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# **gLAWcal Comment #277**

**ARE FREE MARKETS INCOMPAT-  
IBLE WITH SUSTAINABLE DEVEL-  
OPMENT?**

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*Based on*

**Paolo Davide Farah and Tivadar Ötvös “Com-  
petition Law and Trade in Energy vs. Sustain-  
able Development: A Clash of Individualism  
and Cooperative Partnerships?” Arizona State  
Law Journal**



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Global Law Initiatives for Sustainable Development

**A gLAWcal comment on Paolo Davide Farah and Tivadar Ötvös "Competition Law and Trade in Energy vs. Sustainable Development: A Clash of Individualism and Cooperative Partnerships?" Arizona State Law Journal, Vol. 50, No. 2, 2018, pp. 49.**

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One of the specifically asked questions from the chapter includes the following: "can trading of services and goods on a national and international level be carried out in a free and liberalized market providing equal opportunities for each participant, while supporting and promoting methods in compliance with sustainable development at the same time?" Essentially - are the ideals of free markets and ideals of sustainable development incompatible? Without much surprise, there are many assumptions baked into this question. For those who may answer that they are incompatible might assume that all corporations are interested only in profiteering, and those actions may necessitate unsustainable practices. Yet for those who may say that they could be or are already compatible would remark that corporate responsibilities and morals already have placed themselves in line to encourage sustainable development. These individuals may comment that many multinational corporations

have been adopting sustainability pledged due to customer demand and natural market forces. Yet those who would say they are incompatible may remark that regulations have shifted the markets to remove barriers to cooperation with sustainable practices. In other words, they would not be behaving in such a manner if a freer market existed around them. While the question presented in the chapter could be seen as a purely philosophical exercise, the consequences of intervention in the market are not to be ignored. There is extensive push back by individuals left behind by globalization, they rail against the ideals that often are best for the international efforts to combat climate change. Recognizing that maybe, just maybe, the goals of sustainable development may currently be incompatible with free market ideals can usher in new discussions of how to reframe sustainable development as a net-positive for more people than who are enjoy the direct benefits of sustainable practices.



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