

# Just Sustainabilities: Re-imagining e/equality, living within limits.



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## The problem: How do we balance *environmental quality* and *human equality*?

“This social justice perspective must be included in green campaign agendas because, short of coercive measures, true environmental well being will only exist when there is human well being.”

(Agyeman, 1988)

“Equity, that’s not an issue for us. We’re here to save the world.”

(Interview with Greenpeace UK, 1990)

“In recent years it has become increasingly apparent that the issue of environmental quality is inextricably linked to that of human equality. Wherever in the world environmental despoilation and degradation is happening, it is almost always linked to questions of social justice, equity, rights and people’s quality of life in its widest sense”.

(Agyeman, Bullard and Evans, 2003)



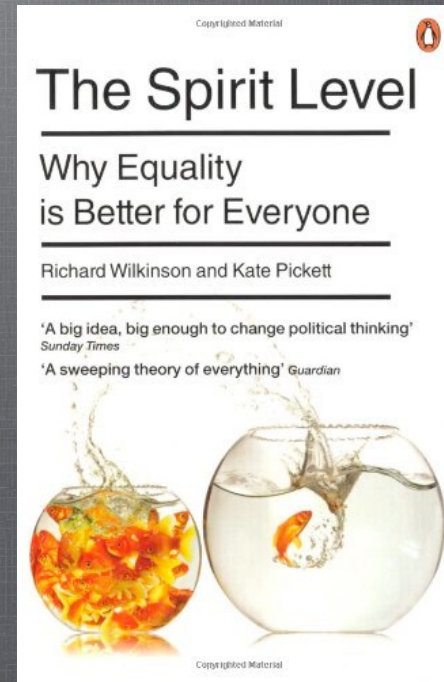
## Interrelated: *human equality* and *environmental quality*?

The most compelling evidence to date.....

**“Inequality....heightens competitive consumption”**

(Wilkinson and Pickett 2009)

If we REALLY want to understand sustainability our focus should be on both *human equality* and *environmental quality* **TOGETHER.**



# Human equality and environmental quality as activism(s): Two separate US activist paradigms.....

## Env. Sustainability

“more than 40 percent of the largest cities..had sustainability projects on the web, but only five of these dealt with environmental justice.”

(Warner 2002)

“while there has been an increase in the number of cities incorporating environmental justice elements into sustainability plans since the early 2000s, their conceptualizations and implementations of sustainability remain highly constrained”

(Pearsall and Pierce 2010)

“most cities that have sustainability indicators do not explicitly use social or environmental equity”.

(Portney 2003)



## Environmental justice

The two dimensions of EJ:

It is, predominantly at the local and activist level, a vocabulary for political opportunity, mobilization and action.

At the same time, at the government level, it is a policy principle, that no public action will disproportionately disadvantage any particular social group”.

(Agyeman and Evans 2004)

## Or is there a middle way paradigm, a '*just*' sustainability.....

### Who is doing it in the US?

**0 - No mention of equity or justice in core mission statement or in prominent, contemporary textual or programmatic material;**

**1 - No mention of equity or justice in core mission statement. Limited mention (once or twice) in prominent, contemporary textual or programmatic material;**

**2 - Equity and justice mentioned, but focused on intergenerational equity in core mission statement. Limited mention (once or twice) in prominent, contemporary textual or programmatic material;**

**3 - Core mission statement relates to intra- and intergenerational equity and justice, and/or justice and equity occur in same sentence in prominent, contemporary textual or programmatic material.**

Organization	Just Sustainability Index
American Rivers	0
Center for Health and Environmental Justice	3
New American Dream	3
Defenders of Wildlife	0
Earth Island Institute	2
Earthjustice	2
Environmental Defense	3
Environmental Law Institute	1
Friends of the Earth	2
Greenpeace	1
League of Conservation Voters	0
Izaak Walton League	1
National Audubon Society	0
National Environmental Trust	0

“New American Dream helps Americans consume responsibly to protect the environment, enhance quality of life, and promote social justice.”



“Audubon's mission is to conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on birds, other wildlife, and their habitats for the benefit of humanity and the earth's biological diversity.”



