

Brock Brown

Date of Presentation:
Wednesday, January 27, 2010

Sustainability of Human Economies Over Time



Abstract: Sustainability refers to a long-term on-going relationship between consumption of a group of humans and the continued productivity of their environmental resource base. It is impacted by the number of people and their level of per capita consumption, or standard of living. For a number of centuries preceding the advent of the agricultural revolution our hunting and gathering ancestors maintained a general “sustainable” relationship with their environmental resource base. The modern global market economy, on the other hand, is struggling to continue to extract enough resources to meet a growing economic demand. Massive

amounts of energy and technology are needed to subsidize the global resource base in order to keep up with increasing demand and consumption. The ability to meet future demand is largely dependent upon the continued and increased inputs of energy and technology. “Resource optimists” argue this is not a problem and human creativity will always solve resource shortage problems that arise. “Resource pessimists” argue the Earth’s ability to provide resources is finite and that steps must be taken now to ensure adequate resources for future generations. This seminar will begin with a discussion of the controlling factors that contributed to sustainability for our hunting and gathering ancestors. This will be followed by a discussion of the resource optimist/pessimist continuum and its implications for the future well being of humans.

Reading: <http://www.nationalgeographic.com/xpeditions/guides/geogsummary.pdf>

Biography: Brock Brown did not like geography as a public school student. Only later in life did he discover the real value of geography as an interdisciplinary perspective that contributes to the observation and analysis of anything distributed across Earth space. Geography is a way of understanding and solving problems. He pursued his new found interest in geography and the broad understanding of the Earth and humans it offered. Today, as a geography professor at Texas State University, he shares the insights of geography with his students, teachers across the United States, and just about anyone who wants to gain a richer and more informed understanding of the world and humans interacting therein.