

THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FALLACY

The Brundtland Commission gave the classic definition of the concept of sustainable development, one that was used for 25 years--" Sustainable Development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." However, in realistic terms, that definition is totally and completely useless as it does not define the word "development" and does not distinguish that word from the word "growth".

Professor Jeffrey Sachs wrote on page 3 in his book "The Age Of Sustainable Development"--" Sustainable development is also a normative outlook on the world, meaning that it recommends a set of *goals* (emphasis in the original) to which the world should aspire." and "Sometimes the following shorthand is used: SDGs call for *socially inclusive and environmentally sustainable economic growth*" (emphasis in original). Combining Brundtland's definition with the quote from Sachs gives us the following definition ---- "Sustainable Development is environmentally sustainable economic growth." I suggest that is the best and simplest definition of sustainable development.

The phrase "sustainable economic growth" is totally and completely meaningless until and unless the word "sustainable" is defined or modified. Does the word "sustainable" mean that economic growth can forever continue into the future on the finite earth or should it be modified by a period of time---sustainable for X years? A reasonable interpretation of the word "sustainable" without any modification by a period of time is that it means sustainable forever into the future. Economic growth uses one or more of the earth's limited physical resources and, therefore, cannot continue forever into the future. The only way development can be sustained forever is not to use any physical resource which the earth provides to humanity. I challenge anyone to describe in detail an economic system which does not use anything physical. Based on the fact that any economic system must use one or more physical resources, the concepts of sustainable development and/or sustainable economic growth are complete nonsense.

More importantly, anyone who takes the position that economic growth can continue forever into the future and writes about it is misleading humanity and the leaders of humanity to total and complete destruction. If sustainable economic growth does not mean that economic growth can forever continue into the future, then all we are discussing is when economic growth will cease.

The economy of the United States, the economies of all the nations of the world, and the world's economy grow in a compound manner. Kenneth Boulding, a famous economist, wrote "Anyone who believes that exponential growth can go on forever in a finite world is either a madman, or an economist." And the planet Earth is our finite world. The statement made by Boulding was true and accurate when he made it and it is still true and accurate today. The phrase sustainable development has been used and is being used today by those who do not want to state simply and clearly that some point in time

economic growth must cease and no action taken by humanity can change that simple fact.

I challenge anyone to present a factually and ecologically supported case, with absolute certainty, that sustainable development and/or sustainable economic growth can continue forever on the finite earth. Absolute certainty is not needed. If there is a 90% chance that sustainable development or sustainable economic growth can continue forever, there is also a 10% chance that they cannot continue forever. Humanity cannot afford to gamble on a 10% chance that economic growth will cease, because it will cease with violence, death and destruction beyond the imagination as each group, religion and nation will fight to obtain the resources needed to satisfy the needs and desires of its population.

New technologies and other actions taken by humanity to make the economy more efficient (less resource usage per unit of economic output) will not save humanity from destruction for at least three reasons---1) No matter how efficiently humanity uses resources, almost all of the resources that the earth provides are finite and limited and eventually will be gone; 2) The Jevons paradox and the Khazzoom-Brookes postulate state-- when technological progress increases the efficiency with which a resource is used (reducing the amount necessary for any one use), the rate of consumption of that resource rises because of increasing demand; and 3) Efficiency can only reduce resource usage by a limited amount, whereas demand can grow geometrically more than offsetting the reduction in resource usage.

Summarizing the above--SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IS NOTHING MORE THAN USING DIFFERENT WORDS FOR SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH IS A FOOL'S DREAM BECAUSE ECONOMIC GROWTH USES THE LIMITED AND FINITE RESOURCES OF THE EARTH.

SINCE THE EARTH AND THE RESOURCES IT CAN PROVIDE HUMANITY ARE LIMITED AND FINITE, BOTH ECONOMIC AND POPULATION GROWTH MUST CEASE SOMETIME IN THE FUTURE. NEITHER CAN GROW FOREVER AND BECOME INFINITELY LARGE. NO ACTION BY HUMANITY CAN EVER CHANGE THAT FACT.

Based on the fact that both the economy and population must reach a peak, the following questions must be answered:

- 1) When will each reach its peak?
- 2) What will be the peak level of economic activity and what will be the population level and age distribution when population reaches its peak?
- 3) Will each reach its peak due to the intelligence of humankind, or will either of them reach its peak due to violence?
- 4) Upon reaching its peak, how long will each remain at its peak before starting to decline? Each must start to decline sometime after reaching its peak due to the fact that humanity will continue to use the limited resources the earth provides. Neither of them can forever remain at its peak. Ultimately, due to the second law of thermodynamics, the

population will be limited by the amount of energy it receives from the sun. The second law of thermodynamics provides that a closed system, and the earth is a closed system except for the energy it receives from the sun, must exhaust its energy resources.

