

Sustainable Futures: Environmental Concerns and the Transformation of Development Thought

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Abstract

The debate between development and environmental sustainability has undergone a profound transformation leading to shift focus from growth to sustainable growth. Subsequent debates on ecological modernization and political ecology has given a new impetus to tackle climate change by introducing planetary boundaries. Will developed and developing countries support each other to protect environment? Will there be a consensus regarding sustainable development? As of now some developed countries does not see climate change as real. Although debates are happening about the climate change and global warming, needless to say but it's the time when differences needs to be set aside and cooperation and consensus needs to be focussed.

Keywords: Sustainable Development, Climate Change, Ecological Modernization, Political Ecology.

Introduction

The debate regarding the development and environment protection seems to be the talk of the hour. In this implies that environmental sustainability and economic development has a most consequential relationship to focus on intellectual and policy debates of the late twentieth and twenty first century. The period after the post World War II was the period where development theory was dominated by growth centric models that sees nature , primarily as a

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reservoir of inputs – land, minerals , water and, biomass . These resources need to be harnessed in the service of industrialisation to raise standard of living.

The consequences of these trajectories on environment for decades treated as externalities. By externalities means The displacement cost shifted onto ecosystem, future generations, and mostly on the vulnerable population of the world (Escobar, 1995). Above will counter good and started two reforming thinking on development from 1960 onwards, Insisting that ecological limits were not superficial inconveniences But constitute of features of any viable vision of human progress. This chapter focuses on that transformation examining how environmental concerns came into mainstream development discourse, How negotiations stakes, place and introducing and what intellectual and political consequences followed.

This has moved from several stages initializing firstly from surveying early ecological critics challenging orthodoxy in the 1960s and 1970s. Secondly, examining important concept of sustainable development as codified in the Brundtland Report and its consecutive career in policy and scholarship. Thirdly, it explores the drift between ecological modernization and more radical political ecological perspectives. Fourthly, It addresses the emergence of climate change as the most dressing issue of the contemporary error and its consequences for the development thought. Finally, it considers the Fuel aspects to focus on new green deals, post-development alternatives. Thus chapter deals with scenarios of political economy and how environmental issues be treated.

Early Ecological Critiques And The Limits To Growth Debate

The contemporary movement challenges the orthodox practices crystallised in early 1970s with a bunch of landmark texts and events that impose environmental concern questions onto the international policy agenda. Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962) already showed the systemic harms of industrial pesticide use, leading to rising tensions about the consequences of technological progress (Carson, 1962). But major attention was grabbed by the publication of *The Limits To Growth* by Meadows et al. (1972) that most of them directly confronted the Growth paradigm.

Making dynamic modelling, Meadows and his colleagues projected that if industrialization continued to expand at then-current rates, there will be a catastrophic encounter of resources constraints and environmental degradation within a century. Although the report was controversial and criticised for its methodological assumptions, but it led to the establishment of 'limits' as an unavoidable reference point in development debate (Meadows et al., 1972). At the same point of time, the 1962 United Nations Conference on Human Environment in Stockholm raised environmental issues at the inter governmental diplomacy channel for the first time. This has articulated dual commitment to environmental protection and development, hiding the development deep environmental issues whose consequence, population is facing currently.

Economies that are concerned for the environmental protection has attempted to ground developmental theory in biophysical reality. As we move forward entropy brings disorder which implies that which implies that focusing on mere developmental models without seeking sustainable development will lead to the increment of disorder and serious environmental concerns.

The Brundtland Synthesis: Sustainable Development as Global Consensus

The importance of sustainable development gets its due importance in the report "Our Common Future", published in year 1987 by World Commission on Environment and Development chaired by Norwegian Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland (World Commission on Environment and Development [WCED], 1987). Sustainable development has defined by the report as ' the development that meets the need of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'. By focusing on the fact that poverty itself was a major cause of environmental degradation. The report argued that environmental protection and development needs to be taken into consideration simultaneously and could be made mutually reinforcing.

The report validated the continued innovation in technology within ecological bounds. For the development of the developing nations, it affirms their right to develop an obligate developed countries

to assist them in their transition. To focus on environmental concerns, it has elevated ecology to a send central point of view of international policy. Nevertheless, the efforts showed positive outcomes in the form of Earth Summit, Agenda 21 along with Framework Convention on Climate Change. But recent developments in geopolitics where USA withdrawing from major institutions led to derail the developmental process and environmental protection agenda in jeopardy.

Ecological Modernization versus Political Ecology

By 1990s, the debate on sustainable development and ecological modernisation gained prominence, argued that advanced capitalists societies possessed the institutional capacity to transform their relationship with nature through technological innovation, regulatory reforms and market mechanisms. But developed countries are sceptical in providing new and advanced technologies to developing countries creating a problem in framing out solution regarding climate change and sustainable development. Clean technologies, environmental management systems, tax, reforms, carbon markets could green the economy without requiring major transformations.

Ecological modernisation provided theoretical rational for emission trading scheme, environmental impact assessment, corporate sustainability, reporting, and the green business practices, treating ecological problems as a technical puzzle. The concept of greenwashing (the deployment of environmental rhetoric to legitimate business as usual practices) emerged and it led to the poorly addressing of environmental degradation issues. Whereas political ecology offered a more structural perspective as it emerged from the intersection of political economy and cultural ecology. It argued that environmental problems are indispensable from question of power, inequality and social justice. Environmental degradation was not an accidental byproduct of development but a systemic feature of capitalist accumulation.

This has led to the emergence of the concept of environmental justice, developed within North American in environmental activists and later scholars to highlight disproportionate ecological burden, borne by communities of low and medal income countries. There needs to be an holistic approach where environment and development can go hand in hand without further polluting and compromising the life of future generations.

Climate Change and the Transformation of the Development Agenda

Climate change has restructured the development-environment debate since 1990s. The major factor that came as a cost of environmental degradation are the anthropogenic factors that lead to global warming as consolidated by IPCC report of 2021. The report shows that cumulative emission of greenhouse gases by industrial civilization were altering the planet's energy balance which will change the environment completely and these changes will be irreversible. Climate change represented the most consequential environment challenge in the form of development based on fossil fuels leading to the exhaustion of non renewable resources.

The implications for the development theory are more damaging for me, for the nations and populations, most vulnerable to climate impacts such as small island states, Sub Saharan African countries, coastal and deltaic societies. Climate change also raised the stakes of the growth debate as scientists articulating planetary boundaries. The planetary boundaries framework suggested that the continued economic growth, along with historical trajectories, would transgress multiple earth system threshold simultaneously leading to irreversible ecological changes. The 2015 Paris Agreement represented as most important moment focusing on climate concerns within development governance. Its commitment to limiting global average temperature rises to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels a m trying to limit warming 1.5°C. The concept of nationally determined contributions adopted were all countries need to articulate decarbonisation trajectories effectively making climate policy to move towards sustainable development to protect environment.

Conclusion

To focus on sustainable development and transformation on development thought, under the pressure of environmental concern represent the most vital intellectual shift of the past half-century. From growth centric post war development economics, the focus has moved towards protecting environment. Sustainable development for all its ambiguities and limitations established a new terrain of discourse in which environmental considerations became most important in order

to deal with uncertain challenges. Recent issues escalated tensions in geopolitics leading to a war like situation creating more irreversible ecological changes.

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