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Meaningful lives under constant change

From the moment we are born we search our surroundings for patterns that we can recognize. Patterns allow us to predict what comes next and by so doing, recognizable patterns are what allows us to make sense of the world, understand it and navigate it.

In a global economy where people, money, jobs, and information are constantly moving or being moved around, well-known patterns break down and new patterns arise, and they do so at an increasing speed. This makes it increasingly hard to understand and navigate the surroundings safely and the stability and predictability that make life meaningful are hard to maintain.

How does this affect cultures and individuals? Will it have an impact on the economy itself?

By combining scale-free networks, semantics, child psychology, and cognitive science I have developed a model for describing how life becomes meaningful and how it may lose meaning again if important elements of life and/or culture disappear; if for instance people are forced into exile, have to constantly move around to find work and lose a sense of community and belonging, lose their land due to industrialization, expropriation or plain land-grab, if their skills are suddenly useless, or if they cannot live according to their

traditional ways as immigrants in a new country. The model also explains why some immigrants or second generation immigrants may turn to religious fundamentalism, even if they or their parents were not very religious before they decided or were forced to migrate.

After mapping what makes (or made) life meaningful, the model can then be used to assess what has been lost, find out what is left, focus on that, and help create new meaning and meaningful lives from there.

The model may also be used for mapping the values and cultural habits of people affected by political decisions and thus help avoid implementing measures that won't work, will lead to unpredicted behaviors or may tear apart the social fabric.