5) When the economy reaches its peak, how soon thereafter will population reach its peak? When the economy starts to decline, how soon thereafter will population start to decline? The economy and population are so intertwined that when the economy reaches its peak, population must reach its peak shortly thereafter and when the economy starts to decline, population will start to decline shortly thereafter.

6) How steep will the decline of each be? How long will the decline last? At what level will each cease its decline?

7) In order for humanity to survive after the peak level of population has been reached, will every aspect of society (morality, charity, justice, government and everything else) have to be reevaluated and changed?

There are many additional questions which will have to be asked and answered to understand what will happen to humanity after both population and economic activity reach their peaks. The important point to understand is that anyone who writes about or discusses sustainable development and/or sustainable economic growth cannot do so until and unless he considers the question set forth above.

Without going into a great deal of detail, there is a substantial amount of evidence that the earth cannot support the current population at the current level of per capita usage of resources for even a very short period of time, no matter what action is taken by humanity. There is additional evidence that humanity will face major violent catastrophes before the year 2100, due to the population increasing to 11.2 billion (the UN's most recent medium variation prediction/projection/estimate) and due to the increasing per capita usage of resources caused by the ever growing economies of the nations of the world. If the chance of a major violent catastrophe causing the deaths of billions occurring before the year 2100 is as low as 10%, the discussion or consideration of sustainable development and/or sustainable economic growth is an act of madness as both require the use of additional resources and both theoretically will act to increase the human population.

The evidence of the statements made in the previous paragraph is the following list of the problems which will not be discussed in detail, except for the problem of the exploding human population--- environmental degradation, exhaustion of oil and other fossil fuels, global warming, rising food prices causing starvation and social unrest, the possibility of new and deadly plagues due to the destruction of forests and other natural habitats, elimination of species on a scale that could lead to the elimination of humanity from the planet, lack of water to grow food due to the exhaustion of underground fossil aquifers, over fishing leading to the elimination of fish as a source of food for humanity, dead zones in the ocean due to fertilizer runoff, the possibility of new and deadly plagues due to each human being living in close proximity with other human beings, excessive irrigation leading to the destruction of soils, overgrazing leading to the destruction of soils, pollution in the atmosphere and rivers causing deaths and serious health issues due to chemicals, hormones and other wastes being dumped into the atmosphere, rivers and

waters that humanity uses, invasion by non-local species leading to the destruction of local species, resource wars which probably would use weapons of mass destruction and many other items too numerous to list. You are urged to read the papers put out by the Global Footprint Network that show the human species has presently exceeded the carrying capacity of the planet and that the deficit is rapidly growing.

A few simple statements about population growth:

1. It took from the time humanity evolved from the ape until 1950 (about 500,000-1,000,000 years ago) for population to reach 2.5 billion.
2. According to the UN's demographers, it will take just 150 years from 1950 to 2100 for population to reach 11.2 billion, a gain of 8.7 billion (11.2 minus 2.5=8.7) and the population will still be growing. 11.2 is 4.48 times greater than 2.5.
3. The UN demographers cannot guarantee the accuracy of their numbers, they could be high or low, but they are among the best in the world and the leaders of humanity must not ignore them.
4. The world-wide average fertility rate is presently above replacement level. Reaching replacement level fertility will not instantaneously reduce population growth to zero. It will take about 70 years after replacement level fertility is reached for population to reach zero growth and at that time the total population would level off at an amount about 50% greater than the amount of people that were alive when replacement level fertility was reached.
5. In 2004 the UN's prediction/projection/estimation for 2100 was only 9.1 billion. In 2016, just 12 years later, that prediction increased to 11.2 billion, an increase of 2.1 billion. A very, very large change in a very short period of time. The change in the UN's prediction combined with the increase of 8.7 billion in just 150 years set forth above should force anyone with any level of intelligence to the conclusion that the current method of population control (voluntary population control) is a complete and total failure. What would happen to humanity if during the next fifty years the UN increased its prediction for 2100 by 6.8 billion to 18 billion? Please note I am not indicating that the UN will do that. I have no way of knowing what the UN demographers will do--they could increase the prediction, lower the prediction or keep it the same. However, based on the past increases I am saying that a substantial increase in the prediction is possible and must not be ignored. If humanity continues its population growth such that there is high probability that the population will attempt to reach 18 billion by the year 2100, there is also a very high probability that one or more major catastrophes will cause the deaths of billions and the destruction of civilization before that year is reached. Let me be very blunt. If there is even a 10% chance that humanity will be on track to substantially exceed the current prediction of 11.2 billion in 2100 and the leaders of humanity continue to refuse to discuss, debate, consider or evaluate coercive population control they should be executed for stupidity and crimes against humanity.

