



Group Activity: Perspectives on Becoming Ecologically Sustainable

Objectives of this Activity:

1. Explore via web research a particular social/political perspective on how we should seek to become ecologically sustainable.
2. Staying true to the perspective that you have been assigned, compose a visual presentation designed to advocate for your group's approach to becoming ecologically sustainable.
3. Present your group's approach to becoming ecologically sustainable to the class and answer questions about your perspective.

Instructions:

1. One of the take-home messages of the ecological footprinting exercise that we completed is that our society -- as we live in it -- is ecologically unsustainable. Our impacts exceed the "boundaries" of what the earth's natural systems can tolerate. We can understand the origins of these impacts using the IPAT equation, which your group will be required to make reference to in your presentation.
2. For the purpose of this activity, we will define "sustainability" strictly from an ecological perspective: the "goal" of each group will be to present a perspective on how human society can avoid harming and/or depleting the earth's ecological systems.
3. Your group will be assigned to represent one of the following social/political perspectives. Your assigned perspective is checked below:
 - Technological Optimists:** believe that human civilization can become sustainable by developing novel technologies.
 - Neo-Luddites:** believe that technology is the root cause of our unsustainable lifestyles.
 - Population Bombers:** believe that overpopulation is the root cause of our unsustainable lifestyles.
 - Deep Ecologists:** believe that a failure to respect nature's right to exist is the root cause of our unsustainable lifestyles.
4. In the time allotted by your instructor, create a presentation that advocates for your position while addressing the following questions from your assigned perspective:
 - a. How does your group interpret ecological sustainability? What operating definition of ecological sustainability is your group most likely to use? Why is this definition of ecological sustainability well-matched to your group's perspective?
 - b. How does your group propose that we deal with the unsustainable nature of current-day human societies? What designs, actions, and/or policies might your group advocate? How do these proposals reflect your group's perspective?
 - c. In becoming sustainable, what parameter(s) of the IPAT equation does your group propose to reduce? What parameter(s) of the IPAT equation is your group trying to maintain or is willing to see increase? Explain how your proposals relate to the parameters of the IPAT equation.

