

Report on “Rethinking Global Climate Change Governance” by Scott Barrett

(i) Is the contribution of the paper potentially significant?

Definitely. The issue of international cooperation on climate policies is very important, and the paper should be of considerable interest to a broad group of readers.

(ii) Is the analysis correct?

There is no formal analysis, so there is no yes or no answer. But the logic of the reasoning is very sound. The paper gives a good explanation of the problems inherent in the Kyoto type approach to climate policy cooperation. This is treated in the first six and a half pages of the paper. Economists and others working actively on these issues have perhaps seen most of the arguments before, but the paper nevertheless gives a good and well-written summary of these arguments.

The last part of the paper (starting with “Some Suggestions for a New Approach”) is also well-written and interesting. However, the reader might find some of this somewhat vague. In particular, what exactly does it mean to focus more on R&D? What types of new technologies seems most likely to succeed? Does cooperation over R&D raise some of the same free rider issues as Kyoto type emission limits? What are the incentives for individual countries to implement technology standards if this increases costs (e.g. CCS, which can become less costly than it is today but always will be an extra cost). These are difficult questions, but some attempt to at least raise them would be nice to see incorporated in the paper.

Conclusion:

The paper is definitely publishable. Some attempt to address the issues raised above would be nice, but even without a revision the paper deserves to be published.