

URBAN UTOPIA: HOW AMERICAN CITIES SHATTERED SOCIAL CAPITAL

by

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this work to my late aunt Ashlie Maria Villa, who always persevered for her education. Thank you for setting a wonderful example.

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ABSTRACT

Despite the decline in The United States' homeless population since its most recent peak in 2010, the number of homeless Americans is once again on the rise. With vacancy rates simultaneously declining across the nation, The United States government is forced to confront the very real need for truly sustainable development. This paper analyzes how The USA interpreted and implemented sustainability from the coinage of the term. Specifically, this paper analyzes how the term evolved over time, as well as circumstances in which American attempts towards sustainability have fallen short. In doing so, this paper will examine a history of urban development as well as what motivators were present before sustainability began to be a consideration. This will be followed by an examination of how climate change influenced the meaning of sustainability, and how this new focus would further impact urban development and the population of cities. Finally, this paper evaluates the decline in social capital that has simultaneously been occurring during the extreme growth of American cities in recent years. The results of this progressive analysis find that with profit being a priority for urban developers and planners, areas that once thrived have been splintered into factions and spread into suburbs. In order for urban sustainability in America to reach its full potential, the capitalist notion of constant growth will have to be compromised to finally prioritize the population's needs, regardless of the potential profit.

I. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Pre-20th Century City Formation

The United States was a largely agrarian society until the spark of the industrial revolution at the turn of the 19th century ("Economic Growth And The Early Industrial Revolution [Ushistory.Org]"). The revolutionary concept of a factory system was introduced to the American economy effectively changing the United States way of life as women began to see their first slivers of independence from their male counterparts, goods began to be produced more efficiently, and urban areas began to expand as citizens migrated closer to the city for job opportunities. This influx of residents brought issues in development as cities began to organically grow outward, with no real plans for infrastructure created. As the latter half of the 19th century approached, expansion and growth exponentially continued. Immigrants from across the Atlantic rushed over and freed slaves moved north to cities in search of job and housing opportunities.

Naturally, accommodations became scarce in industrial cities, and accommodations like tenements and shanties were constructed to house low-income citizens who could not afford residence within the city but needed the proximity for their job. In New York, specifically, tenements were old buildings that were converted into apartments for low-income families, with shanties being self-built homes in the undeveloped areas of the city. The increase in population density for cities like New York, Cleveland, and Philadelphia brought forward issues in public health and sanitation, pollution, and transportation, among other things ("City Life In The Late 19th Century"). In areas where the industrial development wouldn't have supported factories, equally problematic "mill towns"

or “company towns” were constructed around businesses to bring labor to the area, and varied widely in quality and structuring. In Lowell, Massachusetts, what was considered to be “America’s first large scale industrial community’,” set the precedent for company towns across the United States (Hirsch). Entering the second half of the 19th century, conditions in these early mill towns like Lowell had become just as treacherous as factory workers’ following the financial panic of 1837, and a large amount of Irish and German immigrants shortly thereafter were willing to work and live under much worse conditions than those before them (“Lowell Mill Girls and the Factory System, 1840”). By the end of the civil war, “More than half of New York City’s residents lived in tenement housing,” and conditions grew increasingly worse until the next centennial when the public would feel it their personal responsibility to help their cities (“Settlement | MCNY”). Accompanying the issue of the impoverished population brought by the industrial revolution came the problem of environmental degradation from pollutants produced by the industries built. In New Jersey, the Passaic River became so polluted from sewage and industrial waste that “the city had to abandon the Passaic as a water supply” and “homes along the waterway disappeared”— during summer months, the smell from the river was so foul that the factories in the area would close down (Melosi). The result of the industrialization boom could be summed up well by Lewis Mumford’s argument in *The City in History* claiming that “the growing tendency of cities to concentrate on economic activities to the virtual exclusion of other functions had a devastating effect on the physical environment”.

