

Do we live in a sustainable society

Society



There are many ways to define sustainability and to answer the question of whether we live in a sustainable society you should first define the question. The simplest definition of what a sustainable society is still very complex. A society that can persist over generations, one that is farseeing enough, flexible enough, and wise enough not to undermine either its physical or its social systems of support (Hubbard, 1996).

Other sources label the question as an environmentally sustainable society that satisfies the basic needs of its people without depleting or degrading its natural resources and thereby preventing current and future generations of humans and other species from meeting their basic needs (Answers. com). Many people have struggled to define sustainability and sustainable communities. Trying to define sustainability is like trying to define democracy, justice and other important principles that guide our society.

On a global setting this task of creating a sustainable society should be the first thing each government around the world addresses, however, in most cases this subject is far too low on the list of priorities. This economic boom we have witnessed the past decade was the results of a generation that pushed for economic growth as a means to improving humanity's condition, now the world realizes that economic development is pointless if it destroys its environmental base that fuels it.

The start of economic development created factories, automobiles, and waste that pollutes the world's air, water, and soil, decimates forest and natural resources, and creates toxic wastes and overflowing landfills. Our government has already seen the importance of protecting select areas from this type of economic growth and has made millions of acres of land

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protected from any development. The world is finding out quickly that if we continue with the same approaches that created these problems then we will have environmental problems for future generations.

Sustainable development is a far-reaching approach to repair and avoid these problems. The idea of sustainability is an ongoing process and something that will take decades to achieve. The want for an increased quality of life and to preserve the environment for present and future generations is apparent around the world. After all, what good are jobs and a strong economy if we do not have a habitable planet to put them on? The problem is not if we want to, but how can we. To convert from our current life style and economic base without destroying it seems near impossible.

Communities around the country are demonstrating that it is indeed possible to increase economic and community well-being in ways that promote a healthy environment. So what is the process that will lead us to a future of sustainability? Resource efficiency is an essential foundation of sustainability. Communities can significantly reduce environmental impacts and improve the economy by using energy, water and materials more efficiently, and by using better manufacturing techniques that cut pollution, waste and production costs. Current U. S. energy use demonstrates the enormous potential presented by resource efficiency.

We can easily reduce current energy use with existing cost-effective technologies. Energy efficiency is one of the most direct ways to address air pollution, acid rain, smog, climate change, oil spills, scarred landscapes and all the other environmental harms associated with the production and consumption of energy. The U. S. uses the 2nd most electricity annually in <https://assignbuster.com/do-we-live-in-a-sustainable-society/>

the world, China being number one (Heimbuch, 2011). China, however, has four times our population and average power per person is three times lower than the U. S (Heimbuch, 2011).

We live in this society that takes something as simple as electricity for granted. How can a society like the U. S. change the way we use electricity? Today our government has bills in place that grant tax credits and refunds to those that buy high efficiency products like tank-less hot water heaters and TV's that use less gas and electricity. This is the only way, in my opinion, to reduce how much energy we use. Our society works off a unique set of rules and priorities that all come down to one thing, money. Making things so expensive or giving incentives for using less is the only way to get our attention.

Imagine for a moment that gas was five dollars more a gallon, putting the cost per gallon over eight dollars. How much less would each person use? What if it cost 10 times as much to turn on a light switch, would you change your habits and only use what you had to? The reality of what we are faced with here is not a change that everyone doesn't want to make; it is more of an unwillingness to lose the comforts of our current unsustainable society. When households, businesses and local governments implement resource efficiency improvements, they free up money for other purposes.

It is the responding of this saved money that generates significant community economic advantages from resource efficiency. Think of the businesses and operations in your community. Imagine the environmental and economic results if grocery stores, office buildings, industries, schools, restaurants and public operations all curbed resource use by an easy 20%,
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and then went on to cut other operation costs through waste reduction, recycling and pollution prevention (Millennium Institute, 2011). The point is to make wasting precious resources cost more money to businesses.

If you do not spend the extra money to cut down on the pollution or other negative impact that you create on the environment then our government should step in and take that money. It creates a system where you either get on board with these policies and spend the money to reduce your impact, or we will take that money anyways; even go as far as taking more than the cost of the improvements. Some may argue that just making things cost more would destroy our current economic system and push millions more people into poverty level.

A minimum wage job could not support a young couple if simple bills like driving to work increased this much. This change would have to happen over a decade's time in order for people to adjust their way of life. If you put society to the test they will shock the world by adapting to change. Technology is available today that can reduce the use of un-renewable resources and tomorrow's technology can only continue to do so, so long as the focus is on sustainability.

For example, our current food system is energy, water and pesticide intensive, enormously dependent on expensive inputs, and responsible for massive losses of topsoil. One of the environmental costs of our current food system is its scale, and the amount of energy required simply to transport food from the field to the table. Some communities are finding ways to address the environmental harms of our food system by reconnecting with local agriculture, resulting in fresh, tasty, regionally distinctive foods for residents

and restaurants, creating local jobs and a better place to live (Millennium Institute, 2011).

A technology that can maintain a local food system to eliminate the need to transport the produce so far is a much better use of technology than trying to produce a product that can stay fresh longer. The focus of our technology has been blinded by our society's need to consume and socialize. The next generation will see less importance on a sustainable society unless we teach things to our youth. We do currently live in an un-sustainable society and we are all faced with an uncertain future because of it. Years have gone past after we have realized this with very little change in how our society attacks the issue.

I think about things like fast food and water parks when people argue about increased costs of the basic needs for a family. I walked into a Coach Outlet store with my girlfriend the other day and was just amazed at the activity level in the store. From \$300 dollar purses to \$100 matching wallets I was confused about how this could be possible in a so called "tanking" economy. This example of our society's twisted outlook on what we think we need and what we actually need. Billions of people around the world are never even exposed to the things that in a U. S. society are considered needs.

A \$500 phone, \$300 purses, \$3000 a month rent bills, an "extra" car, a 2nd home, vacation after vacation, 36' 5th wheel's and a power stoke engine to haul it with. The list can go on and on; cable TV, high speed internet, 4 computers in one household, music, games, and sports. Yes these things are what our society considers freedoms and the American way of living life, but how long can the American way of life hold up. The billions that never see <https://assignbuster.com/do-we-live-in-a-sustainable-society/>

these things worry about just a few things in life; food, water, and shelter, and of that list we make poor decisions every day.

My brunch I had the other morning is a perfect example of a poor decision. I sat down at IHOP the other morning and ordered enough food to feed 10 starving kids, spent an hour playing around on my iPhone drinking my \$2.50 endless coffee. Including tip I walked out about \$19 poorer, not something I do very often and still had to eat something later in the day. We feel as if it is our freedom to consume what we want, when we want to, and from whom ever we want to buy in from. The reality of it all is that we can, but for how long is the question we are now starting to ask ourselves.