
Preface

This book has, at its heart, a concern with taking stock, over twenty-five years on from the influential Brundtland Report (WCED, 1987), of the concept of sustainable development and its implications for the conduct of public policy and human behaviour. There is little doubt about the prominence of the term 'sustainable development' in contemporary debates about natural capital specifically and human development more generally. Indeed, if anything the term itself has suffered from overuse alternatively as a panacea for all modern ills or as a catch-all theme to which all policy challenges (no matter of what complexion) are somehow inextricably linked.

In reflecting within these pages on what sustainable development really is, how it can be achieved and how it can be measured, it is the aim of this volume to provide an unequivocal demonstration that the term remains extremely useful. What we can conclude from the contributions that follow is that, while sustainable development does indeed imply a broad research and policy agenda (both in terms of its scale and its scope), it is also an agenda that is far more coherent than might appear to be the case on first impressions. Much of this coherence stems from a shared concern about the development path that developed and developing countries (as well as the world as a whole) are on. For us, as others, this is the essential difference between saying that some action is 'undesirable' and saying that it is 'unsustainable'. That is, undesirable actions may warrant the attentions of policy makers but are not necessarily the domain of concern about sustainable development.

That said, the evolving literature, coming as it does from a variety of disciplinary perspectives, contains a wide range of topics and policy challenges to study and respond to. We have not shied away from this diversity – of subject matter and approach – here. Indeed, in mapping out the structure of the first edition of this volume some years ago, we were immediately faced with the challenge of choosing what should be included. As with our first volume, while we have continually sought to be comprehensive, we are unable to be encyclopaedic. But putting together a second volume has allowed us to revisit this challenge and, importantly, to try to fill any crucial gaps that we were forced to leave first time around. Moreover, debates change and evolve. While the terms 'green growth' and 'ecosystems as assets' were with us in the run-up to the first edition of this volume, the prominence with which these notions now have come to the fore makes it necessary and highly desirable to include these topics as new chapters.

Our first volume appeared shortly after the death of one of our contributors, David Pearce. David's passing continues to be a huge loss to the profession and he remains sorely missed. We have taken the liberty of retaining David's chapter in this revised volume. We are particularly grateful to Sam Fankhauser for agreeing to take on the task of updating this contribution. Given that Sam was one of David's favourite and most promising young researchers in the years that followed the publication of *Blueprint 1*, we feel that his co-authoring this important chapter is entirely appropriate.

We are also delighted, of course, that so many of our original contributors have been

able to update their chapters. These high quality contributions continue to form the bedrock of this new volume. We are equally pleased to have been able to bring on board so many new contributions from research leaders in a wide variety of fields. We are conscious that, in doing so, we have made this new volume a significantly more substantial read. In our view, the benefits of this have greatly outweighed the costs. We hope, of course, that readers of this new volume will agree. It is only appropriate that we finish this preface with a great many thanks to our contributors without whom this second edition would not have been possible.

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