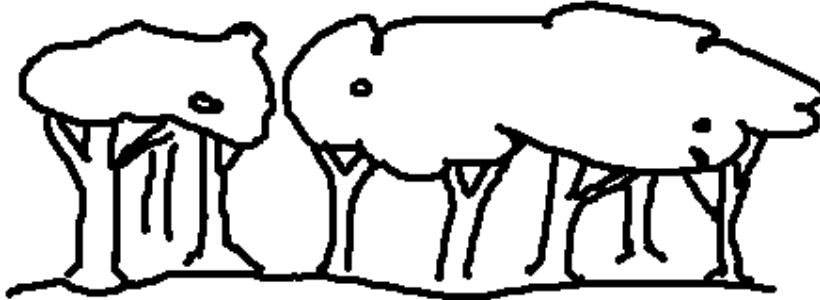


## The essence of ecological sustainability

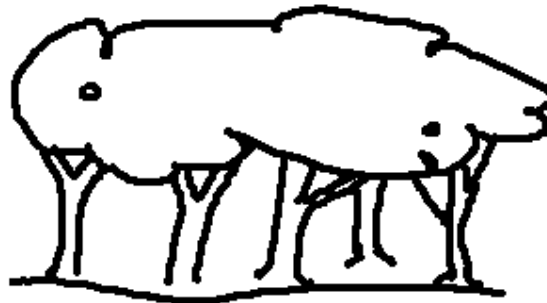
It is important that we have a realistic way of assessing whether a business, a country or our entire global civilisation is ecologically sustainable or not.

The essence of environmental sustainability is that overall we do not destroy nature faster than it can regenerate.

Suppose you have a forest.



And you log part of it.



But an equivalent amount grows back somewhere else.



As long as the amount that grows back equals the amount that was logged, the forest is sustainable. You destroy part of the forest, but it can regenerate.

However, if you destroy the forest faster than it can regenerate, the forest gets thinner and thinner (or smaller and smaller) and eventually turns into grassland and then desert.



This is unsustainable.

So what we are looking at is cumulative environmental damage – damage that accrues over time.

In the long run *cumulative* environmental damage is unsustainable.

*The Natural Step Story* by Karl-Henrik Robèrt explores these principles in detail.