

North-South Collaboration Redefined: Resource Allocation in Sustainable Development

Abstract

This paper explores the changing paradigm within North-South relations in regard to sustainable development through the sophisticated systems dealing with the allocation of resources that seek to mitigate power imbalances of the past and promote shared environmental and development goals. We move beyond the donor-recipient discourse to examine emerging relationships between the North and South in terms of finance, technology, knowledge, and policy. The study proposes a conceptual framework based on the three dimensions of justice—procedural, distributive, and recognitional—to assess collaboration's equity and effectiveness simultaneously in regards to the collaboration approaches. Analyzing the architecture of climate finance reveals how institutions such as the Green Climate Fund and national climate funds strive to balance global mobilization of resources with setting local priorities and ownership. Platforms for technology cooperation illustrate the shift from one-way transfer models to innovative schemes whereby technology supply is linked with the demand created by developing countries' priorities defined by their local contexts. Knowledge transfer in capacity building is increasingly emphasised through mutual learning and co-production facilitated by formal and digital peer-to-peer exchange networks beyond traditional institutional frameworks. Key policy implications identify reforms in multilateral governance structures such as defined flexible funding models which allow for unilateral diverse implementation strategies for carrying out funded projects, redesigned frameworks for intellectual property rights, and robust evaluations that measure procedural equity as the outcome.

Key words:sustainable development; resource allocation; climate finance; capacity building; North-South collaboration

1 Introduction

In the past few decades, the classic framework of North - South relations has changed remarkably, creating new problems to deal with regarding the interactions made over developmental cooperation and resource distribution. One-sided models of development assistance, where resources flow from developed nations or charitable NGOs to the so-called developing nations, are increasingly criticised for reproducing neocolonial power hierarchies and dependency relationships. This partnership evolution, with its movement towards more integrated arrangements which incorporate South-South cooperation to the North-South paradigm, has been studied

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thoroughly recently[1]. In regional blocs such as MERCOSUR, emerging collaborative frameworks illustrate the achievement of set sustainable developmental objectives through methods that promote lateral knowledge and resource sharing[2].

The need to move past forced cooperation frameworks has gathered pace with scholars proposing alternative models that account for the agency and intellectual inputs of Global South partners[3]. Thérien observes that the differentiation between North and South has evolved from broad consensus to fierce debate. This represents much deeper tension relating to the conception and strategy of global development[4]. These conflicts are most pronounced in the international forums addressing the fundamental issues of the global commons, such as climate change, where deep-seated inequities shape dominant narratives and decisions despite claimed commitments to equity[5].

Such partnerships provide a broader context within which the more intricate North-South relationships can be studied. The analysis of the partnership experts' viewpoints reveals deep structural inequalities which require more radical approaches to collaboration beyond simplistically recasting existing frameworks[6]. The enduring North-South divide that Erdelen et al. illustrate with the expression "one planet–two worlds" poses troubling questions as to whether the existing systems of resource allocation could withstand the mounting adversities of sustainability[7].

Considerations relating to climate justice are now more integrated into the North-South cooperation discourse, particularly for the African regions where the green growth and degrowth debate reveals diverging development paradigms[8]. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) attempt to construct a unified agenda for the world; however, as it was noted, they conflict with the hope of transforming business-as-usual politics and economies[9]. The governance-sustainable development dilemma in South Asia demonstrates that the balance between a country's institutional capacity, political will, and resource availability determines its sustainability effectiveness[10].

This document analyses how new paradigms of collaboration between the North and South are shifting the paradigms of resource distribution for sustainable development.

2 Theoretical Foundation and Conceptual Framework

To comprehend the historical patterns, as well as the emerging paradigms in sustainable development cooperation, the dynamics of North and South relations need a comprehensive theoretical framing. This part builds a theory within development, climate justice, and international relations that explains the mechanisms of resource distribution.

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The analysis of collaboration between the North and South has evolved through distinct approaches and periods due to changes in the political economic paradigm of the globe. Early development theories advanced by Kenneth Waltz had a single-nation-centred approach which foresaw developed nations as anchors whilst developing countries were signified as tenders. Emulation of developed nations came along with the justification of their knowledge and assistance being equally entitled to be replicated. Dependency theorists strongly opposed this idea stating that such practices and ideologies would only materially reinforce and entrench structural inequities. Recently adopted paradigms of partnership which centre integration focus on shared benefits, contextualised responsibility, and knowledge exchange, yet still leave some room for the older outlook. Power disproportion remains a central critique even within what claims to be equal partnership frameworks.

