

FROM GREEN ECONOMY TO GREEN SOCIETY

BRINGING THE SOCIAL TO RIO+20



Will the transition to a green economy be seized as an opportunity to transform social structures, institutions and power relations for more resilient, inclusive and equitable societies? Or will it be limited to technological fixes and market-based solutions that support business as usual?

In the two decades since the 1992 Earth Summit, the international development community has come to accept that sustainability will require major transformations in patterns of investment, technology, production, consumption and governance. Persistent poverty in some regions, and growing inequalities worldwide, are stark reminders that economic globalization and liberalization have not created an environment conducive to sustainable and equitable social development. Multiple global crises – food, fuel and climate – also bring into sharp relief the limits and contradictions of current development models based on the exploitation of finite natural resources, and the urgent need to shift to low-carbon development paths.

Green economy has emerged as a pathway towards sustainable development. It has called attention to the environmental failings of economic development, and the significant structural changes required in the economic system itself.

But green economy is highly contested. There is little agreement on how to define the concept, or how to green the economy in ways that are equitable and just. Because the idea is purposefully vague, it can be shaped by diverse groups in new, hopeful ways – but it is also vulnerable to capture by powerful interests favouring business as usual.

>> **Green economy** can be seen as capitalism's best hope to create jobs, restore growth, and limit climate change... or it can have more negative connotations.

Bob Jessop, speaking at the UNRISD conference 2011

The social dimensions – the third pillar of sustainable development – are often marginalized in green economy analysis and policy. For example, despite serious debate around the ways in which equity, human rights and justice – critical social factors in poverty reduction, pro-poor growth and environmental sustainability – can be integrated with economic or environmental priorities, these issues remain on the margins of the mainstream green economy agenda.

Also sidelined are questions about how green economy strategies impact different social groups and patterns of inequality; whose values, priorities and interests are shaping the concept and policies of green economy; and what alternative visions and processes exist at local, national and global scales to achieve social, environmental and economic objectives in a holistic way.

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Illustrations courtesy of Áine Cassidy

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Photo courtesy of Monique Campbell

Evidence from around the world indicates that social dimensions are central to understanding the connections between green economy, sustainable development and poverty eradication. Efforts to restructure the economy that are both green and fair must take the following into account.

- > **The winners and losers**, and the role for social policy in mitigating the unequal social effects of different green economy approaches.
- > **How green economy approaches can transform** persistent structural inequalities that underpin poverty and vulnerability, rather than reproducing them.
- > **The strategies of participation** that are emerging – or might need to emerge – for diverse social actors to influence green economy agendas.

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CASE STUDY

CARBON CONSUMPTION AND MITIGATION POLICIES IN THE UNITED KINGDOM



The United Kingdom, which is legally committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, is implementing a range of carbon mitigation policies (CMPs). Research indicates that these ambitious policies place a heavy burden on poorer households.

Energy companies obliged by the government to improve efficiency and increase the use of renewables are passing on costs to consumers in the form of higher energy prices. This is problematic from a distributional perspective, as energy comprises a far higher share of total spending in lower income households. It is impossible to fully compensate lower income households for such costs via social benefits, tax allowances and credits because of the heterogeneity of their circumstances.

Household income is also a major driver of emissions. Because of the low income elasticity of emissions, they constitute a higher share of spending for low income households. Consequently, higher carbon taxes or tighter carbon allowances also impinge more heavily on low income households.

Those groups and populations likely to be most harmed by climate change are the least responsible for causing it and have the least resources to cope with the consequences. Combating this "double injustice" requires better policy integration across economic, social and environmental domains – for example, through policies such as personal carbon allowances and trading, reduced working time, and the taxation of consumption. A priority should be better integration between social policies and carbon mitigation policies in line with social justice goals.

>>>**This is double injustice:**
those groups and populations likely to be most harmed by climate change are the least responsible for causing it and have the least resources to cope with the consequences.

Research conducted by **Ian Gough**, Professorial Research Fellow, London School of Economics. (To read the full article, go to www.unrisd.org/publications/op-gough)

BIASES WITHIN THE FIELD OF ECONOMICS

Green economy policies are heavily informed by neoclassical economics, under which market efficiency depends on “getting the prices right”, often to the exclusion of other perspectives. In the case of carbon trading, accurate pricing requires regulation (polluter pays, carbon caps) and extending property rights. Carbon trading offers an illustration of how green economy policy making could gain important insights from other strands of economics.

> **Ecological economics**, which points to the ecological incommensurability of fossil versus biotic carbon, the potential for conflicts among resource-dependent competitors and the fact that profitable carbon trading opportunities and offset schemes may actually aggravate the overall ecological burden.

> **Institutional economics**, which points to the exclusionary nature of carbon allowances or credits, as well as how

powerful economic agents shape institutions favouring control of fossil fuels and CO₂ emissions.

> **Property economics**, which makes explicit the fact that exclusive carbon rights increase the capitalization value of firms by securing their future income and profit, in addition to profits made on primary carbon markets.

These perspectives, which contribute to a more holistic understanding of the potential and limits of carbon markets with regard to the environment, differing interests in society, and future generations, can inform more coherent policies.

Research conducted by **Pascal van Griethuysen**, The Graduate Institute, Geneva. (To read the full article, go to www.unrisd.org/news/vanGriethuysen)

VIEWING GREEN ECONOMY THROUGH A SOCIAL LENS

A fair and equitable green economy transition must not only address the consequences of environmental and economic change. It must also seek to transform the social structures, institutions and power relations that underpin vulnerability, inequality and poverty.

