

## Conference Presentation

**Bergmann, Iris 2014.** Sustainability and Animal Protection – How do they intersect, where do they collide? Presentation at *Critical Animal Studies in the Asia-Pacific*, **Institute for Critical Animal Studies Oceania Conference**, Abbotsford Convent, Melbourne Australia, 26-27 April.

### Abstract

Parts of the animal protection movement are skeptical of the concept of sustainability. This skepticism is justified in part due to the anthropocentric focus of the mainstream sustainability movement, coupled with a concern of measuring societal well-being primarily in economic value terms, and the pursuit of an economic model that continues to adhere to the growth paradigm. After all, it is these three overriding dimensions that inherently push non-human animals toward the margins (and over the edge) of societal concern, include them only in objectified form and perpetuate their exploitation for economic benefit in most abhorrent ways. However, this characterises only a part of the sustainability movement and there is potential for a deep alliance between sustainability and animal protection to advance both.

To further outline this argument, it is helpful to consider the different conceptualisations of sustainability and their historic roots. In short, we can differentiate between sustainability steeped in deep ecology and systems thinking at one end of a continuum, and the concept of sustainable development somewhat short of its original meaning reflected in the Brundtland report at the other end. In a simplified model, animal protection concerns are placed high on the agenda at the sustainability end of this continuum, and lowest at the sustainable development end. Moreover, the relationship between animal protection and sustainability is complicated based on the existence of a variety of different ethical foundations for sustainability thought as well as animal protection thought.

The concept of sustainable development, rather than sustainability, has been widely adopted by governments, academics and activists, to the detriment of animal protection. In order to illustrate this point, I focus the next part of the discussion on the model of the *Green Economy*. The *Green Economy* is an economic model to advance sustainable development and is built in particular on concepts of justice, efficiency, ecosystem services and growth. I outline how these concepts relate to animal protection issues, and how non-human animals are included and excluded from the sustainability transition under this model. It comes apparent, that under the *Green Economy*, and under the concept of sustainable development in general, sustainability and animal protection are in many ways played out against each other. I present critical examples of how these antagonistic forces come to bear in specific ways in the Asia-Pacific Region.

In the final part of this presentation, I give special consideration to the justice dimension as a normative concern that has significantly shaped advancements in sustainability thinking, as well as in the animal protection discourse. I conclude by carving out this common ground and by applying the spectrum of ecojustice, distributive, participatory and restorative justice to both, animal protection and sustainability.



## Sustainability and Animal Protection: How do they intersect, where do they collide?

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## The Missing Voice

- › sustainability discourse has been advancing without the nonhuman animal voice
- › the next frontier this discourse needs to engage with: animal protection
- › pivotal role of the animal advocate

## Overview

- › Facets of “sustainability”
  - Social construct
  - Historical and ethical roots
  - A typology
  - Sustainability vs sustainable development
  
- › The Green Economy, China and Global Dairy
  
- › Moving on: the justice dimensions
  
- › Conclusions



## Sustainability

- › General complaint: a myriad of definitions... But: Such is the case for concepts such as freedom or justice.
- › Competing and incompatible views
- › Unproductive search for a “proper” definition
- › Working definitions for a particular situation and a particular community
- › Context, field and background dependent
- › Clarification of one’s stance
- › Giving it meaning is an ongoing social process.



## Why does it matter?

Sustainability is

- › a meta-concept
- › a normative concept that gives guidance in how society ought to develop
- › internationally increasingly accepted as a central idea and as a key to sound policy
- › There is consensus that it is here to stay.



## Roots of Sustainability

Emerging 1950-1990:

- › The Ecological/Carrying Capacity Root
- › The Resource/Environment Root
- › The Biosphere Root
- › The Critique of Technology Root
- › The "No Growth - Slow Growth" Root
- › The Ecodevelopment Root





# Brundtland Commission

1987 "Our Common Future"

- › Connection between the reduction of world poverty and the protection of the environment
- › Reducing environmental degradation by addressing poverty in the developing world

Development synonym for "modernisation" and increased well-being  
Intergenerational justice → Sustainable growth as strategy



