

Toward Integrated and Sustainable Development?

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Acronyms

CCA	Common Country Assessment
CDF	Comprehensive Development Framework
CDAFs	Comprehensive Development Assistance Framework (UNDP)
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
EADI	European Association of Development Research and Training Institutes
EA	environmental assessment
ECLAC	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
EIA	environmental impact assessment
EMS	Environmental Management System
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GDP	gross domestic product
GEF	Global Environmental Facility
GNP	gross national product
G-7	Group of 7
GSDF	Global Sustainable Development Facility
GTZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit
HDI	Human Development Index
IBRD	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
ICSID	International Center for Settlement of Investment Disputes
IDA	International Development Association
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IFC	International Finance Corporation
IFI	international financial institution
IIED	International Institute for Environment and Development
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPM	integrated pest management
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
IUCN	World Conservation Union
IUED	Institut Universitaire d'Etudes du Développement
MDB	Multilateral Development Bank
MIGA	Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	non-governmental organization
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PCD	people-centred development
PPP	purchasing power parity
SARD	Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development (FAO)
SD	Department of Sustainable Development (FAO)
SDA	Rural Development (FAO)
SDC	Swiss Development Cooperation
SDR	Research Extension and Training (FAO)
SDW	Women and Population Division (FAO)
SECO	State Secretary for Economic Affairs
SHD	sustainable human development
Sida	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
UN	United Nations

UNCED	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
UNCSD	United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNRISD	United Nations Research Institute for Social Development
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WB	World Bank
WBG	World Bank Group
WCED	World Commission on Environment and Development
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization
WMO	World Meteorological Organization
WTO	World Trade Organization
WWF	World Wide Fund For Nature

Summary/Résumé/Resumen

Summary

How have mainstream development agencies interpreted and applied approaches to “sustainable development”? Are they stimulating progress by governments and other social actors toward reaching the environmental and social goals enunciated, for example, in the Declarations and Plans of Action adopted by the World Conference on Environment and Development (Rio, 1992) and the World Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen, 1995)? Is it realistic to expect specialized international development agencies to adopt integrated, holistic approaches to complex environmental, social welfare and related socioeconomic issues? What might be done to help ensure that mainstream agencies’ sustainable development efforts become more effective?

In attempting to answer these types of questions, this paper looks first at some of the interpretations, ambiguities and contradictions associated with the term “sustainable development”, and at why it became so popular among development agencies during the 1990s. Barraclough suggests that the recent popularity may have less to do with its conceptual innovation or analytical sharpness than with the practical politics of the era. Moreover, he argues, diverging interpretations of the term have enabled a wide range of actors to endorse and pursue “sustainability” and “development”, which have almost universally positive connotations associated with dynamic and more equitable progress.

The paper goes on to discuss recent attempts by a few mainstream international agencies—the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank—to apply the concept of sustainable development in their operational programmes. The author asks: To what extent do recent agency policies in the name of sustainable development represent conceptual innovations implying a change in thinking, as contrasted with a simple change in terminology? How have sustainable development policies been translated into concrete programmes and operational decisions? Are they mere “add-ons” to the agency’s ongoing programme, or do they suggest a fundamental change in its overall approach? And how well have the agencies succeeded in integrating declared environmental and social goals? He finds that agencies’ adoption of “sustainable development” goals and programmes tended to be more a terminological than a conceptual innovation. Furthermore, the agencies have often not succeeded in integrating socioeconomic and environmental issues into a unified approach to guide their wide-ranging operations. The paper also mentions the efforts of some other development actors—UN agencies and programmes, the international financial institutions, the dozens of bilateral organizations dedicated to providing development aid, and numerous international NGOs. These agencies face similar problems in carrying out integrated programmes on the ground.

Finally, Barraclough speculates on what impacts efforts to promote sustainable development might have had in practice, and what might be done by some of the principal actors to contribute toward more integrated and effective approaches to sustainable development.

Evaluating impacts on the ground is extremely complex. Available data and analysis suggest mixed, often contradictory, results. Yet perhaps even more surprising is the author's finding that there seem to have been few systematic attempts to trace how sustainable development policies and initiatives have been interpreted and applied at various levels, from headquarters through regional and national decision-making centres, to their impacts on livelihoods and the environment on the ground. Apparently, even less is known about the extent to which such initiatives may affect broader processes that contribute to social inequalities and environmental degradation. The author suggests that this relative absence of systematic assessments with critical feedback from the field can lead to fallacious assumptions becoming embedded in the conventional wisdom that is used to formulate recommendations for future policies and programmes.

