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"Sustainable Development and Social Justice: Expanding the Rawlsian Framework of Global Justice"

Langhelle, Oluf

Langhelle, Oluf. "Sustainable Development and Social Justice: Expanding the Rawlsian Framework of Global Justice." *Environmental Values* 9, no. 3 (2000): 127–52. doi:10.3197/096327100129342074 .

This article makes two arguments. First, that social justice constitutes an inherent part of the conception of sustainable development that the World Commission on Environment and Development outlined in Our Common Future (1987). The primary goal of the Commission was to reconcile physical sustainability, need satisfaction and equal opportunities, within and between generations. Sustainable development is what defines this reconciliation. Second, it is argued that this conception of sustainable development is broadly compatible with liberal theories of justice. Sustainable development, however, goes beyond liberal theories of justice in many respects. It is based on three assumptions, which are for the most part ignored in liberal theories: an accelerating ecological interdependence, historical inequality in past resource use, and the "growth of limits." These assumptions create a conflict between intra- and intergenerational justice, which is ignored in liberal theories, but which sustainable development tries to solve. It does so by imposing duties on developed countries that goes beyond liberal demands, and by abandoning the focus "solely on protection" that dominates non-anthropocentric approaches to environmental sustainability.
— Text from The White Horse Press website

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