13

The Illusion of "Apolitical" Climate Policy

MATTO MILDENBERGER AND MATTHEW LOCKWOOD

A widespread belief exists that effective climate policymaking requires the establishment of independent institutions to insulate decision-making from short-term political pressures and provide stability for investors and other actors (Knaggård and Pihl 2015; Dudley et al. 2021). From this perspective, the time structure of the climate change problem makes climate policy similar to an investment; the benefits are mainly in the distant future, while costs must be incurred up front (Jacobs 2011; Lazarus 2009). As a result, while governments might make initial climate policy commitments, they may also face incentives for policy retrenchment or reversal if short-term policy costs generate public backlash. Policies may also be reversed when governing parties change. Because of this "time inconsistency" problem, a government's stated commitments may not be credible, especially to investors, who must be convinced that either current or future governments will not reverse the policy and strand their investments (e.g. Bosetti and Victor 2011). The belief is that well-designed institutions to remove climate policy decision-making from the realm of party politics can solve this central policymaking challenge and provide policy stability (see Paterson, Tobin, and VanDeveer, Chapter 1, this volume).

This analysis and the concept of time inconsistency was originally developed in monetary policy by Kydland and Prescott (1977), where the problem was that political pressures to spend would lead to high inflation. Here, economists proposed a solution in the form of "commitment devices," defined as: "institutional arrangements that make it a difficult and time-consuming process to change the policy rules in all but emergency situations" (Kydland and Prescott 1977: 487). In Rogoff's (1985) influential contribution, these arrangements were conceptualized as an independent central bank that would not be swayed by political considerations.

The idea that credible commitment to policies could be created by the delegation of decision-making to a politically insulated technocratic body subsequently spread across a range of policy areas in Europe and elsewhere. The resulting bodies

were sometimes termed "non-majoritarian" institutions, that is, not reflecting the preferences of the majority of voters, and included arm's-length regulators and specialist agencies (Majone 2001; Thatcher and Stone Sweet 2002). In turn, arguments about depoliticization have been extended to the establishment of credible climate commitment (Helm et al. 2003; Brunner et al. 2012; Grosjean et al. 2016), where a now standard recommendation is the establishment of an independent advisory body for climate change policymaking, creating stability in climate policy trajectories (Averchenkova et al. 2018). At the core of this argument is the idea that delegation to an independent technocratic body removes distributional conflict from the political sphere (Meckling and Nahm 2018). This "depoliticizing" move is often conceptualized as the transfer of climate decision-making away from the realm of "formal politics" into more technocratic and less accountable spaces (see Paterson, Tobin, and VanDeveer, Chapter 1, this volume).

One critical response to this strategy has been to take the existence of such depoliticization at face value and draw attention to the kinds of democratic deficits that then arise (e.g. Wood 2016; for an application to energy and climate policy, see Kuzemko 2016). Another is to point to the tensions between arguments for stability through depoliticization on the one hand and those for the inevitability of political conflict in establishing and maintaining climate ambition on the other (Paterson et al. 2022). As this volume makes clear, depoliticization and stability are not clearly correlated properties of climate policy systems.

Here, however, we take a different approach by exploring the origins of these climate advisory institutions and questioning the degree to which they can be understood as apolitical in the first instance. We argue that framing climate advisory bodies as institutional efforts to depoliticize climate policymaking misrepresents the political dynamics that led to their creation. Existing work too often reads the instrumental effects of new climate institutions as the logic that motivated policymakers to propose and pass these reforms in the first place (e.g. Brunner et al. 2012). We instead argue that many climate advisory institutions are the path-dependent product of distributive and partisan conflicts, rather than efforts to bypass climate politics. These institutions did not emerge merely as a result of norms about public goods provision and efforts to reshape intertemporal policymaking incentives, to provide stability, or to solve the gap between current and future welfare needs. Instead, they often emerged to solve the short-term tactical needs of political actors. The subsequent effect of these institutions on the long time trajectory of climate policymaking was a by-product of political conflict, not an effort to sidestep that conflict. What seems in many cases like depoliticization – upon closer examination – proves anything but.