Transition into the Progressive Era and the City Beautiful Movement

After a publication titled *How the Other Half Lives* by Jacob Riis exposing the conditions that those residing in tenements had to endure, enough attention was drawn to the situation to incur the Tenement Housing Act of 1901, which established safety standards for future tenement building—including rules on things like fire safety and proper ventilation—and was the introduction of development regulations to municipal law (Bauman). Simultaneously with this sanitary reform push, the “City Beautiful” movement was picking up speed. City Beautiful was a movement that centered on the belief that “urban development and design should not be separated from social issues and should encourage civic pride and engagement” (Blumberg). Up until this point in time, aesthetics were not a primary concern in constructing cities, and the “dirtiness” that had become associated with cities symbolized industrial growth and economic gain. Washington DC was the first city to implement a government plan to regulate aesthetics, with other major cities shortly following thereafter, but one of the most notorious plans was the one built for Chicago. This plan focused on a civic center as the central point of the city, with major avenues extending out for 60 miles, as well as large parks, and a new system of transportation infrastructure to reduce traffic as well as connect Chicago to its outlying suburbs (Blumberg).

The City Beautiful movement was a symptom of the political movement that was occurring simultaneously — what would become known as the Progressive Era. The Progressive movement was “the response of various groups to problems raised by the rapid

industrialization and urbanization that followed the Civil War”, but all in all the movement was highly decentralized but concerned itself generally with “the repudiation of individualism and laissez-faire, concern for the underprivileged and downtrodden, the control of government by the rank and file, and the enlargement of governmental power in order to bring industry and finance under a measure of popular control” (“United States - The Progressive Era”). Settlement housing, an attempt at integrating into lower-class communities to help mobilize resources for those in the area, became more common in cities across the United States as social reform spread. The City Beautiful movement also brought with it the birth of genuine city planning and a movement away from the organic growth that had defined America’s development up to this point. There was a true focus on generosity and community prosperity, not just individual gain, and it could even be considered amongst the first environmental efforts owing to the focus on pollution reduction and increase in environmental preservation. Unfortunately, World War I saw the decline of the movement and though well-intended, the City Beautiful movement did not actually address any of the underlying issues of class, and instead catered more to the desires of the elite to prioritize aesthetics. The City Beautiful trend did, however, influence the planning efforts of suburban development with its focus on physical development (Gerckens).

Amidst the Great War, the local and federal government’s role in urban planning became concreted with the issuance of the first American zoning law, in New York City, 1916 (Campbell). As zoning spread as a practice, it was abused to cater to the elite once more, sectioning neighborhoods off from potential Black residents. A little over a year

later, the US Supreme Court ruled in *Buchanan v. Warley* that racially based zoning was unconstitutional, but zoning would be used as a systemic form of racial oppression for decades to come (United States Supreme Court). Aside from new zoning restrictions to get used to, more and more Americans were losing their homes due to war hardships. An increase in the amount of Black rural Americans migrating to cities to fill the open jobs left by those fighting in the war occurred, densifying cities even further. In 1918, Congress approved two federal housing agencies, one of which was the US Housing Corporation, which provided 55 different housing projects across the country for working class citizens and their families.

Intra-War Confusion

After the war, the *laissez-faire* theory returned to American politics, and the economy slowed severely in the demobilization of war, with the disparity between lower and middle classes becoming greater than it had ever been. The rural migrants who had left their lives behind for opportunity were left without their jobs as soldiers returned from war (Bauman). Black communities were growing in numerical and geographic size, yet the only new constructions occurring were the suburbs that were beginning to become popular. The invention of the automobile made transportation even easier, and the desire to leave the crowded city and its new inhabitants for a green paradise was fostered heavily by private developers and loan associations, so those who could afford to made the move to the suburb. With the lack of additional housing for low-income families, most of whom were immigrants or Black Americans, old residencies were quickly converted into tenement housing that once again did not meet codes due to landlords' apathy for the

populations they were housing (Bauman). The roaring 20s provided two very different lifestyles for American citizens, but this came to a slamming halt in 1929 with the Great Depression (Campbell).

