

A dark, atmospheric forest scene with a path leading towards a bright light at the end of the tunnel. The trees are tall and thin, with bare branches, creating a dense canopy. The light at the end of the path is a bright, glowing yellow-green, casting a long shadow on the path. The overall mood is mysterious and ethereal.

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SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE ENVIRONMENT - THE REFORMIST APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

In the present paper, the reformist approach to environmental sociology is discussed. The Lovins and Paul Hawken in their book 'Natural Capitalism' talked about maintaining the environment in line with economic development. Frank Adloff and Sighard Neckel analyzed three approaches to sustainability and concluded that these theories can't be practiced individually and rather can be practical in integration. Then Joseph Huber talked about ecological modernization which says that, due to defaults in the design of the present system, the present natural ecosystem gets disturbed, and devastated. However, these defaults are capable to be reformed. And reforms can be made by extending reflective knowledge and enabling modern thinking. The present theories talked about sustainability. They have great relevance and are applicable in the form of the Paris Agreement, the Kyoto Protocol, and the Sustainable Development Goals.

INTRODUCTION

In the late 1970s, under sociology, environmental sociology emerged because, during the 1960s, environmental movements also emerged. And this is a unique subfield, as the focus is also on

the physical facts and matters and not just on the social facts and matters.²¹

It has many perspectives and approaches. Such as the realist approach, reformist approach, constructionist approach and etc. And in this paper, the author has solely focused on the reformist perspective or approach in environmental sociology. The research methodology is empirical in nature and, secondary data is collected and analyzed in order to understand what actually is the reformist approach of environmental sociology. Although there are many theories on reformism, but the author could not find many papers that talk about multiple theories on reformism. So, the author through this paper has tried to include multiple theories on reformism in this paper.

ENVIRONMENTAL SOCIOLOGY

In recent times, the discipline of environmental sociology has grown and flourished. All over the world like in Australia, Europe, and North America, this subject is being taught in universities, plus a firm base has been created for it in the countries like Korea, Japan, and Brazil.²²

It studies interactions and connections between civilizations and the environment in which they live. The focus of the discipline is on the communal aspects that affect the environment, and cause problems in the environment, as well as the mechanisms by which these problems are socially created to become social problems and society's reactions to them. This subject is indeed a subcategory in the subject of sociology. Through its introduction, sociology's subject has been extended as it has included physical matters and context in relation to social issues.²³

²¹ Caves, R. W. (2004). *Encyclopedia of the City*. Routledge. p. 234.

²² HANNIGAN JOHN, *Environmental Sociology* (Routledge 2005)

²³ Caves, R. W. (2004). *Encyclopedia of the City*. Routledge. p. 234.

Although this field is unique in nature, it had to overcome the old traditions that did not encourage giving attention to environmental concerns because they believed it is not social in nature. Due to the fact that the extension of sociological study on environmental issues has been accompanied by criticism and reevaluation of key sociological procedures and assumptions, the link between environmental sociology and its parent subject is somewhat strained.²⁴

THE REFORMIST APPROACH

AIM

The aim of this approach is to have small reforms to the structures of the economy and politics of the present society in order to deal with the problems and issues of the environment.

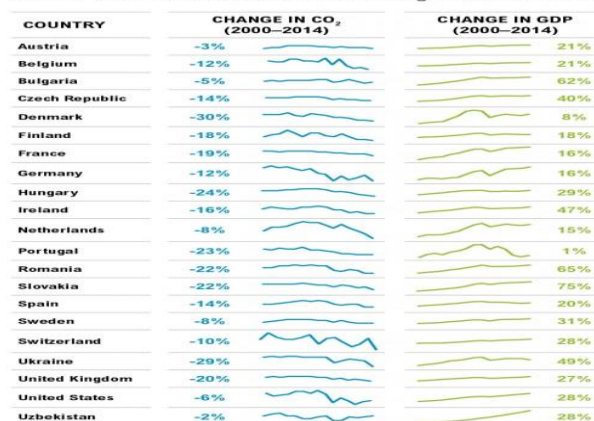
HUNTER LOVINS, PAUL HAWKEN, AND AMORY LOVINS

A. **MARKETS** - The book ‘Natural Capitalism’ is written by Amory Lovins, Paul Hawken, and Hunter Lovins, in which they said that the primary means of distributing products in an economy are markets. Here, money is a means to buy and sell products. “natural capitalism does not aim to discard market economics.” And instead, the markets need to be driven “in more creative and constructive directions.” Other elements of capitalism are still in place, which includes, land, labor, money, private ownership and etc.