The origins of these climate institutions, in turn, shape their ability to create stability in national climate policymaking regimes (see Paterson, Tobin, and VanDeveer, Chapter 1, this volume). We argue that the political context

surrounding their creation tends to limit the degree to which they can stabilize policy over time or depoliticize climate policy debates. We thus offer a distinct understanding of these climate institutions grounded in historical institutionalism rather than economic rational choice institutionalisms (Hall and Taylor 1996). This approach builds on the wider literature in politics that recognizes the possibility of multiple reasons for, and outcomes of, delegation (Flinders 2008).

We develop our argument with political readings of four cases of "depoliticizing" climate institutions. These comprise two countries (Australia, the UK) that created new bureaucratic bodies to delegate decisions on climate policy stringency and two countries (Norway, Denmark) that created new organizational venues to create long-term, cross-party policy commitments. We analyze each case, drawing from documentary evidence and eighteen interviews with senior political actors, bureaucrats, interest group advocates, and environmental leaders (see also Lockwood 2013, 2021a, 2021b; Mildenberger 2020).

In each case, we highlight the significant gap between the putative "depoliticizing" function of the country's climate institution and the fundamentally political origins of these institutions. These institutions were not deliberately established to circumvent politics but instead addressed the distributive core of climate politics, the short- or medium-term political needs of incumbent governments, or both. We then discuss the implications of how climate institutions were created and how they have subsequently functioned. We conclude by emphasizing the importance of correctly specifying the origins of climate institutions. When we conflate one possible institutional function with the dynamics of institution-building, we risk undermining efforts to generate the robust, new climate institutions necessary to address the climate crisis (e.g. Dubash et al. 2021).

13.1 The 2008 UK Climate Change Committee

The UK is often seen as the paradigmatic case of institutional innovation in climate policy, with the 2008 Climate Change Act and establishment of a Climate Change Committee (CCC). The act has been widely taken up and copied, in form if not always in content (Nash and Steurer 2019). Both the act and the CCC have been interpreted as mechanisms designed explicitly for strengthening the credibility of climate commitment (Brunner et al. 2012; Averchenkova et al. 2018). However, while this idea was discussed by some actors involved in its genesis, the act and especially the CCC can more accurately be seen as primarily the outcome of an episode of political party competition in the UK in the mid 2000s (Carter 2009; Lockwood 2013; Institute for Government 2012).

Before 2004, the salience of climate change was low in the UK and not subject to any party competition (Carter 2006; Carter and Childs 2018). On the contrary,

the Treasury in the Labour government was wary of climate policy ambition after pushback in the late 1990s from energy-intensive industry and the road lobby, while the Conservatives were largely hostile. In early 2004, Labour Prime Minister Tony Blair launched a sustained campaign to raise the profile of the issue with a speech. However, this exposed the government, as its flagship climate change program from 2000 was widely acknowledged to be failing. Blair's intervention encouraged the civil society group Friends of the Earth to focus their campaign efforts on climate policy (Carter and Childs 2017), a move that was then picked up on by a wide range of actors, including churches and conservation organizations, as well as backbench MPs. Industry was still split (Mildenberger 2020), but leaders in key companies and the Confederation of British Industry were leaning in the direction of supporting greater ambition, reinforced by the publication of the "Stern Review," a high-profile government-commissioned assessment of the economic costs and benefits of mitigating climate change, in late 2005.

The situation then changed radically at end of 2005 when the Conservatives elected a new leader, David Cameron, who immediately sought to reposition the party in the middle ground, using climate change as the issue to do this. He visited the Arctic, changed the party symbol to a tree, and used the slogan "Vote Blue, Go Green" in the 2006 local elections (Carter 2009). The Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats signed a joint statement on a cross-party approach to climate change. Importantly, Cameron also publicly backed the civil society campaign for a new Climate Bill, which was getting wide support from backbenchers of all parties.

This strategy produced a large boost for the Conservatives in opinion polling, with Labour seriously challenged for the first time since 1997. The government came under huge pressure to respond – according to an aide, David Miliband, a high-profile Labour figure who as environment secretary was leading on climate policy, commented that "Labour could not get into the position of being the only major party not in favor of the proposed bill" (Institute for Government 2012: 115). Labour needed a solution and started looking at options in the second half of 2006 and formally announced its own bill in November 2006.

