

Sustainability: From Social Democracy to Neoliberalism

Sustainability

1987 Brundtland Commission Report

Our Common Future

The three E's

Link to production and equality

Sustainable development

Intellectual origins of sustainability

Anti-colonialism

Environmental movement

Ehrlich's *The Population Bomb*

Environmentalism of the Poor

UN Declaration of Human Rights

Ecological Economics and *Limits to Growth*

Evolution of Sustainability

Development and justice versus growth

Neoliberal Capitalism

History of neoliberalism

The apotheosis of the market

Continue Neoliberal capitalism

Changing ideas of freedom

New govt role in society

Neoliberalism as policy

World Bank and IMF

Reducing poverty?

Corporate environmentalism

Achievements of Sustainability

OUR COMMON FUTURE

THE WORLD COMMISSION

ON ENVIRONMENT

AND DEVELOPMENT

Sustainability, a definition

“The ability to meet present needs of people without compromising needs of future generations”

Goal: improve quality of human life by understanding limits and constraints of living and non-living resource bases

The Three E's.

Ecology

Equality

Economy

Sustainability

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The Origins of *Our Common Future*

1. Anti-colonial movements of 1960s and 70s
2. The spread of environmental movement around world
 - a. Concern with invasive technologies that don't take into account limits
 - b. Concern with unbridled plunder of resources by TNC's
 - c. The population bomb (Paul Ehrlich)
 - d. Environmental Justice struggles
3. UN Declaration of Human Rights, 1947
4. Ecological Economics as a field within Economics

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Sustainable development to Sustainable Growth

1. Neoliberal capitalism and the transformation of sustainability
2. Sustainability through market capitalism and consumer choice
3. Responsibility for sustainability shifted onto the individual consumer

Welfare state/social democracies

1. 1930s-1970s, government and public (collective) obligation to Correct failures of unfettered capitalism
2. What kind of corrections and interventions?
3. Role of social movements and worker's movements in bringing about reforms. Many were asking for more radical systemic change.

Shift to neoliberal capitalism (much in common with 19th century)

1. Profit squeeze
2. "Freedom" in midst of cold war. Notion of creeping socialism

What is Neoliberalism?

1. Myth of reduced government
2. Wealth transfer to capital and prosperous upper middle classes
3. Slash social programs and public goods and remove protections
4. Remove regulations on finance industry □ speculation
5. Remove rules and regulations on production: worker safety to environmental protection
6. Assist capital's search for cheap nature and cheap labor through free markets, tax breaks and anti-union policies
7. Consequences: increased inequality, precarious living due to loss of public services, obdurate poverty, ramped up exploitation of natural resources and thus ecological deterioration

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Corporate/Market Environmentalisms

1. Create private property rights to conserve environment
2. Big corporations going “sustainable” or “green”
3. Produce for an environmentalist market

Results:

- 1.** Seen as easy solution, feel-good “ethical” consumerism.
- 2.** Shifts our attention away from the environment as a public good that we all must protect to an individual consumer choice
- 3.** Not about questions of political and economic power or social inequality generated by unfettered capitalism
- 4.** The savior phenomenon—Elon Musk
- 5.** Repression and violence against environmental justice movements

ECOLOGICAL FOOTPRINTS



WHAT IS YOUR FOOTPRINT?

Clicker question time:

What are the three E's of sustainability as laid out in *Our Common Future* (The Bruntland Report)?

- A. Efficiency, equality, and economy
- B. Enterprise, ecology, and exclusion
- C. Ecology, equality, and economy
- D. Ecology, empathy, and elitism
- E. Empowerment, ecology, and enterprise