B. **ECONOMIC EXPANSION AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT** - The reformist approach maintains economic expansion. It is said that this is possible while reducing environmental impact. For instance, Hawken said that “even if the global economy expanded by 6- to 8-fold, the rate of releasing carbon by

burning fossil fuel could simultaneously decrease.” And some of the countries which are real examples of this statement are Austria, Belgium, Denmark and etc.

Since 2000, More Than 20 Countries Have Reduced Annual GHG Emissions While Growing Their Economies



Sources: BP Statistical Review of World Energy 2015; World Bank World Development Indicators
WORLD RESOURCES INSTITUTE

Figure 1

POLITICAL CONDITIONS - The possibility of voters abandoning political parties that do not adopt environmental changes motivates citizens to petition legislators for change. Markets “demand . . . responsible citizenship to keep them functioning properly.” The government needs to intervene in order to bring a change like regulations to prevent those practices which damage the environment, carbon tax on fossil fuels and etc. The Indian government has also intervened in order to bring environmental reform through schemes such as the National Clean Air Program, Green Skill Development program, Namami Gange Project and etc.²⁵

FRANK ADLOFF & SIGHARD NECKEL

In the year 2019, they published a paper titled, ‘Futures of sustainability as modernization, transformation, and control: a conceptual framework’. They structured the potential transformations into three ideal-typical

²⁴ “.” Encyclopedia of Sociology... Encyclopedia.com. 26 Sep. 2022.” (Encyclopedia.com/October 3, 2022) <<https://www.encyclopedia.com/social-sciences/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/environmental-sociology>> accessed September 15, 2022

²⁵ Sucharita Mishra, ‘Sociology of Environment’ <https://ddceutkal.ac.in/Syllabus/MA_SOCIOLOGY/Paper_12.pdf> accessed September 17, 2022

sustainability trajectories, each of which is driven by a different competing "imagination of sustainability"

A. SUSTAINABILITY AS MODERNIZATION - Where sustainability is analyzed as "modernization," a formal definition of modernization is used that emphasizes the necessity for social reproduction to adjust to environmental changes by choosing new modes of action—without assuming any predetermined results. Through scientific and social advancements, programs for sustainable modernization seek to enhance the ecological harmony of contemporary cultures so that the earth's resources are not overextended. These initiatives do not intend to significantly change current institutions, such as liberal democracy and market capitalism, or significant facets of the contemporary way of life, such as individualism, consumerism, affluence, and mobility.²⁶

Ecological modernization thus aims to use the structural institutions, especially the economy, of contemporary societies in terms of ecological renewal. This perspective views markets and competition as efficiency-enhancing economic institutions that may be used to support sustainable behaviors rather than as barriers to sustainability. According to this reasoning, increasing the demand for sustainable goods and providing incentives for the adoption of sustainable production methods are necessary if we want to build a sustainable economy. Financial markets that encourage one to buy green bonds, the carbon trading market, are some well-known examples of this.

B. SUSTAINABILITY AS TRANSFORMATION - Varied transformational perspectives are discussed. Such as the theory of postcapitalism. Here innovation and growth in technology take place and also there is a fight against climate change via endlessly shared digital information. For this there needs to be a world that is networked, there are no market constraints, and

for sharing of data, digital modes are being used. According to the theory of the degrowth movement, without new institutions, technologies, and mindsets that go beyond the logic of capitalistic societies, future civilizations cannot be sustainable. Alternative practices are being adopted, such as practices of care and provision, repair, recycling, renunciation, sharing and exchanging, or the use of local or alternative currencies and bicycles instead of automobiles, with the hope of discovering (both socially and ecologically more sustainable) methods of producing goods and living harmoniously and in cooperation. The aims of these transformations are to gradually not continue with the general behavior, to overcome the consumerist attitudes, and attempting novel lifestyles.