Green economy is often defined as an economy “that results in improved human well-being and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities” (UNEP 2011). While this definition clearly connects economic, environmental and social aspects, analysis and policy often ignore key social dimensions. Viewing green economy through a social lens can help redress this situation, by directing attention to the following issues and related questions.

Values, knowledge and discourses informing policy

A number of transition paths are currently being envisaged. But the question of which ideas and values will prevail, and shape policy and practice, partly depends on which worldviews inform public opinion and policy processes. Certain academic disciplines and strands of economics are particularly influential while others, which potentially have much to contribute, remain marginal. Similarly, policy making often fails to draw on valuable local knowledge.

Social impacts and distributional consequences

Green economy is often associated with “win-win” assumptions, which mask the fact that all change entails winners and losers. It is crucial to identify which social groups stand to lose from industrial restructuring and more accurate pricing of carbon, market-centred approaches that may exacerbate existing inequalities, and strict environmental regulations that may negatively impact the livelihoods and identity of small farmers, indigenous groups and others.

Social institutions and relations

Promoting a fair green economy requires recognition of the multiplicity of social institutions (norms, regulation, rights, trust and cooperation) and relations (class, gender and ethnic) that underpin vulnerability and the capacity of individuals, groups and organizations to respond to change. New standards to promote green consumption and production should take human rights and equity issues into account.



The role of social policy in transition

Within the public policy arena, social policy has a key role to play in promoting a green and fair economy. Diverse aspects of social policy need to be factored into green economy debates and strategy. These include “eco-social” investment in housing and public transport, human capital formation, social protection for those negatively affected by transition, and redistributive policies that address issues of equity and empowerment.

Power and participation

Green economy concepts, approaches and policies are contested by a wide range of social actors, each with different interests and capacities to mobilize resources and influence decision-making processes. Institutional change associated with low-carbon growth and environmental protection requires not only local buy-in, but also the backing of broad-based coalitions of social actors. It is important to consider which interests are driving change, the extent to which disadvantaged groups can participate effectively in decision-making processes that affect them, and the potential for individuals, groups and communities to organize and mobilize collectively.

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INTERVIEW

THE WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY IS NOW

Q WHAT ARE YOUR MAIN CONCERNS AROUND THE CONCEPT OF GREEN ECONOMY? We need a global value transformation that is not only concerned with the accumulation of capital within a green economic paradigm, but that also incorporates cultural dimensions. We can learn a lot from communities in the South about how to live in harmony with the environment.

Q WHAT DO YOU SEE AS THE MAIN CHALLENGE FOR RIO+20? Our greatest concern is how to make sure people on the ground are listened to. The UN seems less and less willing to provide this opportunity. Offering the floor to the people should be the objective of the conference. For Rio+20 to be rich in terms of thinking and progress, we have to listen to the voices of those already affected by compensatory policies. In Rio, Friends of the Earth International will, together with other social movements, stand outside the official negotiations to try and make the voices of those affected heard.

Q WHAT TYPES OF COALITIONS OR ALLIANCES ARE NEEDED TO IMPLEMENT SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT POLICIES? For coalitions or alliances to make sustainability possible, we need common visions. In this age of climate disaster, we are told that we are all in the same boat – “let’s save the planet together!” But linking civil society, governments and the media is not working. From the perspective of a grassroots organization in existence for 40 years, we are foremost committed to our alliances, to those with a shared vision of living without exploitation. I believe that when governments are really willing to listen to the people’s perspective, then they can become our allies.

Q IN TERMS OF ADVOCACY AND ACTIVISM, WHAT GIVES YOU HOPE? The capitalist system is revealing failures and is about to crack under financial crises. This presents a window of opportunity, especially for people to mobilize. [Some] people do not believe in the green economy, they believe that it is more of the same thing, repackaged. It is time to make alternative proposals and to be listened to. Only then we can create change.

LUCIA ORTIZ, INTERNATIONAL PROGRAM COORDINATOR - ECONOMIC JUSTICE, FRIENDS OF THE EARTH INTERNATIONAL



INTERVIEW

GENDER EQUALITY FOR SUSTAINABILITY AND GROWTH

Q WHAT CAN BE DONE TO ENSURE A FAIR TRANSITION TO A GREEN ECONOMY? It is vital to make the case that fair and equitable approaches are not just desirable but indeed necessary to making the transition. An example of this is gender equality. Recent empirical work has been carried out using quantitative analysis. What emerges repeatedly and very clearly is a strong association between gender equality and environmental sustainability. The point is that fairness and equity – a socially just approach to the transition to a green economy – is essential.

Q DOES GENDER NEED TO BE GIVEN SPECIAL CONSIDERATION IN THE TRANSITION TO A GREEN ECONOMY? Absolutely. We know that gender equality is very strongly associated with positive outcomes and the performance of countries in environmental terms. In fact, some of the analysis we did recently looked within high-growth countries to see if there were any differences. What is evident is that the strongest environmental performance tends to be in countries with better gender equality. The countries which came out strongest were Canada and Sweden among developed countries and Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania among middle-income countries. In these cases, strong gender equality related not just to environmental outcomes but also to growth. Empowering women, ensuring that women have voice and can contribute in various ways to the transition to a green economy, appears to be essential.