Economic growth will cease in the very near future due to the power of compound growth and the economies of all the nations of the world grow in a compound manner. If the economy of the world were to grow at an annual rate of 4%, (see page 2 of Professor

Sachs' book where he states that the world's economy is vast and growing rapidly at 3%-4% per year) it would double every 17.5 years. In just 175 years there would be 10 doublings resulting in a growth factor of approximately 1,000 (actually 1,024). If the growth were to continue at 4% per year in just 350 years, the growth factor would be over 1 million and in just 525 years the growth factor would be over 1 billion. If the growth rate were only 2% per year, in 350 years, the growth factor would be over 1,000, in 700 years over 1 million, and in 1,050 years the growth factor would be over 1 billion.

According to Professor Sachs (see pages 482 and 483 of his book, the leaders of humanity in their 2012 meeting at Rio de Janeiro stated that eradicating poverty is the greatest global challenge facing the world today. I violently disagree with that statement. The greatest challenge facing humanity today is to revise every aspect of human society (and I do mean every single aspect of human society) due to the fact that in the very near future both economic activity and population will reach a peak and shortly thereafter start to decline. Neither economic activity nor population growth can continue forever and they both will reach peaks in the near future and shortly after reaching those peaks will start to decline. I challenge anyone to present a factual and logically supported case that either or both economic activity and population can grow forever. If they cannot grow forever, they must reach peaks and the only question is when will those peaks be reached. And, as indicated above, they will reach those peaks in the very near future due to the power of compound growth.

Professor Sachs also discusses ten Sustainable Development Goals at pages 486-489. Those goals were recommended by the Sustainable Development Solutions Network established by the UN to set forth goals for Sustainable Development. Since this essay is becoming long, I will discuss only the first two Sustainable Development Goals

SDG 1-- "End extreme poverty, including hunger." Professor Sachs in describing that goal did not even discuss population growth. As stated above, according to the latest numbers issued by the UN population will grow from the current 7.2 billion to 11.2 billion by the year 2100. It is almost certain that extreme poverty and hunger will not be eliminated by the year 2100 due to the population growth---about 4 billion in just 85 years. The failure of those concerned with extreme poverty and hunger to discuss and consider all methods of population control is unconscionable and a total disaster for humanity. Every person concerned about the survival of the human species should be aware that the leaders of humanity refuse to discuss population growth and population control in an intelligent manner. An intelligent discussion of the exploding human population requires a discussion of all methods to control population growth, including coercive population control. No person on the face of the earth can set forth a valid reason why coercive population control should not be discussed or can set forth a valid argument that a discussion of coercive population control will be more harmful to humanity than not having such a discussion.

SDG 2-- "Achieve economic development within planetary boundaries." At this point I'm going to quote everything written by Professor Sachs about SDG 2 as his words are extremely important to understanding why the concept of Sustainable Development is a

complete fallacy---" This goal means that all countries have a right to economic development as long as that development respects planetary boundaries, ensures sustainable production and consumption patterns, and helps to stabilize the global population by mid century. The idea of SDG 2(as recommended by the SDSN) is to give support to continued economic growth, especially in the developing countries, but only growth that is environmentally sustainable within the planetary boundaries. This will require huge changes in the ways we use and produce energy, grow food, design and build cities, and so forth".

Professor Sachs uses the phrase "continued economic growth" in relation to Sustainable Development Goal number 2. Continued economic growth is a fools dream as it uses physical resources and anything that uses physical resources cannot continue to grow sustainably, it is a physical impossibility on the finite earth. He also uses the phrase "growth that is environmentally sustainable within planetary boundaries". The only growth that is sustainable within planetary boundaries is growth that does not use anything physical and the growth he refers to uses physical resources. Therefore, the entire concept of growth that is environmentally sustainable within planetary boundaries is a fools dream. He also uses the phrase "all countries have a right to economic development as long as that development respects planetary boundaries." Professor Sachs does not discuss the possibility that planetary boundaries have already been exceeded and, therefore, all additional development must exceed planetary boundaries. In simple terms, if planetary boundaries have been already exceeded Sustainable Development is pure nonsense. And a very strong case can be made that humanity has already exceeded the planetary boundaries. See the problem list above.

An argument using math that adds to the support of the concept that humanity has already exceeded the planetary boundaries. The US has between 4 and 5% of the world's population. I will use 5% to be conservative. The US uses about 30% of the world's resources. I will use 25% to be conservative. If the entire world used resources at the same rate as the US, the planet could only support 20% of the current population and that is a very conservative estimate. To make the calculation even more conservative, assume that due to efficiency of resource usage and a reduction in the standard of living 50% less resources were used. Based on that assumption and the other two assumptions (5% of the world's population and 25% usage of the world's resources) the most that the planet would be able to support is 40% of the current population of humanity or 40% of 7.2 billion which results in a population of 2.88 billion. Humanity has exceeded the planetary boundaries. Again, if planetary boundaries have been exceeded Sustainable Development is a fallacy.

In stead of wasting time and effort writing and/or talking about the useless concepts of Sustainable Development and Sustainable Economic Growth, the intellectual leaders of humanity must intelligently discuss, debate, consider and evaluate all methods of population control, including coercion, such that humanity survives on this planet.

