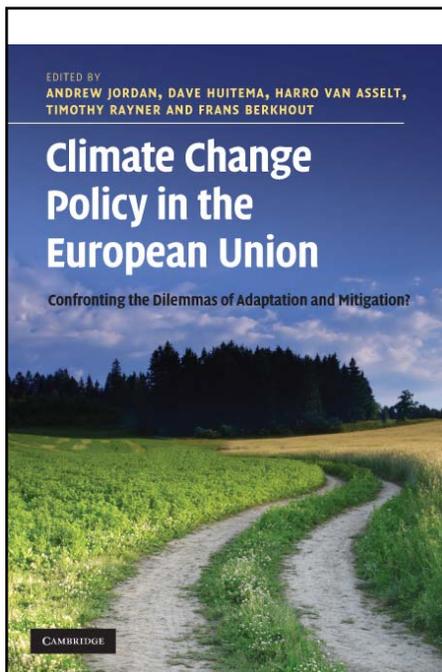


# Climate Change Policy in the European Union

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## Outline

- The problem of EU leadership in climate policy
- Explaining the evolution of EU policy: five paradoxes
- EU climate policy futures
- Conclusions

## The question

How can we explain the evolution of EU climate policy over the past 20 years?

## Explaining EU climate leadership

- Gupta and Grubb (2000): structural, instrumental and directional leadership
- Zito (2000): not a race to the bottom, but 'bargaining up' through 'collective entrepreneurship'
- Schreurs and Tiberghien (2007): '...competitive multi-level reinforcement among the different EU political poles within a context of decentralised governance.'
  
- But, the notion of EU leadership assumes that the EU is an 'actor' on climate change

## Is the EU an actor in climate policy?

- Two dimensions of 'actorness'
  - European institutions (Commission, Council and Parliament) as climate policy actor(s) within the EU
  - The EU as an actor in the international arena
  
- Can the EU be seen as an actor?
  - State-centred theories (Moravcsik, 1998) and 'lead state' theories of environmental policy (Schreurs and Tiberghien, 2007)
  - Process-based theories (Pierson, 1993)

## EU climate policy evolution

- Not gradual, inexorable progress, but slow and rapid change, a tipping point, and reverses as well as advances
- A different explanation seems to hold for the period before 2000-1 (slow, uncertain, incremental change), than after 2001 (rapid policy innovation)
- Strategic political competition in the international arena is not a sufficient explanation of EU policy development
- A series of paradoxes central to EU governance play a decisive role

## Paradoxes of governance in the EU

1. The EU aspires to lead, but is itself leaderless
2. The EU is anxious to appear united, but is often disunited (even in core policy domains like the Single Market)
3. Harmonisation is a *raison d'être* but differentiation persists
4. The EU sets ambitious targets but has a limited policy toolbox
5. The EU is good at adopting policies but there are obstacles in implementation

## Leadership and leaderlessness

- Without a central point of steering, leadership emerges from many places at the same time (MS, the European institutions, with a role for industry, the media and NGOs)
- In the period to 2000 there were too few leaders, after 2000 new leaders came to the fore
- Polycentricity forms a basis for an escalation of policy ambition
- Especially the case where linkage with single market rationale is strong (as with ETS and burden sharing)

## 'Actorness' and diversity

- Preferences in Member States and the emergence of 'regulatory method' (co-decision) of decision-making in Brussels has given EU institutions more power (i.e. 20-20-20 package in 2009)
- Tension between unity and diversity may be enabling (the EU delivers 27 signatures in international negotiations)

## Harmonisation and burden sharing

- Burden sharing in mitigation and adaptation can be highly divisive
- Desire for international credibility underlies burden-sharing arrangements (1997 and 2009) because it increases collective bargaining power
- But the role of political agreements on burden sharing is shrinking as more EU emissions fall under the ETS

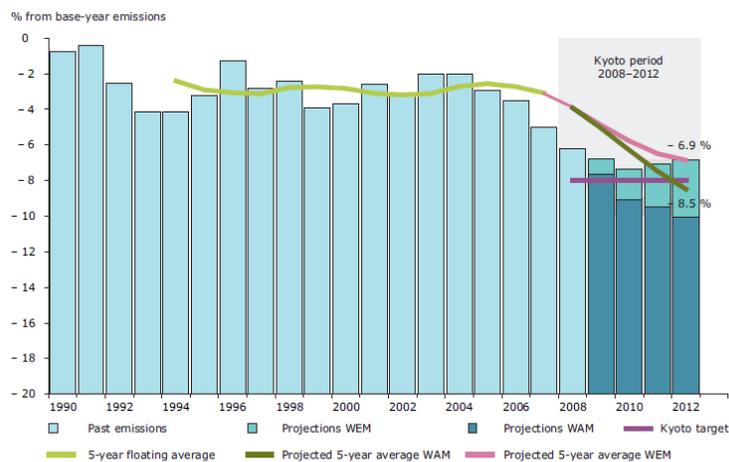
## Ambitious targets but few instruments

- Declaratory targets have been a key element of EU policy since 1990, but tax and energy policy remains a competence of Member States
- Targets have operated as ‘boundary objects’, representing levels of ambition, forming the basis for international leadership positions, acting to force coordination between MS – functional linkage between targets and policies
- Benefits in simplifying the EU’s tasks to target-setting, market-creation, and monitoring and regulating MS performance

## The implementation gap

- Well known problem in EU environmental policy
- Question of EU policy effectiveness is serious:  
 ‘...[the EU’s] efforts in the last two decades have probably not made as much as one part per million difference’ (Held, 2009)

Figure ES.1 Projected emission scenarios in the EU-15



Note: WEM: with existing measures (measures implemented or adopted), WAM: with additional measures (planned measures)  
 Source: EEA, 2009.

## Future EU policy scenarios

Low mitigation / High adaptation



*Go it alone, let them adapt*



*Sharing the costs*

Autonomous

Coordinated



*Low carbon technology competition*



*Kyoto +++*

High mitigation / Low adaptation

\*George W. Bush is President of the USA, IajuddinAhmed is President of Bangladesh, Stavros Dimas is European Commissioner for the Environment, Arnold Schwarzenegger is Governor of California

## Conclusions

- European climate policy has emerged through the resolution of governance paradoxes intrinsic to governance in the EU
- Transfer of coordinating and policymaking power to EU institutions occurred by stops and starts before 2000 (state-based theory), and thereafter was consolidated (process-based theory)
- EU governance paradoxes can be viewed as both a weakness and a strength in the evolution of EU climate policy
- EU climate policy remains contested, imbalanced and its effectiveness is in doubt
- EU policy needs to be resilient to different future scenarios