Centre for Science and Policy

Cambridge Centre for Environment, Energy and Natural Resource Governance

Report of the Policy Workshop on:

Fostering multi-level governance to meet Paris climate change commitments: the role of local decision makers

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St Catharine's College, Cambridge

Introduction

The Paris Agreement adopted in December 2015 marked a turning point in climate negotiations. However, if it provides a broad international framework for further climate action from 2020 onwards, its success will be measured only in light of its concrete implementation on the ground. Given the decentralised (or bottom up) approach of the post-2020 framework, the successful implementation of the Paris agreement will largely rely on soft modes of coordination between states. In addition, efforts at different levels of governance – international, regional, national and local – are required to turn words into deeds.

The purpose of this Policy Workshop was to bring together academic experts with policy makers who are implementing the Paris commitments. The workshop aimed to foster a productive dialogue between the theoretical analyses produced in universities and the practical insights of policy makers, in order to open a debate about what the Paris Agreement implies for the multi-level governance of climate change.

The workshop set out to address three sets of issues:

1. **The development of synergies between different levels of governance to meet commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions:** EU and national policy makers are encouraging local climate initiatives, while cities and local authorities have strengthened their collaboration to influence upper levels of governance.

   a) How can actors working at different institutional levels engage in constructive dialogue and share experiences to facilitate the implementation of the Paris Agreement?
   b) What are the best ways to stimulate productive collaboration between these different levels, for example on renewable energy initiatives and on integrating climate change mitigation strategies in local land use planning?

2) **The division of responsibilities:** Despite obvious complementarities, the partial and uneven transfer of responsibilities to the local and EU levels often creates confusion regarding how responsibilities are assigned and who is in charge.

   a) How have competencies been shared in practice?
   b) Which level of governance is the best suited to address what type of issue?

3) **Democracy and public participation:** The multiplication of actors in the climate regime tends to blur the transparency of initiatives and can be an obstacle to citizens' involvement.

   a) How can we strengthen the legitimacy of multi-leveled actions?
   b) What is the best way to include and encourage public involvement in these actions?

3

Summary

The roundtable discussion brought together 22 participants with a background in climate change from academia, local and national government, industry, the not-for-profit sector and beyond. The variety of perspectives around the table facilitated a dynamic and rich discussion, and enabled a free flow of ideas covering a range of issues surrounding multi-level climate governance.

This report provides details of the main issues and questions discussed at the workshop, including:
- The merits and failures of centralized (top-down) and decentralized (bottom-up) governance
- Incentives (or a lack thereof) for businesses and the public to take action on climate change, and the role of governments in providing such incentives
- The translation of good examples of local sustainability to other places, both nationally and globally
- How to promote public engagement with climate change mitigation

Discussion

Top-down or bottom-up: How best to foster global governance?

The Paris Agreement lets state and non-state actors decide what to do to combat climate change, rather than handing down national targets and obligations. Do we need a fundamental shift from top-down to bottom-up models? Both systems have merits and can be supported by examples of real change; the consensus view of this workshop was that there is a role for both. Where the balance lies is up for debate.

Merits and limits of regulation
- Top-down environmental regulation has a mixed track record. While the Montreal Protocol is widely deemed one of the most successful environmental agreements yet achieved, the extent of the Kyoto protocol's achievements are debated.
- What is the ideal scale of climate change regulation? Kyoto viewed the world from a global perspective; the Paris agreement zooms down to a more local level.
- Top-down regulatory approaches are starting to force companies to think about exposure to climate change risks. Yet compliance of these laws is increasingly driven by bottom-up actions, by "civil society governance of non-state governance" (i.e. civil society groups holding companies to account).
- Carbon pricing is a top-down approach with some success, yet in some cases (e.g. China) its roots lie in city-scale schemes which are then joined up.
- Bottom-up approaches and involvement of non-state actors can provide a crucial injection of enthusiasm to national governments.
- Regulation can be good for business, providing a stable environment in which it can operate. But regulation can also limit the diversity of local efforts to tackle climate change. Regulation can either support or hinder innovation, depending on how it is framed.

- One constraint on the effectiveness of environmental regulation is that certain companies may react by lobbying against the regulations, rather than changing their practices.

