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Ficklin, L, Stringer, LC orcid.org/0000-0003-0017-1654, Dougill, AJ orcid.org/0000-0002-3422-8228 et al. (1 more author) (2018) Climate compatible development reconsidered: calling for a critical perspective. *Climate and Development*, 10 (3). pp. 193-196. ISSN 1756-5529

<https://doi.org/10.1080/17565529.2017.1372260>

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Climate Compatible Development Reconsidered: Calling for a Critical Perspective

Ficklin, L., Stringer, L.C., Dougill, A. J., and Sallu, S. M.

In 2010 Tom Mitchell and Simon Maxwell introduced the term 'climate compatible development' (CCD) as the basis of a new development landscape. At its core, CCD introduces a framework for aligning climate change and development trajectories in such a way that minimises the harm caused by climate impacts, while maximising the human development opportunities created by low carbon emissions initiatives. CCD was conceptualised as moving beyond traditional boundaries of mitigation, adaptation and development to provide a combined 'triple-win' approach to climate change and development policy (ibid). CCD therefore integrates climate-resilient development strategies that focus on adaptation, with mitigation initiatives to reduce carbon emissions and/or enhance terrestrial carbon storage, without compromising development. CCD is immensely appealing to policy stakeholders. It targets synergies to present a cost-effective pathway to a triple-win development in an increasingly uncertain global context. This triple-win thinking perpetuates the idea that development can be more rational and efficient if connected elements can be combined into one strategy and rolled out into multiple projects across multiple governance contexts and sectors. As these elements concern 'sustainable development' and 'climate change' policies it is difficult to imagine opposition, at least at the international and national levels where such policies are developed and approved.

CCD is also appealing to researchers and the term is gaining traction in research circles. However, rather than initiating this research with the theoretical and conceptual engagement with CCD, academic enquiry, thus far, has been preoccupied with how CCD is being operationalised (e.g. Stringer et al., 2014), and empirical analyses of how triple wins might be achieved dominate the CCD research literature (Suckall, Stringer and Tompkins 2014; Verat et al., 2014). Mitchell and Maxwell (2010) claim that CCD pathways may be pursued through individual projects. However, analyses to date suggest that the more common CCD operationalisation mechanism involves policy makers balancing priorities across regions and sectors which results in trade-offs, particularly in relation to adaptation

and mitigation. It is these trade-offs that underpin CCD's operation and simultaneously raise questions about the feasibility of the triple-win rhetoric in leading to the multiple benefits to which it aspires.

At the national level, CCD presently functions as a multi-level market in trade-offs between adaptation, mitigation and development with political conflicts over their relative importance commonplace (e.g. Hulme, 2011; Conway & Mustelin, 2014). Decision-making operates with trade-offs between different sectors to compensate for emissions produced through development and adaptation activities. These trade-offs are multi-level in that they connect international finance flows to project level initiatives through national and local government and civil society intermediaries. The intermediaries make decisions about the trade-offs between and within sectors, which actors are involved and excluded, and about who will ultimately bear the costs or reap the benefits of these processes. Whilst these trade-offs are occurring in order to connect the three components of CCD, there is very limited empirical evidence that illuminates how they are considered commensurable. Transactions and exchanges are occurring between highly variable sectors that independently commodify oil, gas, trees, fish, crops, biodiversity, carbon, healthcare and so forth. Yet there is no sense of how these 'commodities' are being collectively valued by different intermediaries in order to make trade-offs more equitable between them and to explicitly consider the local level livelihood implications.

There are consequently three issues which complicate the operationalisation of CCD that require further research. The first is the problem of conceptualisation, the second concerns the process of assigning value to the three components of CCD, which guides the trade-offs made within it, and the third issue is governance. The underlying challenge to engaging with CCD is that there is little consensus and clarification on what it actually is. As a concept it is used interchangeably with 'climate resilient pathways', 'green growth', and 'low carbon development' and is completely absent from the 2014 IPCC WGII report. There is little clarification as to how these other terms are distinguished from CCD, beyond CCD aiming for triple-wins that include mitigation, as opposed to only focussing on co-benefits for development and adaptation. In accepting that CCD is both a multi-level governance and multi-sector challenge, space is required for multiple definitions and meanings to be

negotiated between different epistemic communities, different stakeholders and sectors, and the winners and losers of such initiatives in practice. Research is required to make sense of CCD as a concept: to establish the connections between CCD as part of the development rhetoric and the financiers and constructors of this agenda, and to identify any resistance to the roll-out of what is essentially another economic development approach that claims to add an additional 'win' to the *status quo*. Despite convincing claims that CCD provides the basis for a new development landscape, questions persist about what this new landscape looks like.

