

## Views of Sustainable Development: A Typology of Stakeholders' Conflicting Perspectives

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### “...**Modernisation and postmodernisation**”

The typology proposed here is based on two well-accepted propositions and on one that is new. The first proposition is that different perceptions of sustainability reflect differing views of the human relationship with nature. The second is that at the root of **the differing views of the human–environment relationship** are differences in socioeconomic, sociopolitical and ecological contexts. The new proposition is that these contexts are best described by Inglehart's (1997) tripartite typology of societies and social values...(**traditional, modern, postmodern**)...

... Before discussing Inglehart's typology of societies, it should be noted that one of them, the modern society, is a longstanding field of study (Giddens 1991; Harrison 1988). Since the time of Marx (1965), Durkheim (1893/1984), and Weber (1958, 1983), theorists have speculated about the values that produce, and are produced by, the macro-societal process of modernisation. Despite this, **the distinction between modern and postmodern views of sustainability remains unclear. Ecological modernisation theory (EMT)** (Mol and Sonnenfeld 2000; Mol and Spaargaren 2000) supposedly derives its name from the application of modern themes to environmental issues, but actually **contains a mix of modern and postmodern themes**. Mol and Sonnenfeld (2000) identified the major themes of EMT. First, **science and technology are seen as helpful in solving environmental problems. Second, market dynamics are deemed to have a role to play in restructuring society in a more sustainable way. Third, private and civic-sector arrangements are seen as increasingly important in creating effective de facto regulations relative to the legislation of nation-states. Fourth, environmental social movements are observed to play an increasingly participative role in social change**, as opposed to a role giving voice to calls for the complete restructuring of society. Fifth, EMT eschews the complete neglect of either environmental or

economic interests in favour of intergenerational solidarity in dealing with the interaction of the two.” (p. 21)

“...Pre-modern societal organisation is portrayed as agriculturally based. **Modern society is seen as organised around industrial production. Finally, in ecological modernity, science and technology correct the problems of the transitional modern period.** Because it has these diverse elements, **EMT seems to inhabit the contested terrain between the modern and the postmodern.**

EMT’s perspective on sustainability invokes dimensions that differentiate modernity from postmodernity. This is likely to be a reflection of broader debates in Western societies. Mol and Spaargaren (2000) acknowledge that **EMT was developed on an empirical base limited to Western European countries.**

...The World Values Survey (WVS)...sampled over 55,000 respondents in 43 countries representing 70% of the world’s population. Inglehart described the differences among three economic and political systems on three dimensions: authority; economy; and values. Societies dominated by traditional values combine the steady-state economics of subsistence agriculture with an allpervasive tribal and religious authority. They hold religious and communal values. Societies dominated by modern values combine a dynamic industrial economy with the authority of a rational–legal nation-state. Their values highlight achievement motivation and the disciplined drive for material success. **Societies with a high proportion of people subscribing to postmodern values combine the post-industrial economics of information- and service-based work with the authority of participatory democracy, global governance networks and autonomous ethical decisionmaking. They value tolerance, self-expression, trust and individual rights.** Inglehart did not find any societies that were dominated by postmodern values, but the Scandinavian countries came closest.” (p. 22)

“...The movement from traditional to modern values is part of the process of modernisation. **The movement from modern values to postmodern values is called postmodernisation** (Harvey 1990; Jameson 1991; McGowan 1991). **Postmodernisation occurs when societies cross a certain threshold of affluence such that scarcity of life’s necessities no longer dominates daily decision-making** (Inglehart 1997, 2000).” (p. 22)

“...[P]ostmodern societies contain the most diverse populations in terms of their **perspectives and values.** They include some people who adhere to traditional values, some who adhere to modern values and some who hold postmodern values. **The progression from traditional to modern to postmodern is one that has been observed only in the history of Western societies. We do not know if other societies will necessarily follow the same progression.**” (p. 23)

“...The traditional view of the human–environment interface emphasises the local environment. The first dimension in Table 1.1 highlights the fact that traditional societies depend on their local environments for survival.” (p. 25)

“...Trade in resources from distant natural environments allows for population concentrations in urban areas that are far beyond the carrying capacities of the natural environment in those locales...[T]he distinctly modern perspective [is] that local environments can be endlessly harvested and polluted without danger because nature always renews itself. It follows that there need be no limits on economic growth. By contrast, traditional and postmodern perspectives emphasise balance instead of growth. The fourth dimension proposes that **both traditional and postmodern views endorse the need for ecological stewardship while modern societies operate on assumptions of unlimited growth.** Because they trade over long distances, modern societies can spread their environmental risks across the natural environments inhabited by themselves and all their trading partners.

... **Postmodernism takes environmental stewardship to the global level.** In these societies, trade has created so much specialisation and interdependence that the sustainability of the whole trading system becomes a widespread concern.” (p. 26)

“...[T]here appear to be some fairly obvious links [between]...traditional, modern or postmodern political and economic systems...[and]...Manuel Castells[']...five categories [of]... environmental movements of the developed world...[and] a sixth category of movement...” (p. 29)

“...Two of the arcs in Figure 1.1 represent the processes of **modernisation** and **postmodernisation**. The third arc, neotribalisation, is a relatively new concept. I use it to refer to the thrust towards constituting communities on the basis of collective identities rooted in postmodern critiques of modernism... By **‘neotribalisation’** I wish to refer to **community formation that may arise from new social movements (e.g. deep ecology, gay rights, eco-feminism), from geographically centred communitarian movements or from virtual communities.** Not all expressions of neotribalism concern themselves with sustainable development. Those that do, however, not only recognise the impotence of the modern nation-state but also place little faith in efforts to create international governance structures to control the excesses of global capitalism (Mander 2001). Instead, neotribalists opt for a more anarchist, locally autonomous model.