Organization	Just Sustainability Index	
National Parks Conservation Association	1	
National Wildlife Federation	0	
Natural Resources Defense Council	2	
Nature Conservancy	0	
North American Association for Environmental Education	2	
Physicians for Social Responsibility/ Environmental Health Action	1	
Redefining Progress	3	
Resources for the Future	0	
Sierra Club	2	← "Explore, enjoy and protect the wild places of the earth. Practice and promote the responsible use of the earth's ecosystems and resources. Educate and enlist humanity to protect and restore the quality of the natural and human environment. Use all lawful means to carry out these objectives."
The American Solar Energy Society	0	
The Ocean Conservancy	0	
The State PIRGs	0	
The Wilderness Society	1	← "Deliver to future generations an unspoiled legacy of wild places, with all the precious values they hold: Biological diversity; clean air and water; towering forests, rushing rivers, and sage-sweet, silent deserts."
WWF	1	

## **“Big Green” All White Men?**

**Sierra Club? White male.**

**Nature Conservancy? White male.**

**League of Conservation Voters? White male.**

**World Wildlife Fund? White male.**

**Environmental Defense Fund? White male.**

**Friends of the Earth? White male.**

**National Audubon Society? White male.**

**Nature Conservancy? White male.**



## Urban Ecology, San Francisco: A case study in just sustainability.

“Urban Ecology has not focused on the traditional environmental priorities of preserving land, air and water. Neither have we had a traditional community development focus aimed at, for example, generating affordable housing. Rather, our work has integrated elements of these disciplines and others, with *healthy human habitats* as the common denominator”.

*Healthy human habitats* = Just sustainability



### *Community Design Program -*

Planning and Design services to low income communities.

### *Sustainable Cities Program -*

Approaches municipal governments to promote more just and sustainable development patterns.



## Networks: Bringing activist paradigms together through coalitions or “movement fusion?”

“Clean Buses for Boston” was an Environmental Justice/Green Groups coalition that focused on an agenda that *all could agree on* and delivered 350 CNG buses.



“Movement fusion is a necessary ingredient for the long term success of the environmental justice movement because, put simply, environmental justice advocates do not have a large enough power base to win the larger struggle for justice on their own”.

(Cole and Foster 2001)

## 'Just' sustainability is

“The need to ensure a better quality of life for all, now and into the future, in a just and equitable manner, while living within the limits of supporting ecosystems”.

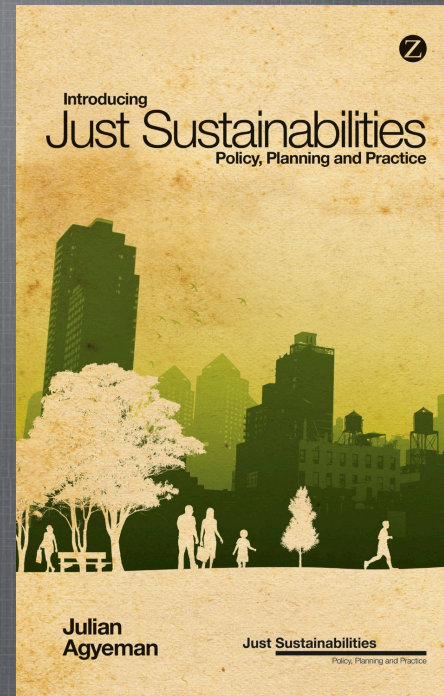
(Agyeman, Bullard and Evans 2003)



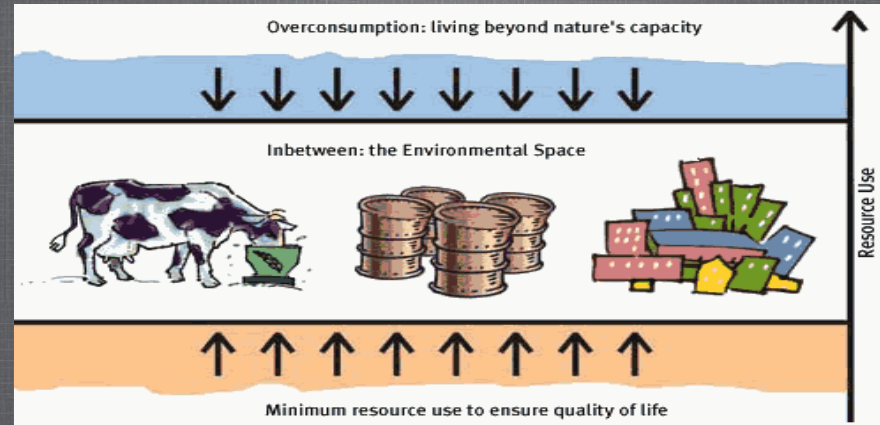
# What might 'just' sustainability look like in practice?

I'll concentrate on 5 key themes:

- 1 Environmental space/fair shares
- 2 Wellbeing and happiness
- 3 Planning for *intercultural* cities
- 4 Urban agriculture and food justice
- 5 Spatial justice



## We are all interrelated: *The environmental space*



Fair use of environmental space lies between the minimum resource use needed to ensure quality of life (the 'dignity' floor) and the maximum use of the Earth's capacity feasible without depleting ecological stocks (the 'profligacy' ceiling). It is an example of a 'per capita resource allocation' strategy.