ROBIN MEARNS, LEAD, SOCIAL DIMENSIONS OF CLIMATE CHANGE, WORLD BANK



Illustration courtesy of Áine Cassidy

THINK PIECE

GENDER EQUALITY AS A KEY TO SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION

Evidence from Sweden shows that women and men tend to consume in ways that confirm traditional gender roles. Women are more likely to purchase basic essentials in the form of less expensive but recurring consumer goods for the whole family, while men buy expensive capital goods and also tend to own the family residence. The fact that men globally, in all economic segments of society, tend to have more resources, power and rights, both as a group and as individuals, gives them greater freedom than women to choose lifestyle and consumption. And their preferences are shaping a wider culture of consumption.

A gendered assessment of consumption patterns may be needed if we are to replace outdated carbon-intensive models of development with

innovative thinking that can shift the focus, from purely economic or environmental considerations, to aspects of well-being that are more sustainable. Acknowledging the role that gender plays in shaping consumption and well-being can go a long way towards addressing key aspects of quality of life for both women and men. These are core social dimensions of sustainable development often missing from green economy debates.

Research conducted by **Gerd Johnsson-Latham**, Deputy Director, Department for Development Policy, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Sweden (To read the full article, go to www.unrisd.org/news/johnsson-latham)

CONTESTED PATHWAYS TO A GREEN ECONOMY

Various “worldviews” on sustainable development are currently shaping green economy debates, priorities and actions. Each has its own potentials and constraints.

Four worldviews

Four worldviews reflect different ways of defining the problems and identifying the solutions of sustainable development challenges.

- > **Market-liberal:** This view argues that economic growth creates higher incomes, leading to improved capacity to make environmental improvements. Solutions rely on eco-efficiency, voluntary standards and markets as the key mechanism for achieving environmental change (through investment, R&D, incentives, technology transfer and industrial restructuring).
- > **Institutionalist:** Sharing much with the market-liberal approach, this perspective also recognizes the need for a stronger role for both states and global governance mechanisms for moving towards more sustainable forms of development.
- > **Social green:** Social, economic and environmental problems are seen as inseparable. In this view, rebalancing global inequalities and restructuring capitalism are considered fundamental to achieving sustainability, equity and human survival.
- > **Bioenvironmental:** This view emphasizes Earth’s limited ecological carrying capacity and the impossibility of infinite growth. According to this perspective, economic models require a revised measure of progress and methods to achieve it, as well as a new understanding of the human/nature/economy relationship.

Shaping pathways to green economy

Each worldview influences how different actors envisage transition paths to a green economy. But their limitations must also be considered.

Capitalism with a green face

In the context of recent multiple crises (food, energy and finance), this approach sees a crisis “in” the system that can be resolved through top-down crisis management, rather than a crisis “of” the system that requires more fundamental institutional, structural and political change (Jessop 2012). Poverty reduction is seen to follow largely from green jobs, pollution

reduction, environmental remediation and targeted social protection. However, this dominant approach to green economy draws heavily on a market logic that, without compensatory and redistributive mechanisms, may generate or reinforce inequality and human insecurity.

Strong sustainability

Economic and environmental concerns take priority over the social in this view, despite its calls for changes in institutional arrangements to address market failure, shifts in production and consumption patterns, and cooperation and policy coordination. Ongoing fragmentation and blind-spots in institutional governance – around macroeconomic policy, trade regimes, elite power, corporate influence and multistakeholder cooperation – mean that doubts persist about the legitimacy and capacity of many existing or reformed institutions.

Social economy

Social economy faces many challenges: fragmentation, the political strength of interests favouring business as usual, lack of a widespread social base for focusing on ethics and justice, and difficulties connecting Northern and Southern movements and forming global-level coalitions. The lack of funding, research and policy work in this area also means that social economy is rarely considered a viable alternative to dominant green economy approaches.

Limits to growth

In practice, few concrete solutions – beyond those offered by ecological economics – have been influential in mainstream sustainable development policy. In the context of green economy, this approach is most aligned with social economy but has little political traction despite growing civil society support.

Different worldviews matter for a number of reasons

- > **How the social dimensions** of green economy will be interpreted and how they will be applied in practice is up for grabs.
- > **Looking at proposals** for a green economy from different perspectives can help us move beyond purely economic and environmental questions, towards a better understanding of the social nature of potential transition paths.
- > **They allow us to look beyond** the rhetoric of green economy, and to unpack assumptions (about markets, institutions and development trajectories for example) underpinning how green economy is defined and why it is contested.
- > **They bring to light** the very different sets of social values, knowledge, institutions and impacts underlying different pathways of change.

	CAPITALISM WITH A GREEN FACE	STRONG SUSTAINABILITY	SOCIAL ECONOMY	LIMITS TO GROWTH
Worldview	Market liberal	Institutionalist	Social green	Bioenvironmental
Timeframe	Short-medium	Medium	Short and long	Long
Social	Green jobs Social protection for vulnerable groups Equality of opportunity Consultation Green consumerism	Global cooperation Redistribution (income) Stronger institutions Inter- and intra-generational equity Capacity building Social dialogue	Redistribution (power) Rights-based Social justice Equality of outcomes Empowerment Citizen action	Radical decrease in consumption and population growth Inclusivity Needs Rights
Environment	Eco-efficiency Technology transfer REDD	Eco-regulation Strengthen global governance regimes REDD+	Environmental justice Agroecology Grassroots action	Eco-centric valuing of nature for its own sake Enforced regulation of global commons
Economy	Green growth Voluntary CSR Carbon markets, PES Production focused Private governance	Economic/trade reform Green finance Green taxes State governance CDM	De-globalization Localization Institutional reform Regional solidarity Green economics	No-growth/de-growth Measures beyond GDP Ecological economics
Representative organizations	WTO, IMF, WBCSD	UNEP, UNCCC Global Environment Facility	World Social Forum Third World Network	World Watch Institute Pachamama

Sources and further reading

The chart and text draw on the worldviews classification developed in J. Clapp and P. Dauvergne. 2011. Paths to a Green World: The Political Economy of the Global Environment. MIT Press, Cambridge, MA.
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USING SOCIAL POLICY FOR GREEN ECONOMY TRANSFORMATION

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An “eco-social” policy agenda that integrates environmental and social risks can support a fair and green economy. Such an agenda will need to not only compensate or protect losers, but also address structural causes of inequality and exclusion, and strengthen accountable institutions that promote rights and social inclusion.

