P78 / Capturing policy changes and diversity related to climate change policies: issues, concepts and cases

Topic : Policy Change/Continuity/Dynamics

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GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

Whilst Robert Keohane lamented in 2015 the slow response of political science to climate change, the past decade has seen substantial progress, notably in conceptualizing the state's role in climate policy. Scholars have identified distinct climate and environmental policy styles and varieties of environmental and climate governance (Dubash, 2021; Tosun and Debus, 2021), state strategies to counter opposition to these policies (Meckling and Nahm, 2022), the double representation of polluting interests in policymaking and implementation (Mildenberger, 2020), and new state roles in decarbonization, such as the green developmental (Thurbon et al., 2023), catalytic (Prontera, 2023) and electro-state (Daley and Newell, 2026).

This proliferation of concepts (Larsen and Jackson, 2025) is a sign of vitality, but it also raises three fundamental challenges:

1. The travelling problem (Sartori, 1970). Can these concepts travel beyond the region or category of states where they emerged, such as the green developmental state in East Asia (Dent, 2018) or the double representation of polluting interests in carbon-intensive democracies (Mildenberger, 2020), without conceptual stretching?
2. The policy change problem. How can we capture the multiple dimensions of change in climate policy, including goals, instruments, stringency, institutions and implementation, as well as the factors driving them?
3. The "old wine, new bottles" problem. Can established concepts such as policy paradigms (Hall, 1993; Kern et al., 2014) explain change and diversity in climate policy, or do its distinctive features create new state capacity challenges (Collington, 2026) that require new theoretical tools?

This panel addresses these challenges by:

-examining what facilitates and hinders comparison between countries of the Global South and the Global North (Hochstetler, 2021);
-bringing together new conceptual tools for capturing the multiple dimensions and drivers of climate policy change;
-assessing whether existing theories of policy change remain adequate for climate policy, or where they fall short;
-evaluating the contributions and limits of different methods, such as process-tracing, mixed methods and large-N comparison.

CALL FOR PAPERS

We welcome theoretical and empirical papers, particularly comparative studies spanning the Global North and South, papers testing existing concepts in new contexts, and methodological reflections.

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Britain. Comparative politics, 25, 275-296.

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Kern, F., Kuzemko, C., & Mitchell, C. (2014). Measuring and explaining policy paradigm change: the case of UK energy policy. Policy & Politics, 42(4), 513-530.

Larsen, M., & Jackson, J. (2025). The green versus environmental state: Reviewing two decades of conceptualizing state-led approaches. Competition & Change, 0(0).

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Mildenberger M. (2020). *Carbon captured: how business and labor control climate politics*. MIT Press

Prontera, A. (2024). Winter is coming: Russian gas, Italy and the post-war European politics of energy security. West European Politics, 47(2), 382–407.

Sartori, G. (1970). Concept Misformation in Comparative Politics. American Political Science Review, 64(4), 1033–1053.

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Tosun, J., & Debus, M. (2021). Operationalising and explaining environmental policy styles. In M. Howlett & J. Tosun (Hrsg.), The Routledge handbook of policy styles (S. 123–134). Routledge