The origins of the CCC also lie in this process of political competition. The idea for an advisory and monitoring body did not come initially from the government, nor from the civil society campaign, which was instead very much focused on legally binding annual emissions reductions targets (Carter and Childs 2017). Instead, it was introduced by Cameron in an October 2005 speech (Tempest 2005), in the form of a proposal for a "Carbon Audit Office." It then appears in the cross-party climate consensus statement in January 2006. Institutional innovation was thus part of the agenda being set by political competitors to which the government had to respond. By mid 2006, aides to Miliband were discussing a proposed "Carbon Policy Committee" as part regulator and part monitoring and advisory

body. However, the attraction lay as much in the blame avoidance function such a body could play as in the creation of credibility.

Thus, the origins of the act and CCC lie in an episode of sharp political competition, marking the emergence of Conservative challenge to Labour from which the latter party did not really recover. In the absence of this competition, it is unlikely that the act and the Committee would have been brought into existence.

13.2 The 2011 Australian Climate Change Authority

Few countries have seen more contentious debates over climate policy than Australia – or larger oscillations in policy outcomes (e.g. Cashore and Howlett 2007). During the 2007–2011 Labor government under Kevin Rudd, a high-profile effort to pass comprehensive climate reforms faltered and led to Rudd's replacement with new Labor leader Julia Gillard. After Julia Gillard won a surprise minority government in the 2011 federal election, she initiated a new climate policymaking effort in partnership with the Australian Green Party and several climate-minded independents that she depended on to govern. These negotiations took place within a newly established Multi-Party Climate Change Committee (MPCCC), which all parties were invited into, but which the right-wing opposition declined to join. The MPCCC served as a coordination venue for climate policymaking, bringing the minority Labor government into conversation with its political allies. The committee also included four nongovernment members, brought on for their individual expertise: a scientist, an economist, a social service provider, and an energy stakeholder. While these members did not have voting rights, they otherwise were included as equal members of the committee.

However, the MPCCC quickly encountered differences in the climate policy ambitions of an industry-aligned Labor government and more stringent voices from the Green Party. While both sides were able to negotiate over the structure of a national emissions trading scheme, they could not agree on the pollution reduction trajectory this scheme should have. The Greens refused to accept anything less than 25 percent reductions below 2000 levels, while Labor was reluctant to agree to anything more ambitious than 5 percent reductions below 2000 levels. Facing intractable conflict, the MPCCC instead agreed to establish a new independent agency, the Climate Change Authority (CCA) in July 2011, whose bureaucrats would be tasked with formally recommending the stringency of Australia's emissions trading scheme based on a set of jointly agreed-on criteria.

This move to delegate Australia's carbon pollution reduction trajectory generated a short-term consensus largely because the Greens and Labor had very different expectations about the CCA's likely recommendations. This stemmed from different interpretations of the CCA's mandate, which asked the CCA to calibrate

Australia's response based on the actions of other countries. Greens and Labor Party negotiators had different perspectives on what level of foreign climate policies would induce accelerated domestic pollution cuts. At the same time, the Labor government reserved the right to set the eventual target at its 5 percent level, overruling the CCA, if the Australian parliament could not vote to accept the CCA's report. In this sense, the CCA was a much weaker institution than its otherwise similar UK counterpart.

The CCA also proved weak because it could not survive Gillard's loss to the anti-climate Liberal Party in Australia's 2013 election. The MPCCC's proposed targets were ultimately released after Tony Abbott's election, surprising most Labor Party actors with its proposal of a 15 percent cut below 2005 levels – more ambitious than they had expected at the time of the CCA's creation. However, Abbott was already in the process of dismantling Australia's climate policy and the CCA's report was purely symbolic. Instead, climate policy retrenched in Australia despite the CCA.

Still, despite these failures, it is again instructive to consider the political origins of this move to delegate policy stringency decisions to an independent agency. Rather than reflecting a commitment to delegation or depoliticization, the CCA emerged as the only viable solution to intractable political conflict between Labor and the Greens during policy negotiations. The decision responded to short-term political needs and was established to meet these, rather than serve the type of credibility-creating functions that could be retrospectively read into the example.

