

T14P02 / Understanding Power in Energy Policymaking

Topic : T14 / SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, ENVIRONMENT AND POLICY

Chair : Adrian Rinscheid (University of St. Gallen)

Second Chair : Maya Jegen (Université du Québec à Montréal)

GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

Securing energy supplies while limiting the environmental consequences of energy production and use is a major challenge for today's energy systems. As a result, energy policy has risen to the top of national and global political agendas, and many countries are transitioning their energy systems. Historically, energy transitions are complex, protracted and path-dependent processes that are mostly opportunity-driven (by price or technological innovation). By contrast, the transitions that are now called for are problem-driven, seeking to attain a low-carbon future. Climate scientists call for 'rapid decarbonization' of energy systems, the latest IPCC report even requires the transformation of the world economy within a few years to avoid most serious damage. The report concludes that rapid change is technically possible, but politically unlikely. In the same vein, policy analysts bemoan a lack of progress in climate and energy policymaking. To be successful, comprehensive energy transitions require that powerful political opposition be overcome. But although there is agreement that these processes require a balance of the interests of various stakeholders in light of different energy policy targets (economic and ecological sustainability, energy justice), the politics of energy transitions remain poorly understood.

The focus of this panel is on concepts of power in energy policymaking. Who are the powerful public and private stakeholders? Where are power asymmetries? How do they delay or even stop energy transition processes? Are there power brokers? Even though these are "classical" political science questions, they have a specific relevance in the energy sector where the cost of structural change is concentrated mainly on a small number of actors whose structural position is pivotal in capitalist economies (e.g., electric utilities, oil corporations). Because the power distribution among participants in the policy process shapes societal responses to climate challenges, an improved understanding of power relations and resources can contribute to better assess the political feasibility of policies aimed at accelerating low-carbon transitions.

By bringing together scholarship on power in energy policymaking, this panel seeks to disentangle why rapid climate action is unlikely and how it might become more likely. The concentration of power is not constant across time and space, and the successful exercise of power depends on factors such as institutions and agency. This provides fertile ground for comparative studies on the role of power in energy policymaking.

CALL FOR PAPERS

This panel advances the study of the politics of energy transitions by focusing on perspectives of power. It welcomes both conceptual and empirical contributions from the fields of Political Science, Public Administration, Policy Studies, and Science and Technology Studies, that focus on power relations and their effects on energy policymaking. In particular, we seek to discuss papers that revolve around the following research questions: What are the material, institutional and ideational roots of power relations that shape energy policymaking? How do institutions condition power structures, and what are the implications for energy policies across countries? What role do power relations play with regard to the social acceptance of energy policies and infrastructure projects? (How) do ongoing energy transitions shift power resources and actor constellations? Which actors are most influential in energy policymaking, and which strategies do they use?

While we encourage scholars to provide a clear and consistent theoretical foundation for their approach, the panel aims at conceptual plurality and a fruitful dialogue between different perspectives. In terms of methodologies used for empirical studies, we welcome diversity (quantitative analysis, text or discourse analysis, comparative approaches, case studies...). Empirical perspectives might focus on the level of nation-states, but also on the local, regional or global level. Finally, we encourage scholars to pay particular attention to the policy implications of their research, as the panel aims at contributing to the ongoing dialogue between policy scholars, scientists in other disciplines, and policy practitioners.

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Session 1

Thursday, June 27th 08:00 to 10:00 (MB 9 A)

Discussants

Maya Jegen (Université du Québec à Montréal)

Erick Lachapelle (Université de Montréal)

Contested Energy Transition? Europeanization and Authority Turns in EU Renewable Energy Policy

Helge Jörgens (ISCTE - University Institute of Lisbon)

Israel Solorio (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México)

In a context of multiple crises, the European Union's climate and energy policies have become highly politicized and contested. This is particularly true for the promotion of renewable energy sources (RES). Based on a comparative study of the Europeanization of renewable energy policies in ten EU member states, and taking a circular vision on Europeanization, this article unravels the renegotiation of power and authority in successive rounds of negotiation, adoption and implementation of RES policies at the European level. Our analysis focuses on the three main legislative instruments in this policy area: the 2001 Directive on Electricity Production from RES, the 2009 Renewable Energy Directive (RED), and the 2018 RED II. Based on longitudinal process-tracing, this paper explores (i) how and why authority was conferred to the EU; (ii) what types of contestation on the part of Member States has emerged; and (iii) how authority conflicts have been addressed. To get a better understanding of the authority turns between the EU and the national level, our analysis focuses on two main features of this policy: the nature of the EU RES target, which impacts on the EU's capacity to set goals and watch compliance, and the debate on support systems, which relates to the EU's authority to determine the means by which RES is promoted in the member states. Taking into account processes of policy feedback, we explore whether and how Europeanization amplifies the diffuseness of power and authority between the EU and its member states and assess how and under which conditions Europeanization can trigger de-Europeanization and a weakening of European integration.

