

Investment Capitalism and the Physics of Time

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<https://youtu.be/CRPHp2EjNR8&lc=UgxUEN2I3d-kcl8MmtN4AaABAq>

A Comment on the [Sabine Hossenfelder](#) (YouTube) post:
Capitalism is good. Let me explain. (Sep 2, 2023)
<https://youtu.be/CRPHp2EjNR8>

Sabine, thank you for a beautiful defense of Adam Smith's deeply insightful version of investment capitalism! It's worth noting that investment has deep roots in the survival strategies of all living organisms since, for example, every maple tree that stores sugar in its roots is investing in a future in which winter will end, and it can once again grow leaves to create more sugar. The more profound physics message is that investment is a heuristic method for dealing with the profound asymmetry of time: While the asymmetry of time means we can never see the future as clearly as the past, if we can estimate the future well enough to "see" huge profits there, investment then allows us to access those future profits in the present, making that future come to past.

Interestingly, that also means that cognition is a form of investment: We "see" futures that may or may not be possible, but with sufficient investment and planning, we (sometimes) shape that future and enable it to exist. Investment and cognition both help create futures that otherwise would never exist.

Thank you for mentioning the importance of rules! Because investment accesses future benefits, there must be rules to ensure those who invest now see returns in the future. Without rules, investment capitalism degenerates into gangsterism and outright predation. Complexity enables new futures while predation annihilates them.

Regarding carbon: While that is an immediate and critical concern, it's also just the tip of a far vaster iceberg. Full expansion of the future-access model of success requires accommodation of events that could take place millennia from now for the benefit of descendants for whom we learn to have concerns now as part of our own investment strategies — our children's children, so to speak. Thus, we need to invest more explicitly in sustainability in general, including depths we don't even "see" at the moment. Do you exploit a new mineral deposit until it is empty, never to exist again? Or do you invest in how to extract and efficiently reuse those one-time-only resources in a fashion that is sustainable for millennia? If you see new opportunities, such as asteroid mining, how do you invest in them and balance the risks of failure?

Finally, imagination and hope play an enormous role in successful investment. It is the ability to see new futures, ones literally more beautiful and hopeful than the present, that ultimately drives investment in everything from how we set up priorities in our daily lives to long-term investments in areas such as infrastructure and big science. Hope, beauty, and diversity of thought are not just the domains of the arts but the drivers of how we invest collectively in futures worthy of our efforts now.