C. SUSTAINABILITY AS CONTROL - According to most scholars, political actors, and NGOs, this approach is a negative trajectory. This interpretation of sustainability alludes to the potential for an ecological emergency that would need to suspend democracy temporarily and elevate the person who proclaims the emergency to the position of sovereign. Thus, global elites may be allowed to retreat into safe havens ("preparedness") while the weaker sections of society would be left exposed to escalating catastrophes like pollution, famine, conflict, storms, floods, or draughts. Sustainability as control, when applied to ecological catastrophes, refers to a resilient world rather than one that is really sustainable. Disasters must be tackled if a collapse is to be avoided. Resilience is the ability of natural and social systems to change while retaining their original structures and functions in the face of pressures and shocks. It refers to strategies for handling emergencies and reacting to them once they happen.

Adloff and Neckel believed that these theories cannot exist independently, instead, they are connected to each other. Through modernization, there will be transformation. And

²⁶ Karl-Werner Brand, 'Features of a 'halved sustainability': Critical comments on Frank Adloff and Sighard Neckel's research program (2021) Vol. 60(2) SSI

there are chances where liberal democracy can be seen as a hindrance to a change in the environment. Under liberal democracy there is a right to property so, that would go against the theory of postcapitalism. Modernization goes in tandem with control. For example, in geoengineering, in it, natural processes are manipulated in order to minimize the effects of global warming.²⁷

JOSEPH HUBER

Joseph Huber founded the ecological modernization theory. This theory says that, due to defaults in the design of the present system, the present natural ecosystem gets disturbed, and devastated. However, these defaults are capable to be reformed. And reforms can be made by extending reflective knowledge and enabling modern thinking. As per the thinking of Huber, over the later half of the 20th century, the significance of social movements as collective agents pushing social changes significantly decreased. Economic players, particularly business groups, have taken center stage in the campaign to promote environmental changes. The effectiveness of de-industrialization projects in halting ecological degradation has been considerably diminished due to reasons like inadequate political backing and limited commercial viability. Even the environmentalists have now changed their approach from ideological radicalism, which focused on confronting to more solutions-oriented action plans. One example of it is 'Greenpeace', which is an environmental organization. In the 1990s, after many years of extreme campaigning, it shifted from a confrontational to a cooperative approach to business. While environmental activism remains a component of the goal of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), direct negotiation and cooperation are becoming more accepted and practiced in organizational

structures. Huber's view of ecological modernization hinged on the establishment of the new ideology that guides the political strategy of non-governmental environmental groups. He saw it as a phenomenon driven by a new ideological orientation in an age of reflexive modernity as opposed to a political agenda founded only on hypothetical assumptions. At the heart of the modern approach is the notion that societies are capable of addressing environmental issues provided their nations display political will and leadership. It illustrates how contemporary policy institutions may include environmental concerns in their everyday operations by drawing on examples from many Western European nations. In other places, the interest of politics and economics control the state and, therefore, development trajectories, and environmental degradation persists, undermining the principles of ecological modernization. Clearly, the theory rests on an implied view of the state, one that is instrumental according to Miliband (1969). It is not functionally necessary for contemporary governments to support environmentally destructive behaviors; in fact, it may be beneficial for them not to do so, since this forces national champions to transition from ecological practices that are inefficient to more sophisticated resource management. Thus, altering the national regulatory environment may result in conformity with growing best practices, which should provide national enterprises with a competitive edge on more sophisticated global marketplaces.²⁸

APPLICABILITY

THE KYOTO PROTOCOL

Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change is its full title. It is an international treaty. This treaty takes its name from the location where it was signed. It

²⁷ Frank Adloff and [Sighard Neckel](#), 'Futures of sustainability as modernization, transformation, and control: a conceptual framework (2019) 14 IR3S <
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/331634913_Futures_of_sustainability_as_modernization_transformation_and_control_a_conceptual_framework
k> accessed September 20, 2022

