

Beyond GDP: The Ongoing Search to Measure “Wellbeing”



- OLLI Fall Term 2022
- Wednesdays, 1-3pm
- Sept. 14 thru Nov. 2

- Co-facilitators:

David Carlson,

EEE Forum founder
and

Paul Belanger,

EEE Forum webmaster

Good afternoon and welcome to the the third week of Beyond GDP: The Ongoing Search to Measure Wellbeing. We'll begin with an outline for the next couple of hours.

Sustainable Development, Equity, and the U.N. Session #4 Outline

- OLLI Announcements
- Highlights from Session #3 – state BGDG Overview and WEALL
- SDGs and the U.N.'s 50-year focus on Sustainable Development
- 5-minute break
- Guest presentation and Q&A: **Sheila Davis**, Office of Health Equity, Colorado Dept. of Public Health and Environment
***“Equity and Public Health: It’s Not Your Genetic Code
But Your Zip Code That Matters”***
- Looking ahead to Session #5 (Oct. 12th)

Some State-level Beyond GDP Programs

- [Maryland \(Genuine Progress Indicator\)](#) 2010-
- [Oregon Shines](#) (Tracking Our Progress, 1989-2009)
- [Minnesota Milestones](#) (1991-2001, 2009-2011)
- [Minnesota Compass](#) (2010--)
- [New Jersey Sustainable State](#) (1995-2007)
- [Virginia Performs](#) (2003-2017)
- [Hawai'i 2050 Sustainability Plan](#) (2005--)
- [Arizona Indicators](#) (2007--)

Some takeaways (next slide).

State BGDG program overview – takeaways

- General pattern: Most state BGDG programs have been initiated or endorsed by governors or the legislature. Goals were established and indicators developed to track progress. [MD*, OR and MN Milestones-governors; VA and HI* -- legislature.] * *program continues.*
- Some discontinued programs have been replaced by tracking indicators of wellbeing without explicit goals or shifting to a community focus. [OR TOP to OR Community Foundation; NJ ***Sustainable State*** to transitioned to ***Sustainable Jersey*** community focus; MN Compass ongoing].
- AZ Indicators: no statewide goals or annual tracking report; ASU faculty ready to respond to policy Qs

Week #3 (Sept. 28th) -- Guest Presentation: “The Wellbeing Economy Alliance (WEAll)”



**Paul
Sutton**

- Professor, Department of Geography and the Environment, University of Denver
- “Most of my research focuses on applied issues associated with the Human-Environment-Sustainability problematic.”
- ***WEAll** is a collaboration of organisations, alliances, movements and individuals working towards a wellbeing economy, delivering human and ecological wellbeing. (weall.org)*

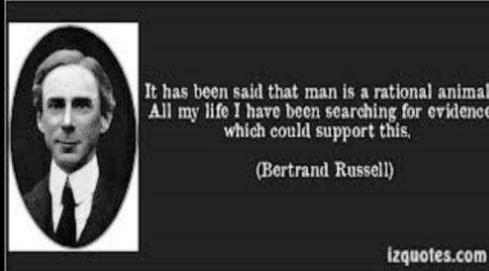
Paul Sutton's presentation was the second of four talks to be given in this course about going Beyond GDP by challenging the underlying framework of neoliberal or neoclassical economics. (Alec Tsoucatos' presentation on "Spaceship Earth Economics" was the first.)

Conventional ECONOMIC Theory

Core Beliefs about human behavior:

Homo economicus

- 1) **Insatiability**
- 2) **Perfect Rationality**
- 3) **Perfect Information**

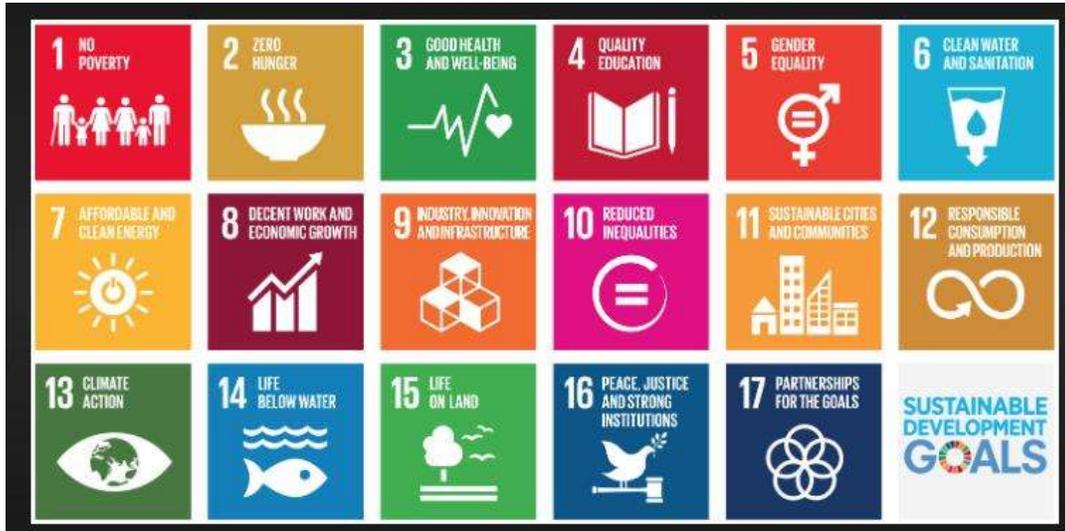


Broader Economic Behavior is simply the aggregation of decisions by rational self-interested individuals. And, an invisible hand guides these individual decisions so that we unwittingly serve the broader societal good without intending to do so and simply serving our own individual interests. Greed is good.

Psychologists like Daniel Kahneman are winning Nobel Prizes for pointing out how these flawed assumptions of economics undermine the entire theoretical framework of the discipline of economics.

A key takeaway: Recent research in behavioral economics disproves three key assumptions of neo-classical economic theory.

Week #4 -- Sustainable development, equity, and the U.N.; how relevant are the SDGs for NGOs and other groups?



These 17 Goals, together with 169 targets, were unanimously adopted by the 193 member nations of the United Nations in September 2015. The following year, a U.N.-led technical team developed 232 indicators to track progress toward reaching these goals by 2030.

Recall from week 1 that our introduction to Gross Domestic Product started with the origins of GDP—National Income (during the Great Depression) and later, Gross National Product (during WWII). Likewise, we'll sketch the emergence and widespread use of the concept "sustainable development" as formulated by the U.N.



Here's another way of displaying the 17 SDGs. Did any of you check out the SDG images website?

The first world conference on the environment!

- The [1972 U.N. Conference on the Human Environment](#) in Stockholm was the first world conference to make the environment a major issue.
- Participants adopted 26 principles for sound management of the environment and an Action Plan.
- The ***Stockholm Declaration*** placed **environmental** issues at the forefront of international concerns and marked the start of a dialogue between industrialized and developing countries on the link between **economic growth**, the pollution of the air, water, and oceans and the **well-being** of people around the world.

Fifty years ago, the U.N. sponsored the first world conference on the environment. The language of the conference included the components of **sustainable development**—the environment (pollution of air, water, oceans), development (in the narrow sense of “economic growth”), and sustainability (“well-being”). I've color-coded these three elements in the next four slides to help us see the emergence of the concept, "sustainable development."

U.N. World Commission on **Environment** and **Development** (1983-87) -- objectives

- to propose long-term **environmental** strategies for achieving **sustainable development** by the year 2000 and beyond;
- to recommend ways concern for the **environment** may be translated into greater co-operation among developing countries and between countries at different stages of **economical and social development** . . .
- to consider ways and means by which the international community can deal more effectively with **environment** concerns; and
- to help define shared perceptions of long-term **environmental** issues and the appropriate efforts needed to deal **successfully** with the problems of protecting and enhancing the **environment**, . . .

Fifteen years later, a U.N. World Commission on Environment and Development released its 300-page report that includes a definition of "sustainable development." Four years earlier, Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, appointed Gro Harlem Brundtland, former Prime Minister of Norway, as chairperson of the commission.

Again, we're highlighting the interplay among these key concepts-- environment, development, and sustainable development. Will hear Chairman Brundtland's own words on the next slide.