## Sustainability (S) vs Sustainable Development (SD)

- › At times used interchangeably
- › Some suggest: S as the goal (a dynamic-equilibrium 'end-state') and SD as the process or the pathway to it
- › But: manifestations of two fundamentally distinct and largely irreconcilable philosophical positions:

S →  
environmental-  
preservationist

SD →  
prudentially  
conservationist  
(extended capitalism  
approach)

(Hector et al. 2014)



## Conceptions of Environmental Sustainability

What to sustain?	Total capital (human-made and natural)	Critical natural capital: e.g. "ecological processes"	Irreversible natural capital	"units of significance"
Why?	human welfare (material)	human welfare (material and aesthetic)	human welfare (material and aesthetic) and obligations to nature	obligations to nature
Objects of primary concern	Present generation human needs and wants, future generation human needs and wants	Present and future generations human needs, present and future generations human wants	(Present generations human and non-human needs.) (Future generations human and non-human needs.)	(Present generations non-human and human needs), (Future generation non-human and human needs)
	secondary conc	Present and future generations non-human needs	Present and future generations human wants	Present and future generation humans wants
Substitutability between human-made and natural capital	Considerable	not between human-made capital and critical natural capital	not between human-made capital and irreversible natural capital	eschews the substitutability debate

(Adapted from Dobson 1996)



## Environmental Ethics

Conflicting positions between and within environmental and animal ethics are influencing conceptions of environmental sustainability:

### › Land Ethic

→ Aldo Leopold, "holistic", the effect on the ecological system is the decisive factor in the determination of the ethical quality of the action

### › Animal liberation

→ "individualistic" concern with suffering of sentient animals



## The Green Economy

- › A path to SD: Green economy and green growth
- › In particular also for the Asia-Pacific region
- › Cause of current crisis according to UNEP: the evident misallocation of capital
- › Remedy: Market incentives to reorient capital investment toward green investments and green innovation.

The green economy [is] one that results in improved human well-being and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities. In its simplest expression, a green economy can be thought of as one which is low carbon, resource efficient and socially inclusive." (UNEP, 2A Synthesis for Policy Makers, in Lander 2012)



## China and The Green Economy

China is embracing the Green Economy.

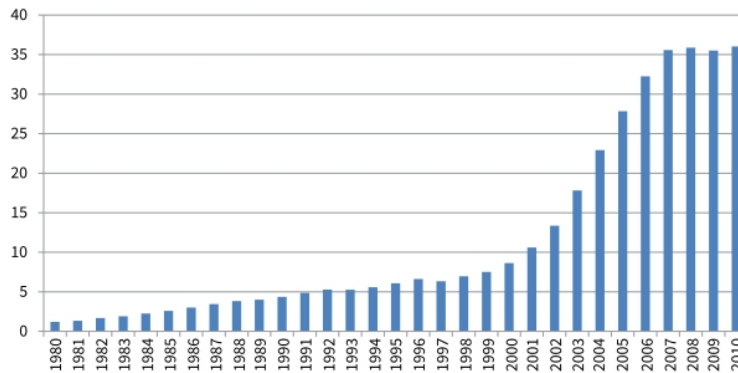
Higher economic growth and higher living standards  
→ increased consumption of animal products



[http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Asia-Pacific\\_map.png](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Asia-Pacific_map.png)



## Trends in China's cow milk production 1980-2011 (million tonnes)



Source: FAOSTAT.

Milk production in 1980 was only 3-4% of 2011 rate. Production and consumption continue to grow at rapid rates. Most of the growth in domestic production has been achieved through an increase in the number of cows rather than gains in productivity (Garnett & Wilkes 2014).



## Global Dairy doing the defining



2009: Six international dairy organisations joined to address GHG in the global dairy sector.

*“The Dairy Sustainability Framework is the GDA program for aligning and connecting sustainability initiatives to demonstrate leadership and progress globally.”*

<http://www.dairy-sustainability-initiative.org>





## Global Dairy doing the defining cont'd



### Dairy Sustainability Vision...

A vibrant dairy sector committed to continuously improving its ability to provide safe and nutritious products from healthy cattle, whilst:

1. Preserving natural resources
2. Ensuring decent livelihoods across the industry

### 11 key sustainability categories

#### › #11: Animal Care

“Dairy animals are treated with care, and are free from hunger and thirst, discomfort, pain, injury and disease, fear and distress, and are able to engage in relatively normal patterns of animal behavior.”

