P03 / Climate Change and the Future of Democracy I

Topic : POLICY DISCOURSE AND CRITICAL POLICY RESEARCH

Chair : Rosana Boullosa (University of Brasilia/Brazil and Enap/Brazil)

GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

Climate change raises massive challenges not only to environmental policy and law but also to the democratic process in which such policy and law are enacted and implemented. These challenges can be divided into several groups in two dimensions. One dimension is a spatial unit of political community: we can distinguish between national, regional, and global levels. The other concerns types of climate policy, the most relevant one among which is a distinction between mitigation and adaptation. These two dimensions help us to understand and assess the burgeoning literature on democracy in the context of climate change. In the past three decades, many authors have emphasized the significance of citizens' deliberation on this problem and participation in their society's political processes in attempting to reduce various forms of environmental degradation including climate change. One feature of these authors' approach is thus to largely focus on the national level of democratic decision making. Yet climate change is obviously a global problem in that no one on the globe can circumvent its adverse impacts, and so we should not dismiss global or regional level of decision making. Another feature of the current literature is to concentrate on mitigation, reflecting the mitigation-oriented tendency of conventional climate policies. Despite numerous efforts of mitigation made by international community and some societies therein, however, greenhouse gas emissions have been so far steadily increasing rather than declining. Also, it is very uncertain, to say the least, whether the emissions will be effectively reduced in the near future. Therefore, we need to consider not merely mitigation policy but also adaptation policy. Still other problem with the existing literature is that researchers have paid scant attention to the question of how citizens' collective deliberation and decision can deal with the long-term character of climate change. Given the undeniable fact that it is difficult, if not impossible, for many of us to seriously concern about the wellbeing of remote future generations who will come into existence long after we die, it is an immense challenge to design democratic processes in which citizens, their representatives, and experts could adequately address temporally far-reaching environmental problems such as climate change.

Keeping these gaps in the literature in mind, this panel aims to address two groups of research questions. First, what shape would democratic processes catering to the need for effective mitigation make, given predictable long-term impacts of climate change? What role could citizens and experts play in such processes? How would global, regional, and national levels of democracy interface with one another? Second, if the current attempts of mitigation did not successfully stabilize the earth temperature, what political process could we design to adapt to dangerous climate change? Would we have a new, innovative, and active form of democracy? Or, would we be forced to compromise democracy for the sake of human survival and security?

CALL FOR PAPERS

Climate change raises massive challenges not only to environmental policy and law but also to the democratic process in which such policy and law are enacted and implemented. In the past three decades, there has been the burgeoning literature on prospects and promises of democracy in the context of climate change. Many authors have emphasized the significance of citizens' deliberation and participation in their society's political processes in attempting to mitigate climate change. One feature of these authors' approach is to largely focus on the national level of democratic decision making. Yet climate change is obviously a global problem, and so we should not dismiss global or regional level of decision making. Another feature is to concentrate on mitigation, reflecting the mitigation-oriented tendency of conventional climate policies. However, greenhouse gas emissions have been so far steadily increasing, and it is very uncertain whether the emissions will be effectively reduced in the near future. Therefore, we need to consider not merely mitigation but also adaptation. Still other problem is that researchers have paid scant attention to the question of how citizens' deliberation can deal with the long-term character of climate change. Given that it is considerably difficult for many of us to seriously concern about the wellbeing of remote future generations, it is a challenge to design democratic processes in which citizens, their representatives, and experts could adequately address the temporal far-reachingness of climate change.

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Session 1

Thursday, June 27th 08:00 to 10:00 (MB 2.265)

Discussants

Doug Torgerson (Trent University, Canada)

Piyapong Boossabong (Chiang Mai University School of Public Policy)

What Challenge to Democracy Will Climate Change Present?