Integration of climate into other policy areas

- When there is a clear objective, like reduction of smoking or CFC emissions, top-down government regulation can have a concrete impact. But the complex nature of climate change requires a more complex, multi-level response. One size does not fit all.
- Environmental issues may be sidelined in government when set against other priorities. If climate change was more integrated into government priorities, for example in its industrial strategy, it could be easier to generate change.
- Climate change is not currently treated in the same box as other risks, like health and safety (for example standards on safety of children's toys). Could wider integration into government policies help rectify this?
- Is Brexit a danger or an opportunity for UK climate governance? It is both. The UK has 'punched above its weight' in the EU, showing world leadership with the Climate Change Act. Brexit offers a window of opportunity for the UK to recommit to this global leadership position – but this will depend on the priorities of current political leaders.
- Likewise Brexit provides an opportunity to recraft agricultural policy to deliver environmental benefits.

Multilateral approaches

- Climate change is a global issue that demands increasing international cooperation and solidarity.
- Multilateral organizations can play a crucial governance role in supporting countries to work together. For example, by mobilizing small nations before the Paris conference, the Commonwealth enhanced their negotiating power by enabling them to present a united front.
- Multilateral organizations can also facilitate bottom-up, civil society-led approaches, like the Commonwealth Youth Climate Change Network.

Incentives are the key to action

Much of the inaction on climate change in the past two decades has been because of a lack of incentives for both companies and citizens to address climate change. There is a growing awareness of the business risk of climate change, but still not a clear path for how to make climate change mitigation profitable. Governments can help by providing frameworks for climate-friendly investment. For engagement with the public, language is key: talking about everyday concerns like healthy living and traffic congestion can be more effective than focusing on climate change.

Channelling investments

- Climate change is a systemic risk to business, just as the risk from extreme events is. This was emphasized by Mark Carney's speech earlier this year about investors having to take into account "the facts of climate change".

5

- Many investors still do not take the risk of climate change seriously. If this message can be better communicated to them, would this drive the market to bring change in investment choices without the need for extra regulation?
- Climate change mitigation needs to become profitable if businesses are to make substantial commitments to changing their practices. We have seen such a confluence of interests before, with an abundance of CFC-free goods sold post-Montreal. This mitigation-profit link has not been properly established post-Kyoto and Paris.
- We need to get the right incentives, but also the right checks and balances, for business.

Relationship between central and local government

- At a local level, the need for climate change action can be a tough message to sell, but if you integrate it with smart cities and digital infrastructure, companies are keen to listen.
- Government needs to create frameworks to promote green investment – for example, to overcome the infrastructure constraints preventing localities like Cambridgeshire adding large amounts of renewably generated energy to the grid.

Public communication

- Language is critical when discussing climate change with the wider public. There is a need to align climate change action with people's everyday concerns.
- For example, to reduce the number of cars on the road, an approach emphasizing the mental and physical health of the population would likely be be more effective than a focus on climate change – even though the outcome is good for both.

From Cambridge to the Commonwealth: Local models, global translation

The Paris Agreement makes an important mention of 'non-party stakeholders'. As cities around the world become more powerful, trans- and sub-national initiatives are gaining traction. Major cities are playing more obvious roles on a global governance level, for example at the Compact of Mayors meeting. There is also a need for "exemplar cities" to demonstrate viable business models as a precursor to encouraging the substantial investment that will be needed to transform the economy. All cities are different, but what are the key transferable features of sustainable cities? Is it true that "adaptation is local, mitigation is global"?

Local initiatives: achievements and barriers

- Cambridge aims to be among the leaders, with a climate change strategy to reach zero carbon status by 2050, but budgetary pressures create challenges for implementation – both in Cambridge and across the UK.
- It is therefore more important than ever that councils, businesses, universities and civil society work together on a local basis to bring about change.
- Investors are wary of committing funds to sustainable cities because no-one knows exactly what such a sustainable city looks like.

How to transfer the best examples of local models

- We need examples showing what it's like when a city undergoes a wholesale transformation to become a sustainable city. What will this city look like? How will it feel going through the mechanisms required to achieve this? And how can this be demonstrated to be profitable?

- No matter what everyone does in the UK, a lot of things need to happen outside this country for efforts here to have a tangible effect. What lessons can be transferred between cities globally? We need more knowledge sharing.
- Exeter and Cambridge are very different (public transport, population densities, city layout, local government landscape), making implementation of climate mitigation policies specific to each city.
- Yet these differences pale in comparison to cities in developing countries. To share lessons learned in the UK and other parts of the world requires finding commonalities, despite vast differences in socio-economics, public and political priorities and existing infrastructure.
- What are these transferable features? Can we find the features that prove so successful that they trigger a domino effect to all cities?
- The Congestion Charge is widely touted as one such 'sustainable city' success, but it is still not yet widespread outside London. Such schemes are implausible in cities like Delhi, where public transport is limited and cars are a major status symbol. Schemes like this require investment in public transport prior to implementation – as happened in London.