Typically, climate justice initiatives have configured discourse of North-South collaboration vehemently. The common but differentiated responsibilities principle implies that whilst climate change is a problem that concerns every inhabitant of the earth, the contribution and capability of each country vary vastly. Herein lies the resource distribution dilemma because it dictates a portion of how developed nations need to aid developing countries to transition to sustainable paths along with supporting mitigation and adaptation actions to the climate-proportional burden.

The political economy of resource transfers concerns both the formal and informal dimensions of collaboration between the North and the South. Resource flows include financial investment, technology on offer, knowledge transfer, and capacity development, each within its own set of institutional frameworks and relations of domination. Allocation of resources historically has often reflected the priorities of the so-called donors rather than the recipients, which concerns agency, ownership, and impact effectiveness contemporary paradigms must analyse.

Our North-South collaboration conceptual framework figure 1 provides guidance for analysing sustainable development collaborations. Resource allocation mechanisms in the figure cut across multiple dimensions: process-based (how decisions are made) equity or opportunity; outcome-based equity or benefit/burden allocation distributive equity and recognition equity how diverse knowledge systems and priorities are valued. The framework captures fundamental evaluation hypotheses regarding collaboration equity and effectiveness within defined collaboration models.

Figure 1 displays our interpretation of the North-South collaboration within the context of sustainable development. The figure illustrates that allocation of resources works at the intersection of several axes; procedural justice (the processes involved in decision-making), distributive justice and burden sharing as benefits. Also included is recognitional justice which depicts the value placed upon different knowledge systems and priorities. The framework identifies key evaluation criteria for assessing collaboration models to the Equity Effectiveness ratio.

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The framework identifies four main mechanisms for how resources are allocated within North-south collaboration for sustainable operational development initiatives. Financial mechanisms include proposed climate finance structures, public-private investment partnerships, along with innovative financing methods such as green bonds or debt-for-nature swaps. Others include joint proprietary research as well as the adaptation of technology to specific eco-sociocultural conditions. Knowledge mechanisms focus on institutional capacity building, exchange of expertise, and institutional development aid. Policy mechanisms capture governance scope such as realignment and governance enablement that facilitate resource use for impact.

As illustrated by Figure 1, all these mechanisms need to simultaneously fulfil equity and effectiveness criteria. Equity measures define the verifiable outcome indicators of sustainable collaboration approaches together with meaningful participation, the means of equitable resource and benefit access, and ownership of development processes. Effectiveness measures assess the integration of the Sustainable Development Goals, tangible climate impacts, and contributions to transformational shifts instead of mere change.

The historical trajectory of North-South relations worldwide shows unresolved competing principles contradictions: sovereignty versus global responsibility, division of labour and trade growth versus environmental protection, or efficiency and equity in resource distribution. While these conflicts manifest differently in various collaboration domains, they invariably impact the mobilisation, allocation, and utilisation of resources. Different approaches these days increasingly acknowledge that resolving these conflicts requires polycentric governance systems where different actors and knowledge systems are included but guided within coherent frameworks for joint efforts.

The emerging digital technologies have created new opportunities for participation in resource distribution by enabling direct contacts among stakeholders, transparency on decisions made, and new ways to follow up on actions taken. These technological possibilities are, however, limited by the existing industrial relations power structures, which make them more likely to reinforce inequity without proper institutional guarantees and capacity support.

This proposed theoretical framework simultaneously captures both established and emerging models of collaboration within the context of North-South divergence. Adding participant perceptions of injustice supplemented with specific mechanisms of resource allocation and defined evaluative measures together with achievement assessment criteria fills the gap of systematic evaluation towards the balance of contemporary collaboration models, paradigm shifting from historical power asymmetries towards shared objectives of reciprocal sustainability alignment. The following case study demonstrates the use of this framework in analysing innovative collaboration models within North-South relations.

