



Global North and South: Conflicting aspirations, deprived participation, what the future of Global Environment holds?

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Global environmental governance (GEG) has been a driving factor of environmental management as well as driving the sustainable development agenda, the global north-south politics has been inevitably persisting pointing on legitimacy and effectiveness of GEG. The study explores how the global environmental discourse shapes the future of GEG using the analytical lenses of north-south politics. The paper analyses the journey of the environmental politics of conflicting aspirations in relation to the participation of local communities in GEG and explores the recent Rio+20-earth summit to forecast the future of GEG. Highlighting conflicting aspirations, the paper charts the three key global environmental conferences (Stockholm 1972; Rio de Janeiro 1992; Johannesburg 2002) which note progressive changes in the involvement of the global south from contestation, participation, and engagement. It identifies the recent Rio+20 Earth summit 2012 as a disengaging phase from global to local in a contradicting manner in the name of “the future we want”. Questions regarding this study proliferate to: How has the post Rio+20 transformed the global environmental discourse? How are aspirations conflicting? How are the local communities participating and how can they cushion the conflicting aspirations? Using a qualitative methodological approach, the study analyses the post Rio+20 global south policies’ motives. Informal interviews with policy makers of the global south were used regardless of the methodological challenge of political connotations to portray rational views. Local communities’ participation was mapped in rural Zaka using participatory observations and informal interviews. The study notes key observations as; the global south deriving from the notion “the future we want” is enacting policies that are contradictory to the global agenda. As well local communities of the global south are deprived participation through information unawareness, autocracy, institutional and legislative suppression in the discourse to share the local aspirations, knowledge and practices to the global platform.

As the north-south aspirations persist to conflict, while local communities’ participation is deprived, the future of GEG is turning vaguer. GEG as the main driving force of all environmental management practices and development initiatives, the continual conflicts of global north and south becomes focal point to unlock the tied values of environment and development. Thus, the paper calls for adoption of common uncommon treatment and collaborative action. It identifies the need to enact local policies as auxiliary to the global objectives where the notion “think globally, act locally” (top-down approach) applies to the environmental partners at local scale to keep the global agenda in motion in global south. In regard to the global environmental institutions, the paper elucidates that the notion “think locally, act globally” (bottom-up approach) needs to be adopted to apprehend decentralised approaches which witness positive collaboration, where locally enacted ideas are appreciated and incorporated into the global environmental initiatives so as to gain support of both partners towards one future. It concludes that this all together apprehend legitimacy and effectiveness of GEG from both the global south and north towards a common future thereby witnessing a balance of environment and development towards global consensus.