[These objectives are listed in the Chairman's Foreword to the Commission's 1987 Report.]



Gro Harlem
Brundtland,
U.N. World
Commission
Chair

... The **environment** does not exist as a sphere separate from human actions, ambitions, and needs, and attempts to defend it in isolation from human concerns have given the very word "**environment**" a connotation of naivety in some political circles. The word "**development**" has also been narrowed by some into a very limited focus, along the lines of "what poor nations should do to become richer", and thus again is automatically dismissed by many in the international arena as being a concern of specialists, of those involved in questions of "**development** assistance".

But the "environment" is where we all live; and "development" is what we all do in attempting to improve our lot within that abode. The two are inseparable.

In the Chairman's Foreward to the 1987 Report, Brundtland writes: "When the terms of reference of our Commission were originally being discussed in 1982, there were those who wanted its considerations to be limited to "environmental issues" only. This would have been a grave mistake. [The slide continues.]

Comments about her definitions of "environment" and "development"?

Our Common Future (aka, The Brundtland Report) 1987
--a definition of “sustainable development”

Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

It contains within it two key concepts:

- the concept of ‘needs’, in particular the essential needs of the world’s poor, to which overriding priority should be given; and
- the idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organization on the environment’s ability to meet present and future needs.

[Our Common Future](#) (p. 41)

The first sentence of this definition is often quoted in the sustainable development literature--but the second sentence, very rarely.

Post-Brundtland SD Conferences: 1992-2012

- The **1992 UN Conference on Environment & Development** (aka, the 'Rio Summit' or 'Earth Summit') sought to implement the conceptual understanding of **sustainable development** in the Brundtland Report.
- The **2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development** ('Rio+10') emphasized the social and economic dimensions of sustainable development in light of the 8 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) adopted at the UN Millennium Summit in 2000. [SEE NEXT SLIDE]
- The **2012 UN Conference on Sustainable Development** ('Rio+20') launched a process to develop a set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), building upon the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and converging with the post-2015 development agenda.

2000 UN Millennium Development Goals deadline: 2015



[2002 Millennium Project: Action Plan Commissioned](#)

In 2005, the independent advisory body headed by Professor Jeffrey Sachs, presented its final recommendations to the Secretary-General in a synthesis volume “Investing in Development: A Practical Plan to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals.” [We'll hear more about Professor Sachs next week.]

Is the 1987 Brundtland Report still relevant today?

How faithful have subsequent formulations of sustainable development been to these three original principles:

- intergenerational equity,*
- concern for the poor, and*
- the inseparability of the environment and development?*

Comments?

[Sustainable Development: From Brundtland to Rio 2012](#)

It is generally accepted that sustainable development calls for a convergence between the three pillars of economic development, social equity, and environmental protection. . . .

While sustainable development is intended to encompass three pillars, over the past 20 years it has often been compartmentalized as an environmental issue. Added to this, and potentially more limiting for the sustainable development agenda, is the reigning orientation of development as purely economic growth. . . . [underlining added]

-- from the Executive Summary

Here's one informed view: This 26-page Background Paper prepared in 2010 for the U.N. by the International Institute for Sustainable Development [[Sustainable Development: From Brundtland to Rio 2012](#)] includes this statement.

"Rio 2012" refers to the planned U.N. conference on the 20th anniversary of

[Here's more: "Sustainable development is a visionary development paradigm; and over the past 20 years governments, businesses, and civil society have accepted sustainable development as a guiding principle, made progress on sustainable development metrics, and improved business and NGO participation in the sustainable development process. Yet the concept remains elusive and implementation has proven difficult. Unsustainable trends continue and sustainable development has not found the political entry points to make real progress. As a result, climate change has become the de facto proxy for implementation of the sustainable development agenda; but the framework of the climate change negotiations are not always the appropriate forum for broader strategic discussions of sustainable development."]