13.3 The 2008 Norwegian Climate Settlement

A different type of seeming "depoliticization" of climate change occurred in Norway in 2008, with the country's Climate Settlement (*Klimaforliket*). These political agreements came in response to a government 2007 climate policy White Paper that brought all but one of the country's major political parties together to outline a shared and stable framework for medium-term national climate policymaking. Only the far-right Progress Party, which has downplayed the climate change threat, refused to participate in the settlement. This effort to establish a shared set of policy priorities that could outlast changes in governments would, on the surface, seem an archetypical example of politicians working together to solve the credible climate commitment problem. Rather than leaving climate decisions to oscillate as a function of political control, all major stakeholders came together to establish a shared decarbonization trajectory (amounting to between 13 million and 16 million metric tonnes) that could guide climate policy over the coming years. Moreover, such multiparty agreements have some precedent in Norwegian healthcare and pension policymaking (Mildenberger 2020).

However, the political motivation for establishing this Climate Settlement had little to do with political concern over long-term policy credibility. Instead, the settlement was a short-term political solution to an internal crisis within the incumbent governing coalition, led by Labour Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg and his junior governing party, the Norwegian Socialist Left (SV) party. This de facto red–green coalition, elected in 2005, made early progress on such environmental files as biodiversity but struggled to navigate tensions over climate policy ambition. In particular, the industrial wing of the Labour Party refused to compromise with the strong environmental wing of SV, leading to significant internal friction that led SV politicians to contemplate leaving government. When Labour pushed through a climate policy White Paper in 2007 that was viewed as relatively unambitious, these tensions crystallized. SV found its government being criticized from the right by such parties as the Norwegian Liberals (Venstre) and Christian Democrats for the White Paper's willingness to allow Norway's carbon reductions to come from supporting decarbonization abroad rather than imposing costs on domestic industry (see Farstad, Hermansen, and Lahn, Chapter 11, this volume). SV found this position politically untenable.

Labour's solution to resolving this internal coalitional conflict was to expand the table to bring the opposition into the room. By including opposition parties in official climate policy development, they could defang the opposition's ability to destabilize Labour's partnership with SV. The ultimate settlement was only more ambitious than the White Paper and did not reflect any serious step change in Norwegian climate policy ambition. It remained significantly less ambitious than SV wanted and primarily innovated through its creation of a large-scale program to support avoided deforestation in the Global South. However, the settlement solved a political problem for the incumbent Labour–SV government, shielding the pro-climate SV from criticism by other political parties. In other words, the settlement was not motivated by a shared desire to create a credible reduction trajectory for the country. Instead, it was designed to protect a governing coalition from outside criticism.

13.4 The 2020 Danish Climate Act

The 2020 Danish Climate Act involves a combination of dynamics from the UK and the Norwegian case. A Social Democrat-led government had adopted an earlier Climate Change Act in 2014, which was superficially modeled on the UK's CCA and included a Climate Council (*Klimarådet*) to mirror the UK's CCC (Dyrhauge 2021; Lockwood 2021a). However, because attempts to gain opposition support were only partially successful, the Danish act lacked quantitative targets for emissions reduction or carbon budgets, gave a restrictive advisory remit to the Climate Council, and was seen as largely symbolic in nature (Nash and Steurer 2021).

By the late 2010s, the wider context had changed. Following the Paris Agreement, the salience of climate change in Denmark was rising sharply (Concito 2018; Dyrhauge 2021), and there was pressure from groups in civil society for a new Climate Change Act with quantitative targets and an interim planning system for reaching these (Nash and Steurer 2021). The center-right government in power by this time did not, however, manage to negotiate another climate agreement to form the political basis for a new act before the 2019 election.