²⁸ Orsato RJ and Clegg SR, "Radical Reformism: Towardscritical Ecological Modernization" (2005) 13 Sustainable Development 253

was signed in Kyoto, Japan, during the month of December in the year 1997. Its purpose is to restrict the emission of greenhouse gases, which contribute to global warming. The agreement, which went into force in 2005, mandated 41 countries and the European Union to cut their emissions of six greenhouse gases by 5.2% below 1990 levels over the "commitment period" of 2008 to 2012.²⁹

A. TREATY EXTENSION AND REPLACEMENT - In 2012, in the month of December, the first period of its commitment got over. Parties to this treaty met in Qatar, in Doha. They made an amendment which is called as Doha amendment, that added new targets for emissions, for the second commitment period, from the year 2012 to 2020. However, this amendment was short-lived. And in the year 2015, a sustainable development summit took place in Paris, France. All the parties of the UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change) signed another pact that replaced the Kyoto Protocol. And that pact is known as the Paris Climate Agreement.³⁰

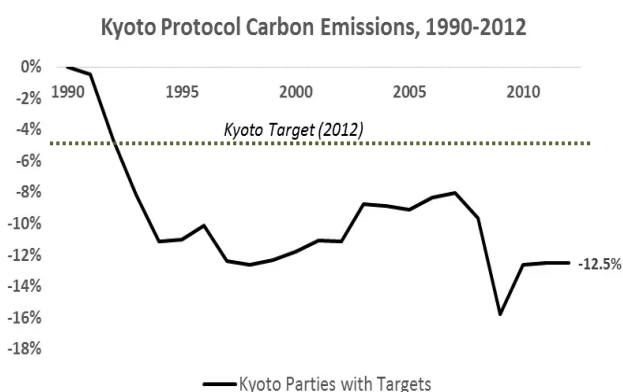


Figure 2³¹

THE PARIS AGREEMENT

²⁹ "Kyoto Protocol" (*Encyclopedia Britannica*) <<https://www.britannica.com/event/Kyoto-Protocol>> accessed September 23, 2022

³⁰ Tardi C, "What Is the Kyoto Protocol?" (*Investopedia* August 23, 2022) <<https://www.investopedia.com/terms/k/kyoto.asp>> accessed September 23, 2022

³¹ Circular Ecology, "The Kyoto Protocol: Climate Change Success or Global Warming Failure?" (*Circular Ecology* May 14, 2020) <<https://circularecology.com/news/the-kyoto-protocol-climate-change-success-or-global-warming-failure>> accessed September 23, 2022

The Paris Agreement is a legally binding international agreement on climate change. It was approved by 196 Parties at the 21st Conference of the Parties in Paris on December 12, 2015, and entered into force on November 4, 2016. It aspires to limit global warming to far below 2 degrees Celsius, preferably 1.5 degrees Celsius, compared to pre-industrial levels. To accomplish this long-term temperature target, governments aspire to reach the global maximum of greenhouse gas emissions as rapidly as possible by mid-century in order to establish climate neutrality. The Paris Accord is a watershed point in the worldwide climate change process because, for the first time, all nations are united in a legally binding pact to combat climate change and adapt to its repercussions.

A. WHAT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED SO FAR? – since the coming of this agreement, there are low carbon emissions and new markets have emerged. Although, more work needs to be done in order to achieve the goals of this international agreement. Now, more countries, cities, regions, as well as corporates, are establishing targets i.e, carbon neutrality targets. Now zero-carbon solutions, which are energy sources such as wind, nuclear, and solar energy that do not emit carbon emissions when utilized to generate power, are now coming into economic sectors, and due to this, for early movers, business opportunities are being created.³²

³² (*Unfccc.int*) <<https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/the-paris-agreement>> accessed September 25, 2022

