



ECSO6004: Sustainable Communities & Global Development

Theme 3: Exploring Environmental Theory + Reflective Activity

The Story of Stuff

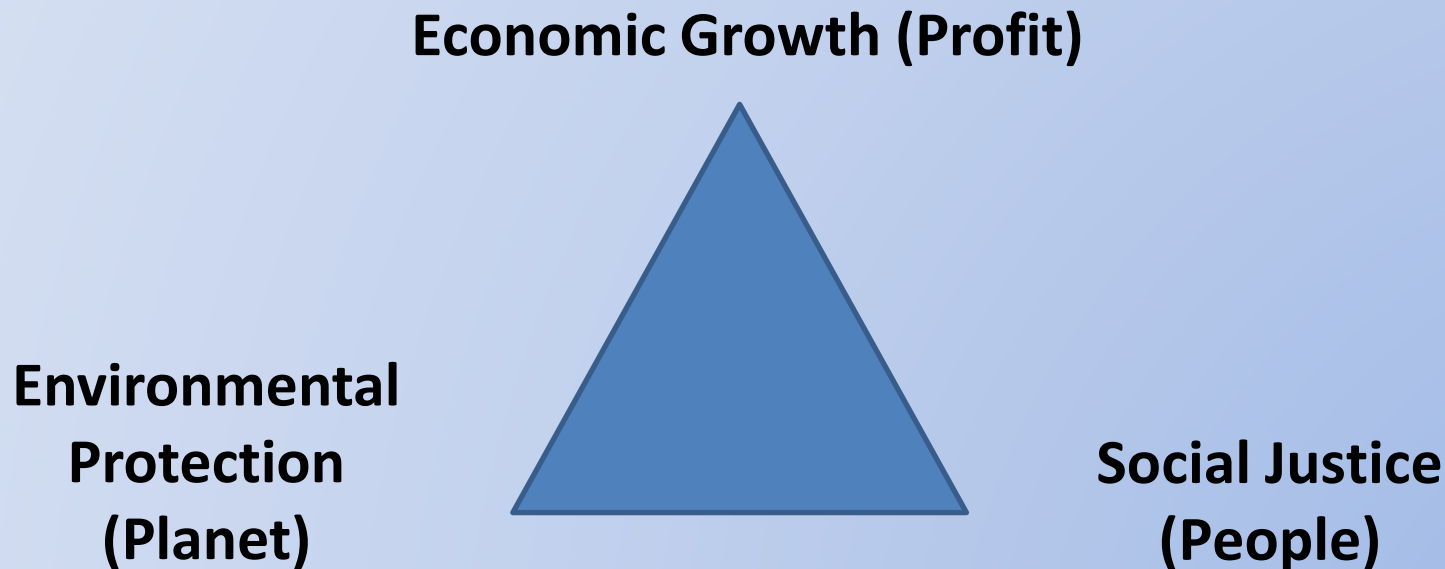


Time Cue 16:55

If you have not yet had the chance please take a look at this video and take notes of any key points or questions.

The Main Issue

- Sustainable development means different things to different people
- Can we have all three elements of sustainable development at the same time?



Who says this is important?

“Effects of climate change on health will effect most populations in the next decades and put lives and wellbeing of billions of people at increased risk”

Who do you think made this statement? 

Costello, Prof. A. (2007) '[Managing the health effects of climate change - The Lancet](#)' *The Lancet* Volume 373 (No. 9676, May 2009) p. 1693

Environmental Inequality in the UK

Environmental inequality has been defined as:

“Environmental inequality refers to the unequal social distribution of environmental risks and hazards and access to environmental goods and services, and is closely related to the concept of environmental justice”.

(Sustainable Development Research Network, 2004)

Discuss what you consider to be environmental inequalities



Measures of environmental inequalities include:

- Air pollution
- Industrial pollution
- Flooding
- Access to food and water
- Transport and public transport access
- Access to natural green spaces and biodiversity
- Access to employment
- Noise
- Housing
- Safety
- Race and equality issues

Group Activity

Read the two articles on the decision of the Dyson company to move production from Wiltshire to Malaysia.