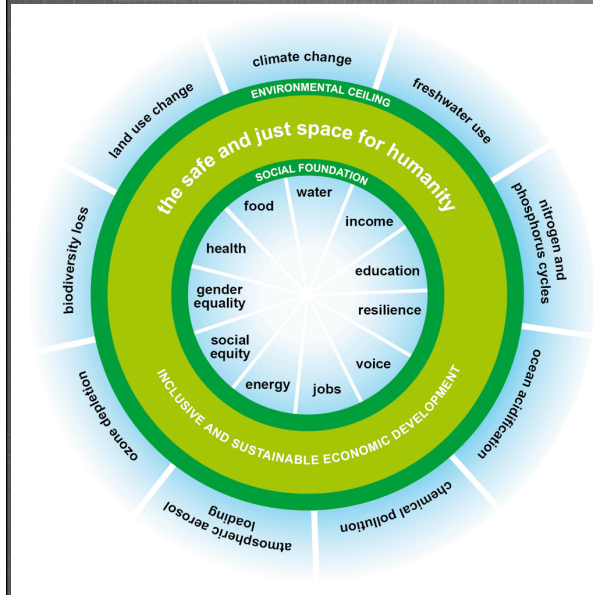
Remember: "Inequality... heightens competitive consumption" (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2009)

## European environmental space targets

Resource	Present use per cap.p.a	Env. Space per cap p.a.	Change needed (%)	Target 2010 per cap.p.a.	Target 2010 (%)
<b>Energy</b>					
CO2 emissions	7.3 t	1.7 t	-77	5.4 t	-26
Primary energy use	123 GJ	60 GJ	-50	97.2 GJ	-21
Fossil Fuels (a)	100 GJ	25 GJ	-75	78.0 GJ	-22
Nuclear	16 GJ	0 GJ	-100	0 GJ	-100
Renewables (b)	7 GJ	35 GJ	+400	12.2 GJ	+74
<b>Non-renewable raw materials</b>					
Cement	536 kg	80 kg	-85	423 kg	-21
Pig iron	273 kg	36 kg	-87	213 kg	-22
Aluminium	12 kg	1.2 kg	-90	9.2 kg	-23
Chlorine	23 kg	0 kg	-100	17.2 kg	-25
<b>Land use pattern</b>					
Built-up land	0.053 ha	0.051 ha	-3.2	0.051 ha	-3.2
Inland waters	0.009 ha	as now	0	0.009 ha	0
Protected Sites	0.003 ha	0.061 ha	+1933	0.061 ha	ca. +2000
Woodland	0.164 ha	0.138 ha	-16	0.138 ha	-16
Arable land (c)	0.237 ha	0.100 ha	-56	0.150 ha	-37
<b>Other</b>					
Wood	0.66 m3	0.56 m3	-15%	0.10 m3	-15
Water	regional and national estimates needed, European targets not adequate				

SOURCE:FOE EUROPE

# The Safe and Just Space for Humanity (Oxfam 2012)



Oxfam adds a much needed *just* *sustainabilities* dimension to the 'Planetary Boundaries' of Rockström *et al* (2009) by "combining the concept of *planetary boundaries* with the complementary concept of *social boundaries*" Between the two boundaries lies an area – shaped like a *doughnut* – which represents an environmentally safe *and* socially just space for humanity to thrive in.

## Developing our capabilities: Well-being and happiness

1. *Measure what matters*: produce a set of national well-being accounts;
2. *Create a well-being economy*: employment, meaningful work and environmental taxation;
3. *Reclaim our time* through improving our work-life balance;
4. *Create an education system to promote flourishing*;
5. *Refocus health services* to promote complete health;
6. *Invest in early years and parenting*;
7. *Discourage materialism* and promote authentic advertising;
8. *Strengthen civil society*, social well-being and active citizenship.



Local Government Improvement and Development

nef  
economics as if people and the planet mattered

National Mental Health Development Unit

Community wellbeing

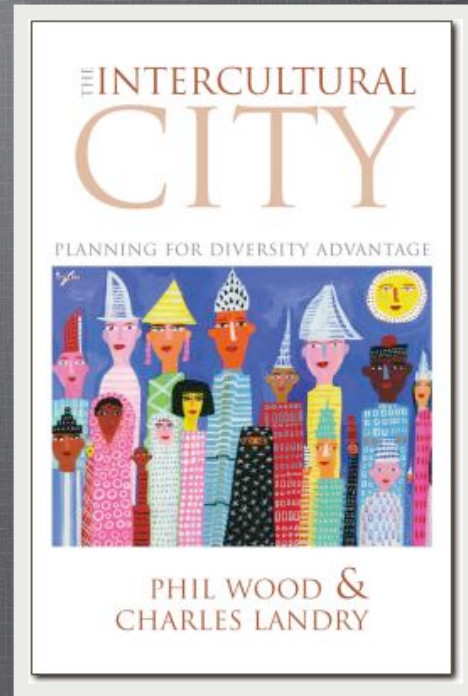
**The role of local government in promoting wellbeing**

Healthy Communities Programme



## Mutuality: *Planning for 'intercultural' cities.*

- a 'diversity advantage':
- interaction/exchange of ideas between different cultural groups;
- a pluralist transformation of public space, institutions and civic culture;
- proactive engagement between cultures;
- mutual learning and joint growth;
- cultural competency enabling people to interact functionally with anyone different from themselves regardless of their origins.



