

LECTURE 4 Q&A

Jukka-Pekka:

Is perpetual economic growth while keeping within the ecological boundaries of our planet an impossible concept? Is it naïve to think that productivity growth can continue only with technological development without increasing the consumption of resources? If so, is degrowth or zero growth the only option if we want to keep human society within the boundaries of our planet?

Yes on all counts if you ask me. But this is, of course, limited to material growth. If capitalism could survive by ever-growing immaterial (whatever that means) production and consumption, then it would be compatible with keeping within the planetary boundaries. Be that as it may, it seems that while people use this defence, they are too lazy to act upon it.

Karelia:

If the economy doesn't hold essential value to the same degree as the natural world does within an ecologico-social equality paradigm, is the primary of environmental health considered as in fact instrumental to human wellbeing – that is, humanity can only truly prosper through a caring and regenerative relationship with the environment?

Partly yes, partly no. If you ask a utilitarian, and the question does not involve other sentient beings, probably yes. But if you ask care and relations ethicists, you could get something like this (from a live research plan of mine, not for public citation): “Others, mapping the road ahead, have envisioned new worlds through the lens of vegan antinatalism (MacCormack 2014; 2020), where the hegemonic position of the human gets decentralised and human life gradually recedes in favour of more caring, vitalistic, and jubilant ecologies and relations that allow nonhuman lives to flourish; combined with critiques of our binary divisions of nature/culture, human/nonhuman, life/death (Edelman 2004; Radomska 2016; Radomska & al. 2019); and a reimagining of kinship beyond genetics and biology (Haraway 2007; 2016).” – I have tried to bridge the gap by the concept of “essential value”. I hope that makes sense.

Yian:

The Malthusian Trap stated that unless human beings voluntarily cut birth rate to cope with the reality of the scarcity of resources, humans could suffer from

famine, disease or wars — none of them would do good to the mankind. Similarly, many scholars also argue that sustainability development can be achieved when population declines so that more people's needs could be met (especially related to those SDGs) and the overall ecological environment could be better. For example, Professor James Brander (University of British Columbia, Canada) revisited the Malthusian Model and linked it to sustainability in his paper [Brander, J.A. (2007) Viewpoint: Sustainability: Malthus Revisited?, The Canadian Journal of Economics, 40 (1), pp.1-38] where he concluded that the continued demographic transition to lower fertility is the primary requirement for achieving sustainable development. From another perspective, however, we all see that the pension system is increasingly at risk due to rapidly aging population and the gradual decline of birth rate (especially in advanced/developed economies but also in newly industrialized economy/transitional economy of China). When less and less young working population contribute to the social security system, there is eventually a break-even point where the contributions could not sustain the pay-off of pensions to seniors anymore. (here we also suppose the per capital productivity rate cannot easily fill-in the gap) The adequacy and sustainability of the pension system should also be part of the framework of UN SDGs, because it would show the caring and support of the retirees. So how would you see this phenomenon as related to the sustainability relationship framework between declined population versus sustainable development in a society that caters to the well-being of all citizens including senior retirees?

This is a good question, and it came to the right address. I do not have an answer, but I thank you for reminding me of this – and for the Brander-article tip. I am currently applying for funding for a research project on natalism and antinatalism, and my partners include the Vatican (!), David Benatar (the most influential contemporary antinatalist in philosophy – he works in Cape Town University and we have developed our antinatalist arguments side by side since the late 1990s), and feminist antinatalists (Patricia MacCormack and Donna Haraway). In my Malthusian zeal to curb population growth, I have not really thought about addressing the pension issue. Now that you mention it, I will have to do that. “Who increases knowledge, increases pain.” In this case, you, stuffing this important and thorny topic on my already overrunning plate. ;)

Ali:

My question may sound scandalous to some, but I'll ask it anyway. I have always found it amusing that most environmental critics of capitalist growth hail from super rich countries that have already enjoyed a substantial amount of economic development. Truth is, less developed countries are more vulnerable to climate crisis precisely because they are less developed. Now, instead of lashing out at capitalism from the guarded comfort of wealthy societies, wouldn't it make sense to help developing societies also get rich fast? Wouldn't this be a more just pursuit of justice?

