

**Geological Repositories: A Common Objective, a Variety of Paths -
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Societal Aspects and Ethical Issues

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World Commission's Report on Environment and Development, *Our Common Future*, from 1987 (OUP)

The development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. (p. 43)

Two ideas of sustainability

- **Weak sustainability**

the agenda of sustainable development be reduced to the workings of neoclassical economy.

- **Strong sustainability**

natural capital cannot be reduced to monetary capital: “politically generated restraints on the unfettered market informed by ecologically generated information concerning ecosystem health” (Carpenter 1997, p. 22)

Three problems of strong sustainability

- *The ignorance problem*

We do not know what future people want and need

- *The distance problem*

Is it really meaningful to speak of a moral responsibility to remote generations?

- *The extent problem*

How extensive are our obligations to future generations?

Anvar de-Shalit, *Why Posterity Matters* (1995, p. 14)

A theory of morality...should not demand the absolutely impossible. If people are told that they should share natural resources, e.g. coal, with people who would be alive six or twelve generations from now, they will at least listen and may even tend to agree. But if they are told that they should share access to coal with someone living in the year 2993 or 3993, the response will probably be, "To hell with morality and intergenerational justice! This is ridiculous; such policies do not make any sense because they are inconceivable!"

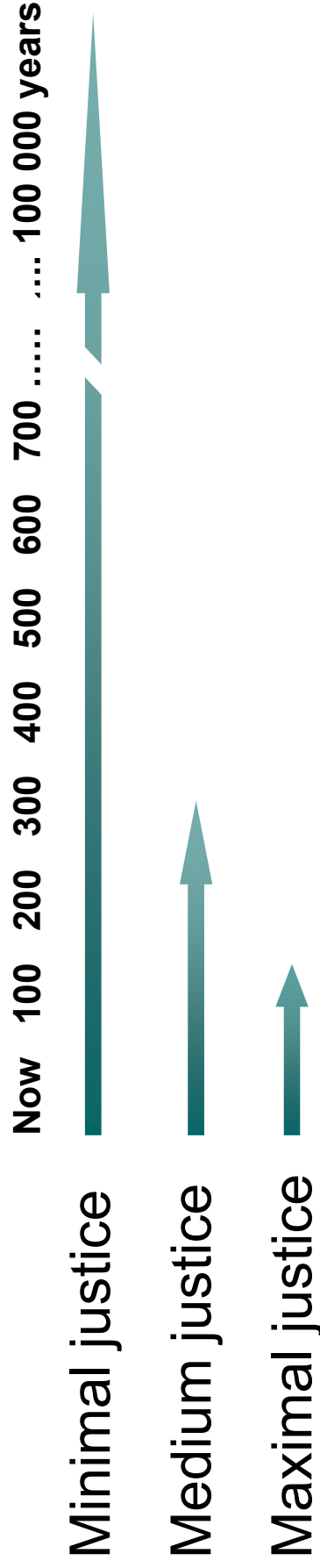
The idea of diminishing responsibility

(for the future in our use of natural resources)

- The *minimal* principle of justice
We have a moral obligation to avoid harming future generations
- The *medium* principle of justice
We have a moral obligation to satisfy future generations' basic needs
- The *maximal* principle of justice
We have a moral obligation to contribute to future generations' effort to achieve a quality of life at least equal to ours.

Three timelines that define the main applications of the principles of justice in time

(From *Nuclear Waste. State of the Art Reports 2005*. KASAM, p. 440)



The idea of the rolling present

- Preserve the gains that our culture and civilisation have made for posterity!
- Maintain our just institutions – and those institutions that maintain justice – intact!
- Pass on to future generations a greater capital, in the form of more knowledge and better developed technology than we ourselves received from previous generations!

(from John Rawls)