According to the author, the burden of adjusting toward more sustainable development will have to fall primarily on the rich. Sustainability will be out of reach without a redistribution of wealth and power from rich countries to poor ones, and from the rich to the poor in both. Growing pressures emanating from increasingly organized groups of the hitherto excluded, in alliances with others standing to gain from more sustainable development, could help. Identifying the social forces that could be mobilized to bring about the policy and institutional reforms required for socially and ecologically sustainable development at international, national and local levels remains the key issue for international development agencies.

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Résumé

Comment les institutions de développement en place ont-elles interprété et mis en pratique la notion de "développement durable"? Incitent-elles les gouvernements et d'autres acteurs de la société à atteindre les objectifs environnementaux et sociaux énoncés, par exemple, dans les Déclarations et Plans d'action adoptés par la Conférence des Nations Unies sur l'environnement et le développement (Rio, 1992) et le Sommet mondial pour le développement social (Copenhague, 1995)? Est-ce réaliste d'attendre d'institutions internationales spécialisées dans le développement qu'elles adoptent une approche intégrée face à des problèmes écologiques, sociaux et socio-économiques complexes? Que faire pour que les efforts de développement durable des institutions en place donnent plus de résultats?

En tentant de répondre à ce genre de questions, l'auteur de cette étude examine en premier lieu certaines des interprétations, ambiguïtés et contradictions associées à l'expression de "développement durable" et se demande pourquoi elle est devenue si populaire dans les institutions de développement pendant les années 90. Solon Barraclough laisse entendre que cette popularité récente tient sans doute moins à la nouveauté du concept ou à l'acuité de l'analyse des pratiques utilisées en politique pendant cette période. De plus, poursuit-il, les interprétations divergentes données à cette expression ont permis à un large éventail d'acteurs de souscrire à la "viabilité" et au "développement", qui ont des connotations presque

universellement positives associées à l'idée de progrès, de dynamisme et d'une plus grande équité, et d'en faire leurs objectifs.

L'auteur étudie les tentatives récentes faites par certaines institutions internationales—l'Organisation des Nations Unies pour l'alimentation et l'agriculture (FAO), le Programme des Nations Unies pour le développement (PNUD) et la Banque mondiale—pour mettre en pratique la notion de développement durable dans leurs activités de terrain. Dans quelle mesure, se demande l'auteur, les politiques récentes adoptées par ces institutions au nom du développement durable sont-elles novatrices dans leur conception, impliquent-elles une rupture dans leur réflexion, plutôt qu'un simple changement de vocabulaire? Comment les politiques de développement durable se sont-elles traduites en programmes concrets et en décisions sur le terrain? S'agit-il de simples ornements ajoutés au programme de l'institution ou indiquent-elles un changement radical d'approche? Et dans quelle mesure les institutions ont-elles réussi à intégrer des objectifs environnementaux et sociaux déclarés? Il estime qu'en adoptant des objectifs et programmes de "développement durable", les institutions agissent plus au niveau de la terminologie que sur une innovation conceptuelle. De plus, elles ont rarement su adopter à l'égard des questions socio-économiques et environnementales une démarche unifiée, applicable dans leurs opérations d'envergure. L'auteur mentionne aussi les efforts tentés par d'autres acteurs du développement—les institutions et programmes des Nations Unies, les institutions financières internationales, les douzaines d'organisations bilatérales qui dispensent une aide au développement et les nombreuses ONG internationales. Ces institutions se heurtent aux mêmes problèmes dans la mise en œuvre de programmes intégrés sur le terrain.

Enfin, Solon Barraclough se demande quelle incidence les efforts déployés en faveur d'un développement durable ont pu avoir dans la pratique et ce que pourraient faire les principaux acteurs pour que le développement durable soit abordé de manière moins fragmentaire et plus efficace. Il est extrêmement difficile d'évaluer les répercussions sur le terrain. Les données et analyses disponibles conduisent à des résultats souvent contradictoires. Mais ce que l'auteur découvre est peut-être plus surprenant encore: il semble que l'on ait rarement tenté de suivre les politiques et initiatives de développement durable du siège aux centres de décision régionaux et nationaux pour voir comment elles avaient été interprétées et appliquées à divers niveaux et

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