- 1. Identify whether the articles approve or disapprove of this decision.*
- 2. Using the Conceptual Tools of Scale and Elements of Sustainability, Decision Making and Ideology evaluate the issue using the worksheets provided.*



Discuss this with the group



Four key areas of environmental inequality

- Immediate locality or ‘front door’ issues such as litter, neighbourhood noise and the accessibility to and condition of open and green spaces.
- Wider service issues such as access to environmental services, local transport facilities, healthy food and fuel poverty.
- Planning, infrastructure and development issues such as air and water quality, environmental noise, road traffic accidents and flood risk.
- Multiple environmental deprivation, considering the ways in which environmental problems accumulate and have combined effects on an area and people’s health.

‘Weak’ or ‘Strong’ Sustainable Development

Weak focuses on;

- Prevention of catastrophe for human society
- Acceptance of science and modern technology
- Anthropocentric-Human centred
- Intergenerational distribution treated separately
- Lower environmental risk aversion

Strong focuses on;

- Promotion of society in harmony with supporting ecosystems
- Questions science & seeks alternative technology
- Ecocentric- Values nature
- Intergenerational distribution central to sustainable development
- High environmental risk aversion

‘Weak’ & ‘Strong’ views of Sustainable Development

Technocentric versus Ecocentric

- These terms were defined by Timothy O’Riordan in his 1989 work ‘The Challenge for Environmentalism’
- Seen by O’Riordan and others as being in opposition to each other
- One focuses on **technology** and the other on **ecology**

Techno-Centric Viewpoints

Interventionists

- Have complete faith in human ingenuity, science, and the market to solve all problems and ‘improve’ the quality of the environment
- It is argued that this is the view of those who control industry and commerce
- Sees the natural world as a means to the end of human well-being (also known as androcentric/anthropocentric)
- Examples would be GM crops (i.e. change nature for the good of humankind)

Theories of Sustainability

Technocentric Approaches

Interventionists



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Techno-Centric Viewpoints

Accomodationists

- Largely follow this view but are more moderate and express a note of caution
- They believe some accommodations are needed to mitigate the impact of humans on the environment
- Believe that technology and institutions can adapt to deal with resource scarcity or environmental problems

Techno-Centric Viewpoints

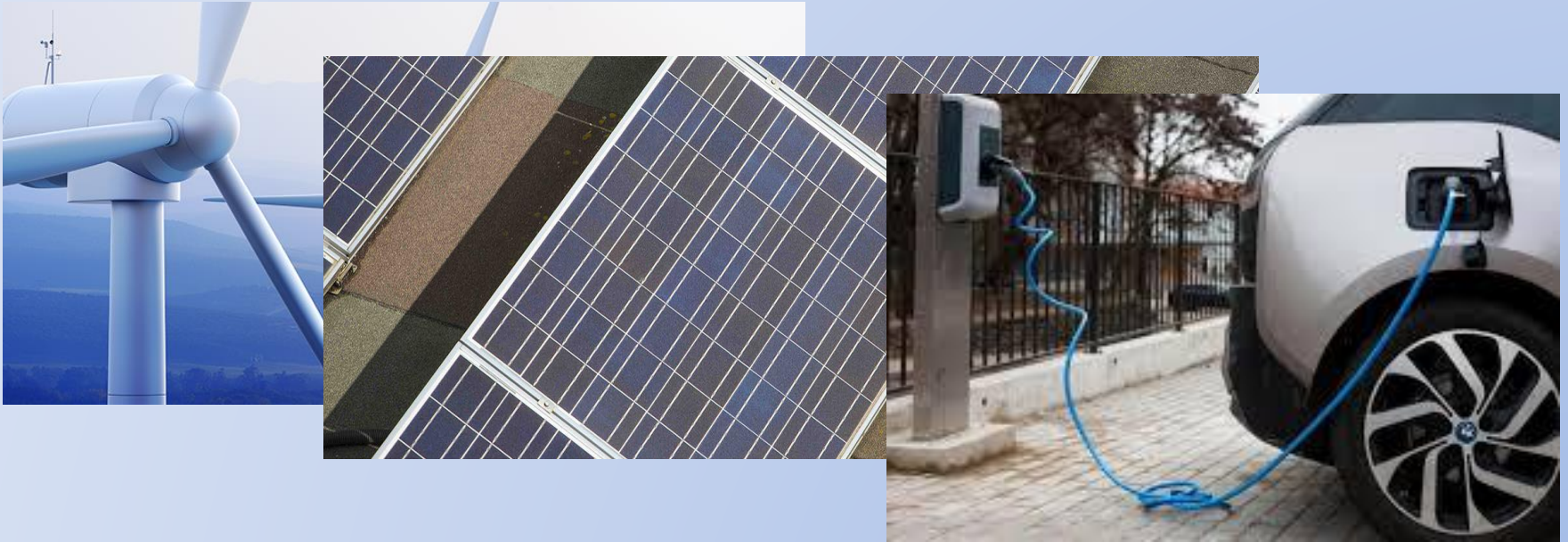
Accomodationists

- At the most moderate end of the 'accomodationist' spectrum are those accused of wishing for the 'status quo'
- i.e. when asked they want an undisturbed environment
- But also want a house, car, luxury goods and overseas holidays
- An example of cognitive dissonance?