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Social policy encompasses a range of public actions designed to manage livelihood risks, protect people against contingencies (such as ill-health and loss of income) and invest in their capacities to contribute productively to the economy. As demonstrated in both developed and developing country contexts, appropriate social policies can enhance productivity and contribute to reducing poverty while providing the foundations for more equitable growth. Achieving such outcomes requires not only social assistance but also redistributive policies, support for families and social reproduction, and investments in human capital.

Social policies are also necessary for the transformation required to achieve a fair green economy. First, increased environmental risks, which disproportionately affect the poor, will need to be incorporated into a social policy framework to promote adaptation as well as provide protection. Second, green economy involves major shifts in employment, production and consumption. Social policies can facilitate employment and skill transitions, and are also a key policy instrument for providing incentives to change the behaviour of consumers. Third, both environmental and economic change generate losers as well as winners, at least in the short term. Most often, the most negatively impacted will be those already economically or socially disadvantaged and thus in need of assistance. Finally, comprehensive social policies can foster social inclusion, which may be threatened during processes of rapid change.

Current policies focus on protection and adaptation

Around the globe and particularly in low-income countries, the current social policy agenda has come to be dominated by social protection in the form of cash transfers. With increasing concerns about environmental change, combined with the limited resilience of those most affected, innovations have emerged in thinking about adaptive social protection. Interventions are expanding to address a wider range of risks, including the consequences of environmental change, and to strengthen the coping and adaptive capacities of low-income or vulnerable groups.

Thus we see a policy focus on:

- > **protection or compensation** of individuals or groups directly affected by policy changes (for example, workers displaced when environmentally harmful production processes are discontinued) as well as those considered vulnerable (due, for example, to income, age, gender, location or ethnicity); and
- > **adaptation** to enable such groups to better respond to environmental or climate-related risks.

Beyond these social protection mechanisms, there is also increasing attention to programmes that can deliver co-benefits – in other words, that simultaneously meet a combination of social, environmental and economic objectives. Such “win-win” approaches include:

- > **job creation and training** in “green and decent” work
- > **education, retraining and skills** for the transition from “dirty” to green jobs
- > **provision** of ecological low-cost housing
- > **infrastructure** investments (such as public transport) that benefit the poor
- > **incentives** for green consumption (for example, via green taxation)

The limits of current approaches

Limitations of current approaches are seen both in the conceptualization of green economy policies and in practice.

- > Interventions are most likely to be residual and compensatory – projects or programmes added on to policies designed to achieve economic and environmental goals.
- > They are often implemented through projects not policies, so are at high risk of being cut if resources are constrained.

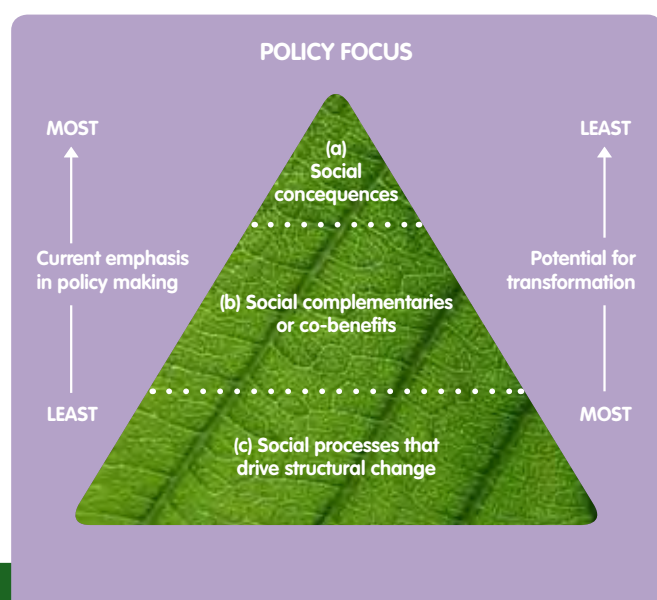
- > Implementation often depends on local social and power relations: gender, ethnicity or other factors may determine outcomes.
- > Win-win programmes (such as green jobs in renewable energy) do not automatically lead to improved opportunities or conditions for poor or marginalized workers, or for women, and the social dimensions tend to remain secondary to economic or environmental goals.
- > They may have negative social consequences when they affect traditional and sustainable systems of resource management and food security.

Where contradictions exist between macroeconomic, sectoral, technological or other green economy approaches on the one hand, and social goals and programmes on the other, the latter are rarely prioritized. In contexts where underlying structures of inequality are entrenched and persistent, whether along lines of class, gender, ethnicity or other factors, these are unlikely to be challenged, and may indeed be reinforced, by residual and compensatory social policy approaches. For example, despite integrating social protection (such as direct cash transfers) into some REDD schemes in Brazil, these have still been shown to involve unjust trade-offs with the well-being of indigenous or other peoples. In Australia this is also a concern, as indigenous groups do not automatically benefit from PES schemes.

