

The Numbers Game Problem: Neoliberal Formalism, MICE Philosophy, and the Capacity for Comprehensive Understanding

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5TH AUSTRALIAN EAST COAST TRIP SERIES ABSTRACT: The travel from Brisbane to Geelong through country New South Wales, running out of petrol with no money but the kindness of others, spending several days with Australian leading Islam/Muslim historian and then the return trip via Sydney where I presented on the Dynamic of Cognition at the University of Sydney's "Leaving Religion and Non-Religion Thought Symposium.

The "Beyond the Economic Numbers Game" audio commentary on MICE's Contributory Economy and Human Authorship:

¹ Artificial Intelligence (A.I.) has been fairly used in the production of this work. The tool used is Google NotebookLM (recently rebranded as Gemini Notebook). It is an AI-powered virtual research assistant and thinking partner designed to help a person interact deeply with their own documents. Unlike general chatbots, it is source-grounded, meaning it only generates answers based on the specific PDFs, documents, or links uploaded. The A.I. process in the production of this work has been limited to the attached (prompts) on each of the questions in turn. This ensures an accurate reading of each source. The author then rearranged and re-edited the answers the A.I. provided. The human author publishes this work. A.I. is never an author when used properly. This assistance is not qualitatively different from a human research assistant when that assistance is deemed to have no authorial status but is acknowledged.

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This essay investigates the “**Numbers Game Problem**” within contemporary political economy, educational governance, and social psychology. Moving beyond the classical reduction of economics to game-theoretic probability and market-clearing metrics, the paper critiques the formalist tendency to reduce human agency, moral judgment, and civilizational capital to quantitative throughput and audit culture [3, 28–30]. Through the lens of Dr. Neville Buch’s **Management Institute for Contributory Economy (MICE)**, the essay contrasts the narrow, fixed mindset of neoliberal formalization—which conflates price with value and transactional utility with human welfare—with an organological, communicative, and ethically thick framework [28, 30, 33–35]. By aligning MICE principles with Bernard Stiegler’s critique of denoetization, Jürgen Habermas’s communicative action, Bernard Williams’s thick ethical concepts, and Susan Haack’s foundherentism, the essay demonstrates how overcoming the Numbers Game Problem restores the capacity for **comprehensive understanding (“360-degree vision”)** [30, 33–35, 67]. Ultimately, this intervention reasserts human authorship and $\$oikonomia\$$ over automated, extractive systems²more_horiz.

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1. Core Economic Argument: The Reductionism of the “Numbers Game”

The term “**Numbers Game Problem**” originates in economic and mathematical literature as a descriptor for probability models, illegal policy rackets, and non-cooperative game theory [2–4]. In traditional neoclassical and public choice formulations, economics constructs a formalist paradigm around *homo economicus*—an atomized, utility-maximizing agent operating within competitive market clearing mechanisms [3, 29, 120–121].

In contemporary political economy and cognitive sociology, the Numbers Game Problem represents “**neoliberal formalism**”⁵⁶:

1. **Conflation of Price with Value:** Market fundamentalism assumes that if a social good or historical synthesis cannot achieve immediate commercial monetization, its production represents an inefficient allocation of resources⁷⁸.
2. **Downward Liability Transfer:** Centralized corporate and state institutions achieve the illusion of financial balance by transferring unpriced operational, cognitive, and reliability burdens onto individual citizens—a dynamic formalized in Jameel’s Economic Law of Responsibility Burden [10–11].

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3. **Audit Culture and Denoetization:** Complex human faculties—such as deep historical memory, contemplative judgment, and community care—are flattened into thin statistical indicators, short-term performance benchmarks, and transactional throughput.
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2. Alignment with MICE Principles and Philosophy

The **Management Institute for Contributory Economy (MICE)** directly counters the reductionism of the Numbers Game Problem through eight integrated principles that draw on continental philosophy, epistemology, and cognitive sociology [31–32]:

- **Organological Dimension (Bernard Stiegler):** Human cognition and memory are intrinsically coupled with technical implements (\$epiphylogenesis\$)9. The uncritical mechanization of thought via market algorithms and autocomplete metrics induces “**denoetization**”—the systematic liquidation of human judgment911. MICE restores “long circuits of attention” to ensure technology serves human flourishing rather than turning the thinker into an unpaid system operator9more_horiz.
- **Communicative Dimension (Jürgen Habermas):** Rather than accepting transactional bargaining where money or power dictates outcomes, MICE establishes “**Open Constitutionalism**”13. This creates a level playing field where action conflicts are resolved through unforced, reasoned consensus rather than administrative decree or statistical manipulation13.
- **Ethical Dimension (Bernard Williams):** MICE replaces thin, quantitative metrics with “**thick ethical concepts**” (such as integrity, truthfulness, and courage)10. These concepts combine factual description with evaluative meaning, preventing economic policy from devolving into audit culture10.
- **Epistemological Dimension (Susan Haack's Foundherentism):** By decoupling truth and explanatory power from market demand, Haack’s foundherentist crossword-puzzle model establishes that the validity of historical analysis exists independently of whether a commercial market currently purchases it [37–38].
- **Decoupling Contribution from Wage-Labour:** MICE recognizes that automation and AI permanently alter traditional wage-labour hours14. Instead of forcing all human activity into narrow market jobs, MICE compensates **contributory activities**—actions that generate non-rivalrous social value, ecological care, and public education [41–42].

