Climate Norm Creation and Interactions with Energy Governance

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Background/approach

- Paper explores EU climate benchmarking:
  - How and why benchmarks are constructed – both revealing some of the assumptions behind them and considering how these become embedded in climate and energy governance
  - Compliance at the national level: (UK and Germany) – increasingly important but reveals complexities and tensions
  - *Climate governance interacts with energy policies and the specific ways in which this takes place has consequences for climate benchmarks*
- Approach – broadly a constructivist IPE approach (institutions)
- Themes:
  - Benchmarks as normative, constructed and simplified/often numerical/technical - but tend not to see politics of compliance
  - Climate governance as emergent, fluid (Stevenson 2011) and also as vulnerable to further qualification

Climate Benchmarking

- Why:
  - Scientific knowledge (neutral) increasingly establishes anthropogenic climate change has combined with growing political acceptance (IPCC)
  - Consequences of climate change extreme and to effect all (albeit not equally) – action as beyond politics (party, national)
  - Keep warming to 2°C above pre-industrial levels
  - Benchmarking to establish new climate norms and infers range of policy and behaviour changes at *national* level

- How: now includes specific *energy* targets:

EU 20-20-20 (EEA)/UNFCC – collective and national targets

  - GHG emissions reductions for EU 20% by 2020 (binding)
  - *Renewables* EU level 20% of energy consumed (binding)
  - Improve *energy* efficiency by 20% by 2020

Assumptions I: Economic growth is 'sustainable'

- Ecological/radical ideas about limits to growth compromised away to secure international agreement (Bernstein 2001) - EU as reformist
- Economic growth objective as NORM and energy as integral to growth and development

- How reflected in benchmarks (methods):
  - Differential EU benchmarks recognise need for countries to 'catch up' economically (post 2004)
  - Energy efficiency of all targets has less positive implications for economic growth – but benchmarks less committed/measured
  - Win-win scenarios in which economies grow but energy is 'green', secure and affordable
  - What is left out? Fossil fuel subsidies, core industrial/transport sectors…

Assumptions II: Climate governance as a policy area

- Climate benchmarks as separate (from environment) – narrowing down; BUT energy policies are important to meeting climate objectives (‘mainstreaming’) – expanding out

- How reflected in benchmarks and policy institutions:
  - Binding GHG emissions but not other environmental measures - in practice climate programmes that are environmentally damaging can be claimed as successful on *climate metrics*
  - Allows for inclusion of nuclear as *low carbon source – nrg mix*
  - DG Climate separated out from DG Environment
  - Climate objectives to be mainstreamed across policy areas (sustainability part of Europe 2020) – set targets policies to follow
  - Climate mitigation requires a low carbon energy transition

Comparative Compliance: Germany

- Benchmarks differentiate little between UK and Germany
- Arguably only at the level of national compliance with regional (international) benchmarks that complexities come to light:

- Qualitative analysis suggests Germany well ahead of UK (reformer):
  - Energiewende as phase II – more distributed system/renewables
  - long-term commitments to renewable energy (not nuclear)
  - political/public will and other supportive institutions (KfW)
  - Co-ordinative institutions appear to support change better
- Much achieved but SCALE of changes to energy system and ensuing internal politico-economic tensions
- More reformist than most countries but still makes concessions for economic growth and competitiveness
- Energy security/systems driver for sustainable energy (renewables)

Comparative Compliance: UK

- Weak reformer-status quo: qualitative analysis suggests far behind Germany:
  - Weak phase I - fewer system choices made, still very centralised electricity supply and renewables 3.8% 2011
  - Economic (austerity; growth) and energy security objectives win out
  - Institutional capacity and government vs. corporate knowledge – very high level of policy change but little system change
- Economic growth and energy security as greater drivers for policy change – nuclear and renewables
- Stay diversified (security) means betting on all technologies – delays decisions on other parts of energy systems
- Challenge to accepted role of renewables within process of meeting climate benchmarks – within UK but also within EU 2030 negotiations

Conclusions

- Ways in which climate governance **interacts** with energy policy
  - Other energy objectives can drive acceptance of climate policies
  - **Hierarchies** and compromises: between climate and other governance areas but also between energy policy objectives
  - What is **not** seen: scale and impacts of change on political and technical energy systems (feedback?)

- Climate benchmarks as highly political in compliance terms:
  - Assumptions built in are not immediately transparent and complying/changing has deep socio-political implications
  - Leaves climate benchmarks open to further contestations – some of which emerge from politics of energy and attempts to transition energy systems
  - Benchmarks that cannot 'see' realities of what lies below quantitative measures lose ability to 'name and shame' and/or test compliance – *important in the light of latest IPCC reports*

- Greater knowledge of assumptions built into benchmarks as well as the scale and politics of changes might assist those wishing to keep climate on agendas by equipping them with visibility of political ‘realities’ facing countries complying