Can science help shape a “good” anthropocene?

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Society and the sciences are vigorously debating how to respond to the Anthropocene – Earth’s “Age of Us,” an era in which humans have, as the Russian geochemist Vladimir Vernadsky proposed long ago, become a planet-scale influence.

Do we have to “degrow,” as some propose? Or can the pulse of scientific and technological progress that has propelled our species’ zooming trajectory – in both numbers and appetites – now facilitate a transition to low-impact prosperity?

As a prize-winning journalist and author, Andrew Revkin has been exploring such questions for three decades, from the North Pole to the Amazon, the Indian Ocean to the White House. In an illustrated talk, he offers a guardedly optimistic guide to ways to balance seemingly infinite human aspirations with life on a finite planet.