# Developing urban networks and community capabilities: Urban agriculture/food Justice



## Interrelationship: *Spatial Justice*



“Just as *social justice* requires that life chances are not distributed along class lines, *spatial justice* requires that they are not distributed geographically”.

(David Lammy, British Member of Parliament 2004)



## Delivering spatial justice : Rethinking urban spaces I

“In this new century, we are facing a different kind of threat to public space-not one of disuse, but of patterns of design and management that exclude some people and reduce social and cultural diversity”.

(Low, Taplin and Scheld 2005)

“*contact theory* posits that....interracial interactions that occur in leisure settings have the potential to be more genuine and sincere compared with the more obligatory interactions that take place in formal settings”

(Shinew, Glover and Parry 2004)

In the 1980s, environmentalists in Bristol, UK, persuaded the local Parks Department to create wildflower meadows. These are environmentally sound, but are they socially just?

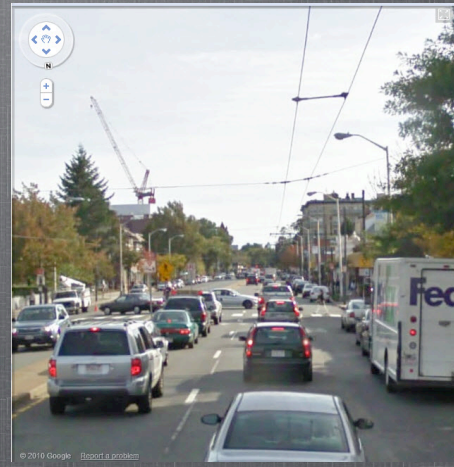


## Delivering spatial justice : Rethinking urban spaces II

Södra Vägen, Gothenburg, Sweden

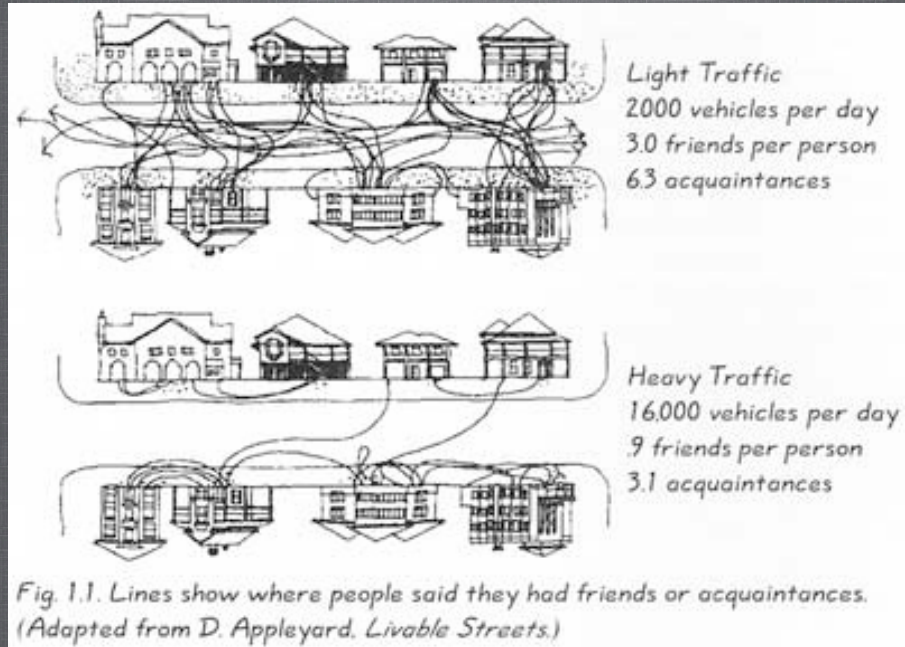


Massachusetts Ave, Cambridge, MA



The street is our most commonly used public space. It has been *democratized* on Södra Vägen but not on Massachusetts Avenue. What does this say to adults, children who use these streets daily and become acculturated to *spatial justice* on Södra Vägen or *spatial injustice* on Massachusetts Avenue?

## Delivering spatial justice : Rethinking urban spaces III



## Closing thoughts

Sustainability means using our *unlimited* mental resources, not our *limited* natural resources



We have the *science* of sustainability, we know what we need to do, but we're not doing it. That is a where *social science* (psychology, sociology, anthropology) comes in.

Thank you