Makoto Usami (Kyoto University)

It seems predictable that the ongoing climate change will make various significant political impacts on democratic societies in several upcoming decades or centuries. First, significant parts of the population, particularly the socioeconomically disadvantaged, will be forced to flee their home in order to avoid extreme weathers and climate-caused disasters within borders. The increase of such internally displaced people, as well as so-called climate refugees, is expected to question the traditional residential condition of citizens' participation in democratic processes. Second, a relatively new form of political objection, climate change litigation, might be used more frequently in the predictable future. Such a phenomenon would raise the question of what role the judiciary can and should play in a democratic society. Third, the confrontation between the haves and the have-nots is predicted to heat up because the latter group is more vulnerable to adverse impacts of climate change, while the former is the larger greenhouse gas emitter. This confrontation might accelerate the emotionalization of democratic politics, which we recently observe in the context of right-wing populism in European societies and the United States. Emotionalized politics would in turn undermine the practice of rational deliberation and decision-making. This paper examines characteristics of these three challenges raised by climate change and proposes several reforms of democracy to tackle them.

Democratic Authority and Climate Change

Hirohide Takikawa (Rikkyo University)

A democratic decision-making procedure structurally ignores or at most reflects only indirectly the interests of future generations because they do not have the right to vote. They will probably face much more impacts caused by climate change than our generation, but they have no choice but to just accept our decisions because they have no representatives in the democratic procedure. To give a fair chance to their life, we need to amend it or develop alternative procedures to reflect their interests.

Firstly, I examine the notion of democratic authority. A key question is whether a democratic decision-making procedure has a legitimate authority to those who have no right to participate in it such as foreigners, prisoners, and minors. I explore the conditions under which they should be subject to democratic authority, especially focusing on fairness and epistemic superiority provided by democratic procedures.

Secondly, I examine some options to compensate the defects of democracy about the climate change problems. The first option is an amendment to a democratic procedure, which includes multiple votes for younger generations and multiple votes for climate experts. I will indicate a sharp conflict between fairness and epistemic superiority. The second option is an invention of non-democratic procedures like lottery voting on behalf of fair opportunity to the future generations. Then, I will make it clear the merits and demerits of these options in terms of accountability to the future generations.

Food and democracy in a warming world: a framework for critical policy analysis of the climate-food-democracy nexus

Julia Dennis (Humboldt University Berlin)

Peter Feindt (Wageningen University and Research Centre)

Frank Fischer (Humboldt University in Berlin)

Food security has long been treated as an area for experts, debated in fora far removed from the focus of national democratic struggles. Recently, three developments have combined to re-politicize this policy field. First, a transnational movement has formed that calls for “food democracy” and attacks corporate power in globalized value chains. Second, environmental change, not least climate change, is threatening the supply of food from agricultural production systems around the globe. Third, the post-truth era where trust in scientific expertise is up for debate. While the issue of corporate power and the prospect of climate-related food scarcity are re-politicizing frames in themselves, this is reinforced by the potential threat of these developments to the conditions necessary for thriving democracies, with dystopic visions of either a plutocratic or a neo-Hobbesian policy world. We call this the climate-food-democracy nexus.

This paper aims to develop and apply a comparative framework to analyze the climate-food-democracy nexus at the level of nation states. After clarifying the analytical dimensions, we present two ideal types of food governance: the food democracy model with decentralization, mutual recognition and open public deliberation, and the food autocracy model with ring-fenced policymaking which abets technocratic-authoritarian climate solutions. Within each ideal type, we distinguish between depoliticized and politicized modes of policy-making. This leads us to a two-by-two matrix of scenarios: depoliticized liberal democracy, (re-)politicized strong democracy, depoliticized autocracy and (re-)politicized autocracy. Each mode is characterized by different links between political system, food security and climate policy. The second part of the paper applies the analytical framework to four cases which illustrate each of the four scenarios, drawing on current trends within the democracies of the USA, Canada, Brazil, Thailand and Germany. Based on the cases, we discuss the preconditions, implications and likelihoods of each policy scenario.

In the concluding section, we discuss how this framework can be used to analyze the connections between the resilience of food systems in an increasingly unpredictable climate, and struggles in the development, decay or transition of future democratic political systems.