W01 / Climate Democracy: Can Democracies Tackle Super Wicked Problems?

Topic : Wicked & Wild Problem Agenda Setting

Chair : Gilles Massardier (Cirad)

Second Chair : B. Guy Peters (University of Pittsburgh)

Third Chair : Eduardo de Lima CALDAS (Universidade de São Paulo - USP)

CALL FOR PAPERS

Contemporary governments are facing a number of extremely complex and interrelated challenges–climate change, immigration, and artificial intelligence to name but a few. Governments face difficulties in coping with problems of this sort for several reasons. One if the scale of the problems and the interconnection of a number of conventional policy domains. Another is that these types of problems require “credible commitments” by government for maintaining long-term actions to ameliorate the problems. While all governments have difficulty with these “wicked problems”, democratic governments have particular problems because of the pressures of electoral cycles, and the dangers to stability if public discontent grows over policies that impose costs on citizens.

This workshop is at the junction of two potential 'tragedies': climate change is a physical change that could be amplified by inadapted governance and democracy (Povitkina, 2018). First, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) stresses the urgency of tackling climate change and mitigate, relayed by the 'Take urgent action' injunction of the 13th goal of United Nations. The second potential tragedy is that of 'super wicked problems' : the more policy failures are proven, the more the 'climate super wicked problem' becomes a 'tragedy', notably because 'time is running out' (Levin & al., 2012) because of the complexity of climate governance and to make collective ‘tragic choices’ (Calabresi, Bobbitt, 1978) : i) the implementation of climate plans is very incremental (Mushtaq, 2018): policies are path dependent (Levin & al., 2012) on bureaucratic traditions, democratic and policy styles (Peters, 2021 ; 2011), locking in older policy choices and change perspectives (Groen & al. 2022; Rosenbloom, 2018) ii) the integration of long term in today's public policies is difficult as their benefits will only accrue much later (Jacobs, 2016) iii) literature notes barriers to adaptation policy (Lee & al., 2022 ; Dupuis, Knoeffel, 2014) with the same effect.

In this context, opening up the debate about climate democracy and rapidly strengthening it becomes crucial: i) democracy is considered to be in decline (Rosavallon, 2006) and ill-adapted to the challenge of the climate emergency (Povitkina, 2018), notably because of its ‘myopia’ in front long term problems (Lindvall, 2021). Some studies conclude that 'authoritarian environmentalism' is more efficient (Gilley 2012; Mittiga, 2021). The literature treats this issue of authority in a binary way. Authoritarian environmentalism is declared more efficient than democracy as it produces outcomes more easily (China case), because it is less short-termist and exposes its leaders to less blame (Gilley, 2012). Democratic legitimacy would decrease and authoritarianism would have more secure legitimacy (Mittiga, 2021) facing long term climate issues ii) Let's not forget that Linz explained the downfall of democracies in the 1930s by their illegitimacy to solve problems quickly, and by the inability to avoid the rise of oppositions disloyal to democracy (Linz, 1978) iii) building climate democracy is then part of the response to the 'tragedy' of poor governance: by rebuilding trust in the 'reason' of public debate; by enabling a 'framing' of the climate issue, and its public policies, that is as pluralist as it is temperate and 'evidence-based', in order to counteract the misdeeds of the democracy of opinion (uncertainty in knowledge that oscillates between scientific knowledge and the so called 'fake news') ; by reconciling democratic instruments and procedures with knowledge and expertise; by reinforcing 'communicative action' to share common reasons for action, particularly in emergency situations (Wilson, 2011) ; by rebuilding trust in the institutions of representative democracy and in elected representatives' control over the complex processes of climate governance (Hulbert & al., 2016; Bednar and al., 2019; Ojha and al., 2016); by reintroducing pluralism and transparency into the latter.

However, the political variables are little studied within literature concerning climate change. In particular, the variables of political regimes, notably democracy, are relatively absent from the climate literature. Knowledge about the democratic governance processes remains too scarce to be able to think about them with the discernment their reform requires for maintaining long-term actions and tackle climate change urgently.

This workshop wants thus :

i) Establishing an empirical inventory about two crucial, but relatively uninformed, questions :

· To what extend democratic quality of policy processes (transparency of action and information,

accountability and arbitration capacity of elected officials are irremovable principles of good democratic functioning, Lindvall, 2021; Mees, Driessen, 2019) strengthens the capacity to face the climate challenge to ensure trust in democracy ?

· To what extent are the political responses made to tackle climate challenge the result of processes that are procedurally organized to be pluralist, competitive, polyarchic and enable polycentric governance in networks that include the diversity of individuals, ideas and social interests involved? What institutional innovations could amplify this democratic openness of climate policies?

ii) Describing examples of democratic innovations. The issue here is therefore to identify innovative procedural instruments for improving the democratic governance of climate policies, provide democratic solutions to the climate challenge.

ABSTRACT

This workshop deals with the capacity of democracies to tackle climate change. While all governments have difficulty with these “wicked problems”, democratic governments have particular problems because of the pressures of electoral cycles, and the dangers to stability if public discontent grows over policies that impose costs on citizens. Climate change is a 'super wicked problems', notably because 'time is running out' (Levin & al., 2012) because of the complexity of climate governance and to make collective ‘tragic choices’.

This workshop wants :

i) Establishing an empirical inventory about two crucial, but relatively uninformed, questions :

· To what extend democratic quality of policy processes strengthens the capacity to face the climate challenge to ensure trust in democracy ?

· To what extent are the political responses made to tackle climate challenge innovate to open climate process ?

ii) Describing examples of democratic innovations for improving the democratic governance of climate policies.

W01 / Climate Democracy: Can Democracies Tackle Super Wicked Problems?

Chair : Gilles Massardier (Cirad)

Second Chair : B. Guy Peters (University of Pittsburgh)

Third Chair : Eduardo de Lima CALDAS (Universidade de São Paulo - USP)

Session 1

Wednesday, June 26th 10:15 to 12:00 (AULA 21B)

Permeability of the SDGs in local public policies

Jose-Manuel LEAL (University of Guadalajara)

Can Biden’s Disinvestment Reversal Strategies Strengthen Climate Democracy?

Christine Overdevest

W01 / Climate Democracy: Can Democracies Tackle Super Wicked Problems?

Chair : Gilles Massardier (Cirad)

Second Chair : B. Guy Peters (University of Pittsburgh)

Third Chair : Eduardo de Lima CALDAS (Universidade de São Paulo - USP)

Session 2

Wednesday, June 26th 14:00 to 17:15 (AULA 21B)

Is Policy Enough?: Governance Complexes for Complex Problems

B. Guy Peters (University of Pittsburgh)

Can Democracy Manage Super Wicked Problems ? A research agenda for the Example of Climate Change and Food Security

Gilles Massardier (Cirad)

W01 / Climate Democracy: Can Democracies Tackle Super Wicked Problems?

Chair : Gilles Massardier (Cirad)

Second Chair : B. Guy Peters (University of Pittsburgh)

Third Chair : Eduardo de Lima CALDAS (Universidade de São Paulo - USP)

Session 3

Thursday, June 27th 09:00 to 12:15 (AULA 21B)

Authoritarian power and the climate emergency: the case of the military coup in Gabon

Viala MBAZOGO MENDENE (Université de Montpellier)

Climate and Water: Does democratic governance give the poor a voice and choice?

Satyajit Singh (University of California Santa Barbara)