

Environmental Change, Injustice and Sustainability

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Abstract. This paper argues that a combination of increasing inequality, hypocrisy, population growth and adverse global environmental change imperils our civilisation. Selected examples of existing inequality and the immoral treatment of human beings are provided from countries of the Asia Pacific. There is also limited discussion of the global eco-social crisis, stressing the links between environmental scarcity and the human responses of resentment, conflict, terrorism and ill-governance. The essay contends that just as the lives of unborn humans similar to us are of interest and value to bio-ethicists, so too should be the lives and descendants of people who are unlike us, even if such people are perceived to be substantially different to ourselves in terms of status, culture and spending power. It is argued that it is in the interests of ourselves, society, and global civilisation that the lives of such people are considered and where possible improved in order to foster the “sustainability transition” needed to secure our collective future. The essay concludes with a discussion of an important element for securing our future: the development and implementation of alternative economic systems which will provide more accurate indicators of global progress.

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