Public participation: new approaches

How can we enhance public interest in climate change mitigation? Social media is one avenue, though is not exclusively a force for good. Young people have the most to lose from climate change, and are often the most concerned about its effects. How can we engage them further? The role of scientists in attributing a changing climate to human activity has been essential. How can scientists evolve to provide the most policy-relevant data in the decades ahead?

Social media
- Social media has had a number of successes in driving environmental policy at a national level. Examples include the 38 Degrees campaign to stop privatization of UK forests and the plastic bag ban in the Seychelles.
- However, on a local level, social media can also generate opposition to climate-friendly schemes that would otherwise go ahead.
- Social media is not enough on its own – real change usually requires "offline" action. Can we better harness the internet to generate offline change?
- Social media has dangers. It is self-reinforcing, and may discourage us from listening to alternative points of view.

Public priorities
- The degree of public participation in climate change issues varies depending on the local situation. Climate change is a top priority in the Seychelles, where they are experiencing the effects of climate change now, whereas an approach focusing on traffic and healthy living may attract more attention in the UK.
- Young people can be taken into account both in more top-down approaches (such as the inclusion of youth participation in the Commonwealth Global Youth Development Index) and bottom-up approaches (such as engagement in social media campaigning).

Science
- The Paris Agreement has the potential to transform the role and responsibility of science. As the world goes forward from Paris, new modes of organising scientific advice will be needed to ensure it is appropriately supporting local-level decision making.
- The scientific community should work to develop a concrete set of 'climate health' indicators that policy makers and the wider public can keep track of. This set of 'vital signs' would better inform the public about what effect climate mitigation measures are actually having. It would also provide an opportunity to align the work of scientists and policy makers.
- Scientists also need to play a better role in verification of climate treaties, as they currently do for e.g. arms treaties.

Next steps

In light of the particular interest of the attendees in the role of public participation, C-EENRG is currently exploring the possibility to undertake research on how participatory mechanisms can be best designed to facilitate public engagement in the context of climate action. By identifying different forms of public participation, their strengths and limitations, it is hoped that such a research project will contribute to the identification of appropriate forms of public engagement. C-EENRG plans to organise a workshop in the spring 2017 bringing together academics and policy-makers to discuss this issue further.

Attendees

- **CHAIR: Peter Unwin**, Chief Executive, The Whitehall & Industry Group
- **Craig Bennett**, CEO, Friends of the Earth (England, Wales and Northern Ireland)
- **David Bent**, Director of Sustainable Business, Forum for the Future
- **Dr Pierre Bocquillon**, Lecturer in European Politics, School of PPL, University of East Anglia
- **Henry Demaria**, Head of Deregulation, Department for Communities and Local Government
- **Dr Joanna Depledge**, Affiliated Lecturer, Department of Politics and International Studies, University of Cambridge
- **Dr Robert Doubleday**, Executive Director, Centre for Science and Policy
- **Dr Leslie-Anne Duvic-Paoli**, Post-doctoral Research Associate, C-EENRG, Department of Land Economy, University of Cambridge
- **Janet Fogg (speaker)**, Climate Change Officer, Cambridge City Council
- **Sheryl French**, Project Director, Mobilising Local Energy Investment, Cambridgeshire County Council
- **Dr Candice Howarth**, Senior Research Fellow and CECAN Knowledge Integrator, University of Surrey
- **Professor Charlie Kennel**, Director and Distinguished Professor Emeritus, Scripps Institution of Oceanography, UCSD
- **Angelique Pouponneau**, Vice-Chairperson (Inclusion and Engagement), Commonwealth Youth Council
- **Dr David Reiner**, Senior Lecturer in Technology Policy, Judge Business School, University of Cambridge
- **Alexandra Scott**, Associate Fellow, Centre for International Sustainable Development Law, Cambridge
- **Abhik Sen (speaker)**, Head of Policy and Research (Youth Affairs), Commonwealth Secretariat
- **Richard Smith** (note-taker), NERC-funded Policy Intern, Centre for Science and Policy
- **Dr Alice Vadrot**, Research Fellow, Centre for Science and Policy
- **Pau de Vilchez Moragues**, Lecturer and PhD Candidate, Department of International Public Law, University of the Balearic Islands
- **Professor Jorge Vinuales (speaker)**, Harold Samuel Professor of Law and Environmental Policy, C-EENRG, Department of Land Economy, University of Cambridge
- **David Webb**, Programme Manager, Climate and Policy Platform, Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership (CISL)
- **Eliot Whittington**, Development Director, Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership (CISL)
- **Glenn Woodcock (speaker)**, Director, Oxygen House and CEO & Founder, Exeter City Futures