The Great Depression left most Americans with significantly less than they had before, and all of the development from years before meant nothing as houses were fore-closed and families were kicked out. When Roosevelt entered office in 1933, he got to work on his series of social programs and reforms that became known as The New Deal, in an attempt to repair the American economy and society. The New Deal has been criticized as overall ineffective, and while it may not have been the great uplifter of the economy like it was intended, it held America together through the establishment of large scale social programs and welfare, reestablishment of faith in the government, and established necessary regulations to the private sector. What The New Deal did not do, was benefit Black people, comparatively (Leuchtenburg). "Instead of using New Deal programs to promote civil rights, the administration consistently bowed to discrimination" and refused to enforce equality ("African Americans And The New Deal"). In fact: "Most New Deal programs discriminated against Blacks. The NRA, for example, not only offered whites the first crack at jobs, but authorized separate and lower pay scales for Blacks. The Federal Housing Authority (FHA) refused to guarantee mortgages for Blacks who tried to buy in white neighborhoods, and the CCC [Civilian Conservation Corps] maintained segregated camps. Furthermore, the Social Security Act excluded those job categories Blacks traditionally filled ("African Americans And The New Deal"),"

In terms of urban development, the elimination of slums was once more a major concern for local governments and organizations. The National Housing Act of 1934 created the Federal Housing Administration, which refused “to insure mortgages in and near African-American neighborhoods,” a process known as redlining (Bauman). The FHA specifically said to landowners and realtors that “if a neighborhood is to maintain stability it is necessary that properties continue to be occupied by the same social and racial classes. A change in social or racial occupancy generally leads to instability and a reduction in values” (Underwriting Manual). Using these private entities as loopholes to the prior established zoning laws, segregation based on race and income level continued, families suffered, and the neighborhoods that we raise our children in today are formed from these same loopholes that continue to masquerade as private enterprise and the free market.

Ultimately, what recovered the economy from the Great Depression was the boost in the productivity that always comes with wartime, when the United States entered World War II in 1941. As with WWI, the draft left plenty of opportunity in the job sector for people of color and women, but racial tensions had grown much tighter since then, and discrimination did not recede in light of the war. In Detroit, a half-mile long, 6-foot tall wall was built in the 8 mile neighborhood to separate Black and white neighborhoods before the FHA would supply loans to develop in the area (Van Dusen). Roosevelt’s GI Bill of 1944 followed the same route as the New Deal had, and benefits were left up to state governments to distribute, allowing the Jim Crow laws of the time to bar even those who had just volunteered their service from owning homes in suburbs. In situations where Black veterans did succeed in obtaining a home in these areas, white neighbors

abused them, as they did to John Fort when he moved into a post-war housing project in Chicago (The New York Age). Every opportunity that the United States government had to step in and prevent redlining and racial discrimination was forfeited, and social mobility and opportunity for Black citizens was taken off of the table to be offered to their white counterparts.

Deindustrialization

The suburbs of America continued to fill and expand as post-war consumerism picked up once more and deindustrialization set in. At this point in history, the cycle is becoming more clear in the ways that American society and cities were functioning:

1. Development to better communities (often increasing resources).
2. Migration of less privileged populations to improved urban areas (to access resources/ heighten the quality of life).
3. Migration of middle and upper-class populations to a new or “better” area (often trying to escape the cons of an urban lifestyle).
4. De-urbanization of the area left behind (less taxpayer funding, decline in industry/employment, eventual physical decline due to lack of ability to repair)
5. Re-urbanization (clearing of slums, establishing “proper” neighborhoods and structures)

Though racially restrictive covenants in neighborhoods had been “banned” (The Supreme Court ruled that the covenants did not violate the 14th amendment, but their enforcement by state courts did) in 1948, the “white flight” of the 50s and 60s continued to push suburbs out in number and distance, and even with the ability for some people of color to begin making moves into the white neighborhoods that were being abandoned, the low-

est-income citizens that depended on public housing began to lose their homes, and the United States began to see the first breakings of what had become cultural hubs and safe havens in the US ("Planning History Timeline"). The Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956 aided this mission even further by approving the United States highway system, which often served “sometimes as walls, sometimes as a wedge and sometimes as an extractor in Black communities around the country”; Like it did in Overtown, Florida, for example (Archer, Addressing The Racial Inequities Of The Interstate Highway System). If social capital was synonymous with “neighborliness” in 1961, these urban deteriorations were also at the detriment of social capital in the United States, and the loss of a system as deeply rooted as a neighborhood would prove to be difficult to replace (Jacobs).