Can social policies be transformative?

In addition to these compensatory, protective and adaptive functions, social policies can have a broader function in supporting structural transformations. When social policies are closely aligned with broader developmental and productive objectives, there is the greatest potential for structural transformations that are inclusive, sustainable and equitable. This requires integrating economic and social policies that address distribution and reproduction as well as protection; confronting underlying contours of social disadvantage; recognizing that market initiatives may reinforce rather than challenge unequal distributions of resources and power; and undertaking more systematic analysis of the distributional consequences of economic policies.

Current policies tend to give least attention to these potentially transformative approaches or to building the social institutions and inclusive processes that will be essential to a green economy. Rather, as described above and illustrated below, analysts, governments and private actors currently focus most attention on policies that address (a) social consequences or (b) co-benefits, to the exclusion of (c) broader social processes that drive structural change. This third tier(c) includes not only a focus on outcomes, but greater attention to the processes through which policies are designed and implemented, and ensures relevant stakeholders are empowered to shape decisions and that the rights and entitlements of the vulnerable are protected. A broader institutional agenda that combines policy types a, b and c would also encompass policies, laws and governance arrangements that institutionalize rights; facilitate active citizenship and the empowerment of disadvantaged groups; and promote accountability. Mechanisms range from freedoms of information, association, expression and collective bargaining; secure land rights and support for smallholders; and institutions to hold corporations and government accountable.



Towards eco-social policy for a green society

A green economy is not sustainable without a green society – composed of individuals and households, consumers and producers, organized in social and economic institutions, making choices to manage the environment and natural resources in the interests of future generations. Given the public goods nature of many of the resources of concern, market mechanisms alone cannot deliver the required outcomes.



The challenge will be to build eco-social policies that integrate sustainable environmental goals into core social policy objectives; which utilize such policies to support economic and behavioural change towards sustainable goals; and where economic policies are designed to meet core social and environmental, rather than simply growth, objectives. Such a policy approach would aim to:

- > **reduce well-being deficits** – particularly in critical areas of food, fuel and water;
- > **compensate losers** and support adaptation through a range of social protection measures;
- > **create employment** and facilitate the uptake of green economy jobs among disadvantaged groups;
- > **incorporate uncertainties** and complexities associated with climate change into conventional social policy analysis;
- > **support eco-social investments**, for example in housing, energy and infrastructure, that benefit the poor; and
- > **integrate incentives** for low-carbon consumption or other behavioural change into a range of social and economic policy areas (such as housing, transport, energy and water use).

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PARTICIPATION AND COALITIONS FOR CHANGE

An active citizenry and contestation are crucial for transforming relations of power and patterns of inequality that underpin poverty and unsustainable growth. Governance arrangements that allow the expression of alternative perspectives, facilitate the collaboration and coordination of multiple stakeholders and foster meaningful participation are also key.

In the 1970s UNRISD defined participation as the organized efforts of the hitherto excluded to gain control over resources and regulative institutions. Since then participation has been widely assimilated into mainstream development debates, but some key aspects have been lost in translation. Participation has often been reduced to consultation or dialogue with selected stakeholders, while organized efforts or collective action have been sidelined. Similarly, mainstream institutions borrowed the term empowerment from more radical discourses but defined it in terms of gaining voice rather than gaining control. There was no guarantee that voices would actually be heard or significantly shape decision-making processes.

Coalitions involving civil society, governments, NGOs and business are needed to generate the political will to shift from business as usual, and to mobilize resources and competencies. Collaborative governance and partnerships can ensure complementarities and synergies that would not otherwise exist. But such arrangements are often far removed from the harmonious and inclusive relations depicted in much of the discourse on public-private partnerships. For example, contestation and bargaining between different actors are actually essential ingredients. And marginalized groups (for example, women and indigenous peoples) may not have a say, while powerful groups more easily have their interests heard. Research has shown these to be problematic issues in many REDD and PES schemes.



CASE STUDY

COALITIONS FOR INTEGRATED POLICY AT THE LOCAL LEVEL IN BRAZIL

Crafting forms of green economy that are conducive to sustainable development and poverty eradication requires combining various forms of assets (human, natural, social, financial and physical) in ways that redefine what is meant by nature, society and economy. Two case studies in Brazil, Bolsa Floresta and Araçuaí Sustentável, show that achieving this in an integrated way depends on both cross-sectoral collaboration and contestation.

Bolsa Floresta, a REDD+ project, provides a range of incentives to settlers in order to avoid deforestation in the Amazon. Araçuaí Sustentável is a grassroots project in the state of Minas Gerais that aims to combat social exclusion through self-help literacy and the promotion of agroecological practices among poor small-scale farmers. Building on local knowledge is a key aspect of this particular programme.

In both schemes, local communities, grassroots organizations, private foundations, companies and federal/local government institutions have come together to provide varied resources and competencies. But the perspectives they bring, and the distribution of resources they promote, are contested by the various actors involved. A focus on how each policy process is being contested and how conflicts evolve through implementation provides useful insights into how policy integration happens in practice.

Research conducted by **Laura Rival**, Lecturer, University of Oxford
(To read the full article, go to www.unrisd.org/publications/op-rival)



COP 15 Demonstration, December 2009.

Creative solutions to current development challenges can gain from the genuine participation of social movements concerned with sustainable development. Civil society activism can drive innovative solutions at local, national and global levels, and contribute to the design of a new social pact for sustainability. However, in relation to green economy, activism is often fragmented. For instance, while the Climate Justice movement is strong and dynamic at the grassroots level, it is less successful at the global scale. Research suggests that some global movements might have more success by refocusing on local- and regional-level struggles.