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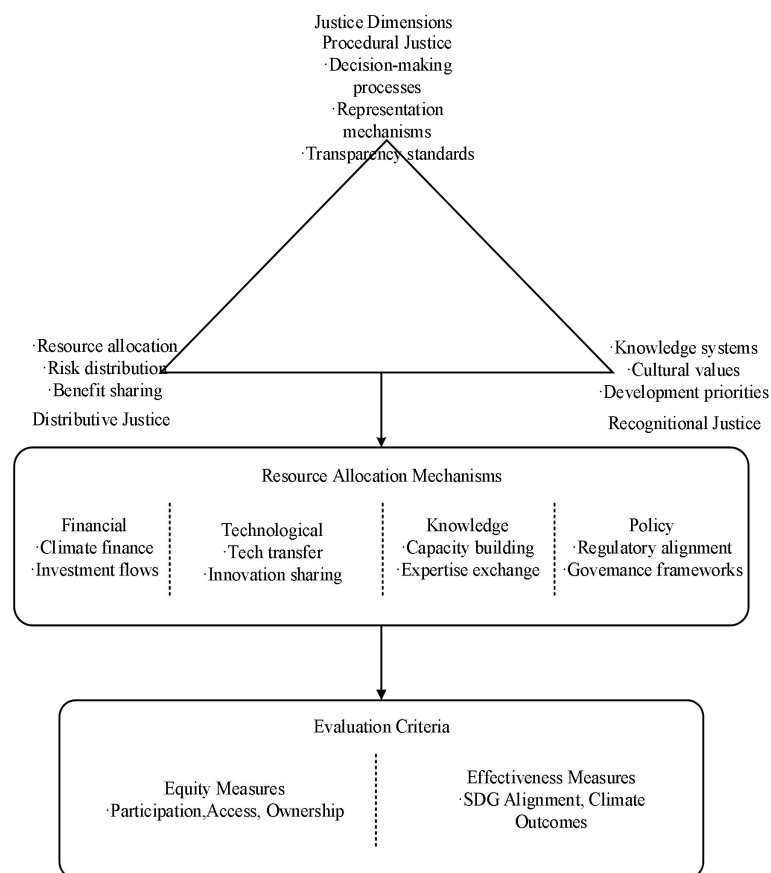


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework: North-South Collaboration in Sustainable Development

3 Emerging Models of North-South Collaboration

In recent years, the intricate design of North-South collaboration has undergone transformation due to the introduction of innovative resource allocation policies in almost every sector. In this part of the document, we evaluate the models that are in the process of forming, paying attention to the ways in which they restructure conventional relationships of authority and deal with “equity” and “effectiveness” as defined in the conceptual framework.

Climate Finance Architecture

Climate finance might represent the most outstanding example of innovation in the paradigmatic North-South resource allocation structure. The Green Climate Fund (GCF), which serves as the main funding arm of the UNFCCC, is an example of attempts to restructure governance realignments to provide equitable representation. With its balanced board representation from both developed and developing countries, as well as access channels that bypassed specialised intermediaries, the GCF marked a fundamental change in finance practices. However, scrutiny of project portfolios reveals persistent imbalances in adaptation versus mitigation funding, with adaptation initiatives—often stalled by developing countries borne vulnerable unable to climate change—receiving proportionately lesser funding, even when formal commitments to

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balance are made.

The creation of national climate funds in Brazil, Indonesia and even Bangladesh, shows to some extent control resource governance moved toward the recipient. These funds define national strategies and set controls while interfacing international finance sources, thereby creating a blended governance model that allows enhanced ownership and access to global resources. A case in point is the Climate Change Trust Fund in Bangladesh, which has both mobilised domestic and international funds while decision-making power rests within national institutions, has designed implementation strategies suited to local contexts and priorities.

Technology Cooperation Platforms

The deployment of technology is no longer a one-way affair, but rather it takes place through cooperative innovation frameworks. The Climate Technology Centre and Network (CTCN) is a perfect example of this shift where it functions as a 'matcher' broker providing a networked mechanism for technology request fulfilment for networked developing countries. Studies performed on CTCN processes demonstrate the possibility of developing countries articulating their technology demands in terms of local needs and supplemental policies while providing adapted global technologies.

The South-South-North triangular split is proving to be the most effective for technology innovation. IBSA (India-Brazil-South Africa) renewable energy partnership is an example of mid-level countries acting as innovation "bridges" which 'spans' technologies for developing contexts using developed countries' engineering skills and funding. This approach is helpful when dealing with strongly context-dependent technologies such as decentralised renewable power systems geared towards particular areas and their socio-economic conditions.

Capacity Building Reimagined

The North-South collaboration paradigm shifts, to a degree, can be most clearly observed in the approaches to capacity building, where a knowledge transfer hierarchy is being replaced by reciprocal knowledge frameworks. An example is the Pan African University Institute of Water and Energy Sciences which operates through partnerships of European technical associates with African institutions and multilateral organisations. Unlike traditional capacity building programmes, the institute's governance structure empowers African institutions as primary actors. This governance model employs experts from a diverse set of other institutions and thus bypasses traditional knowledge hierarchies.

