

Inclusive, Just and Effective Transition: Comparing Market-Based and Redistributive Approaches to Sustainability

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Abstract : While there is broad agreement among governments and civil society globally about the need to develop more sustainable societies, the best way to achieve this is still contested. In particular, there are differences regarding whether to continue to implement market-based approaches or to move to alternative redistributive-based approaches. In this paper, 'Green Economy' and 'Living Well' strategies are compared as examples of these two different strategies for achieving social, ecological and economic sustainability. The paper is based on a 3-year ESRC funded project on transitions to sustainability which examines the implementation of the 'Green Economy' paradigm in South Korea and the 'Living Well' paradigm in Bolivia. As well as outlining and analysing secondary data, the paper also draws on over 100 interviews with a range of local stakeholders in these countries carried out by the author between and including 2016 and 2018. The work indicates that the Living Well paradigm seems to better integrate social, ecological and economic concerns and may better deliver sustainability in the time frame necessary than the dominant Green Economy paradigm. This seems to be primarily because Living Well emphasises redistribution to reduce inequality and ensure human needs are met; living in harmony with nature, taking into account natural limits and cycles; respecting traditional values and practices where these support sustainability and human well-being; sovereignty and local control of natural resources; and participative decision-making, based on grassroots community organising. It is, therefore, argued that to achieve inclusive, just and effective transitions to sustainability we should aim to foster equality, respect planetary limits, build on local traditions, bring resources into public ownership and enhance participatory democracy. This will require a radically different approach to that offered within the market-based agenda currently dominating global sustainability debates and activities.

Keywords : environmental transition, green economy, inclusive sustainability, living well, sustainable transition

Conference Title : ICEP 2018 : International Conference on Environmental Politics

Conference Location : New York, United States

Conference Dates : October 08-09, 2018