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CASE STUDY

LA VIA CAMPESINA GLOBAL PEASANT

MOVEMENT FOR FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

La Via Campesina, an international movement, engages with climate change as part of a broader strategy of transformation. Research into its growth and influence illustrates:

- > **why** global movements are more effective when rooted in local struggles; and
- > **how** local thinking and practice can inform and be informed by global debates.

Representing some 200 million smallholders and other disadvantaged rural groups, La Via Campesina is grounded in communities and organizations that are directly engaged in local livelihood struggles. It is an autonomous, pluralist and multicultural movement, independent from any political, economic or other affiliation. La Via Campesina calls for the transformation of food production and consumption systems to achieve social and ecological goals, and demands government action to support food sovereignty – the notion that small-scale farmers, including fisherfolk, pastoralists and indigenous peoples, are capable of producing food for their communities and feeding the world in a sustainable and healthy way.

La Via Campesina sees its members as drivers of change who are entitled to voice, rights, information and choice. In addition to empowering many communities to achieve food sovereignty, land reform and autonomy at the grassroots, the movement has also developed a strong analytical capacity on food and agrarian development issues. La Via Campesina's ideas have influenced policy and debates in the FAO, the UN Human Rights Council, and a growing number of national governments.

Research conducted by **Nicola Bullard**, Associate, Focus on the Global South, and **Tadzio Müller**, Fellow, Rosa Luxemburg Foundation
(To read the full article, see "**Beyond the 'green economy': System change not climate change?**" *Development*, Vol. 55, No.1.)

SUSTAINABLE FUTURES, ALTERNATIVE VISIONS

Part of the challenge of rethinking the dominant approaches to green economy lies in learning from real-world experiences that put alternatives into practice. With better support, these visions can help to chart a fairer and greener development model for the future.

Numerous examples exist of successful local and regional programmes that join up social, economic and environmental goals, and that can inform the global level both analytically and practically. Many of these examples are driven by the needs of diverse citizen groups at the local level. These groups might represent marginalized and vulnerable people in the South, consumers in the North, and forward-thinking collaborations between governments, business and civil society. Underpinning many alternatives is the recognition of different forms of knowledge, diverse forms of action/participation and a vision of development that is more inclusive and equitable. Such alternatives should be better supported, promoted and funded in ways that do not compromise their objectives.

Traditional knowledge often plays an integral role in informing and shaping action. However, the voices of those who hold such knowledge are seldom heard at the international level. Research can learn from them and, in particular, from societies that have strong connections with ecology. Many alternatives envisage a new nature-society relationship, based on recognizing interconnections and interdependence, with major implications for both economic and environmental policy choices. A better understanding of how this knowledge has been put into practice (and the challenges in doing so) is key for linking natural and social sciences, breaking down boundaries and – perhaps – creating a new science altogether.

Rather than mainstreaming climate issues into development, or vice versa, new approaches have the potential to reframe the meanings of growth, equity and fairness, and re-evaluate development in order to redefine it. Elements of this would:

- > **include justice** as a central principle of policy making;
- > **change consumption** patterns, starting with increasing support for existing alternatives to conventional production and consumption;
- > **overcome challenges** to scaling-up local success stories; and
- > **move towards a social economy**, not just a green economy.

These considerations become especially important in debating a post-MDG agenda, and in the context of current negotiations around sustainable development goals.



La Vía Campesina

Photo by Flickr/Orakenkrakel (CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)



Photo courtesy of Ashok Kumbamu

Organic millet and pulse shop run by Deccan Development Sangham women in Zaheerabad.

INTERVIEW



DEMONSTRATING ALTERNATIVES

Q WHAT ARE YOUR MAIN CONCERNS AROUND THE CONCEPT OF GREEN ECONOMY? As a scholar coming from the global South, I welcome the concept: I believe in it. But I also have reservations for historical, political and economic reasons. My understanding is that green economy can be seen as a means to achieve sustainable development. However, although there are successes at a micro level, at the global level I see it as a failure. We must learn from this. The voices of our partners in the global South must be brought into the debate.

I also want to emphasize the issue of trust. Historically, actors in developed countries of the North and corporations have created [today's climate] problem. These same actors are trying to create the sustainable development model. Who is going to win and who is going to lose? What benefits will be shared with the South? The issues of equity and justice are the most important in the green economy. There is also an ethical issue: actors in the global North must make compromises in terms of production, distribution, and consumption – otherwise it is only going to be rhetoric.

Q WHAT IS SOCIAL ECONOMY? Social economy has been proposed as an alternative way of addressing economic and social divisions. It sits between the state and market, trying to mitigate the negative consequences that come with state development models and market encroachments. Social economy talks about the principles of justice, sustainable equity and democratic decision making. I see social economy as an integrated approach to understanding the relationship between society and nature, and I think it is a sustainable model with which to move forward. But there are various experiments happening within social economy: it is not the model but a model that incorporates different approaches.

Q COULD YOU GIVE US AN EXAMPLE OF AN ALTERNATIVE VISION FOR DEVELOPMENT? I have been working with a group in India called the Deccan Development Society, with Dalit women in particular. They consciously say that they are walking out of the market system and, therefore, the state system. They are trying to control their land, water and other resources, and to produce traditional knowledge systems which are part of their life and nature. They are trying to attain food sovereignty and seed sovereignty. They are also establishing their own community media and radio projects. They are demonstrating that this is possible within the global capitalist system – I see this as an alternative development model.