These relationships are supplemented with unregulated domains such as South-South knowledge circulation. Digital technologies have furnished additional layers to the systematic concepts of peer-to-peer networks, advancing capacity building even further. Southern Voice is a network of think tanks from Africa, Asia, and Latin

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America which fosters collective policy advocacy as well as knowledge production and amplifies the voices of developing nations in international discourse.

Trade and Investment Frameworks

Emerging trade frameworks, such as the AfCFTA, not only shift the dial on sustainable development policies and region-centric integration but also re-imagine reasoning far from the North-south economic divide. An integrated AfCFTA-sustainable investment policy framework allows for resource mobilisation within a region, striking a balance between market forces and strategic developmental objectives. This leads to development acceleration within the region.

Sustainability-focused investment frameworks, such as the EU External Investment Plan, align and support the previously named trade area development policies.

The Africa Renewable Energy Initiative exemplifies the impact of an integrated policy approach. It illustrates the value of policy development and technical assistance, coupled with targeted investment mobilisation designed to permeate African governance structures that control international resource access while preserving African resource ownership—thus demonstrating the power of the mixed ownership model.

Rethinking North-South collaborational strategies is possible through these models, unveiling new implementation opportunities, even if challenges remain. The final section discusses sustainable policy considerations and proposes institutional realignments aimed at fairer, more effective resource distribution for sustainable development.

4 Policy Implications and Future Directions

The emerging forms of North-South collaboration discussed in this paper reflect both new and persistent complications in innovating how to allocate resources equitably for sustainable development. Using this analysis, some key policy suggestions and further areas of work international organisations, state bodies, and development practitioners need to pay attention to.

The governance overhaul of the multilateral conglomerates is a focal point associated with balancing the legitimacy of decisions made for resource allocation. The balanced representation criterion, as witnessed in the Green Climate Fund board, should apply to other institutions which handle considerable North-South resources like the Green Climate Fund. However, formal representation alone proves insufficient; decision-making procedures, technical review processes, and informal influence

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channels must also be altered to avoid symbolic justice. Suggested adjustments include equitable composition of technical panels, adoption of consensus-based decision protocols, and verifiable transparency where the public holds decision makers accountable on resource allocation evaluations.

Secondly, the frameworks defined by donors need to be exchanged for more flexible funding architectures, which promote a diverse range of implementation mechanisms, maintain accountability, and uphold responsibility. Funding platforms owned by a country which interface with international funds like national climate funds showcase promise in harnessing local ownership while global resource mobilisation is facilitated. These hybrid models need to be further refined and institutionalised while ensuring streamlined access to these models without compromising strong environmental and social safeguards.

Thirdly, the climate imperatives and sustainable development goals necessitate a fundamental revision of the intellectual property frameworks. The rapid change and scale of diverse sustainable technologies are obstructed by current approaches that prioritise commercial interests over the diffusion of available technology policies. Initiatives for targeted innovation such as patent pools, collaborative research and development platforms, and open-source technology programmes enhance the acceleration of technology transfer whilst still respecting legitimate incentives for innovation and therefore need to be supplemented with voluntary support tailored to help apply these technologies effectively adapted to particular socio-economic and geographic frameworks.

Fourth, capacity development approaches should evolve further from knowledge transfer paradigms toward authentic co-production models. Institutional partnerships should provide for adequate leadership participation from developing country institutions, which, along with adequate resource provision for sustained engagement, as opposed to short-term project-driven sustenance, facilitates leadership fulfilment. Digital platforms offer particular potential for enabling peer-to-peer knowledge exchange that augments formal arrangements within institutions, though the disparity of access to digital infrastructure must be addressed to avoid new forms of exclusion.

Finally, emerging collaborative models need to be analysed with procedural equity and substantive outcome measures within robust evaluation frameworks. Distinguishing between superficial change and real transformative shift relies on moving beyond simplistic resource transfer volume metrics towards addressing systemic barriers collaboration confronts in sustainable development. While building the evidence base for institutional reform, such evaluation should guide the iterative refining of collaborative mechanisms.

By addressing these policy priorities, stakeholders are positioned to advance North-South collaboration that more effectively mobilises resources while

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fundamentally shifting how global sustainable development challenges are conceptualised and approached.

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