Presently, in order to be able to recognise, measure and evaluate CCD there is a dominance of economic thinking within development, mitigation and adaptation, and a preoccupation with carbon emissions. These issues are inherently connected within questions of value. CCD is continually being reproduced within an economic narrative. Indeed, Mitchell and Maxwell (2010) define CCD as being "characterised as changing patterns of innovation, production and trade tied to climate responses" (2). In adopting such economic language, it can be argued that development is being presented as growth. This is particularly limiting, especially in terms of its neglect of more holistic development foci that centre on well-being (White, 2010). At all levels, there are multiple rationalities about what constitutes development, mitigation and adaptation. Consensus has to be achieved in order to make decisions about the commensurability between them and this is presently attempted through employing an economic rhetoric to understand these processes. It is claimed that CCD is not a technocratic concept (Maxwell and Mitchell, 2010), but this is undermined by the foregrounding of an economic agenda. To perform the economic processes of innovation, production and trade in a triple-win development approach between sectors, a measurable unit is required to ascertain value. Likewise, to make these trade-offs commensurable, they first have to be measurable, a task in which social, cultural and political interpretations of development prove to be very complicated. Perhaps this explains their neglect. The prevalence of carbon in mitigation and adaptation trade-off rhetoric can also be explained in this way. Carbon emissions are relatively easy to quantify and measure: qualities that lend themselves to commodification and trade. If CCD strategies were making trade-offs between quality of life, cultural significance and social cohesion as examples of processes that are much less alienable and therefore more difficult to commodify, the

triple-wins become significantly less achievable. The absence of any non-economic, alternative development agenda and the prominence of carbon emissions trading have served to depoliticise CCD, both as a concept and in practice.

Even within the economic rhetoric that conceptualises CCD there are significant problems in the approach to value measurements being made and the subsequent trade-offs being negotiated. It is unclear as to whether trade-offs are established on the value measurements of individual 'resources' (ranging from access to crop genomes, to the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities, to polluting rights of the atmosphere), or on the area covered by these resources, or rather by their function and utility use. For a stable system of commensurability to emerge, the institutional rules of the market must be clear on how the value of the commodity is to be measured (Robertson, 2004). Within the trade-offs being made to achieve CCD, it is not only unclear as to what the unit of measurement is, but it is not even established as to which commodities require measuring. In short, in order to achieve triple wins and to identify, or avoid potential trade-offs, the units of trade have to form segregable, measurable entities in economic terms. Even by the terms with which it is defined, it is unclear how this is being achieved within CCD decision making processes at the national level.

Analysis of the use and impact of CCD reveals that environmental governance is achieved between and among different levels of government, civil society and the private sector (Dyer et al., 2013). Yet little has been said about the significance of environmental governance reform, and within existing CCD empirical evidence there is a lack of critical engagement among scales of state governance, scales of decision making and local participation. This raises questions therefore, not only about what kind of governance already typifies CCD, but whether or not new forms of institutional processes are emerging that reflect the shift to triple-win thinking. What kinds of institutional structures govern CCD, how they are being established and how they operate has not been a prominent narrative in CCD research and yet is essential to make sense of emerging empirical evidence. The multi-level and multi-sector nature of CCD inherently produces conflicting governing processes, actors and outcomes. The addition of a third win would impact yet more processes, actors and outcomes and by extension more institutions, sectors and regulatory

bodies. The addition of a third development win cannot therefore be simply tacked on to an existing climate policy initiative without significant implications for discursive and institutional shifts in environmental policies and regulation at all scales. The reality that environmental outcomes are largely the result of political choices, institutional structures, and power relations that cannot be separated from the broader political-economic dynamics of globalisation (McCarthy, 2004) has been recognised within CCD research (Tanner and Allouche, 2011). However, the detail of such choices, structures and relationships requires more rigorous exploration in order to make sense of the outcomes they produce.

There is consequently an emerging research agenda into the political economy of CCD. The IDS Bulletin on the political economy of climate change (2011) presents twelve papers, and an Introduction (Tanner and Allouche 2011). The intention of this collection is to establish a 'new political economy approach' to climate policy, one that moves away from a technocratic and linear process, operating mostly at national level and with a science-based rationality, towards an understanding which takes account of ideologies and power relations, incorporates the views of local people, and recognises the social construction of dominant scientific and policy narratives (Maxwell, 2014). This new political economy approach should, in theory, relocate the 'politics' within analyses of CCD by seeking out the inequalities and exclusions, and offering some much needed stratification and critique of its conceptualisation. Yet, the analyses offered in the IDS bulletin inherently focus on economic processes. These processes are applied to empirical contexts that are inherently political, yet in overlooking the political as a research focus, narratives on climate equity and justice are being marginalised. The authors fail to offer a new conceptualisation or framework that could emerge out of a political economy approach to help better understand what CCD is or could be. As such, the research reported serves to legitimise and reproduce the CCD agenda, rather than provide a rigorous unpacking and critique.

Whether CCD is a new development landscape or a mechanism with which to connect already existing development pathways to wider mitigation and adaptation initiatives remains to be seen. There is an underlying assumption that if triple-wins can be achieved then they can be achieved for all, with little recognition of alternative rationalities that place

different values on development, adaptation and mitigation. In implementing a narrow top-down economic interpretation of CCD there is a risk of marginalising those for whom triple-win opportunities do not exist. This inevitably requires attention to be paid to how CCD is conceptualised. Moving forward and connecting CCD practice and projects to a meaningful conceptualisation requires an increasingly flexible understanding of CCD that questions the feasibility of triple-win thinking and its economic agenda, and acknowledges the inherent injustice and inequalities that are created alongside and within it. In analysing whether or not the concept of CCD is being consistently applied, and by whom, it would be possible to initiate a re-politicisation of the combination of development and climate change policies. This challenges the inherent and assumed normative approach to triple-win development rhetoric, allowing reflection on whether we should be bundling inherently complex and contested policy strategies together in the name of streamlining and rebranding what already exists, or whether CCD can offer something new and positive. A more critical engagement with the political economy of CCD, and of whose definitions and values count within the CCD agenda, is required to make sense of CCD, both conceptually and as a policy goal and to assess and guide its impacts on both national policies and development practices.

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