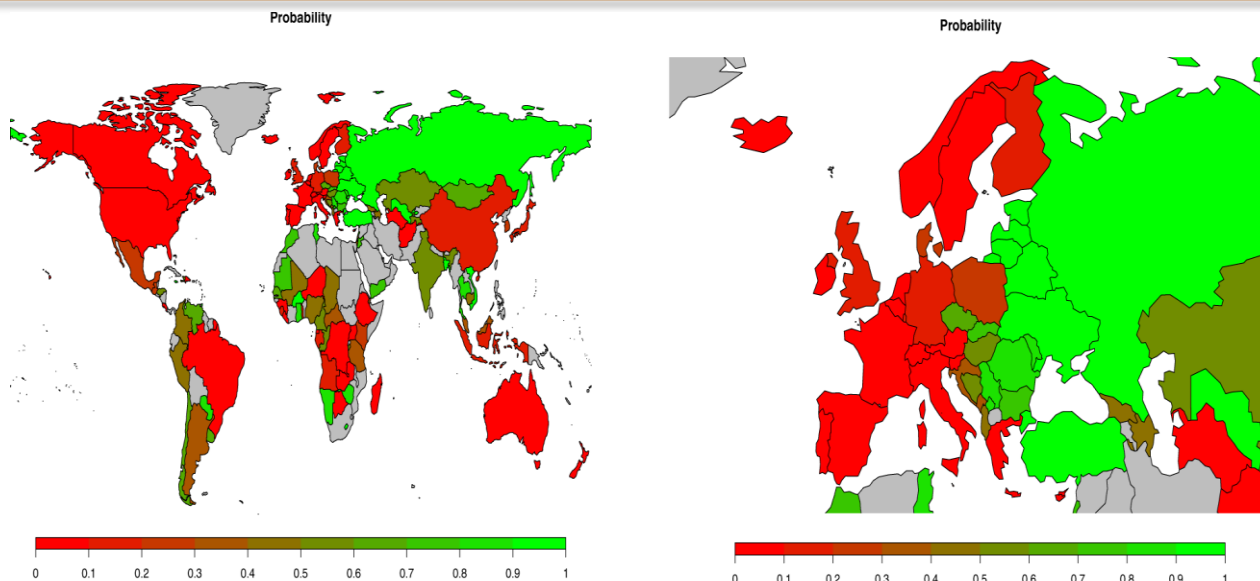


Figure 3 - PROBABILITY OF COUNTRIES ACHIEVING THEIR PARIS AGREEMENT GOALS

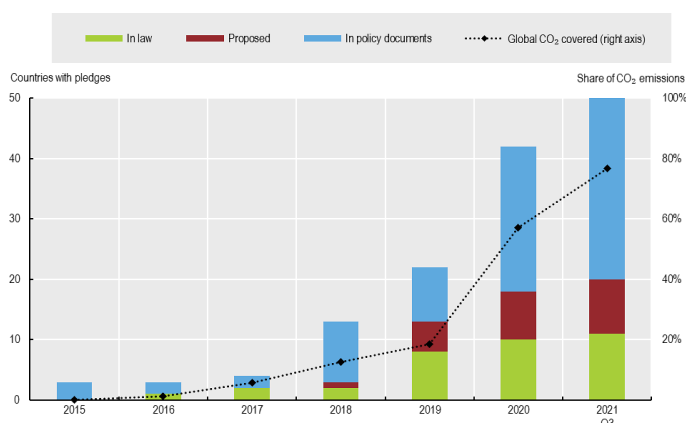


Figure 4³³

THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Sustainable Development Goals or SDGs are also many times referred to as Global Goals. They need to be fully achieved in the year 2030. They were adopted by the United Nations in the year 2015, in order to protect the planet, end poverty, and ensure that prosperity and harmony exist in the world. They are a total of 17 in number. They all are interconnected, as it is recognized that when there is development in one area then it will also lead to development in other areas, the development which is being

talked about should balance the sustainability of the environment, the economy as well as society.³⁴

³³ "The Annual Climate Action Monitor" (OECD) <<https://www.oecd.org/climate-action/ipac/the-annual-climate-action-monitor-5bcb405c/>> accessed September 25, 2022

³⁴ "Sustainable Development Goals: United Nations Development Programme" (UNDP) <<https://www.undp.org/sustainable-development-goals>> accessed September 25, 2022



