

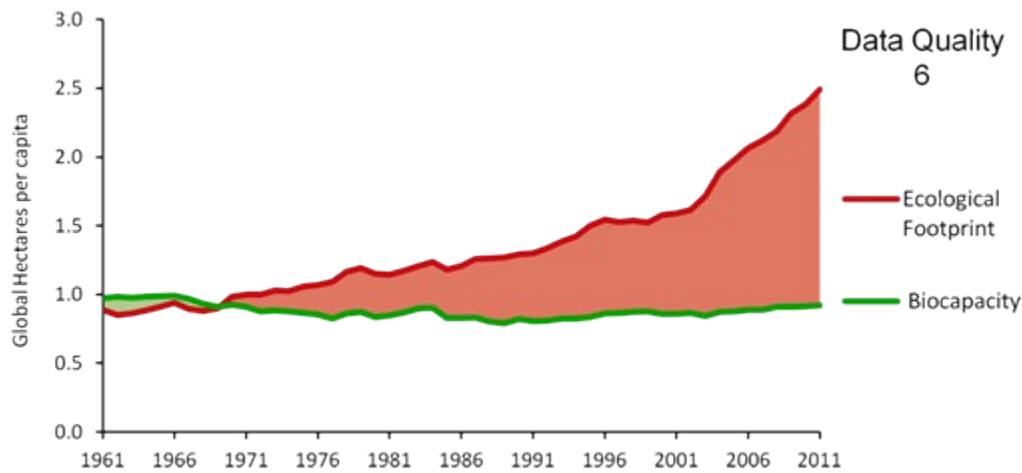


MULTI DIMENSION IMPACT ACCOUNTING (MDIA)

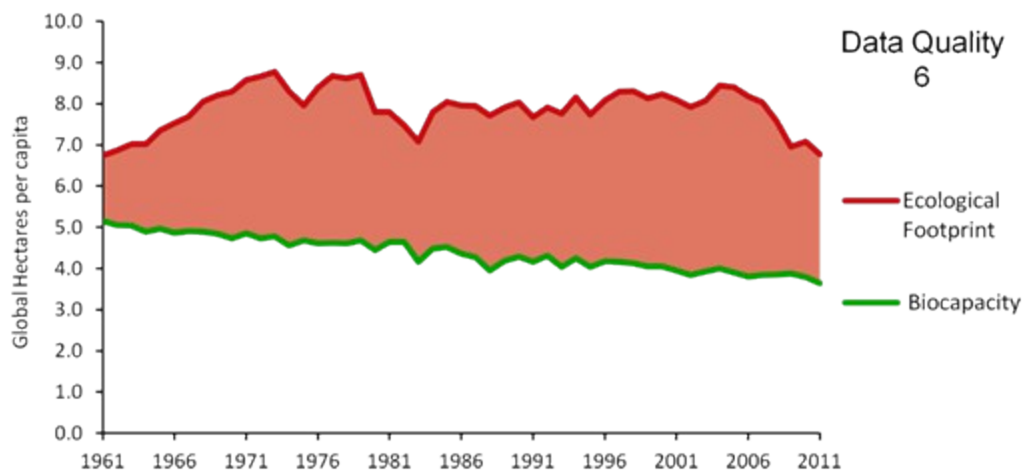
An MDIA perspective on the state of our global ecological footprint

March 2015

I am grateful to the Global Footprint Network for making important data easily available. This is for China:



This graph shows the same set of data for the United States:



Sadly, the vast bulk of the commentary about global ecological footprint, carbon footprint, and the like is that there is a problem with China. This is not, in my view, supported by the available data.

Take these two graphs of data about the ecological footprint versus biocapacity for China and the United States. Clearly China is growing its per capita biocapacity deficit at an increasingly rapid rate. By comparison the United States is holding steady with quite modest fluctuations. Maybe the United States is getting better.

However, these two graphs are comparable only in that they are about the same subject, from similar sets of data, and they both reflect per capita data which suggests equivalence. The problem is that the data are presented with different scales on the x-axis. The scale of the x-axis for China only goes from 0-3 while that for the United States of America goes from 0-10.

When the graphs are reformatted (see below next page) with essentially equivalent scales for the x-axis, the picture looks very different.

The good news for the United States is that the biocapacity per capita of the United States is between 4 and 5 times that of China. However it is declining as the US population increases and the land is repurposed for various forms of built infrastructure.

The bad news is that in spite of this huge available biocapacity in the United States, the American lifestyle cannot be supported. The per capita overuse of biocapacity in the United States is about as big as the total use of biocapacity per capita by the Chinese. This is an appalling state of affairs but almost totally ignored by everyone in the United States including the media and the policy makers and pundits.

This suggests that the United States, far from being the locus for American exceptionalism, is in fact the locus for one of the most inefficient economies the world has ever seen.

Lest I be criticized for the same unwillingness to look at the data objectively and without bias, there needs to be another reformatting of these data to reflect the totality of China relative to the totality of the United States. The population of China at around 1.4 billion people has a very big global impact, while the relatively small population of the United States at around 315 million has a relatively small impact. The story here, is that this small US population is incredibly profligate in its use and waste of biocapacity and other resources, and is not doing much about it.

China

The United States

