

Resources and Allocation of Resources

With an ever-expanding population on planet earth, we place increasing stress on the resources available on the planet. History shows us that scarce resources are a primary cause of war and oppression, as the “stronger” attempt to take charge of the resources at the expense of the “weaker”.

History also shows us that population growth is directly tied to economic well-being in an inverse proportion; that is, the higher the standard of living generally the lower the birth rate.

A moderated birth rate reduces the long-term burden on resources.

Some of the key resources that need to be viewed include access to water, food, and a clean environment, energy and the ability to dispose of waste in a way that does not burden or pollute the planet.

The question is not only one of production capability but also of distribution and allocation of the resources. An inefficient distribution model leads to high levels of wasted resources, thereby exacerbating the “scarcity”. This is particularly evident in areas such as food and water. It is estimated that 30-50% of the food produced is actually wasted through inefficient utilization and distribution methods, which leads to over-abundance in some areas with consequent waste; and spoilage as food is transported and made available to consumers in various locations. Similarly in the USA we find that municipal water systems tend to waste very high percentages of the water they produce through leakage in old and outdated water distribution systems (pipes).

Fresh water has been identified as a flash point for potential warfare throughout the world as it becomes ever scarcer and various regions fight for control. Climate change can increase the dislocations by making some areas far drier than in the historical past, while others get far more rainfall and thus, experience disastrous flooding, which can, paradoxically, reduce fresh water supply as it cannot be captured and managed effectively.

Another issue is the economic system used to allocate resources. There is no simple answer to these questions. Various “solutions” have been tried but to date, none of them has entirely resolved the issues. Some appear to have worse consequences than others. We see today in the world a movement toward extreme concentration of resources under the control of and allocated by a very small number of individuals, representing far less than 1-2% of the world’s population. It is estimated that the wealthiest 2% of individuals actually control more than 70% of the world’s resources, which means that only 30% of the resources is available for the other 98%. If we go to the wealthiest 10% of individuals, the number exceeds 90% of the resources, which means that 90% of the individuals are being asked to live their lives and survive effectively on 10% of the resources. There is an obvious mismatch here which has reached these extreme proportions in modern times, imbalancing a traditional allocation of resources that was much more evenly distributed, even if extremes at both ends still occurred. There has historically been a much broader availability of resources to a much larger population and the experiment we are trying today in concentrating all the resources in a very small group is an extremely dangerous experiment, and subject to tremendous pressure of human suffering, and dramatically increased potential for both civil unrest and warfare. It matters little, for purposes of this analysis,

whether the 1-2% that control and allocate the resources do it through “private enterprise” or through “state management” systems. The effect is the same either way!

Various reviews have shown that the resources being used by advanced Western societies would require as many as NINE planet earths to sustain such a lifestyle for the world’s population. This excessive consumption model may have “worked” in theory as long as the vast majority of people on the planet had neither knowledge of nor access to information and products on the world markets, but in today’s world, we find that populations everywhere aspire and strive for increased access to goods and services and thereby increase the pressure on resources. It cannot be expected that 7 billion people will agree to live a life of destitution, poverty, suffering, hunger and privation so that a few hundred million people can live a life of comparative luxury. Thus, we see an increased demand for food, water, energy, and goods of convenience or entertainment throughout the world, leading to further pressure on the resources of the planet, and increasing the dislocation between the small numbers who control virtually all the resources and those vast numbers of people who do not. This has led to a situation of virtually constant warfare and massive humanitarian crises throughout the world. Climate change enhanced by the global warming impact of modern industrialized and energy-intensive society increases the dislocations involved. Explosive population growth fueled by the low standard of living simply increases the speed and magnitude of the breakdowns we witness.

Solutions short of brutal suppression, constant warfare and eventual breakdown of the entire global infrastructure and potentially the planetary eco-systems (note that overfishing is already depleting various formerly abundant fishing locales) must necessarily require the application of the following principles:

1. Moderation of resource and energy use by highly developed societies
2. Development of more efficient distribution models to conserve resources
3. Repair of broken or old infrastructure that wastes resources
4. Moderation of pollution to conserve fresh water and reduce burden on the planet and enhance long-term health, thereby reducing suffering and required allocation of resources for health care needs.
5. Repair of the broken allocation models that concentrate all the resources in a very small percent of the population and return to a more normal historical pattern of more even resource allocation models

Santosh Krinsky
[Institute for Wholistic Education](#)
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