

# The Sustainablism Manifesto: Executive Summary

A global pandemic has brought humanity into a state of shared experience on a level unlike any before. Do we emerge from this nightmare with a sense of triumph, unapologetically returning to past ways? Or do we proceed with the recognition that a world apparently too big to fail sits on a fragile foundation? An unbiased, open and label-free confrontation of our past is our chance for growth.

Coordinated, collaborative economic models have not yet found real oxygen, a failure which reinforces the barriers that deny upward mobility. Furthermore, humanity is bumping up against the carrying capacity of earth's gifts, with a tinderbox of social tensions ready to blaze. The question of whether we can escape the past is existential, and so the answer binds our very future.

While we may well strive for wholesale changes throughout our society, balancing our aims with what is realistic, and with what will move the needle, should guide our direction. As important as the ballot box, economic participation is a weapon the individual can wield on a daily basis. We are not, however, taking this weapon up in a meaningful way. The low-hanging fruit for affecting change can be found by following the primary pillar of Sustainablism: a sustainable business organization (SBO).

There are four defining organizational principles required by SBOs: 50% employee ownership / 50% customer ownership, equitably minded governance <sup>1</sup>, hyper-transparency <sup>2</sup> and externality <sup>3</sup> recapture. SBO entrepreneurs work toward three primary outcomes: levelling the socioeconomic playing field (i.e. rising tides lift all boats equitably), establishing superior economic equilibria<sup>4</sup> & outcomes and reducing the load on government.

Under the SBO framework, every transaction involves owners seeking fairness and sustainability. This effect cascades through supply chains because the sellers to end consumers are indeed owners of their suppliers.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> e.g., limits on the C-suite : mean employee wage ratio

<sup>2</sup> i.e., visibility into supply chain transactions

<sup>3</sup> e.g., calculating the economic cost of pollution

<sup>4</sup> e.g., balancing supply with demand

<sup>5</sup> If they sit in the middle of a supply chain, their customers are 50% owners of the firm one step down the chain, and so on.

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An assemblage of SBO firms effectively becomes 50 percent owners of all sides of every transaction in a given supply chain, with consumption restricted to the goods and services customers actually want to buy, as profit-seeking owners. Ownership is the most important path to wealth and is therefore the most important means of levelling the socioeconomic playing field. Furthermore, with ownership supercharging agency, Sustainablism outcomes flowing from the bottom up are able to gain more traction than the status quo. The pursuit of profit under Sustainablism is a unifying force rather than a rivalrous one.

The establishment of Sustainablism represents a moving of the invisible hand of the free market, wherever it hovers over the dark side, into the light. Furthermore, the Sustainablism system relies on the capitalist toolkit of individual private ownership, supply and demand, price signaling, and competitive forces to direct the economy. However, in contrast to socialism where the profit from transactions is directed to a single commons;<sup>6</sup> individuals with access to SBOs can direct their transactions to a capitalist commons that they themselves define, own and control. Sustainablism is a centrist approach to economic thought, the design of which should appeal to everyone across the political spectrum. It is capitalist with respect to rules and processes and socially conscious with respect to outcomes.

With a wave of policy change upon us, we need to add business organization to the list of the many fields that will be restructured in 2021. 'Innovate or die' never rang more true than it does today.

Business can no longer afford to look the other way or engage in green-washing; stakeholders demand that commercial enterprise align with their values in an authentic way. The organizational principles of SBOs guarantees this alignment across different supply chains and through the economy. Finally, Sustainablism incorporates some of the best features of existing economic systems while locking out their respective worst features - no revolution required.

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<sup>6</sup> The commons is the resources shared by everyone in a free society, e.g., roads, air, information.