The issue-attention cycle on climate change made the 2019 election in part a "climate election," and there was political competition over the issue, especially among the left parties (the Socialist People's Party [SPP], Social Liberals, and Red–Green Alliance) that led these to adopt the civil society proposals in full. However, the 2019 election was also about immigration (Green-Pedersen 2020), where the main center-left party, the Social Democrats, had moved to the right, to compete for votes from the populist Danish People's Party (DPP) (Kosiara-Pedersen 2020). To convince voters that they would not abandon their hardline stance on immigration in postelection negotiations with the left parties, the Social Democrats announced beforehand that they would form a minority government if elected with the largest share. In the event, this was indeed the outcome, with the DPP vote collapsing.

However, this electoral shift put the Social Democrats in a difficult position; to govern they still needed the support of parties on the left but they had stood on a platform of restricting immigration and promoting integration that those parties, especially the SPP and the Red–Green Alliance, opposed. Negotiations took twenty days, the longest period since 1988, complicated by the need to reach a trade-off between changes to the Social Democrats' immigration policy and the left parties' demands on climate targets (Selsoe Sorensen 2019). The resulting platform meant the Social Democrats had to accept a stronger proposed agreement, making Denmark "one of the most ambitious countries in the world on climate change,"[1] but gave it a basis to govern. A consequent Climate Agreement was reached with eight out of ten parties in December 2019, followed by a new Climate Change Act in 2020 with the new targets, a planning review system, a stronger role for the Climate Council, and greater parliamentary oversight (Lockwood 2021a; Nash and Steurer 2021).

As in the UK in the 2000s, a wave of heightened salience of climate change created party-political competition but created a problem for the Social Democrats who were as much, if not more, focused on competition over immigration with the DPP. Once elected as the largest single party, but committed to forming a minority government, they faced a short-term political problem of how to gain parliamentary support without giving way on their immigration policy position. The

---

[1] Maria Reumert Gjerding, Danish Society for Nature Conservation, quoted in Henley (2019).

resulting Climate Agreement and Climate Change Act proposals, stronger than those that the center parties would have wanted, can thus be seen as the outcome of a solution to that problem.

13.5 The Illusion of Apolitical Climate Policy

Across the world, a handful of climate institutions have been held up as possible models for a new apolitical approach to addressing the climate crisis. Here, we have suggested that – upon closer empirical reexamination and comparison – four of the most prominent global examples of "depoliticizing" climate institutions proved anything but. In each case, these institutions did not respond to a desire to circumvent politics or enhance credible commitments. Instead, these institutions helped bridge otherwise intractable conflicts or protected incumbent governments from political controversy. Often, they resulted from a stalemate over policy stringency between different coalition or government actors. These cases highlight at least three critical considerations when it comes to the analysis of climate institutions: the importance of giving attention to the political conditions that led to the creation of these new institutions; the limited capacity of these institutions to transcend these initial political conditions; and the broader diversity of institutional solutions that will likely be necessary to overcome the challenging politics of climate change.

First, climate institutions – including institutions that provide the appearance of depoliticizing climate policy – have to be understood in the context of how they were created. Notwithstanding the eventual functions that these "depoliticizing" institutions have played in each of these four countries, a careful unpacking of their origins reveals a gap between the political motivations that established them and these potential functions. For example, in both Norway and Australia, the delegation of climate policymaking decisions to either an independent agency or cross-party agreement did not reflect desire to address long-term problems of credible commitment and policy stability. Instead, these institutions provided short-term political benefits to incumbent governments, helping them to navigate contentious political conflicts. Similarly, in the UK both the Climate Change Act and the accompanying institutional innovation of the Climate Change Committee and in Denmark the 2020 Climate Agreement and Climate Act were driven by episodes of intense party-political competition.

The issue, of course, is that a theory of institutional origins that privileges potential long-term functions and a theory that focuses on short-term distributive-political drivers can yield observationally equivalent institutional designs. In other words, the outcomes of these distinct institution-building stories can be similar, even if they have radically different operational logics. This creates a premium on empirical study of the motivations behind climate institution-building, to better predict

and support the conditions under which subsequent climate institutions can emerge (Dubash et al. 2021).

