

Sustainable Development and Global Governance

Clive George

University of Manchester

The difficulties of achieving sustainable development reflect several internal tensions in the three-pillar approach: The adoption of economic development as a separate pillar from social development challenges the view that the purpose of one is to achieve the other; economic valuation of the environment removes the distinction between environmental and economic goals; and no distinction is drawn between the development of developing countries and the development of developed ones. These tensions are shown to be symptomatic of difficult issues being avoided. A closer examination revives doubts about whether the conservation of the global commons and the development of developing countries can both be achieved without major changes in economic structures and governance systems, nationally as well as globally. It is concluded that the development of more appropriate systems requires imaginative research in every discipline of the social sciences, with a vital role for cooperation between American and Chinese institutions.

Key Words: sustainable development • global governance • classical economics • global commons