No scandal. You are absolutely right that people in affluent countries should not make noises about environmental decay and its global causes unless they are willing to sacrifice something of their own current lifestyle. Insofar as the Extinction Rebellion are arguing that today's young people should have everything that their parents have had, they are singing from the same hymn book with Gro Harlem Brundtland, and essentially demanding that the sacrifices are made in less affluent countries by stalling the rise of development and general wellbeing. So, *ad hominem*, we can argue that *their* stance is inconsistent and unjust. – In the bigger picture, however, your solution does not seem to have much chance of working. Raising the standard of living everywhere by the kind of material growth that we are having and keeping up will meet its limits at some point. (The key issue is perpetual material growth, not capitalism as such, although it is a good example of a disastrous economic system in this sense. There are others.) When the limits are met, we are left with a broken planet and a zillion hungry people. Not a very appealing prospect, eh? – Did I answer your question?

Thank you for your level-headed and well-informed response. Here is my counter. First of all, the Neo-Malthusian approach ignores the fact that we have escaped every Malthusian trap in history through innovation. Malthus himself did not include the power of technological transformation in his population theory because, well, he didn't live long enough to see it.

Second of all, economic growth in the rest of the world is not something we can stop. It's an inevitable thing. World population is going to reach about 9.5 billion, and then maybe stabilise. Maybe! In the meantime, when more and more people in China and India and Africa and the Middle East join the middle class, they are going to start to consume, and they are going to consume a lot.

We haven't even begun to see what over-consumption means. We'll see that in two decades or so.

This trend is inevitable and unstoppable.

Instead of denying the inevitable, we can actually do something about it. We can encourage developing nations to fulfill their rising demand for energy through renewables. We can encourage them to learn the lessons the West has learned from its own environmental mistakes. We can also invest heavily in new green and carbon-capture technologies, and so on.

In short, we can try to adapt. We can't stop the growth, but, with a lot of work and some luck, perhaps we can turn it into green growth.

What issues do you see in my line of arguments?

Well, your line of argument, if I understand you correctly, is: (a) Economic growth and (b) population growth are inescapable. But that is fine, because new technologies (c) have bailed us out before and (d) will also do so in the future. Point by point:

(a) If it is (I deal with arguments, not facts or predictions), it would be nice if it were less “material” than it has been before and is projected to be in the future.

(b) Maybe. Unless the Academy of Finland funds my antinatalism project, which aims at finding a reasonable way to curb population expansion. (One of the partners is the Vatican, so we have great forces in motion here.)

(c) They have provided us narrow escapes. And they have always, while solving the original problem, created bigger ones of their own.

(d) Tall order. Remains to be seen.

These have to do with the soundness of your argument, i.e., the truth of the premises. This is not really my field. Mine is the formal validity of argumentation, i.e., whether or not the conclusions follow from the premises. In that sense, I think that your argument is as valid as its (well-structured) rivals.

Elizaveta:

What role does philosophy play in modern politics and what role should it play?

To what extent does modern politics refer to philosophy?

I will elaborate a bit on my question as while reading your paper and listening to the lecture the thought that if current politicians addressed (or addressed more) philosophical approaches and relied on philosophical studies even in sustainability issues, the society would be provided with much more complex data (especially considering cultural aspects) and it seems that as a result different 'road map' for further development.

I asked your questions in the Facebook, and philosopher friends from various countries answered in unison: (a) a miniscule role and (b) a much bigger role. As you would expect. – During the last few years, I have had three major research projects that have aimed at telling public decision makers what they could do better. Long story short, they are not listening. Or if they are, they twist my words to serve their own purposes. Example. I have been talking about justice in bioeconomy in many meetings attended by public decision makers. I have always meant all the areas, including the ecologico-social. They have taken the word “justice” and started using it as an attribute of the compensations to the dying businesses in agriculture like peat harvesting and fur farming. – So it looks like we cannot win. But I am not despairing. Your question gave me the strength to start writing the “societal impact” paragraph of yet another research bid to the government. Thank you!

Meng:

A wide range of social movements has been organised against issues such as climate change, anti-abortion, LGBT in recent years. Whether social movements have achieved victory or not, can they be regarded as an act of justice towards the sustainability issues? If so, from what theoretical perspectives in dimensions of justice can you give the explanation for it? According to Coglianese (2001), the goal of law reform is to provide a means of realising the goal that social change is the purpose of a social movement, which is a broad set of sustained organisational efforts to the change of social structure of the distribution of society's resources. What roles can philosophical studies play in law reform to achieve justice in sustainability?

Reference:

Coglianese, C., 2001, Social Movements, Law, and Society: The Institutionalization of the Environmental Movement. University of Pennsylvania Law Review, 150 (1), pp. 85-118.

