Book Reviews

Governing the Climate-Energy Nexus: Challenges to Coherence, Legitimacy, and Effectiveness, by Fariborz Zelli, Karin Bäckstrand, Naghmeh Nasiritousi, Jakob Skovgaard, and Oscar Widerberg

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020
269 pp, £95 (Hardback).

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Global efforts to mitigate climate change and to address the world's energy demands obviously hang closely together. The energy sector accounts for the lion's share of the total greenhouse gas emissions and it is clear that we need to swiftly decarbonize our energy systems to prevent dangerous global warming. The differences between the two policy domains of climate change and energy are quite obvious. While global climate governance is clustered around one central institution (the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change), global energy governance is more fragmented and decentralized. Yet, there is only limited knowledge about the question of how the various actors and institutions with overlapping mandates in the two policy domains are linked and relate to each other. To address this research gap, the edited volume *Governing the Climate-Energy Nexus: Challenges to Coherence, Legitimacy, and Effectiveness* seeks to 'comprehensively map, critically analyze, and compare a wide range of interactions among intergovernmental and transnational institutions across three policy fields in the climate-energy nexus'¹.

The book constitutes the state of the art in the study of the institutional intersection between global climate change governance and global energy governance. This intersection is marked by a plethora of overlapping public, private and hybrid institutions operating at multiple levels with different interests, forms and functions. The various institutions generate a large set of principles, norms, rules and procedures for combating climate change and fostering the transition towards fossil-free energy systems. Building upon the extensive body of literature on institutional complexity and the more recent scholarship on nexus governance, the authors of the volume examine the fragmented nature of the relationship be-

tween the different institutions located at the juncture of the two domains of climate change and energy. Moreover, the authors are brave enough to also assess the consequences of the institutional interactions for the wider global governance architecture.

The edited volume is neatly structured in three parts following the logic of three analytical steps. First, the authors engage in a detailed mapping exercise of the climate-energy nexus based on an original database of all institutions that have a relevant role or function within the intersection of climate change and energy governance. The database comprises 108 institutions that are categorized according to their membership type and governance functions. What is astonishing here is the dominance of public institutions, although it remains unclear whether the authors managed to capture the full picture of private institutions active in the climate-energy nexus. Second, the volume presents three in-depth case studies about the policy sub-fields of renewable energy, fossil fuel subsidy reform, and carbon pricing. These are clever choices as the three sub-fields comprise different mixes of governance institutions allowing for meaningful cross-case comparisons. The case studies focus on two analytical dimensions. On the one hand, they investigate the degree of coherence of the institutional interplay within the respective sub-fields, i.e. whether the relationship between the different institutions is characterized by conflict, coexistence or synergy. On the other hand, they explore to what extent some prominent institutions in the sub-fields seek to manage their overlap towards competition, coordination or a division of labor. Despite the variance across the three cases in terms of the number and mix of institutions, the authors find that all policy sub-fields show clear signs of coordination. Third, the authors examine the implications of the institutional interactions and discuss how the overlaps affect the legitimacy and effectiveness of individual in-

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1 Fariborz Zelli et al, *Governing the Climate-Energy Nexus: Challenges to Coherence, Legitimacy, and Effectiveness* (Cambridge 2020) 5.

stitutions and the overall climate-energy governance nexus. Regarding legitimacy, the most striking result is that the strong institutional overlaps render it difficult for key stakeholders to adequately assess the legitimacy of single institutions. The core finding on effectiveness is that the high number of institutions active in the climate-energy nexus leads to a plurality of perspectives and ideas on the promotion of global energy transitions, while at the same time often leading to duplication of work.

The edited volume offers new conceptual and empirical insights into the compound landscape of global climate change and energy governance. The combination of theoretical grounding and empirical case studies generates numerous interesting findings. Some readers, however, will miss clear answers to the list of research questions raised in the introduction. While the different chapters engage in detailed elaborations of crucial facets of the climate-energy governance nexus, many questions remain open and are left for future studies. This is certainly owed to the new grounds that the authors explore in the book, notably the lack of previous comparative studies on the climate-energy nexus. Yet, the various loose ends in the concluding chapter are also due to the enormous ambition of the authors to study four dimensions of the climate-energy nexus (i.e. coherence, management, legitimacy, and effectiveness) in one volume, instead of delving deeper into just one or two of these dimensions and potentially arriving at clearer results.

Nevertheless, the editors present an academic standard piece and thereby deliver essential groundwork for all scholars and policymakers that seek to understand and further explore the evolving climate-energy governance nexus. Due to its systematic approach and investigation of multiple dimensions, the book offers starting points for a wide range of research strands concerned with the enormous societal challenge of creating more effective institutions to promote low-carbon energy futures.

A Research Agenda for Climate Justice, edited by Paul G. Harris

Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2019
173 pp, £80 (Hardback)/£25 (Paperback).

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The Elgar Research Agendas series provides a unique opportunity for scholars to shine a light into the darkness ahead, to show how a field of study could develop. Indeed, these collections are intended by the publisher to be both 'visionary' and 'provocative'.¹ In practice, it is easier to provoke than to articulate a compelling vision, but the best chapters of this book do both.

