

I hate the word sustainability

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I hate the word sustainability. Before everyone starts picking up rocks to throw ... please consider the physics. The Second Law of Thermodynamics forbids stasis. Earth produces 23 times more entropy than it receives from the Sun. Every living system is a dissipative structure that exists only through continuous transformation. Stop the change, the life stops. That's not a policy opinion. That's physics.

Life has never sustained itself. Over 99.8% of all species that have ever existed are extinct. If we had "sustained" the biosphere at any prior point ... 3.5 billion years ago, 500 million years ago, 66 million years ago ... we would have prevented every subsequent advance in the complexity and beauty of life on Earth. Including us.

The word itself is broken. One definition of "sustain" is to experience something bad ... as in sustaining an injury. The Latin root literally means to hold something up from below to keep it from falling. The environmental meaning didn't even enter English until 1979. We've let a 47-year-old word govern our relationship with a 4-billion-year-old biosphere.

David Deutsch put it best. In the pessimistic conception, the human ability to create change is a disease for which sustainability is the cure. In the optimistic one, sustainability is the disease and people are the cure.

I wrote a paper laying out six independent first-principles proofs that sustainability is unsustainable. Thermodynamic. Evolutionary. Information-theoretic. Epistemological. Linguistic. And one from Maxwell's Demon that the physics community missed for 158 years.

Our goal shouldn't be to sustain. It should be to create more life, more complexity, more beauty than has ever existed on this planet.

The only thing sustainable is change.

Link in comments.

Tell me what you think.

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