Big Energy (Coal) and India's 2-percent CSR under the Companies Act 2013 - has this resulted in corporate social responsibility for sustainability and the public good?

Linda Hancock (Deakin University)

The impact of India's Company's Act 2013 mandated 2-percent CSR contributions to broad-ranging social development and poverty alleviation initiatives funded by large corporations (public and private), is potentially significant. This paper focuses on Big Energy (coal) in India and examines issues surrounding this sector's contribution to the vision underpinning these new CSR provisions. The standard approach to CSR as a social license to operate that goes beyond the law, is also motivated by the corporate desire to self-regulate rather than being required by the law.

Following an overview of the new CSR regime in India, India's 2-percent CSR can be described as a "hybrid CSR system" because it comprises a mix of mandatory and voluntary characteristics. The policy context is one familiar to other coal-dependent coal-producing developing countries like China and developed countries like Australia and the US, where Big Carbon industries have dominated energy and electricity policy, politics and regulatory approaches on energy, climate change and alternative energy. Recent national government commitments to carbon reduction at the 2015 Paris Agreement Conference need to be

evaluated against performance; with negative social, equity, human rights and environmental legacy issues major challenges for this sector.

A case study is undertaken of the business responsibility reporting on CSR of the top Indian Big Energy companies. The case study points to issues of monitoring, evaluation and performance, transparency and accountability for this sector, in the context of recent national policy undertakings by the Modi Government on renewable energy targets the complexities of international climate change expectations on developing countries, recent IPCC reports and concluding on the future potential of the roles and responsibilities of business under the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the efficacy of voluntary sustainability standards.

Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Competing Explanations of the German Energy Transition

Volker Schneider (University of Konstanz)

The paper is about the exceptional decision to phase out nuclear power in Germany and its implications for sustainable energy and climate policy. After the nuclear accident in Fukushima (Japan), the German government decided to shut down eight old nuclear reactors in the short term and to phase out the rest of nuclear power generation reactors) within the next seven years. At the same time German government still aimed to pursue ambitious targets in climate policy. These new energy and climate policy constraints imply that energy security largely has to be guaranteed by the promotion of renewable energies, improved energy efficiency, and accelerated innovation in energy and environmental technologies.

In this context, the paper pursues a twofold goal: on the one hand it presents an inventory and classification of competing explanations currently circulating in the political and social science literature for this profound policy change. On the other hand it presents a new approach in which the more micro-analytically oriented social network analysis is combined with a macro-social perspective to explain policy-making by processes of problem-solving *and* power struggle. Major determinants are formal and informal power structures and specific constellations of socio-political forces. In a methodological view, the paper combines qualitative process analysis with quantitative methods of social network analysis. It shows that German policy is determined by specific political and economic structures facilitating power-sharing and openness for new political forces, but there also were crucial institutional and ideational path dependencies that enabled and supported this radical policy change.

Post-Fukushima Anti-Nuclear Civil Advocacy: Exploring Sociopolitical Challenges in South Korea

Pinar Temocin (Tokyo University)

The Fukushima nuclear accident (3/11) has reinvigorated public engagement in anti-nuclear mobilization in East Asia and played a role as a “catalyzer” of nuclear-related debate. For the case of South Korea public attention and skepticism have become visible with the aim of reduction of nuclear dependency in the post-Fukushima era. However, anti-nuclear civil society faced some challenges and limitations due to the nature of indigenous politics and society. To fully understand those societal issues embedded in the society, there is a need to look at the blockages of social characteristics and institutional constraints on the continuation of nuclear energy production supported by the Korean government.

This research is theoretically framed under the political opportunity structure and resource mobilization approach. It analyzes why anti-nuclear advocacy with the underlying socio-political factors (including the shortcomings in pressure strategies and the top-down nature of nuclear energy policy-making) has failed to curb nuclear energy production in South Korea. To address this question, political tradition that hinders the counter-mobilization process, the public perception on nuclear energy after 3/11, `outcomes` of collective actions and mobilization strategies based on action repertoires, and the degree of `impacts` of public engagement in policy-making are considered.

