



FINAL EXAMINATION
MARCH 2024

COURSE TITLE	POLITICAL ECONOMY FOR DEVELOPMENT
COURSE CODE	TECO4313
DATE/DAY	27 JUNE 2024 / THURSDAY
TIME/DURATION	02:00 PM - 04:00 PM / 02 Hour(s) 00 Minute(s)

INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES :

1. Please read the instruction under each section carefully.
2. Candidates are reminded not to bring into examination hall/room any form of written materials or electronic gadget except for stationery that is permitted by the Invigilator.
3. Students who are caught breaching the Examination Rules and Regulation will be charged with an academic dishonesty and if found guilty of the offence, the maximum penalty is expulsion from the University.

(This Question Paper consists of 4 Printed Pages including front page)

There are FOUR (4) questions in this exam. Answer ALL questions in the answer booklet provided. [100 MARKS]

The World's Sustainable Development Goals Aren't Sustainable.

There are big problems with the most important metric used to assess progress toward the U.N.'s environmental goals.

By Jason Hickel

SEPTEMBER 30, 2020, 2:53 PM

In 2015, the world's governments signed on to the U.N. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with a commitment to bring the global economy back into balance with the living world. Now, five years later, as the U.N. General Assembly convenes online to discuss the global ecological crisis, everyone wants to know how countries are performing.

To answer this question, delegates and policymakers have referred to a metric called the SDG Index, which was developed by Jeffrey Sachs "to assess where each country stands with regard to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals." The metric tells a very clear story. Sweden, Denmark, Finland, France, and Germany—along with most other rich Western nations—rise to the top of the rankings, giving casual observers the impression that these countries are real leaders in achieving sustainable development.

There's only one problem. Despite its name, the SDG Index has very little to do with sustainable development at all. In fact, oddly enough, the countries with the highest scores on this index are some of the most environmentally unsustainable countries in the world.

Take Sweden, for example. Sweden scores an impressive 84.7 on the index, topping the pack. But ecologists have long pointed out that Sweden's "material footprint"—the quantity of natural resources that the country consumes each year—is one of the biggest in the world, right up there with the United States, at 32 metric tons per person. To put this in perspective, the global average is about 12 tons per person, and the sustainable level is about 7 tons per person. In other words, Sweden is consuming nearly five times over the boundary.

There is nothing sustainable about this kind of consumption. If everyone on the planet were to consume as Sweden does, global resource use would exceed 230 billion tons of stuff per year. To get a sense for what this would look like, consider all the resources that we presently extract, produce, transport, and consume around the world each year—and all of the ecological damage that this causes—and triple it.

Or take Finland, for example, which is No. 3 on the SDG Index. Finland's carbon footprint is about 13 metric tons of carbon dioxide per person per year, similar to that of Saudi Arabia. This makes it one of the most polluting countries in the world, in per capita terms, and a major contributor to climate breakdown. For comparison, China's carbon footprint is about 7 tons per person. India's is less than 2. If the whole world were to consume as much fossil fuels as Finland does, the planet would be literally uninhabitable.

This isn't just a matter of a few odd results. Data published by scientists at the University of Leeds shows that all of the top-ranked countries in the SDG Index have significantly overshot their fair share of planetary boundaries, in consumption-based terms—not only when it comes to resource use and emissions but also in terms of land use and chemical flows like nitrogen and phosphorous. It is physically impossible for all nations to consume and pollute at the level of the SDG top performers without destroying our planet's biosphere.

In other words, the SDG Index is, from the perspective of ecology, incoherent. It creates the illusion that rich countries have high levels of sustainability when in fact they do not. So what's going on here? Well, the SDG Index is directly linked to the Sustainable Development Goals. There are 17 goals, each of which include a number of targets. The SDG Index takes indicators for each of these targets (where data is available), indexes them, and then averages them together to arrive at a score for each goal. Then the 17 goals are averaged together in turn to come up with the final figure. All of this seems reasonable enough, on the face of it. But taking this approach means introducing a number of analytical problems.

First, there is a weighting problem. The SDGs include three different kinds of indicators: Some focus on ecological impact (like deforestation and biodiversity loss), some focus on social development (like education and hunger), and some focus on infrastructure development (like transportation and electricity). Most of the SDGs contain a mix of these, but the ecological indicators are almost always swamped, as it were, by the development indicators. For example, the SDG Index has four indicators for Goal 11 (on "sustainable cities and communities"); three of them are development indicators, while only one of them has to do with ecological impact. This means that if a country performs well on the development indicators, its score for that goal will look good even if it fails in terms of sustainability.

This issue is compounded by a second problem, namely, that only four of the 17 SDGs deal mostly or wholly with ecological sustainability (Goals 12 through 15). The other 13 are mostly focused on development. Once again, this means that good performance on the development goals outweighs poor performance on the sustainability goals, so countries like Sweden, Germany, and Finland can rise to the top of the index (with the United States ranking in the top 20 percent) even though they have highly unsustainable levels of ecological impact.

https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/09/30/the-worlds-sustainable-development-goals-arent-sustainable/#cookie_message_anchor

Question 1

(15 Marks)

According to the article, why does Sweden have a higher per capita carbon footprint than many larger countries do?

Question 2

(25 Marks)

Discuss in which ways this article highlights the differences between rich and poor countries with regards to sustainable development. Justify your answer with examples from the article and from the overall course.

Question 3

(25 Marks)

Do you agree with the author of this article that the SDGs favour overall development over sustainability? Justify your answer with examples from the article and from the overall course.

Question 4

(35 Marks)

In your opinion, what responsibility does a developed country like Sweden have to help less developed countries to reach their SDGs? Use examples to justify your argument.

***** END OF QUESTION PAPER *****

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