

<http://www.gowerpublishing.com/isbn/9780566091797>

# Green Outcomes in the Real World

Global Forces, Local Circumstances,  
and Sustainable Solutions

PETER MCMANNERS

GOWER

# Preface

Modern civilization is the pinnacle of human achievement. Through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries human ingenuity built the greatest civilization of all time. Our technology is advancing at such a pace that it seems there is nothing we cannot achieve. One of the secrets of our success has been the development of economic theory to provide a sound basis for organizing society and allocating resources efficiently. The particular idea that has accelerated progress and brought such wealth and material improvement in human lives over the last three decades is economic globalization, but the time has come to consider a new direction for society.

Humans are quick-witted, dexterous and can work well together in groups. This is why the species *Homo sapiens* is so successful. However, we can also be blind to problems until they grow large enough to grab our attention. We have been slow to understand that our narrow focus on economic outcomes is undermining the integrity of the biosphere. Now that this is understood, we have to step back and consider a policy framework to replace economic globalization. This need not be a step back in time to revert to a past age. It should be a metaphorical step back to regain our perspective on priorities for society. From this new vantage point, we can clearly see the dangers and plan the leap forward that is required to move beyond today's problems to the next phase of human progress.

I occupy a no-man's land between proponents of economic globalization and those who campaign for protection of the global environment. I can see clearly both sides of the debate, but the debate has diverged. It is imperative that we pull the debate together and reconcile our material aspirations with the pressing need to relieve the pressure on the natural systems of the planet.

Conventional economists tell us that economic globalization is good economics, and so it is. Globalization has brought economic success to many countries that have fully embraced the opportunities and accepted the harsh discipline of the open world market.

Environmentalists complain that the way modern globalized society operates is damaging the ecosystem; this also is true. Some of the damage we have caused is already irreversible, and there is no sign that humans are backing off. The evidence shows that the damage is accelerating.

I argue in this book that fundamental change is required in the way we run the economy and society. The policies of the last 20 years have, in many ways, been successful. They have shown the extraordinary power of *laissez-faire* capitalism to transform economies and lift people out of poverty, but we are deluded if we remain blind to the dark underbelly of associated problems that arise. Overcoming financial crisis ranks as a relatively minor challenge compared with the looming problems of climate change, oil depletion and population growth.

People want the triple-win of a strong economy, a healthy environment and a stable cohesive society. Over the first decade of the twenty-first century, I have heard linguistic contortions from world leaders and so-called experts attempting to justify the continuation of business as usual. Some seem to believe their own rhetoric that continued progress down the path of growth fuelled by economic globalization is the way to alleviate the problems of the world. This self-delusion is a convenient way to avoid facing the real challenges.

There is a simple truth that we ignore at our peril. Economic globalization brings short-term success but is diametrically opposed to the requirements of a long-term sustainable society. For the policies of economic globalization, there is a choice – to continue, or shift to a different paradigm. For sustainability there is no choice, or no sensible choice, if we believe that humanity has a future. Continuing to ignore the need to balance the economy and the environment will eventually destroy our species. This means that the new paradigm has to be based on the principle of sustainability. It has become clear that overlaying the concept of sustainability on the current economic system cannot work. When, instead, sustainability is inserted at the foundations, the resulting policy framework is radically different.

The aim is to set the context within which economists and policy makers can develop a new paradigm. I describe and explain a policy framework that encourages selfish determination to build sustainable societies. It appears to be a U-turn from the economic policies that have brought material advancement and wealth. In fact, it is a huge leap forward, providing the context within

which humans can redirect their drive for success to build vibrant societies in tune with local resources and local customs.

As the inherent contradictions between globalization and sustainability are addressed and resolved, the old battle lines between the policies of globalization and protectionism will be blurred. For example, global cooperation and interconnections will be vital to support the migration of green technologies and processes across the planet. The term 'protectionism' will lose its negative connotations when it means safeguarding the environment and bolstering social cohesion within national economies.

Instead of fighting over divergent policy choices that separate the economy from the ecosystem, we should engage in building the future for human society and the planet. This reconciliation of global forces with local circumstances makes it possible to deliver a stable and sustainable world society.

My intention is to make my small contribution to ensuring that the world is a better place. Where I dismantle cherished theories, I do so because the world has changed and we need to adapt. Where I make mistakes, which is inevitable when arguing for radical change, I crave your indulgence and ask that you look beyond these to identify the alterations that will improve my framework.

In testing my ideas, I am indebted to Emeritus Professor Paul Turner, London School of Economics, and Professor Emilio Herbolzheimer, Henley Business School of Reading University, to be the first to read my manuscript. Their expert feedback has ensured that my green perspective remains firmly rooted in the challenges of the real world.

Whether you support or oppose my ideas, speak up and join the debate. This is an important and defining point in human history. What we do in the coming decades will have far-reaching consequences for the planet and for us all.

Peter McManners