The **neotribal** view of humankind’s relationship with the natural environment stands between the traditional and the postmodern. **It advocates applying the local stewardship ethic of subsistence societies (e.g. limited harvesting of**

natural resources) to the whole planet through local action more than through international organising. **It applies the implications of global phenomena and perspectives (e.g. global warming, ozone depletion) to local stewardship** practices, but tends to place the sustainability of the local community above global concerns. (p. 30)

...The type of environmental group that seems to be most congruent with **traditional values** and views is one that Castells called **'defence-of-own-space' (i.e. not in my back yard [NIMBY])**. Members of these types of movements view themselves as the local community. These ubiquitous groups oppose pollution (e.g. noise, toxins) and other economic externalities (e.g. traffic, eyesores) in their vicinity. **Their goal is to preserve or enhance the quality of life and health in their local area.** The kinds of disputes that this type of environmental movement engages in often raise questions of **'environmental justice'**. These include concerns about corporations taking advantage of lower environmental standards in poorer countries and municipal governments locating green spaces in wealthy neighbourhoods while relegating waste disposal sites, for example, to poorer neighbourhoods." (pp. 30-31)

“...[O]ne view of the human–environment relationship that corresponds to **modernisation**, but functions best in the least industrialised, most agrarian geographic locations, I dub the **'responsible commons harvester' view**. On the road to modernisation, commons resources (e.g. wild game, fish, whales) come under increasing harvesting pressure. This leads to the familiar 'tragedy of the commons' (Hardin 1968). **Groups have emerged at various times and places to manage such common resources. For example, groups such as rod and gun clubs and Ducks Unlimited try to preserve the natural environment and promote adherence to fishing and hunting regulations in attempts to preserve wild populations of game for future harvesting.** Members of these groups would include **many rural residents who see themselves as 'outdoorsmen', and many members of rural and remote North American Indian communities**. Some hunt and fish to provide food for their families, thereby freeing up cash for alternative uses.” (p. 31)

“...The next type of environmental movement Castells identified is **'conservation of nature'**. Its adversary is uncontrolled development and its goal is wilderness preservation. Members view themselves as nature lovers. In this category, Castells places American groups such as the Sierra

**Club, the National Parks and Conservation Association, and the National Wildlife Federation.** We might speculate that, from this environmental perspective, **sustainable development consists of creating a legal boundary on the landscape with development on one side and wilderness on the other.** Conservation International's campaign to have Misima's reefs declared conservation areas would exemplify a version of this approach to sustainable development." (pp. 31-32)

"...Castells [also]...focused on more **politically oriented movements.** He placed the **German Green Party** (Die Grünen), **and environmental parties and caucuses elsewhere,** into this category. He noted that **their collective identities as groups of concerned citizens are rooted in nation-state politics.** They oppose the political establishment and attempt to offer a counter-power for a variety of marginalized groups and movements. *Die Grünen* is thus an anti-party party. **Although its goals are postmodern,** its means to those goals are modern. **The goals include giving voice to marginalised identities and communities, but the means depend on the modern rational-legalistic institutions of government.** **Sustainable development from this perspective is likely to be anti-development in flavour,** with the legalistic understanding that the other parties and their capitalist friends will look after the pro-development advocacy.

The fifth type on Figure 1.1 is one that Castells called **'save-the-planet'**. He noted that this **includes Greenpeace, the largest environmental group in the world.** Groups such as the Earthday Network and the Environmental Investigation Agency would also qualify. Save-the-planet groups **project an eco-campaigner identity and take a distinctly internationalist perspective.** **The opponent is unfettered global development and the goal is the sustainability of the global ecosystem.** **Such groups gravitate towards issues of planetary significance such as nuclear weapons, global warming, rainforests and oceans, biodiversity and toxic chemicals.** They see development as something that has its own momentum and one that adversely affects the environmental policies of relatively weaker governments and international institutions. Their view of sustainable development is like that of *Die Grünen* in that **they do not advocate for development, but rather for limits and restrictions on development,** thereby making development more sustainable. They differ from Die Grünen in their thoroughgoing internationalism. Single-country issues are only of interest to save-the-planet environmentalists if there is a connection with the global ecosystem." (p. 32)

The sixth type is **'counter-culture, deep ecology'**. It includes members of Earth First!, the Earth Liberation Front, animal rightists and some eco-feminists. **Their goal is an 'ecotopia' beyond the overthrow of industrialism, technocracy and patriarchy**. The worldwide social change agenda gives these groups an affinity with save-the-planet groups, but **their activism tends more towards covert civil disobedience and eco-sabotage** (Foreman and Haywood 1993) **than the save-the-planet campaigns that veer towards creating opportunities for interviews, photo opportunities and soundbites**. At the same time, **their strong anarchist proclivities bear similarities to the localism of defence-of-own-space environmentalism**, particularly as the latter is manifested in self-sufficient subsistence communities. Deep ecology environmentalists are probably the most philosophical type. **Their view of sustainable development is rooted in a fundamental change in humanity. To deep ecologists, sustainable development means a decrease in humankind's impact on nature through less consumption and a deliberate diminution of the human population worldwide.**" (pp. 32-33)