Although research on anti-nuclear mobilization after Fukushima in South Korea is limited, this research sheds light on a better understanding of `politics of radiation`, which could be viewed as one of the most promising avenues in anti-nuclear pacifist literature.

This research is in line with the panel called `Understanding Power in Energy Policy-making`. Since the Fukushima Accident, the `nuclear issue` has become a controversial one. The attention and transition toward the renewable alternatives are crucial in this sense. Thus, there is a need to look at public participation, acceptance, and trust in all spheres of the energy issue. It also requires the examination of

power struggles in the society and how it is dealt with by energy decision makers as well as power holders.

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Session 2

Thursday, June 27th 10:30 to 12:30 (MB 9 A)

Discussants

Adrian Rinscheid (University of St. Gallen)

Burkard Eberlein (York University, Schulich School of Business)

The global politics of the clean energy transition: new actor constellations and the proposed Carmichael coal mine in Australia

Giorel Curran (Griffith University)

Carbon emissions continue to rise worldwide, driven in large part by increases in coal-fired electricity generation and transport-based emissions. Despite the historic Paris climate agreement, there remains strong resistance among many business and political actors to accelerating the clean energy transition to the pace necessary to avert catastrophic climate change. At the same time, this should not overlook the considerable efforts directed to shifting electricity generation – a main contributor to climate change – from fossil fuels, particularly coal, to renewable sources. The world is currently undergoing a clean energy transition, even as the adequacy of its pace remains a concern. In 2018, the International Energy Agency reported that renewables have now surpassed fossil fuels as new sources of electricity, and that, despite some interim 'boom' years, thermal coal exports will decrease significantly by 2040. Moreover, the rapid technological innovation that is occurring in the renewable energy space ensures that projections can upscale quickly. Yet prevailing energy power relations continue to see a powerful fossil fuel sector flexing its ample political muscle in the global energy stakes. Notwithstanding this, this paper maintains that new actor constellations in support of the transition are exercising their own influence. More specifically, the paper contends that there has been a notable reconfiguration of the key factors and actors that both shape and drive the contemporary energy transition. It finds that a changing energy investment landscape, strategic civil society actors, better informed individual investors, a widening context of CSR reporting, and an accelerating innovation momentum in renewable technologies combine to advance the transition dynamic. This paper traces the politics of this dynamic in the resource intensive nation of Australia, using the case study of the Carmichael (Adani) coal mine – one of the world's largest proposed coal mines – as its illustrative case. The paper concludes by reflecting on what the current reconfiguration can tell us about global energy politics going forward as well as the prospects for adequate climate remediation.

The politics of policy adaptation in a context of contested visions of sustainable energy: solar distributed generation in Chile

Jose Opazo (Universidad Adolfo Ibañez)

Distributed generation (DG) has been regarded as an important pathway in the ongoing energy transition. As a local, renewable and decentralized generation and consumption system, its development requires important changes in infrastructures, policies, business models and cultural understandings of energy. Public policies, in the form of regulations, incentives and other policy instruments, have played a key role in fostering the expansion of DG. The specific shape in which DG has been promoted varies across countries, resulting from different understandings of the role of DG in local transitions as well as the type of policy interventions adequate for each context.

Recent scholarship in transitions studies has paid attention to the processes by which policy objectives and policy mixes are defined and articulated over time, analysing the politics of policy processes (Kern 2011; Markard et al 2016), rather than the policy outputs, since these processes represent particular arenas in

which policy mixes develop (Flanagan et al., 2011) and are subject of contestation, affecting the content of policies. Within this line of research, some literature has focused on the mobilization of specific knowledge as a form of politics, in which the definition of a policy problem and its solution are co-construction process (Voß and Simons, 2014). Policy instruments therefore develop within a specific set of actors, devices, knowledges and practices, "which are part of their functioning, grows with them and influences its becoming" (Cointe and Nadaï, 2018)

Following this line of research, this paper analyses the emergence and articulation of a policy mix for DG in Chile. Regulated by the so-called net-billing law (2012), and with little government support, the DG sector has slowly grown pushed by a growing ecosystem of small DG companies. So far, DG has not been considered an important component of the Chilean energy transition, which has focused mostly on the promotion of large-scale renewable energy. Instead, DG has been articulated as a market segment based on the idea consumers –mainly from commercial and industrial sectors, are players with the right to participate in the electricity market as producers, and the efforts concentrate on enabling this market to operate freely and without any distortion. However, there is strong opposition to any scheme that could produce cross-subsidies, such as feed-in-tariffs, or any other protection measure. Nevertheless, since the implementation of the net-billing law there have been important changes in the existing regulation and approach to DG.