ASHOK KUMBAMU, POSTDOCTORAL FELLOW, UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

SPANNING THE EARTH SUMMITS 20 YEARS OF UNRISD RESEARCH

The social and political dimensions of environmental change remain central to UNRISD research in the field of sustainable development.

In the 1980s, many approaches reduced sustainable development to environmental protection and conservation, which ring-fenced nature from human activity. Key elements related to livelihoods, equity and rights were marginalized. In response, UNRISD launched a wide-ranging inquiry on socio-environmental issues. Research focused on deforestation, biodiversity protection, desertification, grassroots environmental management, social movements and NGOs, urban sustainability, corporate social and environmental responsibility and business regulation.

At the time of the 1992 Earth Summit, UNRISD explored the social impacts of environmental degradation and protection, as well as individual and NGO responses to environmental stress. In subsequent years, and around the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development, research was carried out on people-centred approaches to the environment and how development agency discourse on participation was being applied in practice.

During the past decade research has focused on the role of business actors in sustainable development. The trajectory of this work, including the current focus on social dimensions of green economy, reflects the evolving political economy and governance of environmental change. Key features include the rise of market-centred approaches, the growing power of transnational corporations and the presence of multiple non-state actors in regulatory governance.

This research provides evidence of progress in some areas, as well as the continued need to focus attention on some basic principles:

- > **the need** to better integrate environmental, livelihood and equity objectives;
- > **the necessity** to confront the social and environmental impacts of policies associated with economic growth and liberalization;
- > **the imperative** of enhancing the capacity of low-income groups to influence decision-making that impacts their lives.

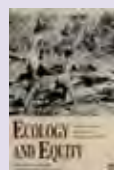
SELECTED UNRISD PUBLICATIONS, 1992-2012



In Defense of Livelihood
Comparative Studies in Environmental Action
I John Friedmann and Haripriya Rangan (eds) I 1993



Forests and Livelihoods
The Social Dynamics of Deforestation in Developing Countries I K. B. Ghimire, Solon L. Barraclough I 1995



Ecology and Equity
The Use and Abuse of Nature in Contemporary India I Madhav Gadgil and Ramachandra Guha I 1995



Grassroots Environmental Action
People's Participation in Sustainable Development I Dharam Ghai, Jessica Vivian (eds) I 1995



Rural Development and the Environment
Towards Ecologically and Socially Sustainable Development in Rural Areas I K. B. Ghimire, Solon L. Barraclough, Hans Meliczek I 1997

HOW TWO KEY UNITED NATIONS REPORTS ADDRESS THE SOCIAL DIMENSIONS OF GREEN ECONOMY

- > **Working towards a Balanced and Inclusive Green Economy:** A United Nations System-wide Perspective, by the Environment Management Group, 2011. (EMG)
- > **Resilient People, Resilient Planet:** A Future Worth Choosing, Report of the United Nations Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Global Sustainability, 2012. (GSP)

The **EMG report** aims to facilitate a common understanding of green economy measures and assesses how the UN system can support countries in the transition. The report covers green jobs, education, infrastructure, ecosystem services, tax reforms and debt, health, standards and regulation, and designing indicators. The following key social dimensions are addressed:

- > **investment** in both human and social capital, i.e. a people-centred approach;
- > **reorientation** of public policies and improvement of monitoring, evaluation and communication;
- > **reduction** of resource intensity in current production and consumption patterns;
- > **institutional** reform to achieve targeted investments across environmental, economic and social domains;
- > **access** to social safety nets, training and education; and
- > **ensuring** that the benefits of economic growth are equitably shared.

The **GSP report** offers a broad thematic scope, going beyond a sectoral discussion of green economy, and integrates core issues (such as energy, water, agriculture/food, finance, business, gender, risk reduction, technology, trade and consumption) with overarching questions of governance, policy, participation, empowerment, equality, rights, knowledge and justice. It strongly articulates the social basis for moving towards sustainability via a rights-based agenda.

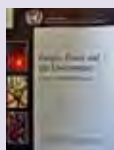
Both reports address various social and participatory dimensions. They offer important guidelines to decision-makers in the Rio+20 process and suggest key elements that need to be incorporated in the Rio+20 outcome document. However, some crucial social dimensions remain underplayed or are simply not addressed:

- > **the social impacts** of mechanisms such as carbon emission trading;
- > **the problem** of rising material standards of living in developed and emerging economies, and the need to reduce consumption in rich countries;
- > **the limits** of social safety nets and targeted social protection policies, and the possibilities of universal social protection (advocated by the ILO and UNRISD for example);
- > **the limits** of CSR voluntary/private standards; and
- > **the need** for stronger government and international regulation of business, and more effective corporate accountability and redress mechanisms.

EMG report www.unemg.org GSP report www.un.org/gsp

>> **'Glocalization'** is needed, whereby fairness and justice need to be considered and warranted both from a local and global perspective.

Witchuda Srang-iam



People, Power and the Environment
15 Years of UNRISD Research | 2002



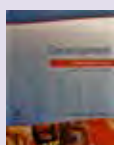
The Greening of Business in Developing Countries
Rhetoric, Reality and Prospects | Peter Utting (ed) | 2002



Staking their Claims
Corporate Social and Environmental Responsibility in South Africa
| David Fig (ed) | 2007



Business Regulation and Non-State Actors
Whose Standards? Whose Development?
| Darryl Reed, Peter Utting, Ananya Mukherjee-Reed (eds) | 2012



Development
Greening the Economy,
Volume 55, Number 1, March 2012
| Kiah Smith, Sarah Cook, Wendy Harcourt (eds) | 2012

The report of the High-Level Panel is perhaps the most holistic vision for global sustainability coming from the UN system:
"... to eradicate poverty, reduce inequality and make growth inclusive, and production and consumption more sustainable, while combating climate change and respecting a range of other planetary boundaries".



