

### **Reflections**

**Antto Vihma (Guest Lecturer)**

**Pre-reading: Williams, M. 2005. The Third World and Global Environmental Negotiations: Interests, Institutions and Ideas. Global Environmental Politics 5: 48-69**

Williams (2005) suggests that post-colonialist doubts expressed by Indira Gandhi in the Stockholm Conference in 1972 have not disappeared. With the rise of emerging economies, China in particular, the global system to govern environmental and climate worries seems increasingly old-fashioned. As history tells, global environmental governance emerged upon established economic and social policy systems, in a predominantly nation-state global context. Furthermore, state-realist views<sup>1</sup> can increase in economic downturns, such as the current financial crisis.

Regarding the two main topics of Rio+20 in 2012, Vihma himself is interested in the reform of the international institutional framework. Europeans have wished for an upgrade of UNEP into a more powerful organization (UNEO or WEO) as Jacques Chirac expressed in 2007, suggesting benchmarking from the model of WHO. This could, in future, help the UN to mitigate the criticism it has received of the inadequate handling of the climate process and the pessimistic views, which suggest that the UN is only as strong as its nation-states.

But perhaps, to meet the challenge of the realist ideology dominated by short-term economic concerns and domestic priorities, also structural academic changes beyond reform of current institutions are necessary. A discussion of “a green economy”, integrating ecological values into economic decision-making is slowly emerging, advocated both by economists and environmental scientists. Academic debate on the topic is connecting critical economists, degrowth-thinkers and other sustainability scholars. A rich torrent of suggestions from environmental accounting into changes of the bottom-line measures of perceived development includes the replacement of the GDP with welfare- or sustainability-oriented indicators.

Indeed, the institutional reform advocated by Vihma seems necessary to expedite the overall global process. New indicators, as well, might help decision-makers to target for goals, which equitably capture environmental, social and economic views. Finally, however, I would consider a third angle. Currently, ‘hard policy issues’ such as the use of natural resources, or energy, trade and security questions, run in a separate stream from the sustainability debate. Motivated by the worrying results of climate science, new sustainability approaches could help to challenge traditional state-realist views. Therefore, I would argue that increased interdisciplinary debate by development, political and welfare economists with sustainability scholars is necessary.

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<sup>1</sup> See e.g. Gilpin, Robert 2001. “Global Political Economy: Understanding the International Economic Order” Princeton University Press.