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"Sustainabilty: An Interdisciplinary Guide"

Pezzey, John

Pezzey, John. "Sustainabilty: An Interdisciplinary Guide." *Environmental Values* 1, no. 4, (1992): 321–362. doi:10.3197/096327192776680034 .

A definition of sustainability as maintaining 'utility' (average human wellbeing) over the very long term future is used to build ideas from physics, ecology, evolutionary biology, anthropology, history, philosophy, economics, and psychology, into a coherent, interdisciplinary analysis of the potential for sustaining industrial civilization. This potential is highly uncertain, because it is hard to know how long the 'technology treadmill,' of substituting accumulated tools and knowledge for declining natural resource inputs to production, can continue. Policies to make the treadmill work more efficiently, by controlling its pervasive environmental, social,and psychological external costs, and policies to control population, will help to realize this potential. Unprecedented levels of global co-operation, among very unequal nations, will be essential for many of these policies to work effectively. Even then, tougher action may be required, motivated by an explicit moral concern for sustainability. An evolutionary analysis of history suggests that technology and morality can and will respond to a clearly perceived future threat to civilization; but we cannot easily predict the threat, or whether our response will be fast enough.

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