I suppose in one sense movements achieve victories when they reach their goals, whatever they are. – The Texas anti-abortion movement seems to be close now, at least for the time being. Their views belong to the upper half (mainly top left) of my map of justice. – The climate-change movement(s), whether they realize it or not, are trying to achieve a utilitarian aim – the reduction of future suffering, environmental decay, and social collapse. This would be the bottom-right corner of my map. But if (the ill-effects of) climate change could, in the end, be stalled more efficiently by technological and business innovations (top right), climate-change protesters and activists might be shooting themselves in the leg. They would then be creating a big show (to reduce their own anxiety) yet promoting, inadvertently, the decay they profess to mitigate. – Some say that the latter is true about the LGBTQ-rights movement, i.e. that by being vocal they provoke reactionary opposition. Be that as it may, the anti-abortionists and LGBTQ activists share the belief in positionality and may somehow oddly feed one another. I don't know enough about this to make a judgement, but as an on-and-off utilitarian myself (<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0963180120000882>) I am trying to build a bridge between care/relations/identity ethics (bottom left) and suffering-reducing consequentialism (bottom right). – Coglianese (https://scholarship.law.upenn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2405&context=faculty_scholarship) – Thanks for the literature tip! – seems to believe that environmental movements have had a great impact on environmental legislation. Maybe. There can be other factors. But I don't know. – I try to push my own agenda (ecologico-social equality) by collaborating with the Finnish government (various ministries). Sometimes I get something done. Most of the time I don't. And all of the time I feel a little dirty and stupid for having to deal with self-serving politicians and incompetent civil servants. ;)

Floris:

Many views are often presented as opposing, or mutually exclusive, e.g. economic versus environmental or social sustainability (noticing now the latter two are joint together, which I didn't question). This dualist way of thinking is fairly dominant in Western philosophy I think, and I have started questioning how useful it is. Recently, I stumbled upon The Red Nation, an indigenous initiative, and I remember them exploring how economic development, environmental responsibility and social progress can actually go hand in hand quite easily. I wonder, considering the current Western-centric power structures and ideologies, do we, could we, should we, search for answers in philosophical

views with origins other than 'our own'? Could it be that that is the alternative, better, only, way forward?

Yes, I think that this would be our only way of getting anywhere. I am also reminded that I should change the name of the upper half of my map of justice. The views represented there are, from left to right, "Our country/locality first, never mind the rest of the globe", "It is OK (in fact, desirable) that one percent of the population owns ninety percent of everything", and "The only way forward is through technological and business innovations". The combination has in Finland been called "kokonaiskestävyys" (overall or overarching or comprehensive sustainability) and in my eagerness to correct that lie I have renamed it economic sustainability. It should be perpetual-material-growth sustainability (and somehow include China's state capitalism as well as the corporate capitalism of the rest of the world). Meaning that what is sustained is material growth, nothing else. Once we get rid of the hegemonic position of that type of thinking, we can concentrate on what alternatives are available, perhaps in the direction you suggest.

Zhiqiang:

Today, most countries claim that they will develop in a more sustainable way. However, I can see many counties face a dilemma in population. It seems impossible that the big developing countries (e.g. China) let their birth rate fall. The reason is that the policymakers want to keep economic growth. What's more, a continuous fall in the birth rate might put an enormous strain on the state pension. If the only way of developing is to keep the population growing or at the least not falling, how can we achieve sustainability?

You are correct, and the only way out would be to develop an entirely new economic system, one that is not dependent on perpetual material growth. Otherwise, we cannot achieve sustainability in the sense that our (whoever "we" refers to) way of life could remain intact over generations.

Toan:

When discussing business sustainability, we often refer to the view of Triple bottom line. That is, business can only be sustainable if it can balance the environmental, social and economic aspects (i.e., planet, people, and profit). How does it fit to the scope of your sustainability point of view?

The idea is commendable, but the model ignores the possibility of conflicts between the three. If all can not be achieved, which dimension will be prioritized? In business, the natural answer is economy and profit. Social and environmental concerns are secondary and either serve the economic goals or are bracketed.

Marjukka:

My question is that have humans always been selfish and perhaps this is the fundamental character of us and it made Homo sapiens as the winning species? I am puzzled to realize how naive and selfish we are as humans and nations. To claim that economic growth and care for nature can go hand-in-hand seems somewhat foolish, who are we kidding?