Outside of substandard housing, urban areas were experiencing the beginning of the “urban crisis”, which warranted then-President LBJ to enact a slew of revitalization policies like the Urban Mass Transportation Act of 1964, the creation of the Department of Housing and Development, and the creation of CAPs (Community Action Program) — ultimately ineffective, but raised awareness for the need to include the communities needs in development, as well as highlighting the need to include social, political, and economic development as priorities in planning as well ("Planning History Timeline"). Not until the Housing Act of 1968 “prohibited discrimination against a property renter or buyer on the basis of race, color, religion, or national origin; gender was added in 1974 and disability and familial status in 1988” was racial discrimination in housing that had created such a large disparity banned outright. Despite what little help these programs may have provided, they largely followed the same pattern of benefitting few disadvantaged Americans,

and in some cases like the Transportation Act of 1964, these programs did more harm than good (Archer, “White Men’s Roads Through Black Men’s Homes’: Advancing Racial Equity Through Highway Reconstruction”).

II. THE BUDDING OF SUSTAINABILITY

Coinage of the Term

The term “sustainable development” made its first official government appearance in “The Brundtland Report,” also known as *Our Common Future*, a document published by the World Commission on Environment and Development (Jarvie). Upon the term’s introduction in this document, it was defined as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (“Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future - A/42/427 Annex - UN Documents: Gathering a body of global agreements,” 2021). The actual first large wave of environmentalism in the United States, however, began in 1969 with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), which was put into effect to ensure that government agencies were considering environmental impact before making decisions on any policies and projects passed. The National Environmental Protection Agency and Clean Air Act followed shortly thereafter in 1970. In 1973, Oregon became the first State to enact a land use law to preserve environmental features and create urban growth boundaries. The Endangered Species Act also came along in 1973, followed by the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act of 1976. Environmentalism was thriving, and conservation efforts were at large, but sustainability as we come to know it in the Brundtland report was not at play during this time.

What Early Sustainability Looked Like

It is worth noting that just because the public sector was not viewing environmentalism and sustainability in modern terms did not mean that academic and environmental professionals were on the same page. In 1981, Lester Brown published *Building a Sustainable Society* that discusses sustainability at length and how lack of sustainability policy creates issues with population growth and natural resources over time (Brown). The US also saw its first “New Urbanist” town in Seaside, Florida, a community built with New Urbanism principles in mind, such as “walkable neighborhoods, sustainability, traditional neighborhood design, transit-oriented development, and other practices intended to encourage a sense of community” (Campbell). It’s worth noting, as well, that in the 2019 Census, Walton County, where Seaside is located, had a population composed of 89.6% White residents (Quickfacts Walton County, Florida). This, as well as the fact that Walton County raised a confederate flag in 1964 in response to civil rights movements and continues to fly the same flag today, infers that the lack of diversity in Seaside is not coincidental, and that instead Black Americans were discouraged from joining the community. While this issue of ‘incidental’ segregation was marking both small towns and large cities across the US, primarily Black communities nationwide were becoming dumping grounds for toxic waste that the Environmental Protection Agency had been tasked with disposing of in 1980. Rather than practicing true environmental sustainability by finding genuine solutions or limiting the production of toxic waste, the US and local governments were instead cleaning up elite and primarily white communities at the expense of minority populations (Bullard, 2008).

Aside from the faux appearance of sustainable development in environmental factors, in the 80's the United States was continuing suburban growth and beginning to see the modern era of homelessness. The notoriously race-motivated war on drugs grew the United States' incarceration rate, prison system, and police force, and with no rehabilitation for addicts, those who were returned to the "free world"— with no belongings, and no prospects due to their criminal charges — were subject to a cycle of disenfranchisement, relapse, criminal activity, and incarceration (Morrison). Nixon's deinstitutionalization of the mentally ill in the 60's resulted in a flood of those with disabilities to the streets with little funding for housing or services, and the consequences of the crack epidemic contributed not only to the amount of homeless Americans and economic inequalities in the US, but also to social tensions as the criminal justice system cracked down on Black communities. The negative view of cities was worsened by this conflict between law enforcement and residents as well as the new association of cities with drugs and drug users as a result of propaganda from the War on Drugs. The recession of the early 80's increased economic disparities between communities as deep cuts were made to the social programs that Americans desperately needed. It wasn't until the Tax Reform Act of 1986 that private companies were finally incentivized to create low-income housing that the majority of affordable housing that exists today was built. Due to the depreciation of rental property from this act combined with the tax credits from construction severely curbed the production of multi-family units in the US, and concreted the idea of single unit housing as high-density buildings dropped off in production (Punter).