Theories of Sustainability

Technocentric Approaches

Accommodationists



What issues can you see with this approach?



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Eco-Centric Viewpoints

‘Environmentalism’

- Environmentalist **noun** – a person who is concerned with or seeks to protect the environment, especially from pollution [OED]
- Often seen as concerned with conservationism and preservation (e.g. national parks)
- Can be seen as being technocratic (i.e. try to win arguments on the terms of governments and industry rather than being ‘radical’)

Eco-Centric Viewpoints

Deep Ecologists / Deep Greens

- Phrase coined by Arne Naess in 1973 and expanded on in 1989
- Must focus on what is good for the planet rather than what is good for humankind
- Human society can only be understood from the viewpoint of ecology
- Sees the connections between every organism as being important

Eco-Centric Viewpoints

Gaianists

- Based on the Gaia hypothesis of James Lovelock
- The planet is a huge inter-connected super-organism
- Creates a self-regulating system focused on maintaining life on earth
- Can see viruses such as Ebola as nature's way of 'fighting back'
- Can even be quasi-religious where the earth is seen as an object of worship

‘Political’ views of Sustainable Development

- Where technocentrists see humanity as the only priority and ecocentrists see ecology as the only priority other theories seek to bring the two together ideologically (i.e. based on a set of shared values)
- Two examples of these are;
 - Eco-feminist viewpoints
 - Eco-socialist viewpoints

Eco-feminist Viewpoints

Eco-feminism

- Phrase coined by Francoise D'eaubonne in her 1974 essay *Le feminisme ou la mort (Feminism or Death)*
- A merging of ecological and feminist ideologies
- Argues for a positive re-evaluation of the connection between women and nature that has been 'forgotten' in Western society
- Stresses that social gender roles give women more of an affinity with nature

Eco-feminist Viewpoints

Eco-feminism

- Can see both women and nature as being repressed by patriarchy
- Argues that women living in developing nations tend to be managers of natural resources (firewood, water etc.)
- Often criticised for being 'essentialist' (i.e. assuming all women are the same)
- Different strands emphasise the ecological, the social and the female spiritual dimensions

Eco-feminist Viewpoints

Eco-feminism

- Charlene Spretnak (1990) defines three main routes to eco-feminism
- Radical/social feminism
- Earth-based goddess religions & spirituality
- Environmentalism
- In the late 20th & 21st Century it has also developed animal rights strand, anti-cosmetics / toxics strand, anti-nuclear strand and others

Eco-socialist Viewpoints

Eco-socialism

- Interested in the social inequalities that exist between humans and how this is reflected in the wider environment
- Capitalism alienates us from our work, from nature, and from ourselves
- Redistribution of wealth and natural resources would improve both society and the environment
- Often criticised for being unrealistic in the same way that 'environmentalists' are
- Argues that environmental inequality can lead to mass migration the short videos below illustrate this dynamic in action.