I couldn't agree with you more. But check out Ali's valiant defence of the opposite view in the above. What if he is right? What if we are wasting wonderful opportunities here? What do you think?

Emilia:

If the pursuit of economy and ecology are paradoxical, how does one determine which pursuit is more just? I assume one or the other is not simply given, since both have their just and unjust aspects. Or is it even necessary to determine? At least that would make decisions easier. I guess a well-functioning and growing economy has been traditionally seen very just, lifting people's living standards (historically at least), and because of it that perspective still prevails, even though there is increasing understanding and pressure to prioritize ecology as more 'just' for humanity, and thus these competing logics lead to the paradox and contradicting clauses in the European Bioeconomy Strategy.

Good question – and also irresolvable. – On a theoretical level, we would need an external viewpoint and an independent criterion for the goodness of policies to make the choice. No such external viewpoint or independent criterion exists. – On a practical level, many people could settle for some traditional solution, say, the greatest wellbeing of the greatest number of people. But it is so difficult to measure and calculate human wellbeing in different scenarios that this is not likely to solve the problem. – Which is why some of us say “A thriving economy guarantees the best future for our nation and that is all that matters” and others “If we let environmental decay continue any longer, the planet will be unlivable for humanity”. These are not statements of fact based on some superior knowledge. They are how we hope

and fear things to be. And since there is disagreement, the debate must go on. – The real problem with the UN 2015 and EU 2018 “solutions” is that they do not recognise the clash, and assume, instead, the economic approach without reflection. The alternative would be to admit the conflict and address it case by case.

Siddhant:

Since different countries have different socio-economic conditions, they have varying degrees of freedom to deal with issues like global warming. Poor countries, while may have the highest concentration of pollution, they have to deal with more pressing problems like food scarcity, jobs, infrastructure etc. Due to this they may not have the bandwidth or public support to deal with important but “slow burn” issues like sustainability. The rich countries, who have provided the basics for their population can seriously think of issues like sustainability, but they are not the major sources of pollution (barring America, that acts like an immature adolescent). So how does one resolve this mismatch between the where the intervention is most needed vs where it’s happening ? Is our only hope a massive external shock that resets the system? Or do we let things go on and let things take its course, hoping for the best ? Or do you think the current efforts to tackle issues like global warming and sustainable development will suffice? If yes, will only the rich benefit by the virtue of being rich and lucky? How do we coordinate this effort and distribute gains fairly?

My two cents’ worth: The current efforts will not suffice. Humanity will end up in some kind of dystopia, perhaps the rich living their oasis life behind fences, the rest roaming in a Mad Max world. – You are spot on about the different pollution levels and different priorities. This is what Brundtland tried to address, with the best interest of the affluent part of the world in mind. The Commission’s definition, when its real emphasis is made visible, would read: “Sustainable development means stalling growth in Third World countries so that they don’t destroy the privileged future of our (Norwegian etc.) children and grandchildren.” – Nothing good happens in this game unless people in affluent countries realize that they will have to give up some things to make the planet livable for all and multinational corporations see the error of their ways. Fat chance?

Elizabeth:

You started and ended with the question "You can stop the trolley whenever you like, but it will probably not reach you in your lifetime, so why bother?" But it is looking clear that the trolley will reach many people who are alive today. We've seen during the covid crisis that many governments are willing to knowingly let the trolley go ahead to save "the economy". I suspect the same will happen with climate change, even as we go forward knowing full well the damage we are doing. I wonder if it would be equally accurate to ask "You can stop the trolley whenever you like, and it will reach you in your lifetime, but why bother?" How can we make sense of the seemingly utter absence of collective ethics when we no longer have the excuse that the problems are too temporally distant to pay attention to? Maybe it really is as simple as human selfishness and greed, but to act in such contradiction to our survival instincts makes no logical sense.

You are right, and the corona pandemic has shown well how short-sighted people can be. That justifies your formulation of the question. My strip's logic is that the trolley will not reach the people in the garden party during their lifetime. It will push through and roll over the nature, the not-so-affluent regions, the oppressed, and the poor, but it will not reach them. Perhaps ever. So why should they? What possible reason could they have? Except perhaps morality. Or humanity. Or just common decency. But those would surely be too much to ask.