The Introduction of Climate Change

In 1987, the same year that “The Brundtland Report” was published, The Montreal Protocol was adopted by all UN members agreeing to combat the emission of substances that were depleting the ozone layer. The following year, the International Panel on Climate Change was created to be assessing evidence about human-induced climate change as fires being created in the Amazon for deforestation and creation of farm land were found to be a contributor to global warming (Simons). The following years provided multiple other instances in which the consequences of climate change were beginning to be felt, such as when an Exxon oil tanker spilled 11 million gallons of oil into the Prince William Sound off the coast of Alaska. As oil pockets continue to be found in the area of the spill over two decades later, the permanent risks of fossil fuels outside of just emissions were realized and the Oil Pollution Act of 1990 created a trust fund from oil tax revenue to aid in potential future cleanups. In 1991, cod fishing on the coast of Canada collapsed from overfishing. Seemingly all at once, climate change became an ominous future that the planet was slowly inching towards.

A Reframing of the Term “Sustainability”

After the publication of “The Brundtland Report” and the sudden increase in natural disasters, ‘sustainability’ came to be known as a concept that struggled to exist alongside the laissez-faire capitalism and the term was defined by the endorsement of “social equity, economic growth and environmental maintenance” (Du Pisani). This made the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) meeting of 1992 especially important as it introduced the idea of sustainable development to the

general public for the first time, and this introduction was being made as a global non-binding agreement made by all representatives and nation-states. Agenda 21, a “comprehensive plan of action to be taken globally” to forward environmental sustainability and development, expected participation from every level, individual to international (“Agenda 21”). Despite this new global initiative for sustainability, in the United States Agenda 21 was met with uncertainty and resistance.

In recent years, environmentalism had “begun to accrue political baggage and unhelpful connotations,” especially in association with environmental racism and justice (Heid). The issues of environmental racism defined by Robert Bullard as “any policy, practice, or directive that differentially affects or disadvantages individuals, groups, or communities based on race or color” had brought forth Black representatives as the strongest supporters on environmental causes (1994). Because of racial and geographic alignments, Republicans echoed anti-environmentalist sentiments, and even with then President George H.W. Bush’s promised support for Agenda 21 in a press conference following the convention in Rio, right-wing groups such as The John Birch Society and the Freedom Advocates began the pushback against Agenda 21 (“George H.W. Bush Rio Earth Summit”). A large amount of Anti-Agenda 21 literature was quickly published and then regurgitated by smaller groups with similar interests, and what started as a resistance in The United States grew into a conspiracy quickly. The largest argument and fear-mongering tactic used by these groups was: “Agenda 21 threatens United States sovereignty to a globalizing UN, along with...diminished individual freedom and private property rights,” essentially accusing the United Nations of using climate change as an excuse to

implement policy that restricts personal freedom (Norton, 2014).

Where Sustainability Began to Appear in Urban Planning

Even with the resistance to sustainable development in the United States, some progress towards sustainability was still made with the HOPE VI program implemented in 1992. The HOPE VI program aimed to turn public housing into mixed-income housing that was up to code. The program has experienced varied criticisms as the most impoverished citizens had their homes destroyed and were never given a truly suitable alternative (Stone, and Stoker). This revitalization method was also criticized because “impoverished communities are subject to pressures of gentrification,” and HOPE VI development in some cities was taking place in areas that had the most potential for economic payoffs rather than the neighborhoods that were the most distressed (Savitch). Other efforts towards sustainable development across the country occurred over the next decade: the evolution of ‘green’ branding and marketing for companies, the signing of the Kyoto Protocol in 1997, the enactment of NAFTA, the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 and the introduction of the LEED building standards for green building development. The US was taking the first steps towards sustainability in economic, natural, and human resources, but the turn of the century brought with it a new attitude towards sustainable development and environmentalism.

After the implementation of Agenda 21, there were fundamental issues with the participation of citizens in environmental sustainability. One of the largest issues was the obscurity of ways in which communities could implement sustainability, but was instead geared “To promote an open, non-discriminatory and equitable multilateral trading sys-

tem that will enable all countries - in particular, the developing countries - to improve their economic structures and improve the standard of living of their populations through sustained economic development” (“Agenda 21”, 1992). At the UN Millennium Summit in 2000, Agenda 21 was replaced with the Millennium Development Goals which focused less on sustainability through economic stability and support, but instead through social assistance and community-nurturing policies. In 2001, President George H.W. Bush refused to sign the Kyoto Protocol into effect once more, and with 9/11 striking the United States that same year, what little fire the sustainability movement might have had left was forgotten as the country shifted to a defense against outside threats.

