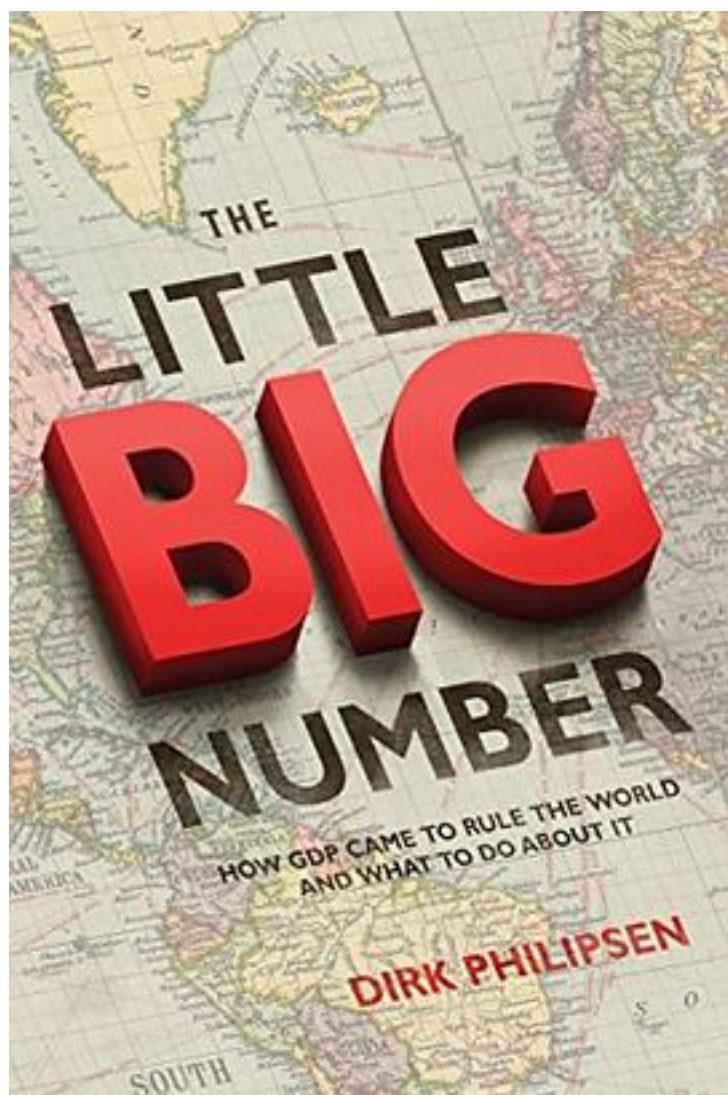


The Little Big Number



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著者:Dirk Philipsen

出版者:Princeton University Press

出版时间:2015-5-25

装帧:Hardcover

isbn:9780691166520

In one lifetime, GDP, or Gross Domestic Product, has ballooned from a narrow economic tool into a global article of faith. It is our universal yardstick of progress. As The Little Big Number demonstrates, this spells trouble. While economies and cultures measure their performance by it, GDP ignores central facts such as quality, costs, or purpose. It only measures output: more cars, more accidents; more lawyers, more trials; more extraction, more pollution—all count as success. Sustainability and quality of life are overlooked. Losses don't count. GDP promotes a form of stupid growth and ignores real development.

How and why did we get to this point? Dirk Philipsen uncovers a submerged history dating back to the 1600s, climaxing with the Great Depression and World War II, when the first version of GDP arrived at the forefront of politics. Transcending ideologies and national differences, GDP was subsequently transformed from a narrow metric to the purpose of economic activity. Today, increasing GDP is the highest goal of politics. In accessible and compelling prose, Philipsen shows how it affects all of us.

But the world can no longer afford GDP rule. A finite planet cannot sustain blind and indefinite expansion. If we consider future generations equal to our own, replacing the GDP regime is the ethical imperative of our times. More is not better. As Philipsen demonstrates, the history of GDP reveals unique opportunities to fashion smarter goals and measures. The Little Big Number explores a possible roadmap for a future that advances quality of life rather than indiscriminate growth.

Endorsement:

"GDP is not just a number but is code for a set of economic values and principles that we're not supposed to question. Philipsen breaks that taboo by critically assessing the origins and impacts of our overreliance on this flawed metric. Anyone who wants to understand our economy's weaknesses--and how to make them better--needs to read this book."--Annie Leonard, author of The Story of Stuff and executive director of Greenpeace USA

"Philipsen brilliantly exposes the skeleton hiding in the economist's closet—the dangerously misleading talisman of GDP. He uncovers the extraordinary story of how good intentions morphed into the monstrous misconception of public progress and economic value that reigns over politics and public opinion. If society fails to heed Philipsen's message about developing new ways to measure economic gain and loss, the sustainable future is not going to be possible."--William Greider, author of The Soul of Capitalism

"The Little Big Number makes the case that GDP has become counterproductive and we need better goals and measures of progress. An excellent and timely book."--Robert Costanza, Australian National University

"Philipsen presents a well-researched, persuasively written book on what is wrong with the economic system we live in and live by. Showing that the GDP measure binds all the different fallacies of our economic world together, he offers a call to action on what we need to change now."--Floris Heukelom, Radboud University

"The Little Big Number demonstrates that the reigning measure of economic policymaking worldwide is not only inadequate but perverse in its impact on any possibility for sane social and economic discourse. This impressive and lively book will become the authoritative text for critiquing GDP."--Thad Williamson, University of Richmond

作者介绍:

Dirk Philipsen is a German- and American-trained professor of economic history, senior fellow at the Kenan Institute for Ethics, and a Duke Arts and Sciences Senior Research Scholar at Duke University. He is the author of *We Were the People: Voices from East Germany's Revolutionary Autumn of 1989*. He lives in Durham, North Carolina.

目录: TABLE OF CONTENTS:

Acknowledgments vii

Introduction: We Become What We Measure 1

Casting a Spell 9

Exploring a Path 13

1. More, Better, Faster: The Beginnings 19

Productivity, Growth, and Success 20

Goals and Measures 27

Values and Measures 32

2. The Origins of Bling: The Spirit of Economic Growth 40

The World of Growth: Refining the Measure 52

Business Accounting Goes National 57

3. The Crucible of Crisis: The Great Depression and the Need for Economic Indicators 65

4. Born from Disaster: The Making of a Key Measure 83

The Challenge 84

The Players 89

The Method 93

The Findings 99

The Big Conundrum: Translating Findings into Action 102

5. Forged in War 107

6. Global Domination: The Age of GDP 117

For Richer or Poorer 117

A Stunted Priesthood 121

Stopgap Consensus 123

Going Global 128

New Rules 130

GDP Junkies 133

Shackled in Fool's Gold 139

7. Today's ABC of GDP 143

It's an Emperor, but Does It Have Clothes? 152

Why It Matters 157

8. More Is Not Enough 160

The Little Big Number: Our Report Card for Success 174

Emerging Dissent 178

9. "The People of Plenty Are a People of Waste" 184

Breaking the Spell 204

10. From Alchemy to Reason: What If? A Thought Experiment 208

Mental Cobwebs 219

One More Time: Simon Kuznets 230

Clearing a Path 236

11. Looking Forward 243

A Daring Vision 250

A Moment of Possibility 265

Appendix A. The Measure as Guide 271
Notes 277
Bibliography 351
Index 389
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评论

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