<http://www.dairy-sustainability-initiative.org>



## China, The Green Economy and Cows

Principles of sustainable development are set against animal interests.

- › No reconceptualisation of “care for animals”
- › predominant paradigm: use of animals for economic growth and profit
- › instrumental anthropocentrism
- › incorporating nonhuman animals and nature in the market logic of values
- › cementing neoliberalism



## Common Ground: Dimensions of Justice

### Environmental and animal protection discourse:

- › intra-generational justice between human beings, but also inter-species justice (fairness to other living organisms)



### Sustainability discourse:

- › inter-generational justice (fairness to future generations, also part of SD discourse)
- › Intra-generational justice
  - › ecojustice
  - › Distributive justice = equity or justness of outcome
  - › Participatory justice = procedural justice
  - › Restorative justice = dealing with past injustices

Need to extend all dimensions of justice to human and nonhuman spheres.

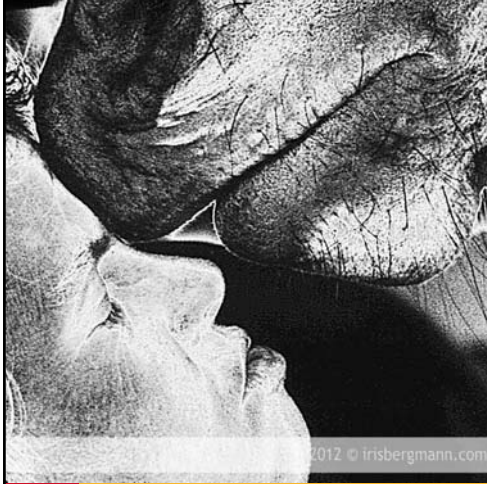


## Conclusions

1. Nonhuman animals are excluded from the dominant sustainability and the SD discourse.
2. The Green Economy as a SD strategy promoted in the Asia-Pacific further entrenches this condition. The focus on neoliberal values and strategies amplifies animal exploitation and justifies it in the name of SD.
3. Animal advocates need to actively engage with the sustainability discourse.
4. New methodologies and sustainability indices need to be developed to include nonhumans as agents.
5. The dimensions of justice are one avenue for framework development.



*Thank you!*



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Image Credits see slide notes.

# Slide Notes

## Slide 5

While some see it as an overarching principle under which all other ethics fall, others see the concept as one of many norms, virtues or principles necessary for a contemporary ethic (Fredericks 2014).

## Slide 6

17<sup>th</sup> century, more so late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century: unease over the destructive impact of industrialization (Hector et al. 2014).

Aldo Leopold 1949. A Sand County Almanac → Land Ethic, “holistic”, the effect on the ecological system is the decisive factor in the determination of the ethical quality of the action → hunting, killing and eating animals is ethically defensible, “environmental fascism” (Regan in Jamieson 1998).

Animal liberation, “individualistic concern” with suffering of sentient animals, “humane ethic”.

Attempt to join both environmental ethics, see exchange between Callicott (1980, 1988, 1998) and Jamieson (1998).

## Slide 7

Six separate yet related strains of thought that have emerged since 1950, contributed to the concept of sustainability, discussing the interrelationships of phenomena among rates of population growth, resource use and pressure on the environment (Kidd 1992):

**The Ecological/Carrying Capacity Root:** most significant root, greatly concerned with environmental degradation and early warnings of ecological disaster, with physical phenomena and initially not concerned with normative values.

**The Resource/Environment Root:** Limits of growth concept; concern for maintenance of environmental quality. Led to environmental laws and regulations, concern shared in US, Western Europe and Japan. UN Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment. Developing countries voicing their concern for environmental degradation in their countries. Costs to reduce industrial pollution were seen as barriers to development.

**The Biosphere Root:** Spaceship earth; moral obligation to future generations – then known as intergenerational justice.

