

International Conference on Inequality and Sustainability

November 9–10, 2012 • The Fletcher School, Tufts University



THE CENTER FOR
INTERNATIONAL
ENVIRONMENT &
RESOURCE POLICY

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CALL FOR PAPERS

Debates over equity—the fair distribution of resources, costs, and benefits—and a closely related topic, economic inequality, have arisen in the wake of the recent financial crisis. The gap in wealth and income between those who came out well after the crisis and those who did poorly has been widely noted. However, in a longer view this can be seen as part of a much broader debate in which conflicting normative goals raise troubling questions, complicated by uncertainties over how societies and economies do and should work. If we are to build a prosperous society, does inequality do more to help or hinder the pursuit of that goal? As we simultaneously seek an equitable and just society, then what level of inequality is consistent with an equitable outcome?

The pursuit of a sustainable society raises further questions. Sustainability implies a normative goal of inter-generational equity, and some have argued that lessened inequality and increased equity may be preconditions for a successful transition onto a sustainable path. At this conference we will look at equity and inequality through the lens of sustainability and, conversely, at sustainability from the point of view of equity and inequality.

The conference aims to bring together sustainability, equity, and inequality researchers to learn from one another about the current state of the art in their respective fields, and to think creatively about the intersections of these fields and the application of these important concepts to development policy debates.

Abstract Submission Deadline
April 27, 2012

Author Notification
June 15, 2012

Final Paper and Poster Version
October 19, 2012

Conference Tracks

Defining a sustainable world as one in which a broadly shared good quality of life can be achieved indefinitely into the future, and recognizing that sustainability is only meaningful if it is achieved globally (albeit through actions undertaken at individual, community, regional, national, and global levels) this conference will focus on the following themes and questions:

1 Notions of equity for sustainability

- a What does political philosophy have to say about equity and inequality, and what light can it shed on the sustainability debate?
- b What definitions of equity are either explicit or implicit in sustainability theory and practice? Why have they been proposed, what are their benefits, and what are their drawbacks?
- c Does research on the determinants and consequences of inequality suggest any constraints on the structure of sustainable communities, nations, and the world?

2 Economic structures for sustainability

- a What does economics (orthodox or heterodox) have to say about inequality, equity, and varieties of economic organization, and how does it inform sustainability theory and practice?
- b What does the sustainability literature assume about the structure and functioning of economies, and what do those assumptions imply about equity and inequality?

3 Equity, inequality, and the sustainability transition

- a From social, political, economic, and environmental perspectives, what are the equity and equality requirements for a transition to a sustainable path?
- b What are the equity and distributional implications of different sustainability strategies? For example, will reduced consumption in high-income countries curtail development in rapidly growing economies?

During the first one and half days of this two-day conference, researchers will share their results and insights. The end of the second day conference attendees will identify policy messages from the conference.

Conference and Submission Information:
conferences.sei-international.org/index.php/development/IS2012