

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF MARKET POLITICS AND DISCOURSE FOR CLIMATE CHANGE POLICY

1. [ref : THE POLITICS OF RENEWABLE ENERGY

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CORE ARGUMENT – relevant to climate change policy more generally
- ***CONCERNS THE SLUGGISH RESPONSE TO URGENT PROBLEM***

INITIAL DECEPTIVELY SIMPLE QUESTION AND SINGLE NATIONAL CASE

Why is renewable energy (RE) developing so very slowly (in the UK)?

*UK rhetorical commitment: 'leaders in climate change' and 'top priority' (PM's speech on Climate Change 14 Sept 2004) vs. 'seriously off course' (House of Lords Science and Technology Committee 2000); and 'mystifying institutional inertia' (Environmental Audit Committee 2006)

ANSWER REQUIRED EXPLORATION OF POLITICS OF MARKETS

- Politics of RE/new technology
- Politics of interconnected markets and (path dependent) interests threatened by RE
- Politics of commodification (including the core functions of the bureaucracy – the policy process itself)

2. ANALYTICAL FRAME : POLITICS OF MARKETS

Key ref. G.White (*Bulletin IDS* 1993)

Markets are forms of politics – politics of state participation, politics of market regulation - politics of industrial structure – politics of collective action – politics of social embeddedness

So:

- Politics of RE/new technology markets
- Politics of interconnected markets and (path dependent) interests threatened by RE
- Politics of commodification (including the core functions of the bureaucracy – the policy process itself)

This was a new way of looking at politics.

Straightforward framework to think with.

In last 10 years, applied to rural development policy in India; food security in Tanzania; social policy in Argentina; health and media in the UK and now renewable energy.

3. ENERGY POLITICS AND INSTITUTIONS 1 : STATE PARTICIPATION AND REGULATION

Key Refs : D. Helm, 2004; Leys, 2006; Norgaard, 2003 – see also Stern 06 and UNDP HDR, forthcoming

- ‘Intelligent design’ and bureaucratic architecture – recipe for severe co-ordination problems
- ‘Polanyi swing’ – from intervention in ownership, technology, quantities and price, through unstable and under-performing regulations and incentives for RE
- Regulatory discretion - tendency towards ‘double capture’ of regulator by state and of state by business
- Conflicts of interest
- Commercialisation of core policy functions
- Politics of discourse - labels – goals without means – aspiration – ‘policy policy’ – technique and closure (case of Stern Report)
- Politics of public awareness versus ontological security

4. ENERGY POLITICS AND INSTITUTIONS 2 : MARKETS AND CIVIL SOCIETY

Market structure – firms more important than energy sectors

- Contradictory practices
- Political roles of individual firms – even in crowded sectors

Collective organisation and collective action

- Multiplicity of interests – evidence of power to change policy in implementation – engineering of conflicts of interest
- State no longer able well to service the needs of business
- RE sector fractured and marginalised

Civil society and social embeddedness

- All scales : from military-nuclear global social networks to communities in rural Wales
- Role of media
- Role of science
- Lobbies without material interests – NGOs

5. VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE POLITICS : PROCESSES

Key Ref: Szlezac 2006

6. SOME GENERAL FEATURES RELEVANT FOR CLIMATE CHANGE POLICY AT GLOBAL LEVEL

- Social consensus, driven by need for ontological security - implications for pace and change
- Opiate role of politics of discourse and politics of aspiration aspiration
- Closure of options through discourse, policy representation (technique) and agenda setting – most importantly fair protection in distribution of costs of adapting to impacts
- Policies have interests: de-participation, de- / re- regulation – leading to marginalisation of RE within diversified firms or specialist sectors and small firms – implications more generally for climate change?
- Policies have interests : proliferation of industrial lobbies including those around dematerialised (carbon) markets – conflicting pressures - complexity, appeasement and procrastination
- Proliferation of lobbies without material interests – proliferation of ideas
- Commodification of the core policy processes – weakening expert capacity of states
- Threat to state capacity to regulate - capacity undermined - even capacity in the interests of business e.g, It steer on investment; energy and carbon prices; tax etc

A change in institutional authority, discourse, co-ordination and enforcement capacities is vital. UN, set up for other purposes, is central to this.

UN needs to put weight behind
a new paradigm of interdependence,
new discourses and metrics of geopolitical necessity, developmental
fairness and ecological–social security
and
a new project of global GHG governance.

Immediate interests - next question - independent science –
international public services? – mass organisations? global civil society
networks?