**The Critique of Technology Root:** Dehumanising, disorganising within industrialised countries; export of inappropriate technology to developing countries

**The "No Growth - Slow Growth" Root:** The validity of growth as a goal was already questioned in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, see John Stuart Mill, 1857, stationary state of capital and population does not imply stationary state of human improvement at the mental, moral and social level. Meadows et al. 1972 “The limits to growth”, Daly 1973 “Toward a steady state economy”, and others. Assumptions: Growth must stop at some stage; no-growth economy can promote ethical values and superior social goals; need for reduction in energy consumption, away from fossil fuels, energy conservation, efficiency.

**The Ecodevelopment Root:** Attaching a social and political agenda to the concept of sustainability. With values considered inherent elements of sustainability, such as: equity, broad participation in governance, decentralised government.

## Slide 8

Catalysing events and writings, e.g. Environmental pollution, chemicals in agriculture, Rachel Carson



“Silent Spring”; Environmental limits, Meadows et al. “The Limits to Growth”...

United Nations conferences and reports on a range of environmental and conservation issues since the early 1970s, most notably: 1987 Brundtland Commission report ‘Our Common Future’ (Brundtland, 1987).

‘... development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’ [WCED, 1987: 8;43]

"By 1945, 'development' was considered synonymous with 'modernization' and increased well-being, supposedly a natural process that was self-evidently desirable and which would eventually spread to all regions of the world. ... The terminology ... was universally adopted, both in 'developed' and 'developing' countries, including, during the 1980s, in the Brundtland Commission." (Borowy 2014:11)

## Slide 9

S: broad goals to conserve or enhance inter- and intra-generational equity, human well-being, biodiversity and ecological integrity

Hector et al. 2014:8-9:

S underlying philosophical position: nature has a more-than-utilitarian, even sacral, significance, humankind, has no special moral privilege, and should live in harmony with nature. ‘Deep-ecology’ position, but the term used here is ‘environmental-preservationist’, recognising the broader notion that the natural world ought to be preserved and must not be allowed to deteriorate or disappear.

SD: origins in conservationism (for example, Pinchot, 1910) – a ‘prudentially conservationist’ position – as a matter of prudence, environmental resources should be conserved so that they do not run out and are available for future generations of humankind. Most environmental economics approaches.

Humankind has a special moral status that places humans above the rest of nature; nature should be ‘looked after’ only to the extent that it is in human interests to do so.

... the process of SD cannot lead to the sustainability equilibrium outlined above unless ‘human interests’ are taken to be so broad as to recognise the inter-dependence of all planetary species. This distinction is important, because it places at the heart of this dilemma the issues of beliefs, values and moral interests. (Hector et al 2014:8-9)

## Slide 12

One of the big animal – and sustainability – issues in the Asia-Pacific region: the growth of consumption of products of industrial animal agriculture, in particular in China, India and Indonesia, which sets principles of “sustainable development” against animal and environmental (and by implication, human) interests, that is against true sustainability. Increased consumption of animal flesh of all kinds including fish and aquaculture products, eggs and milk products.

China, Green Economy aspirations: Addressing energy supply, transportation, forestry sector and consumption. National Climate Change Programme (2007), Long-term Renewable Energy Development Plan (2007), Circular Economy Law (2009).

## Slide 13

- In 2008, 35% of all the milk produced in China came from farms that owned 10 or fewer cows, down from 49% in 2004
- the output from large farms of 500 head or more accounted for 13% in 2008, an increase from 7.5% in 2004
- growth of large-scale (>500) and intensive farms





- domestic and foreign investment in large-scale dairy farms has begun
- large processing companies now control large, feedlot-type farms of 10,000 cows or more

## Slide 14

4 out of 5 of the highest value global commodities are livestock.

European Dairy Association (EDA), Eastern and Southern African Dairy Association (ESADA), Pan-American Dairy Federation (FEPALE), Global Dairy Platform (GDP), International Dairy Federation (IDF) and Sustainable Agricultural Initiative Platform (SAI);

11 key sustainability categories GHG Emissions, Soil Nutrients, Waste, Water, Soil, Biodiversity, Market Development, Rural Economies, Working Conditions, Product Safety & Quality, and Animal Care.

## Slide 17

Dimension of justice in sustainability discussed by Fredericks 2014 and Lele in Sikor 2013

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