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- **The Triadic Political Dialectic:** MICE operates under its signature motto: *"Radical enough to shift the agenda, liberal enough to allow everyone a decent place in the social environment, and conservative enough to preserve the legacy of good value"*¹⁵more_horiz.
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3. The Numbers Game Problem and the Capacity for Comprehensive Understanding

The Numbers Game Problem severely degrades society's capacity for **comprehensive understanding** by locking decision-makers into a **"fixed mindset"** and an "a-historical framing"⁵more_horiz:

1. **Short-Term "Happenings" vs. Historical Process:** When institutions evaluate projects solely through immediate cost-benefit calculations, they fixate on isolated "happenings" rather than viewing policies as part of a managed historical trajectory¹⁸¹⁹. This is evident in government infrastructure vacillations—such as the Brisbane 2032 Olympic stadium proposals—where decision-makers repeatedly recalculate plans in institutional bubbles¹⁸.
 2. **The "1-Degree" Trap vs. "360-Degree Vision":** The reduction of economic life to quantitative metrics produces a narrow, single-point perspective. In contrast, MICE's **360-degree vision** utilizes conceptual analysis to pull apart and reassemble sets of ideas, integrating the "environmental whole" across time, space, and community memory [31–32, 67].
 3. **Loss of Social Intelligence:** When public reasoning is governed by a numbers game, opposing worldviews are mutually dismissed, and public dialogue collapses into reactive outrage ("cancel culture")⁶²⁰. A comprehensive understanding requires **\$panser\$ (thinking as caring)**, which acts as a procedural shield against abstract calculation and protects human dignity (**\$eudaimonia\$**) [19–20, 54–55].
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4. Why This Message Is Important: Reclaiming Human Authorship

The critique of the Numbers Game Problem is a vital defence of **human authorship, intellectual sovereignty, and democratic wisdom**:

- **Shielding Human Cognitive Bandwidth:** In an era of generative AI, surveillance capitalism, and hyper-industrial automation, reducing human value to data inputs threatens to turn

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individuals into superfluous nodes. The MICE framework re-centres the "**historical person**" as an active agent capable of moral courage and reflection⁷²⁰.

- **Protecting the Intellectual Commons:** By providing an economic and epistemological harbor for independent scholars, regional historians, and non-conforming thinkers, MICE ensures that truth-seeking remains pluralistic and free from the coercive pressures of corporate capital and administrative regimes⁸¹⁶.
- **Transitioning from \$Chrematistike\$ to \$Oikonomia\$:** The message calls for a structural shift away from wealth accumulation for its own sake (\$chrematistike\$) toward an economy that serves human life, character, and social flourishing (\$oikonomia\$).

In-Text Harvard References & Bibliography

In-Text Harvard References

- (Brock 1989: 161)
- (Buch 2022: 320)
- (Buch 2026a: 34–35)
- (Buch 2026b: 1–3)
- (Buch 2026c: 1–3)
- (Gibbons 1997: 128)
- (Guala 2006: 241)
- (Haack 1993: 82)
- (Habermas 1984: 102)
- (Jameel 2026b: 79)
- (Kaplan & Maher 1970: 391)
- (Samuelson 2016: 108)
- (Stiegler 2010: 45)
- (Williams 1985: 140)

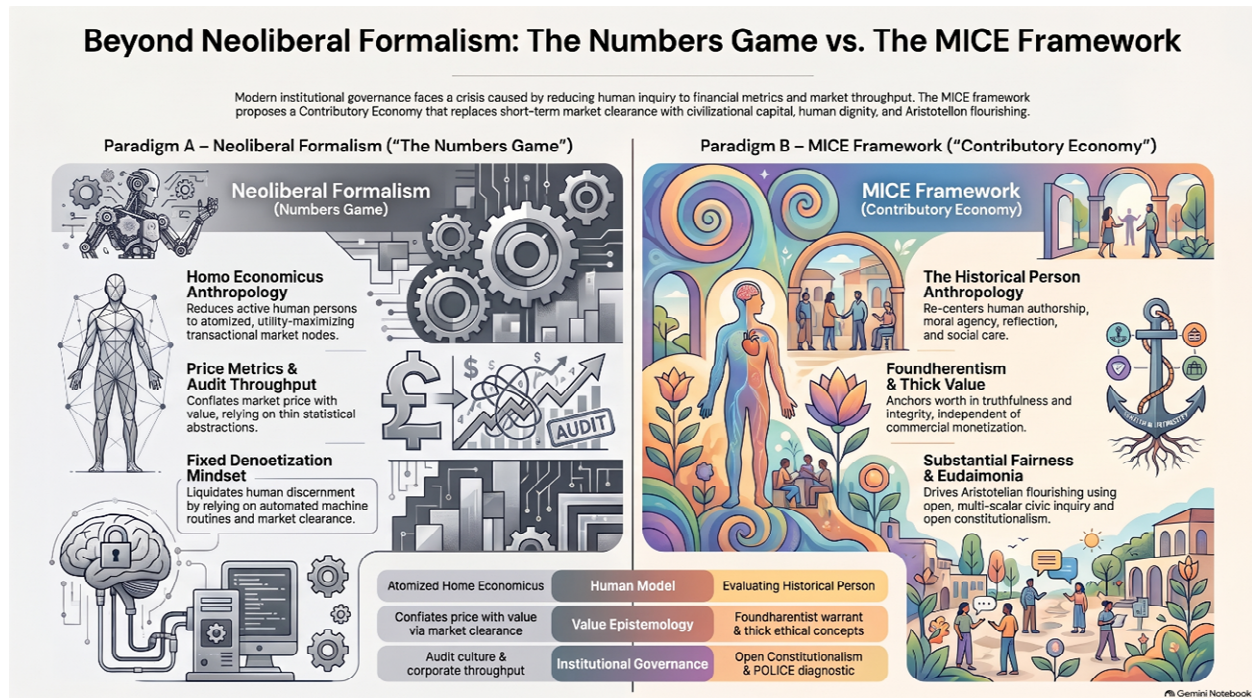
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