By following the development and implementation of the net-billing law and related policies and instruments (2012- present), this paper analyses how definitions of DG as a public policy issue in Chile change over time, and how these affect and are affected by the development of the sector. To do so, we focus on three research questions: (i) Which frameworks are mobilized in the policy discussion in different spaces?; (ii) What are the most relevant practices of policy design, deliberation and assessment; and how these influence definitions and goals of DG?; (iii) How do path dependencies in the Chilean electricity sector affect DG debate?

The Politics of Energy Efficiency: Explaining Variations in Energy Efficiency Policies among the American States

Daniel Fiorino (American University)

Carley Weted (American University)

With level gridlock and reversals of many clean energy and climate policies at a national level, the American states are increasingly important players in the transition to low-carbon energy systems. Energy efficiency will play a critical role in that transition.

This paper examines the wide variations in clean energy performance in the American states and the causes of that variation. Some states are among the best performers in the world, while others lag, with consequences for the climate, the environment, and consumers. The paper presents a framework for analyzing variations among states based on the differences between structural factors (difficult to change near term, such as economic composition) and political ones (more subject to change, such as political ideology or leadership). The goal is to assess existing ways of comparing clean energy performance, review research explaining those variations and the main conclusions, and set out a framework for explaining variations and designing future research. Among the factors to be examined are such political factors as strength of the fossil fuel industry in a state, the presence and role of environmental and consumer activist organizations, and the effects of political ideology at a state level.

The paper will review the literature on state energy policy and performance and present the results of an empirical study on the causes of variations on the specific indicator of state energy efficiency policy. Part of the analysis is to investigate the effects of the fossil fuel industry and of environmental interest groups on state energy efficiency policies. The paper may also consider the similarities between causes of state-level policies and country assessments based on the growing research in the latter area.

Is Energy Transition Occurring in the United States? A Case Study of Texas

Ju-Ying Yang (Valdosta State University)

The Clean Power Plan (CPP) proposed under the Obama administration was challenged by a 27-state coalition, whose members primarily use fossil fuels to generate power. Given its investments in oil and gas development, Texas is not surprisingly one of the coalition's member states challenging the CPP. However, in a seeming contradiction, Texas also keeps adding clean power into its energy production portfolios. Currently, its wind power capacity is more than its coal-fired capacity. The theory of political control offers an explanation, focusing on power and influence. However, it tends to focus solely on the influence of political

actors at the federal level in shaping national energy transitions, such as presidents, Congress, or the courts, all of whom may attempt to influence agency behavior and policymaking process by using their unique instruments. For example, presidents use executive orders to alter the interpretation and implementation of the existing policy, and Congress utilizes oversight, such as hearings, investigations, institutional checks, to control policy choice of bureaucracies and their behavior. But these approaches do not explain how power and control operate in policymaking at local level. To address these issues, this article focuses on understanding how control operates at the local level to shape energy transitions in Texas localities. Since Texas does not have a state-level energy policy to move toward renewables, therefore, critical questions are: What explains such a rapid and unanticipated energy transition to renewable energy in Texas? How and why do localities in Texas vary in the development and use of renewable energy? Which actor is more influential in energy policymaking in Texas localities? Since changing the direction of energy usage could not just be affected by one single factor/actor, this article also includes a wider range of factors that can influence the energy transition, such as economic, citizen involvement, financial incentives and energy price factors. It explores these influences on the surprising energy transition in three localities in Texas through an in-depth, comparative case study. This case is significant for scholars who study public administration because it demonstrates how and why a subnational government responds to national incentives and local demands rather than global energy trends. It also applies political control theory to Texas case study to show whether power shapes energy policymaking at subnational level, and what explains variation in the development and use of energy across Texas localities. It is also relevant for scholars who study renewable energy, and practitioners in the field, because it sheds light on the steps the subnational government takes in order to meet its renewable energy targets and achieve energy independence.