ANALYSIS

What is Social Capital?

Social capital as a term is rather abstract in nature, at least when compared to measurable capitals such as economic or natural. For the purpose of this paper, social capital is most simply defined as ‘neighborliness’, or our relationships with one another and the ability to co-operate with one another. Social capital also can and should be measured based on a government’s ability to care for their citizens through social programs and community resources such as public schools. In the history of the United States, social capital has never been prioritized by name, but the objectives that uphold social capital such as community and personal relationships have continuously declined despite attempts to preserve this aspect of American life. Social capital is fundamental to sustainability especially as living conditions in the US become more competitive and resources become scarce because a nation cannot sustain its current population without providing

welfare for citizens who cannot support themselves under societal norms.

Social capital saw its decline in the United States as government initiatives continued to fracture and disband communities of minority groups in revitalization efforts. As America transitioned to a postindustrial economy that had reduced manufacturing job opportunities and instead saw the majority of opportunities for employment in positions that required more education than was average, “those who cannot adapt [were] nudged to the side (Savitch).” Cities like Baltimore, MD that used to boom with life began to decay quickly without their supporting industries, and it was these cities that had the most difficulty transitioning after the rapid deindustrialization after the wars. Residents who were able to leave did, and those who couldn’t stayed until revitalization efforts began in the late-20th century. Even then, the pieces of these broken neighborhoods were patched up not with resources for the remaining residents, but instead with shiny new businesses and infrastructure that gentrify the area and eventually remove the lingering locals due to increased demand in the area’s market (Stone and Stoker).

On the other hand, urban areas that did survive deindustrialization struggled with a different set of problems as cities like San Francisco became among the most diverse in the nation inviting migrants from foreign countries. This population influx for these regions repeated the cycle from the centuries before as segregation toward Black communities and their members was forgotten in the metropolitan heaven, only to be replaced with a with a new ‘lower caste’ of immigrants. This alternative community should not be considered a better option to the dying cities as social capital remains frayed in these areas due to conflict of groups and outright discrimination against minority members. The re-

peated cycles of splintering neighborhoods and rebuilding new ones from the fragments has resulted in communities where members don't interact, and therefore social capital struggles to survive (Stone and Stoker).

CONCLUSION

Inherent Conflicts with Capitalist Structures and Sustainable Development and the Next Steps Forward

The United States has a fairly prolific list of environmental and sustainability policies, so why do we still struggle to support our own population? With the benefit of hindsight, it's becoming more clear that attempts at 'cleaning up' or 'revitalizing' cities were often focused on aesthetic benefit early on, and became financially motivated in the post-industrial economy. One of the largest inhibitors to growth in social capital and environmental sustainability is the prioritization of laissez-faire capitalism and the idea of constant economic growth. Not only has the leniency of limitations on corporations created irreversible damage to the physical environment of the US, but the continued control and influence of United States policy by companies who put profits first has resulted in broken communities as the elite decide where their next move will be and take whatever means necessary to obtain it. In order for urban sustainability in America to reach its full potential, the capitalist notion of constant growth will have to be compromised to finally prioritize the population's needs, regardless of the potential profit.

Without the willingness to compromise on economic gain, true urban sustainability will be difficult to obtain due to the need to provide social programs to begin rebuilding families and social capital in communities that already exist. This compromise will

need to be seen further in development projects as we move towards more high-density structures in urban areas and as the ‘white-picket-fence’ American dream will have to be forfeited to accommodate the growing population. Despite the inherent conflicts between sustainability and capitalism, it is possible to live happily and sustainably while still participating in a free market - it is specifically the insistence on not ‘wasting funding’ on social spending that directly inhibits growth towards sustainability. In focusing on the social capital of American citizens, one is investing into the human, natural, and economic capital of the country by creating a system of mutual benefits where all actors can assist one another (Hester) . While political tensions surrounding environmentalism and sustainability continue to grow, the need for sustainability becomes more important as the impacts of climate change grow more severe.

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