

One No, Many Yeses: A Journey To The Heart Of The Global Resistance Movement

Chapter 38 Sustainable Development

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No single thinker, party or school of thought offers a complete answer, or anything like it. Answers will have to be hammered out in open-minded dialogue, between all those who accept that tinkering is not enough, across lines of party and creed. The need, in fact, is for a realignment of the mind, socialist in economics and republican in politics. In such a realignment the Green movement must surely have a central place, along with radicals and dissenters from all parties and none. (Marquand, 2010).

In the wake of the third great capitalist crisis of modern times, David Marquand joined other commentators to suggest that the neoliberal paradigm that has dominated policy making in much of the world in recent decades, not least in institutions of global governance, had failed after proving itself monstrously unjust and unsustainable. While mainstream politicians sought a return to a modified version of business as usual, radicals predicted that such measures would fail to revive the profits system (Shatt, 2010). They urged a realignment of minds as a first step towards more rational, sustainable, and political acceptable forms of political economy.

This chapter argues that education has a key role to play in such a realignment of minds. It should engage learners in open-minded dialogue about those values, forms of political economy, and models of democracy and citizenship, that may allow us to live more sustainably with one another and the rest of nature. Such dialogue should consider the merits of greener forms of socialism, alongside those of greener forms of capitalism, and should prompt reflection and action on existing and emergent models of democracy and citizenship.

Unsustainable development

The global economy that underpins all our lives depends on finding profitable sources of investment for ever greater quantities of capital. This requires resource intensive economic growth that yields profits for companies, tax revenues for governments, and rising standards of living for the majority of citizens. All have an interest in an accelerating treadmill of production and consumption, but this periodically comes up against limits when it is impossible to sell all that is produced at a profit and productive capacity has to be scrapped. The speculative boom that preceded the current crisis was an attempt to prevent the treadmill slowing. The de-regulation and liberalisation of the financial sector created housing, credit and asset bubbles to absorb excess capital, but when these burst many assets proved worthless (financial crisis), sources of credit dried up (credit crisis), and many countries went into recession (Gamble, 2009, Harvey 2010).

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