Beyond GDP: The UN's Human Development Index (1990)

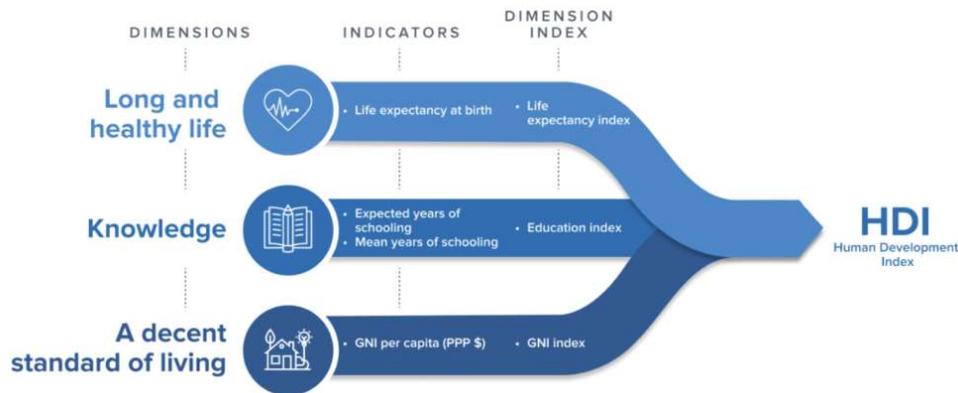


**Mahbub
ul Haq,
Pakistani
Economist**

- The **Human Development Index (HDI)** is a statistic composite index of [life expectancy](#), [education](#) (mean years of schooling completed and expected years of schooling upon entering the [education system](#)), and [per capita income](#) indicators, which is used to rank countries into four tiers of [human development](#). A country scores a higher level of HDI when the [lifespan](#) is higher, the [education](#) level is higher, and the gross national income [GNI \(PPP\) per capita](#) is higher. It was developed by Pakistani economist, [Mahbub ul Haq](#).

In addition to the UN's bringing sustainable development to the forefront in understanding and action, the UN has gone "beyond GDP" in another continuing project: the Human Development Index.

The Human Development Index (UN Development Programme) HDI Dimensions and Indicators



For more about HDI, visit [Human Development Index \(UNDP, 1990\)](#).

The HDI can be used to question national policy choices, asking how two countries with the same level of GNI per capita can end up with different human development outcomes. These contrasts can stimulate debate about government policy priorities. The HDI simplifies and captures only part of what human development entails. It does not reflect on inequalities, poverty, human security, empowerment, etc. The HDRO provides other composite indices as broader proxy on some of the key issues of human development, inequality, gender disparity and poverty.

Latest HDI rankings by the UN Development Programme. For more information, visit [UNDP HDI data](#).

The United States ranks 21st out of 191 countries.

Rank	Country	HDI Value	Change from 2020
1	 Switzerland	0.962	▲ 0.006
2	 Norway	0.961	▲ 0.002
3	 Iceland	0.959	▲ 0.002
4	 Hong Kong, China (SAR)	0.952	▲ 0.003
5	 Australia	0.951	▲ 0.004
6	 Denmark	0.948	▲ 0.001
7	 Sweden	0.947	▲ 0.005
8	 Ireland	0.945	▲ 0.002
9	 Germany	0.942	▼ -0.002
10	 Netherlands	0.941	▲ 0.002
11	 Finland	0.940	▲ 0.002
12	 Singapore	0.939	▲ 0.000
13	 Belgium	0.937	▲ 0.009
13	 New Zealand	0.937	▲ 0.001
15	 Canada	0.936	▲ 0.005
16	 Liechtenstein	0.935	▲ 0.002
17	 Luxembourg	0.930	▲ 0.006
18	 United Kingdom	0.929	▲ 0.005
19	 Japan	0.925	▲ 0.002
19	 Korea (Republic of)	0.925	▲ 0.003
21	 United States	0.921	▲ 0.001
22	 Israel	0.919	▲ 0.002

Equity and the SDGs

*As we embark on this great collective journey, we pledge that **no one will be left behind**. Recognizing that the dignity of the human person is fundamental, we wish to see the Goals and targets met for all nations and peoples and for all segments of society. And we will endeavour to reach the furthest behind first.*

--from the Declaration of the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#)

*“**Leaving no one behind** lies at the heart of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This principle is mentioned at least seven times in the Agenda itself, and has been a recurrent theme in documents, pledges, call to actions, interventions and statements delivered since - by Member States, the UN and civil society.” ["Realizing the SDGs for All"](#)*

Equity has been a core principle of the United Nations since its proclamation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. Today, that principle underlies the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 targets unanimously adopted by the U.N.'s 193 member nations [states] in September 2015.

