

Progress is power. The stories we tell about whether society is moving in the right direction are immensely potent. Progress narratives are at the foundation of civilization, running through the first empires of the Tigris-Euphrates valleys to Silicon Valley. They have compelled us to build cities, chart the globe, delve the oceans, peek at the cosmos, and create remarkable inventions.

But the modern story of progress is a very dangerous fiction. It defines our sense of what “better” means and justifies what we will do to achieve it—no matter the cost. We continue to subscribe to a set of comforting fables that have fueled some successes, but also many harms. These narratives now threaten our existence and the very possibility of complex life on Earth.

In *Progress*, geographer Samuel Miller McDonald illuminates the five-thousand-year history of our most important political idea, offering a radical new perspective on the myths upon which the modern world is built and suggesting an urgent alternative. Drawing on research across fields like geography and history, anthropology and philosophy, Miller McDonald argues that if humanity and many other species are to thrive, then we must dismantle and create anew what we mean by “progress.”

SAMUEL MILLER McDONALD is a geographer focusing on human ecology and history. He holds a doctorate from Brasenose College, University of Oxford, and degrees from Yale University and College of the Atlantic. He has written essays and analysis for *The Nation*, *The Guardian*, *The New Republic*, *Current Affairs*, *Boston Review*, and others, and has contributed interviews to *BBC Ideas*, *VICE News Tonight*, and various radio and podcast programs. *Progress* is his first book.

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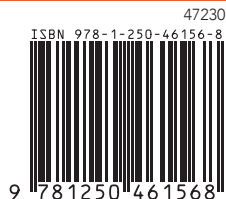
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