The editor is global environmental politics stalwart Paul G. Harris. He defines 'climate justice' broadly as 'the fairness, equity and rightness of responses to climate change'.² While legal justice is not an explicit focus, references to climate and carbon *law* appear in several chapters.

One of the strengths of the book is its comprehensiveness. It covers various perspectives on climate justice as it relates to non-human animals (chapter by Robin Attfield), degrowth (chapter by Carlos Torrel), citizenship and intergenerational governance (chapter by Pellegrini-Masini, Corvion, and Pirni), displaced persons (chapter by Justin Donhauser), psychology (chapters by Storey, Bailey and Mastaler), non-state actors, (chapter by Dietzel and Harris), inter-state aggression (chapter by Selina O'Doherty) and Great Powers (chapter by Sanna Kopra). Each chapter sets forth a unique and, yes, provocative account of what the authors think are the most important research questions in the area.

Below I present some highlights from the book that relate to climate policy. Philosopher Ivo Wallimann-Helmer provides a careful account of what we are yet to understand about the nested systems of moral responsibility in international regimes to combat climate change. Philosopher David Storey exhorts cosmopolitan climate justice theorists to seek to understand traditionalist or communitarian worldviews in order to frame their policy conclusions more persuasively. Using *Laudato Si* as an example, Storey suggests this goal can be met through exploring the social science around psychological moral foundations, Ronald Inglehart's *World Values Survey* and how they relate to conceptions of nature. Political scientist Ian Bailey adds fuel to Storey's fire by show-

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1 See Paul G. Harris (ed), *A Research Agenda for Climate Justice* (Edward Elgar 2019) frontpiece.

2 Paul G. Harris 'Introduction' in *ibid* 3.

ing how opponents of climate action in Australia, New Zealand and the US have framed costs of climate regulation in location-specific ways to make them more salient. Bailey suggests climate justice scholars also should attempt to anchor their arguments for greater climate action to particular places. The final chapter by political scientist Sanna Kopra draws in detail on the recent history of US-China relations driving the development of the Paris Agreement. She concludes that the English School of international relations theory (particularly its more normative ‘solidarist’ arm) can illuminate the role of Great Powers such as the US, and emerging powers, such as China.

Readers of this journal might be particularly interested in the strengths and weaknesses of philosopher Justin Donhauser’s chapter on climate change-related displacement, which among all chapters contains the most references to international law, and international climate change law in particular.

Donhauser assumes that developed countries’ historic emissions and wealth entails a moral duty to provide significant aid to persons displaced by climate change. He recognises though, that revising or replacing the 1967 Protocol to the UN Convention on the Status of Refugees to include cases of migrants displaced due to extreme weather events or slow onset events, like sea-level rise, would be a lengthy and difficult task. In the interim, he proposes ‘complementary responses’³. His preferred stop-gap measure is addressing climate displacement through a combination of probabilistic event attribution (PEA) and the UNFCCC institutions on loss and damage. Here the chapter’s focus on practicality and feasibility suffers from a lack of acknowledgement of the actual developments in the Warsaw International Mechanism on Loss and Damage, and wishful readings of international climate law. For Donhauser, the Paris Agreement’s Article 8, (in particular the mention of ‘risk assessment and management; risk insurance facilities, climate risk pooling and other insurance solutions’⁴) requires developed countries to contribute to a specific fund on the basis of ‘proportional liability for loss and damage’⁵ ‘that can be allocated to address loss or damage suffered by any party to the agreement going forward’⁶. One of the ways that this liability might be discharged, Donhauser suggests, is by admitting climate migrants. Donhauser surprisingly suggests that the Paris Agreement already tracks his own moral assessment of developed country liability

for loss and damage, and it is just details such as the ‘criteria’ for support and ‘risk-thresholds’ that need to be developed, supposedly by treaty bodies.⁷

This insistence that the Paris Agreement can be read as directing states to accept climate-related migrants (or pay for their relocation) in proportion to their responsibility for climate change will likely irk close followers of international climate law. The Paris Agreement does hold that parties ‘should enhance understanding, action and support on loss and damage’⁸ but only refers to the risk management tools in Article 8.4.f as *one possible form* such contributions could take. It does not create an obligation to make use of specific tools. Furthermore, these loss and damage provisions are to be undertaken ‘on a cooperative and facilitative basis’.⁹ In case this was not clear enough, the accompanying Paris Decision, hammers the point home, (in)famously stating that the parties agree ‘that Article 8 does not involve or provide a basis for any liability or compensation’.¹⁰

Donhauser is not alone in wishful readings of the reach of current international law. IR theorist Selina Rose O’Doherty makes a startling argument in her chapter on inter-state aggression. She cites one philosophy text (from 1970) to argue that awareness of side-effects of an act are all that is needed for those side-effects to be intentional. She concludes that failures by ‘state actors’ to reduce emissions ‘as required’ ought to be treated as ‘an environmental act of aggression’¹¹. