GLOBE
GLOBAL GOVERNANCE
AND THE EUROPEAN UNION
Future Trends and Scenarios

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Mapping Global Climate Change Governance

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Preface

This is an executive summary of the mapping paper which is a deliverable of the GLOBE project (Global Governance and the European Union: Future Trends and Scenarios), funded by the European Commission's Horizon 2020 programme. GLOBE addresses the issues defined as strategic priorities in the 2016 EU Global Strategy – trade, development, security and climate change – as well as migration and global finance, in order to identify the major roadblocks to effective and coherent global governance by multiple stakeholders in a multipolar world. The project will recommend strategies on how the EU might promote enhanced global governance and deal with future challenges and gridlocks. More for more information and access to deliverables under GLOBE, please visit: https://www.globe-project.eu/en

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MAPPING GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE GOVERNANCE

Climate change is one of the most daunting global policy challenges facing the international community in the 21st century. This mapping paper takes stock of the current state of the global climate change regime, illuminating scope for policymaking and mobilizing collective action through networked governance at all scales, from the sub-national to the highest global level of political assembly. It provides an unusually comprehensive snapshot of policymaking within the regime created by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), bolstered by the 2015 Paris Agreement, as well as novel insight into how other formal and informal intergovernmental organizations relate to this regime, including a sophisticated EU policymaking and delivery apparatus, already dedicated to tackling climate change at the regional level. It further locates a highly diverse and numerous non-state actor constituency, from market actors to NGOs to city governors, all of whom have a crucial role to play.

Executive Summary

Climate change is one of the most daunting issues facing the international community in the 21st century. It is a global governance challenge *par excellence*, since the actions of all States, corporations and individuals in this domain often have transboundary consequences on all others regardless of territorial boundaries. The international community has made major strides towards tackling the issue since the early 1990s, including concerted efforts within the EU. However, multiple challenges continue to hinder the establishment of a comprehensive regime and institutional framework capable of effectively combating climate change. Despite ample scientific consensus that the effects of climate change are real and will have profoundly negative impacts on a range of global public goods, from security to trade, health and human rights, efforts to advance an ambitious policy response have fallen far short. The recent Paris Agreement has been hailed by some as 'a model for effective global governance in the twenty-first century' (Slaughter 2015). However, for others the voluntary nature of the agreement risks delivering 'appealing promises and renewed victory statements, only to prolong the waiting game' (Gollier and Tirole 2015, p. 1). The stakes are as high as they get.

This paper maps the current state of the global climate change regime (GCCR), illuminating the scope for mobilising collective action through political, institutional and social channels at all scales of governance, from the sub-national to the highest global level of political assembly. It provides a contemporary snapshot of the interstate regime created by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), bolstered by the 2015 Paris Agreement, as well as summary insight into how other formal and informal intergovernmental organisations relate to this regime, including a sophisticated EU apparatus already dedicated to tackling climate change at the regional level. It further locates a highly diverse and numerous non-state actor constituency, from market actors to NGOs to city governors, all of whom have a crucial role to play. One of the most striking shifts has been the evolution of climate policy in China and the US, prior to the election of Donald Trump. However,

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mobilising cooperation on the myriad 'wicked problems' which comprise the climate challenge presents an unprecedented collective action problem, given that exacerbation of the risks arises directly out of myriad micro-interactions, with virtually all individuals, often unaware, implicated in their intensification. In other words, not even the most powerful states will be able to resolve this problem alone.

At the international level, while the UNFCCC serves as a coordinating focal point within UN structures for the GCCR, there remains no central core to the myriad public and private regulatory arrangements on climate change. As Keohane and Victor (2011) observe, the global regime complex for climate change comprises an array of regulatory elements that are only very partially organised hierarchically. Nevertheless, key institutions operating across different sectors and levels of governance are loosely coupled under the UNFCCC. Indeed, as we document, the Paris Agreement has led to the formalisation of non-state actor participation under the Non-State Actor Zone for Climate Action portal (NAZCA). It is vital in any mapping of the GCCR to give due attention to climate policy initiatives operating outside multilateral forums, with signs of growing coherence among sub- and non-state actors in the form of umbrella initiative such as the Global Covenant of Mayors for Energy and Climate and the We Mean Business Coalition. Perhaps most importantly, an operational turn towards implementation ensures that national policies are now a major focus of concern. The ambitious procedural obligations set by the Paris Agreement will demand coordinated (re)deployment of local institutional capacity.

Our mapping of the GCCR provides insight into how a multilateral architecture of systems-wide principles, rules and procedures is being reshaped to serve as a stable evolving framework capable of accommodating the complexity and dynamism of global public policymaking and delivery in the new century (Coen and Pegram 2018). Designing and enabling responses to climate change will require broad goal-setting, supplemented by rapid and strategic experimentation by many actors cognisant of the opportunities and challenges posed by their own operational contexts. This experimental approach is well captured by Hale's (2017) framing of the Paris Agreement as embracing a 'catalytic' model of cooperation, breaking with the legacy 'regulatory' approach. In turn, we complement this notion of a 'catalytic' regime with Keohane and Victor's (2011) framing of a global regime complex. Importantly, we seek to extend this complex to also explore global governance through local

state reform as a viable pathway to global climate policy implementation. Given the vast scale of the GCCR, combined with the absence of any central data repository to account for all regime participants, data collection relies largely on desk research surveying academic literature and policy reports, GCCR-related websites, as well as online data collection, including the International Environmental Agreements (IEA) Database Project.

Whether or not existing global climate governance configurations can be repurposed to deliver the rapid and far-reaching measures required to prevent catastrophic global warming remains an open question. The Paris Agreement may have saved the chance to save the planet, but the window for preventive and mitigation action is closing. Without global system-wide decarbonisation measures, scientific studies predict that global temperatures will cross the 2°C warming threshold as soon as 2035 (Aengenheyster et al 2018). This risk imperative is informing policymaking at the highest levels, as well as mobilising civil society to demand action. This paper has presented an overview summary of the state of global climate change governance at the close of 2019. It highlights above all the incredible diversity of state and non-state participants within this governance domain, as well as the huge potential for positive innovation upon existing governance structures, beyond top-down regulation. Nevertheless, climate governance scholars predict a rocky road ahead, observing a move from conventional distributional politics (who gets what, when and how) to existential politics which 'is like distributional politics on steroids: the stakes are whose way of life gets to survive' (Green, Hale and Colgan 2019).

Significantly, this project was completed during another global crisis, that of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. This crisis continues to highlight the need for some form of global governance to manage transboundary system risk and the importance of multilevel regulation and coordination capacity in this endeavour. How the global community responds during and after this crisis at the global, national and local level will be revealing with important implications for how we do global governance in the future. Indeed, for scholars and practitioners, there will be striking parallels and sharp differences to be teased out and explored contrasting the political response to this public health emergency versus the climate emergency, declared by many international and national authorities.

The GLOBE project invites reflection on a crucial component of global governance structures and processes writ large, the transmission of global policy standards and their effective enabling within domestic political systems. As this paper highlights, the Paris Agreement represents a paradigmatic operational shift towards global-to-local policy implementation. It sets the scene for future work, focused on advancing a research and policy agenda which moves the debate beyond questions of IO institutional design to enabling evidence-based policymaking and action on the part of local governance participants. The ambitious climate targets set by the Paris Agreement demand rapid (re)deployment of local institutional capacity. Empowered, independent climate advisory bodies and MRV agencies promise to be a central pillar of this new phase of climate governance. Future tasks in this work package already underway assess the promise of these agencies, as well as probe the post-delegation risks posed by such policy transfers absent clear international metagovernance frameworks, as well as the implementation challenges posed by divergent national preferences and uneven institutional capacity.

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