Aleksandra:

To start with, how do we find the right way of being sustainable if we do not yet know what exactly we are trying to fix? I agree that human civilization does a lot of bad things to our planet and nature, but there is no consensus of what is exactly that bad or not that bad. For example, everyone kept saying about global warming and how dangerous it was. Later on, it was obvious that there is no global warming as such and this name just does not fit the reality. So next, we moved to the concept of global climate change to have something to fight in the name of justice. Though, there are still scientists who claim that climate change is a normal thing for the planet and it is an expected process for the Earth. Or, for instance, there are studies showing that changes in the climate might positively affect nature in some parts of the world, e.g. increasing amount of CO₂ in the air helps forests to grow and expand. So is it possible to

find the right sustainability strategy if there is no agreement on what is exactly wrong?

Well, judging by the ongoing Glasgow COP 26 meeting, the international community agrees on what is wrong – anything that allows global warming to proceed more than 1,5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. The same community has identified the main human cause for this – burning fossil fuels. So, the right sustainability strategy for the international community would be to reduce burning fossil fuels. By doing so they would, according to their own thinking, sustain the livability of the planet for humans globally. The local gains are recognized but deemed too small to reverse the judgement.

And the second question, assuming that we have found out what exactly to fix, do you think it would be possible to achieve sustainability while capitalism is ruling the world?

No.

Those who hold the power do not seem to me as caring much about the planet, nature, or sustainability, but more about saving their power and wealth. They could show that they care, but as we see, there is not that much point in all of the current initiatives.

Agreed. Which is why what world leaders say in Glasgow will not become reality any time soon.

Claire:

I was wondering about whether a unified definition of sustainability is needed. On the one hand, different contexts have different goals, priorities and capabilities in working towards sustainability. On the other hand, it seems we don't have time to be working towards different goals. How can we develop (co-develop?) the 'right' understanding of sustainability?

Maybe we should prioritise. The UN thinking is that all good goals in the world must be promoted at once. That could, as you say, be the problem. If humankind is choking on climate change, perhaps it should single-mindedly be the only thing we address right now. But then a minority (or a majority) member comes along and says that people have rights. After a short deliberation, we see the point in that, and so we slide back to doing everything at once. And failing to do that. Tough one to crack.

Tejas:

When we talk about SDGs, much of the participation in the said conferences and initiatives revolve around the developed nations. In my opinion (I might be totally wrong) to appear cleaner on paper and many economic incentives for governments, capitalists and consumers, the supply and labour intensive tasks can be (might be) pushed to the developing and underdeveloped nations (Latin America, China, India and parts of Africa). It doesn't stop there, the maritime trade and the fast-growing demand comes mainly in the developed countries. We have observed this with the chip shortage issue around the globe, for example. The pressure then shifts from the developed nations to the developing ones, truth is that these developing countries have huge economic disparities between their rich and poor, for the most part won't have the ideal infrastructure for sewage treatment, public health, and safety. Partly, the reason why the cost of productions could be lower as the average cost of living and living conditions. They have much more immediate reasons of concerns as discussed before. There might never be an equitable and responsible way to share responsibility, costs, and supply processes because countries are not ready to leave their short-term economic benefits. All this leads to a more dystopic future both economically and environmentally, doesn't it?

What can I say? I agree. Just look at the Glasgow meeting. – My constant question is: “Why do adults keep lying to Greta Thunberg and me? Are they evil or are they incompetent?” The first, paradoxically, could be better. We could replace “them”. But what if it’s the second? What if they are the best that we have? Frightening thought. – Having said that, humankind will survive, so some of the concerns are exaggerated. But that, in my book, might be even worse. Check out the other answers for this lecture and you will find that I am an extinctionist antinatalist. The sooner humans go away, the better. I am not holding my breath, though.

Jiancai:

In nowadays sustainability discourse, developed countries require China or other developing countries to have the same per capita carbon emissions as developed countries. Is this fair to the people who are still in a poor status?

For example, at the Copenhagen Climate Conference, according to the plan proposed by European and American countries, the total carbon emissions in the future world will be limited to 800 billion tons. Everyone’s carbon emissions

are locked at the current scale, and everyone has to reduce emissions. Based on the plan, the current 27 developed countries with 1.1 billion people account for 44% of the global carbon emission rights. In addition, 5.5 billion people, including China, account for 56% of the share. According to this plan, the per capita carbon emissions in developed countries will be 2.3 times that of the Chinese.

For me, the right to carbon emissions is a basic human right, and everyone should be the same, because all beings are equal. What do you think of this problem? I really want to hear your opinions and suggestions.