Second, the origins of these institutions have significant implications for institutional efficacy and policy stability over time. Because the creation of the four institutions considered here was driven primarily by the need to solve immediate political problems rather than long-term policy problems, their design was typically based on a set of compromises and they are often relatively weak, that is, they usually lack the decision-making authority seen in central banks and other non-majoritarian bodies (i.e. regulators). Such powers were explicitly ruled out in the case of the UK's much-celebrated CCC, for example (Lockwood 2013, 2021b). As a result, the repoliticization of climate policy, in the sense of partisan or distributive conflict, or both, is inevitable (and, indeed, is a misnomer of sorts since the institutions did not necessarily accomplish meaningful depoliticization in our account).

Moreover, as Posen (2010) points out, even the effectiveness of independent central banks to whom decisions on interest rates are delegated depends ultimately on political support from others:

> The only way that central banks can credibly commit to price stability over the long-term is to maintain a political constituency in civil society supportive of such a policy regime. That support from civil society, not any legal statute, is what protects central banks when they make a hard decision that angers politicians. Absent that support, laws regarding central banks can be changed or threatened to be changed until monetary policy is changed. Central bank independence is endogenous to that support, and it will be curtailed when such support is lost. (Posen 2010: 5)

The same is arguably even more true for the climate domain. The relative weakness of credible climate commitment institutions matters because, while they may attract less attention from opponents and are thus more likely to survive, it also means that they are less likely to produce positive feedback effects. They are likely to leave the actors, conflict between whom originally produced them, untransformed. Institutions are unlikely to become a route to circumvent politics. Instead, we should expect that institutions are the route through which politics will continue to structure climate policymaking over the coming decades.

A reasonable objection here is to consider whether the logic of credible commitment and the logic of blame avoidance (e.g. responsibility for imposing costs on voters) are functionally different (Flinders 2008). One might argue that the mechanism of a delegation either to a technocratic body or to a political agreement have similar tactical justifications. For instance, the Canadian province of New Brunswick established a multiparty select committee to plan its carbon price in 2016 (Mildenberger 2020). Here, the intent was to obscure responsibility for potential costs resulting from the policy. Still, in at least the Australian and Norwegian cases, we see political maneuvering that is clearly more oriented toward handling

short-term conflicts. By contrast, the UK case has a slightly different orientation. In the lead-up to the Climate Change Act, there was a supportive wind of public opinion for stronger action, external policy entrepreneurs pushing for a long-term framework, and a resurgent opposition making climate change central to its platform. This situation created a problem of party-political competition for action for the government, in the context of the widely held perception that its climate change program of the early 2000s had failed. In Denmark, all political parties were under pressure from civil society and public opinion to raise ambition, but the outcome was again determined by short-term political trade-offs with the immigration issue agenda in the 2019 election.

If the institutions we discuss here were created purely for the purposes of meeting climate commitment functions, we would expect to see consensual or technocratic policymaking, or at least that conflicts which arose after they came into being would be managed and resolved by those institutions. However, in some cases we find the opposite, that is, that when short-term political conflicts over climate policy resurface, they are played out outside the architecture of credible commitment. This is especially the case for delegation approaches (Lockwood 2021a). For example, when in 2013 there was conflict between the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats in the UK about the setting of the fourth carbon budget (with business and environmentalist campaign groups pitching in), this was resolved not by the Climate Change Committee but rather by an informal negotiation process between party leaders (Lockwood 2013, 2021b). The same is the case in Australia. While delegation to the CCA initially allowed for management of the distributive conflict between otherwise aligned Labor and Green Party political actors, it obviously could not protect the country's carbon pricing system from retrenchment when the anti-climate Liberal government came into power in 2015.

Third, and finally, these political dynamics remind analysts, advocates, and policymakers that a richer institutional landscape will be necessary to address climate policy needs. There are no institutional silver bullets for managing the complex economic and social conflict implied by decarbonization. At one level, while all four of our country examples involved institutional innovation, they differed in nature. Australia and the UK adopted the standard recommendation from institutional economics for addressing the credible commitment problem by setting up independent non-majoritarian bodies. By contrast, in Norway and Denmark, political parties brokered consensus-based agreements or settlements. This contrast arguably reflects different wider institutional contexts, notably proportional representation electoral rules and coalition politics in the two Scandinavian cases (Lockwood 2021a), in contrast to the majoritarian systems in Australia and the UK.