HIGHLIGHTS

GREEN ECONOMY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT BRINGING BACK THE SOCIAL DIMENSION

AN UNRISD CONFERENCE, 10-11 OCTOBER 2011, GENEVA

Attended by some 250 participants, the event brought together academic researchers, United Nations policy makers, government officials, civil society actors and activists from around the world; 24 papers were presented by 32 researchers, identified through a call for papers that attracted over 300 submissions. Among others, speakers included representatives of CICERO, ECLAC, Focus on the Global South, Friends of the Earth International, Oxfam International and South Centre.

This conference, organized specifically to feed into the Rio+20 process, directed attention to neglected social issues in discussions of green economy:

- > **how** green economy initiatives and strategies impact different social groups and patterns of inequality;
- > **whose** values, priorities and interests are shaping the concept and policies of green economy; and
- > **what** alternative visions and processes exist at local, national and global scales.

Various presentations considered the seemingly unstoppable juggernaut of corporate globalization and neoliberal policy, how the commodification of nature can reinforce inequalities and the ways in which powerful interests can co-opt the benefits of green economy. It was stressed that it is important to forge links between research and activism, noting areas of progressive reform on international policy where the research-activist nexus has been crucial.

Numerous spaces for progressive action and policy were identified. Civil society and local government interactions were shown to be particularly important in many countries. New multistakeholder standards and regulatory initiatives pointed to the possibility of reasserting social control over markets and corporate behaviour. There were myriad examples of local-level experiences conducive to sustainability.

>> **What is needed** is increased institutional support and policy space for currently less powerful forest voices if equity, rights and social justice are to be considered as key aspects of the future global climate change regime.

Rocío Hiraldo

The international development community now faces the challenge of fostering an enabling environment where such experiences can flourish.

>> **There is a need for joined-up analysis, joined-up thinking and joined-up action.**

Peter Utting

The full Conference News can be found here:
www.unrisd.org/publications/cn26

THE SOCIAL DIMENSIONS OF GREEN ECONOMY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

This magazine highlights key findings from research carried out by UNRISD in the lead up Rio+20. "Green economy for sustainable development and poverty reduction" constitutes a core theme in the exploration of the social dimensions of green economy and sustainable development. This inquiry draws on expertise related to poverty reduction, inequality, social policy, environmental conservation, corporate social responsibility, and the politics of social change.

VIDEO SERIES www.youtube.com/unrisd

Six short videos based on the conference proceedings highlight key issues, challenges and suggestions for research, activism and policy.



Green Economy and Sustainable Development: Bringing Back the Social



Social Policies for Sustainable Development



Putting a Price on Nature: Can Markets be Green and Social?



Green Economy Coalitions for Change



Food for the Future: Agriculture in a Sustainable World



Sustainable Futures, Alternatives Visions

UNRISD OCCASIONAL PAPERS ON SOCIAL DIMENSIONS OF GREEN ECONOMY are available to download free here: www.unrisd.org/greeneconomy

The papers in this series, produced in collaboration with the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, show that deeper transformation of the social structures, institutions and power relations underpinning vulnerability and inequality is required to ensure that development processes are greener and fairer for all.

Paper One: Climate Change, Double Injustice and Social Policy: A Case Study of the United Kingdom, Ian Gough

Paper Two: A Fair Green Economy? Studies of Agriculture, Energy and Waste Initiatives in Malaysia, Adnan A. Hezri and Rospidah Ghazali

Paper Three: Realizing Local Development in the Carbon Commodity Chain: Political Economy, Value and Connecting Carbon Commodities at Multiple Scales, Adam Bumpus

Paper Four: The Global Political Economy of REDD+: Engaging Social Dimensions in the Emerging Green Economy, Rocío Hiraldo and Thomas Tanner

Paper Five: The Political Economy of Green Growth in India, Payal Banerjee and Atul Sood

Paper Six: Payment for Ecosystem Services Markets on Aboriginal Land in Cape York Peninsula: Potential and Constraints, Michael Winer, Helen Murphy and Harold Ludwick

Paper Seven: Sustainable Development through Policy Integration in Latin America: A Comparative Approach, Laura Rival

Paper Eight: Emerging Policy for a Green Economy and Social Development in Limpopo, South Africa, Agnes Musyoki

Paper Nine: An Institutional Analysis of Biofuel Policies and their Social Implications Lessons from Brazil, India and Indonesia, Mairon G. Bastos Lima



"GREENING THE ECONOMY" Development, Vol. 55, No. 1

Published by SID and UNRISD, the issue critiques the current push in development to green the economy by applying market mechanisms to nature and the environment, without paying enough attention to social justice issues. The collection includes provocative articles along with interviews and opinion pieces.

www.sidint.net/node/9928

RESEARCH FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

The United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) was established in 1963 as an autonomous space within the United Nations system for the conduct of policy-relevant, cutting-edge research on social development that is pertinent to the work of the United Nations Secretariat; regional commissions and specialised agencies; and national institutions.

Our mission is to generate knowledge and articulate policy alternatives on contemporary development issues, thereby contributing to the broader goals of the UN system of reducing poverty and inequality, advancing well-being and rights, and creating more democratic and just societies.

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For additional resources, go to
www.unrisd.org/greeneconomy



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