“Equity” is explicitly highlighted in SDG 5 (“Gender Equality”) and SDG 10 (“Reduced Inequalities”).

This afternoon's guest presenter will examine "equity and public health".



This recently-updated Plan lists pertinent legislation and aligns the state's goals, policies, and actions with the SDGs across **8 focus areas** (with 38 strategies and 250 recommended actions).

[Hawai'i 2050 Sustainability Plan](#)

- 1. Promote a sustainable Economic Recovery*
- 2. Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions*
- 3. Improve Climate Resilience*
- 4. Advance Sustainable Communities*
- 5. Advance Equity*
- 6. Institutionalize Sustainability Throughout Government*
- 7. Preserve the Natural Environment*
- 8. Perpetuate Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Values*

Hawai'i's path toward sustainability was initiated by bold legislation.

[Act 8, Special Session Laws of Hawaii 2005](#) established the Hawai'i Sustainability Task Force and directed the task force to develop a Hawai'i 2050 Sustainability Plan to address the vital needs of Hawai'i through the year 2050 and beyond.



Virginia Performs was the major initiative of The Council on Virginia’s Future. The Council was comprised of state, business, and community leaders from across the state. The Council was established in 2003 by the state legislature to advise Virginia’s leaders on the development and implementation of a roadmap for Virginia’s future. The Council was dissolved by the legislature in 2017.



ARIZONA INDICATORS

A Project Managed by Morrison Institute for Public Policy

- Began in 2007 by Arizona State University with several community partners. Still ongoing.
- Purpose: to serve as a central resource for data and insights to help support policy making and public awareness of the state's competitiveness and other issues.
- [Arizona Indicators](#) presents interactive data visualizations and mapping tools, public opinion data, and timely policy analysis.

Broad content areas

1. Economy
2. Public Finance
3. Education
4. Innovation
5. Sustainability
6. Culture
7. Health
8. Human Assistance
9. Criminal Justice
10. Transportation

Rather than starting with goals and indicators to track progress, Arizona Indicators works with community partners to determine topics and issues for analysis.

[In 2007, Arizona Indicators began in the Office of the President at Arizona State University with the support of a number of community partners. The initiative grew out of the desire for a central resource for data and insights to help support policy making and public awareness of the state's competitiveness and other issues. Today, Arizona Indicators remains a community partnership with sponsorship by Arizona State University and Arizona Community Foundation, Valley of the Sun United Way, The Arizona Republic, and Arizona Department of Commerce. Organized in 11 broad content areas, Arizona Indicators presents interactive data visualizations and mapping tools, public opinion data, and timely policy analysis.]

**Week #4 (October 5th) -- Guest Presentation:
“Equity and Public Health: It’s Not Your Genetic Code
But Your Zip Code That Matters”**



Sheila Davis

- Director, Office of Health Equity; Colorado Dept. of Public Health and Environment

Equity is...

when everyone, regardless of who they are or where they come from, has the opportunity to thrive. This requires eliminating barriers like poverty and repairing injustices in systems such as education, health, criminal justice and transportation.

After our five-minute break, we'll hear from Dr. Sheila Davis, Director of the Office of Health Equity at CDPHE.

**Week #5 (Oct. 12th) -- Guest Presentation:
“Food Insecurity: Post-Pandemic and Climate Change
Challenges”**



**Patricia
 (“Patti”)
Iwasaki,
MSW**

- Adjunct Instructor, Graduate School of Social Work—DU (“Food Systems, Food Justice”)
- Steering Committee, Food Justice NorthWest Aurora

“Some estimates concerning increased food insecurity in Denver are that rates have tripled from previous (pre-2019) estimates--one in seven or one in ten in certain areas.”

Next week, during the second hour, we'll hear from Patti Iwasaki on Food Insecurity. Patti combines both deep understanding of the complexities of food insecurity and food justice, with extensive experience in working alongside grassroots leaders in food insecurity areas, such as northwest Aurora.