Yet even this variation exists within a narrow range of institutions that delegate or change the venue for decision-making. Instead, institutions that happen to

solve credible commitment problems are not the only ones – nor necessarily the best ones – to solve distributive-institutional conflict. We do not see anything universal about "credible commitment" institutions as the recipe for solving climate policy conflict – conflict that instead varies across countries and demands tailored institutional responses. Consider the case of the United States, which instead pursued a deliberate policy of rejecting credible commitment policy features during the Obama administration. In particular, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) bureaucrats chose a policy of what might be characterized as maximum threat with uncertainty (Mildenberger 2020). They felt that the best way to achieve real transitions in investment structure was to create uncertainty about policy ambition over medium time horizons. Here, the Clean Power Plan is instructive: Its EPA champions viewed it as having an uncertain future before the US Supreme Court. However, rather than trying to pass a policy that was viewed as legally durable, advocates felt it was more important to threaten a more ambitious – even if uncertain – framework to reshape business expectations about long-term investment payoffs. At least one architect of the policy expressed agnosticism about whether the Clean Power Plan would come into effect (Mildenberger 2020). Instead, simply the proposal – even under review by the courts – could impact business perceptions of future policymaking environments and serve its purpose in the absence of coming into effect.

In sum, prominent "depoliticizing" climate institutions have been misunderstood. Their apolitical nature is illusory and misinterprets their origins, their potential impacts, and their contributions to supporting climate policy stability through time. It is tempting to wish for institutional innovations that can circumvent the distributive politics of climate change. To date, however, there are no institutional ways to bypass climate policy conflict. Instead, climate advocates and policymakers have no choice but to recognize and engage with this conflict and work through it.

References

Averchenkova, A., Fankhauser, F., and Finnegan, J. (2018). The role of independent bodies in climate governance: The UK's Committee on Climate Change. Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment/Centre for Climate Change Economics and Policy. www.lse.ac.uk/GranthamInstitute/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/The-role-of-independent-bodies-in-climategovernance-the-UKs-Committee-on-Climate-Change_Averchenkova-et-al.pdf

Bosetti, V., and Victor, D. G. (2011). Politics and economics of second-best regulation of greenhouse gases: The importance of regulatory credibility. *The Energy Journal* 32(1), 1–24.

Brunner, S., Flachsland, C., and Marschinski, R. (2012). Credible commitment in carbon policy. *Climate Policy* 12(2), 255–271.

Carter, N. (2006). Party politicization of the environment in Britain. *Party Politics* 12, 6.

Carter, N. (2009). Vote blue, go green? Cameron's conservatives and the environment. *Political Quarterly* 80(2), 233–242.

Carter, N., and Childs, M. (2018). Friends of the Earth as a policy entrepreneur: "The Big Ask" campaign for a UK climate change act. *Environmental Politics* 27(6), 994–1013.

Cashore, B., and Howlett, M. (2007). Punctuating which equilibrium? Understanding thermostatic policy dynamics in Pacific Northwest forestry. *American Journal of Political Science* 51(3), 532–551.

Concito. (2018). Klimabarometeret 2018. https://concito.dk/sites/concito.dk/files/dokumenter/artikler/klimabarometeret_2018_endelig_rev1.pdf

Dubash, N. K., Pillai, A. V., Flachsland, C. et al. (2021). National climate institutions complement targets and policies. *Science* 374(6568), 690–693.

Dudley, H., Jordan, A., and Lorenzoni, I. (2021). Independent expert advisory bodies facilitate ambitious climate policy responses. ScienceBrief Review.

Dyrhauge, H. (2021). Political myths in climate leadership: The case of Danish climate and energy pioneering. *Scandinavian Political Studies* 44(1), 13–33.

Flinders, M. (2008). *Walking without Order: Delegated Governance and the British State*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Green-Pedersen, C. (2020). Issue competition in the 2019 Danish general election. *Scandinavian Political Studies* 43(2), 90–95.

Grosjean, G., Acworth, W., Flachsland, C., and Marschinski, R. (2016). After monetary policy, climate policy: Is delegation the key to EU ETS reform? *Climate Policy* 16(1), 1–25.

