

Editorial

***Economies* and Sustainability**

Shu-Kun Lin

Publisher of *Economies*, MDPI AG, Postfach, CH-4005 Basel, Switzerland; E-Mail: lin@mdpi.com

Received: 5 January 2013 / Accepted: 10 January 2013 / Published: 15 January 2013

The motivation for launching the journal *Economies* (ISSN 2227-7099) is my concern regarding human sustainability [1,2]. There are two major categories of economic systems: capitalism, or free market economy and socialism, or planned economy. The last 30 years have witnessed great social change in China, for example, indicating that the free market economy has prevailed and now dominates around the World.

My interest in economic systems and sustainability is not in the so-called sustainable development, which is basically the continued economic growth based on ever-increasing production output and consumption. The free market economy needs an unlimited world market and inexhaustible natural resources. Unfortunately, the Earth has a limited size and we cannot trade with capitalists from another planet within any foreseeable years to come.

Human beings have had a great impact on the environment for 10,000 years [3], particularly since the beginning of the industrial revolution about 250 years ago. Suppose we define the degree of sustainability as 1.00 if we can thrive for another 10,000 years. However, the degree of sustainability will be only 0.01 if within 100 years the major nonrenewable natural resources such as minerals are exhausted by man and the ambient environmental conditions which the human species and other forms of life (plants and animals and microorganisms) have adapted to (for example, the air we breathe should be ideally still be at 1 atmosphere, the annual average temperature about 25 °C, the composition of the air remains the same and there is no dramatic increase in CO₂ content, ...), are abruptly and greatly changed, whereby human beings may become extinct or subjectively terminate themselves because it is too much suffering to continue to survive under the unbearable conditions.

It might be feasible that regional and national governments or international organizations like the UN play a much greater role and consider a mixed socio-economic system adding a certain degree of socialism and a certain degree of planned economy or a certain degree of command-based economy, to cope with the limited availability of resources and ensure environmental condition stability. Of course, as an academic or scholarly research topic, modeling or computer simulations can be carried out for the situation in which the countries in the world take up socialism and pure planned economies. It would be interesting to see whether the resulting degree of sustainability corresponding to this extreme

economic system is significantly higher or not compared to the degree of sustainability of the present capitalism-dominated World structure [4].

Concerning the currently much favored social system of democracy, if a degree of human sustainability of 1.00 is our ultimate goal and the utmost priority, it might also be a good academic research topic to consider by modeling and computer simulating what would happen in a world ruled by great minds who might want to mandate that we abruptly and completely stop all kinds of mining and start to preserve all still-remaining nonrenewable resources and plan the use of them for the 10,000 years or 500 generations to come. Of course, the consequences of “stop mining” or any similar decision as can be found from the computer simulation output must be interesting academic research results. However, these topics might be outside of the scope of *Economies* and more pertinent for another MDPI journal like *Sustainability* [2].

Disclaimer: The opinion presented in this publisher’s Editorial, does not necessarily represent any publishing or editorial policy and topic coverage orientation of the company MDPI AG and the journal *Economies*; the author assumes sole responsibility for its content.

References and Notes

1. The present author launched a yearly conference series called *World Sustainability Forum* that has been held since 2011. See: <http://www.wsforum.org>. See also <http://www.sciforum.net/conf/wsf2>.
2. MDPI launched a journal called *Sustainability* (ISSN 2071-1050) in 2009; homepage: <http://www.mdpi.com/journal/sustainability/>.
3. Diamond, J. *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed*; Viking Press: New York, NY, USA, 2005.
4. Randers, J. *2052: A Global Forecast for the Next Forty Years*; Chelsea Green Publishing: White River Junction, VT, USA, 2012.

© 2013 by the authors; licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/>).