You throw an interesting curveball. A “human right to carbon emissions” might be a difficult pill to swallow, if and when we believe that the emissions have a real potential to damage the planet beyond repair (whatever that means). Off the top of my head, may I suggest an alternative? China locks the emissions to the current level (give or take a couple of billion tons) and the affluent countries reduce theirs to the same relative level by 2035. – Will you suggest this to the G20 leaders or should I? There might be some opposition. But never mind that, let’s be World Dictators for the duration of this exchange of ideas. What do you think? Would that work in your equality framework? What pros and cons can you think of?

Martta:

How to harness ambitious human curiosity for the moral benefit of humans and non-humans, in a manner which does not originate from fear?

Enlightenment philosophers, moving from the left to the right on my map of justice, argued that liberalism and/or utilitarianism were already doing this. We can all voluntarily agree to respect one another’s freedom, and this will, through human creativity and enterprise, lead to the greatest happiness of the greatest number. This is still our official thinking in liberal democracies. Unfortunately, in reality the “greatest number” who will have the “greatest happiness” are the middle and upper classes in the more affluent countries. The rest of humanity may think that the arrangement is not fair, and so we have seen the rise of nationalist communitarianism and intersectional feminism. Some of us may also think that nonhuman animals should be taken into account. There is no inbuilt mechanism for that in Enlightenment thinking. And finally, if we recognize liberalism as the ideological excuse for global capitalism and neocolonialism that it is, we may come to a paradoxical

conclusion. What we thought of as a solution along the lines you suggest turns out to be the ultimate source of our current problems – social injustice, global inequity, environmental degradation, and climate change.

Ronja:

Regarding the COP26 summit that finished just a few days ago, my question is, with the developed country -centric power structures, how could leaders improve the environmental justice (e.g. climate finance practices) of future summits? With Ali's question in mind, how can we, the people from developed countries, focus our efforts for the common good instead of complaining from the "guarded comfort of wealthy societies"? And instead of working to "help developing societies also get rich fast" how could we help them shift to, e.g., renewable energy?

I think that the aunties and uncles of the UN, EU, etc., should start by being honest. Now they are not, or that is my impression. They say that rescuing the planet is a priority, that the planet cannot be rescued unless X is done, then decide to do X-1, and go home and try to get an X-2 deal for their own country. It doesn't take a genius to see that this is not the way to get things done. They should either decide to do X and then go home to implement just that or admit that they cannot do it. At least the admission could prompt different kind of action. If the planet (as we know it) cannot be rescued, then let us start planning how to live in an unrescued one. Would that make sense to you?

Outi:

Can the (the European union) bioeconomy target to creating prosperity for all the citizens from limited resources end-up in a failure as the countries don't seem to get to an agreement? This question came into my mind particularly after the Glasgow summit?

It depends on what failure means. Europe will certainly continue contributing to the climate change, indirectly (by externalizing its pollution to other regions) if not directly (our chimneys will have filters built by somebody's cousin). In the process, Europe may retain its prosperity and keep the European middle classes relatively affluent and content, at the expense of the exploited classes in the continent and elsewhere. Or that is how I see the situation. What a little ray of sunshine I am.

Sahar:

If I got it correctly, the whole idea of sustainability concerns future generations. But if resources are to be held over for the future, what about millions of humans who now lack even their basic needs? (Bearing in mind that 821 million people – one in nine – suffer from hunger worldwide. Even more – one in three – suffer from some form of malnutrition.)

The solution seems to be one of these two options: to enlarge the resource supply (which is in conflict with sustainability goals) or to redistribute the resources. The first solution tends to be in direct conflict with the sustainability goals, so just the second approach remains.

My question is whether this approach has been addressed in any of the sustainability agenda or we just sacrifice the poor for the sake of the next generation.

Yes, according to the Brundtland ideology, Development = helping the millions who lack even basic needs & Sustainable = in a way that guarantees an affluent future like ours to our children and grandchildren. Global inequality is inbuilt in the model. The point of sustainable development is to provide a great future to “us” and ours and a not-entirely-miserable future to “them” and theirs. Now that “they” are allowed to talk in international meetings, the inequality and its impossibility have become visible.

Since the planet still has its limits, a redistribution of resources and wellbeing would indeed seem to be the only solution. Since “we” are still allowed to talk in international meetings, however, that solution is highly unlikely. So, a more realistic future scenario is that “we just sacrifice the poor for the sake of the next generation [of “us].” Which, to use a rude slang idiom, sucks.