Hall, P. A., and Taylor, R. C. R. (1996). Political science and the three new institutionalisms. *Political Studies* 44(5), 936–957.

Helm, D., Hepburn, C., and Mash, R. (2003). Credible carbon policy. *Oxford Review of Economic Policy* 19(3), 438–450.

Henley, J. (2019). Denmark's youngest prime minister to lead new leftist government. *The Guardian*, July 26. www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jun/26/denmarks-youngest-prime-minister-leads-new-leftist-government

Institute for Government. (2012). The Climate Change Act (2012). www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/sites/default/files/climate_change_act.pdf

Jacobs, A. (2011). *Governing for the Long Term: Democracy and the Politics of Investment*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kosiara-Pedersen, K. (2020). Stronger core, weaker fringes: The Danish general election 2019. *West European Politics* 43(4), 1011–1022.

Knaggård, Å., and Pihl, H. (2015). The green state and the design of self-binding. In K. Bäckstrand and A. Kronsell, eds., *Rethinking the Green State: Environmental Governance towards Climate and Sustainability Transitions*. London: Routledge, pp. 209–224.

Kuzemko, C. (2016). Energy depoliticization in the UK: Destroying political capacity. *BJPIR* 18(1), 107–124.

Kydland, F. E., and Prescott, E. C. (1977). Rules rather than discretion: The inconsistency of optimal plans. *Journal of Political Economy* 85(3), 473–492.

Lazarus, R. J. (2009). Super wicked problems and climate change: Restraining the present to liberate the future. *Cornell Law Review* 94, 1153–1234.

Lockwood, M. (2013). The political sustainability of climate policy: The case of the UK Climate Change Act. *Global Environmental Change* 23(5), 1339–1348.

Lockwood, M. (2021a). Routes to credible climate commitment: The UK and Denmark compared. *Climate Policy* 21(9), 1234–1247.

Lockwood, M. (2021b). A hard act to follow? The evolution and performance of UK climate governance. *Environmental Politics* 30(Supp 1), 26–48.

Majone, G. (2001). Non-majoritarian institutions and the limits of democratic governance: A political transaction-cost approach. *Journal of Institutional and Theoretical Economics* 157(1), 57–78.

Meckling, J., and Nahm, J. (2018). The power of process: State capacity and climate policy. *Governance* 31(4), 741–757.

Mildenberger, M. (2020). *Carbon Captured*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Nash, S., and Steurer, R. (2019). Taking stock of climate change acts in Europe: Living policy processes or symbolic gestures? *Climate Policy* 19(8), 1052–1065.

Nash, S., and Steurer, R. (2021). From symbolism to substance: What the renewal of the Danish climate change act tells us about the driving forces behind policy change. *Environmental Politics* 31(3), 453–447.

Paterson, M., Tobin, P., and VanDeveer, S. D. (2022). Climate governance antagonisms: Policy stability and repoliticization. *Global Environmental Politics* 22(2), 1–11.

Posen, A. (2010). When central banks buy bonds: Independence and the power to say no. Speech presented at Barclays Capital 14th Annual Global Inflation-Linked Conference, New York, June 14. www.bankofengland.co.uk/-/media/boe/files/speech/2010/when-central-banks-buy-bonds-speech-by-adam-posen

Rogoff, K. (1985). The optimal degree of commitment to an intermediate monetary target. *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 100(4), 1169–1189.

Selsoe Sorensen, M. (2019). Denmark's new prime minister vows to tackle climate change. *New York Times*, June 26. www.nytimes.com/2019/06/26/world/europe/denmark-prime-minister-mette-frederiksen.html

Tempest, M. (2005). Cameron calls for climate change consensus. *The Guardian*, October 31. www.theguardian.com/environment/2005/oct/31/toryleader.politics

Thatcher, M., and Stone Sweet, A. (2002). Theory and practice of delegation to non-majoritarian institutions. *West European Politics* 25(1), 1–22. https://doi.org/10.1080/713601583

Wood, M. (2016). Politicization, depoliticization and anti-politics: Towards a multilevel research agenda. *Political Studies Review* 14(4), 521–533.