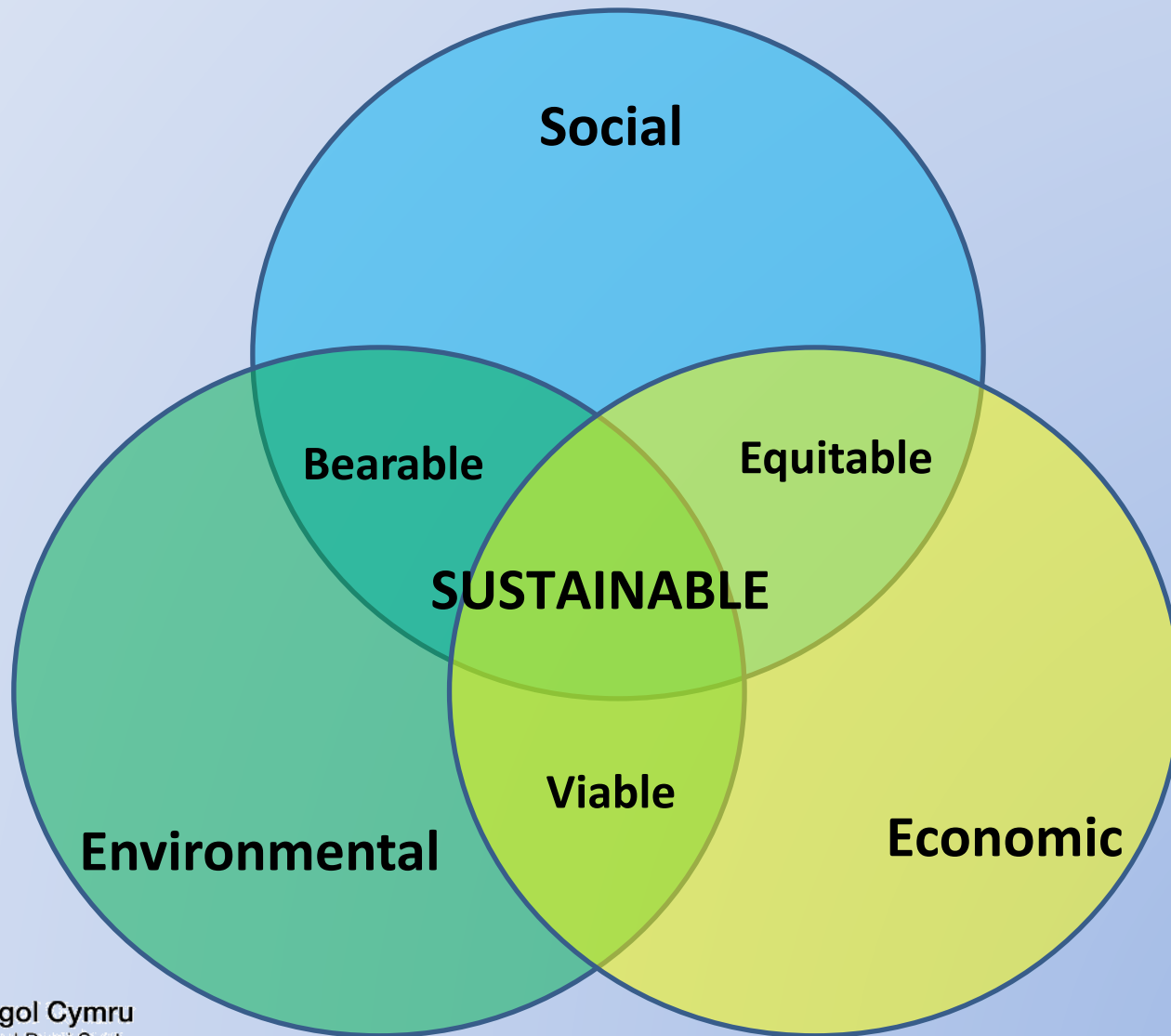


Radical Viewpoints

Social Ecology

- Created by the anarchist and libertarian socialist Murray Bookchin
- Sees environmental abuse as a direct result of the domination of groups of humans by other humans
- With the exception of natural disasters most major ecological disasters in the 20th and 21st centuries have been caused by ethnic, cultural or commercial conflict.
- Argues that if humans can live in harmony with each other they will also live in harmony with nature

Social Ecology



Eco-socialist Viewpoints

Communalists

- Often seen as a more radical form of eco-socialism and developed from Social Ecology
- Focuses far more on local economies, self-sufficiency and sustainable lifestyles
- Local communities are best placed to decide what is best for the environment and therefore themselves
- More about producing less rather than redistributing what is produced

Group Task

Choose one of the ideologies that we are studying



Consider and discuss the positive and negative aspects of the ideology and should also make a judgement on whether it is practical.



Reflective Activity

Sustainability: A personal reflection



*Using the reflective practice worksheet,
consider the following:*



- How environmentally friendly you feel you are now?
- What, if anything, you do that you feel is environmentally friendly?
- How environmentally friendly you would like to be in the future?
- Any changes you would like to make that you feel are possible?
- Any changes you would like to make that you feel are not possible?

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle



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Reflective Activity

Sustainability: A personal reflection



If you have thought of a change that you would like to make and are happy to share it with the group.....

The change I intend to make is.....

I feel that this is environmentally friendly because.....



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