How data science and analytics can contribute to sustainable development

NO POVERTY
Spending patterns on mobile phone services can provide proxy indicators of income levels

ZERO HUNGER
Crowdsourcing or tracking of food prices listed online can help monitor food security in near real-time

GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING
Mapping the movement of mobile phone users can help predict the spread of infectious diseases

QUALITY EDUCATION
Citizen reporting can reveal reasons for student drop-out rates

GENDER EQUALITY
Analysis of financial transactions can reveal the spending patterns and different impacts of economic shocks on men and women

CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION
Sensors connected to water pumps can track access to clean water

AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY
Smart metering allows utility companies to increase or restrict the flow of electricity, gas or water to reduce waste and ensure adequate supply at peak periods

DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH
Patterns in global postal traffic can provide indicators such as economic growth, remittances, trade and GDP

INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE
Data from GPS devices can be used for traffic control and to improve public transport

REDUCED INEQUALITY
Speech-to-text analytics on local radio content can reveal discrimination concerns and support policy response

SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES
Satellite remote sensing can track encroachment on public land or spaces such as parks and forests

RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION
Online search patterns or e-commerce transactions can reveal the pace of transition to energy efficient products

CLIMATE ACTION
Combining satellite imagery, crowd-sourced witness accounts and open data can help track deforestation

LIFE BELOW WATER
Maritime vessel tracking data can reveal illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing activities

LIFE ON LAND
Social media monitoring can support disaster management with real-time information on victim location, effects and strength of forest fires or haze

PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS
Sentiment analysis of social media can reveal public opinion on effective governance, public service delivery or human rights

PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS
Partnerships to enable the combining of statistics, mobile and internet data can provide a better and real-time understanding of today's hyper-connected world



www.unic.org/globalpulse
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Figure 5³⁵

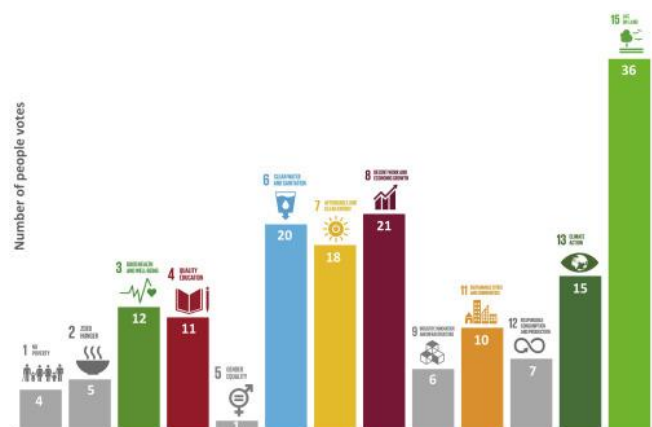


Figure 6 - A COUNT OF THE COMMUNITY'S VOTES FOR THE SDGs OF GREATEST IMPORTANCE FROM LISTING POST ACTIVITY³⁶

CONCLUSION

In recent times, the discipline of environmental sociology has grown and flourished. The reformist perspective of this subfield aims to is to have small reforms to the structures of the economy and politics of the present society in order to deal with the problems and issues of the environment. Amory Lovins, Paul Hawken, and Hunter Lovins talked about how environmental degradation can be reduced simultaneously with economic development. Neckel and Adloff analyzed the approaches of

sustainability as modernization, sustainability as control, and sustainability as transformation, and were of the view that these theories can't be practiced individually and rather can be practical in integration. Then Joseph Huber talked about ecological modernization. This theory says that, due to defaults in the design of the present system, the present natural ecosystem gets disturbed, and devastated. However, these defaults are capable to be reformed, and reforms can be made by extending reflective knowledge and enabling modern thinking. These theories are actually talking about sustainable development, which means developing humans and also at the same time developing and preserving mother nature. All these authors have somewhat said the same thing. These theories have great relevance and are applicable in the form of the Paris Agreement, the Sustainable Development Goals, and the Kyoto Protocol.

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