The Political Economy of Sustainable Development

Workshop on Integrated Approaches to SD Planning and Implementation. Session 6: Fostering an Enabling Environment

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Key Points

• Challenges to Sustainable Development
• A view from Political Economy
  – What is it
  – What it offers
  – It limits
• Can PE help the Post-2015 Agenda?
1. The State of Sustainable Development
The Challenges of SD

• Producing the wealth we need
• For a prosperous society
• Without eating into our capital
The graph illustrates 

CO₂ emissions from fossil fuel burning and cement production (GtCO₂ yr⁻¹)

- **Historical**
- **2012 Estimate**
- **RCP8.5**
- **RCP4.5**
- **RCP6**
- **RCP3-PD**

The graph shows the historical data and future projections for 

- **RCP8.5**: 4.0–6.1°C
- **RCP4.5**: 2.0–3.0°C
- **RCP3-PD**: 1.3–1.9°C

Key events marked on the graph include:

- **2013-2015 UNFCCC review**
- **Inclusion in Copenhagen Accord**
- **Adopted by the EU Council**
- **Planned start of Kyoto successor**
the safe and just space for humanity
Why Such Challenges?

• Technological knowledge
For a >66% chance of staying below 2°C

Mitigation curves after Raupach et al. 2014

Mitigation curve given cumulative emissions to 2013

Mitigation curve given cumulative emissions to 1995

Projections from Friedlingstein et al. 2014
Why Such Challenges?

• Technological knowledge
• Policy knowledge
• Don’t we know already?
  – Rapid energy transition
  – Sustainable production and consumption
  – Land-use, food systems, urban set-ups…
The Stubborn Know-Do Gap

• Difficulty of acting
  – Need to address poverty
  – Reluctance to change lifestyles

• Not facing power
  – Beyond « political will »
  – Need to unpack what this means
That will work! We just need the political will!

Yep, with a good carbon tax.

...and capacity building.

Technologies will do the trick!

Political will? Do I smell an elephant?
2. The View from Political Economy
(Re)Emerging PE

• Analysis of power over the production and distribution of wealth
  – Maps-out actors, their interests, strategies, discourses, alliances and conflicts
  – In production and reproduction

• Flags *vested interests*
  – To avoid hot spots
  – And mobilise “drivers of change”
Are We there Yet?

• Not quite
  – Still have capacity issues
  – Institutional barriers
  – Threatening to many

• But, with recent advances
  – Need for “development effectiveness”
  – New space for politics and PE
  – Build alliances
3. So What?
Can PE Enable SD?

• PE of SD is even more challenging
  – Large-scale
  – Powerful opponents
  – Need broad alliances

• Opportunities
  – Build PE capacity
  – Policy tools
  – Scale-up successes
Discussion Questions

• Does this all resonate to your own experience?
• Do you see PE as a useful and realistic tool?
• Should we work on building PE capacity as part of an enabling tool kit?
Comments and Questions?

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