

Peter Poschen: Decent work, green jobs and the sustainable economy: solutions for climate change and sustainable development

Greenleaf Publishing Limited, Sheffield, UK, 2015, 181 pp., US \$39.95 (paperback)

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Accepted: 26 May 2017 / Published online: 30 June 2017
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A burgeoning literature exists on global fight against environmental degradation and climate change, particularly on the cause and effect of climate change, its disempowering effect on developing economies, and threats to jobs and livelihood. But deep and measured analysis of the contribution of the “world of work” to achieve the goal of environmentally sustainable economies are less common. In the aptly titled book, *Decent Work, Green Jobs and the Sustainable Economy*, Peter Poschen makes it clear that if economic development is dealt separately from environmental protection, the attainment of sustainable economies will be challenging. The author highlights the role of “decent green jobs” as a main solution and an indispensable key to build a sustainable and low-carbon global economy.

Whilst focused principally on sustainable development, the book spans several disciplines and addresses a wide range of research issues, but perhaps the key research question it addresses is whether sustainable economic development can be achieved without environment protection. Bringing together the extensive research results and, more importantly, a wide range of empirical evidence from policies in countries and practices in industries around the world, the author examines this question and explores the importance of environment sustainability in accelerating economic growth of countries and creating decent jobs for all. After reviewing 30 studies available for 15 countries and the European Union, and one global analysis (p. 38), the author concludes that sustainable development is not possible without environment protection and creation of decent green jobs. This, however, requires country specific

policies that integrate social, economic and environment policies with labor market policies ensuring a smooth shift to greener economy.

The standard format of each chapter in this book is: review of all the available evidence on the topic of interests, refinement and thoughtful insights followed by a brief summary and lessons learned.

In the introductory Chapter 1, the author spends time on “decent work” and “green job” concepts and compiles information to discuss the effect of current environmental problems, viz., pollution, climate change, biodiversity losses, water scarcity etc. on the world of work and sustainable economic development. Climate change and current environment problems greatly affect the job market. The poor segments of the society are disproportionately affected by such changes, which threaten social cohesion and stability. So, the author argues that it is important to protect climate and preserve environment for creating more sustainable and socially inclusive jobs.

Chapter 2 elaborates three major opportunities of greening of economies—decent green job creation, job quality improvement and social inclusion. The author claims that green investment would significantly increase employment gain. But it is important to ensure that green jobs are also “decent”. That means jobs should “be productive, provide adequate incomes and social protection, respect the right of workers, and give workers a say in decision which affect their lives” (p. 30).

While discussing major benefits originated from greener economies, challenges in association with such transformation cannot be ignored. Chapter 3 addresses the major risks and challenges associated with transition to greener economies viz. economic reconstruction, threat to jobs and livelihood, and adverse income distribution due to “energy poverty”. The author attempts to assure the readers that the

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movement towards environment sustainability and inclusive green economies is not a job killer. Most polluting industries such as coal mining, fossil fuels and transportation sector provide less employment as compared to other sectors (p. 63). Some jobs and enterprises, particularly carbon-intensive sector, might be lost during this transition, but several new jobs will be created in environmental goods and services sectors.

Chapter 4 presents the scope for a supportive role by the International Labour Organization. It also outlines major national and international initiatives and sector specific policies for sustainable development. The chapter sets a realistic overview of International Labour Conference - 2013, providing the framework and guiding principles for the creation of decent jobs and smooth transition to low carbon green economies as highlighted during the conference.

The lessons learned from the all chapters and the major findings of the research are incorporated in the Chapter 5. The author spends time on highlighting how greener economy could be an important tool for achieving sustainable development goals and solving climate change problems. The author highlights that “there is no one-size-fits-all policy recipe” for sustainable development, every country

should have “right mix of policies” depending on specific conditions of the country (p. 142).

The book is a valuable addition to the literature on sustainable development and green economy. The author provides the reader with a detailed analysis of the opportunities and challenges of achieving environmentally and socially sustainable economies and turning the vision of decent work for all into reality. The author also discusses key policies to address those challenges. The author takes great care not to overstate the findings and sound overly optimistic. The organization of the book makes the reading engaging and provides a clear message throughout its well-organized pages. The author has not suggested a target audience for his work, but book could be applicable for business, economics, sociology, public policy, sustainable development and environmental science courses at both undergraduate and graduate level. Anyone in industry, academia and government will definitely find this book interesting and highly thought provoking.

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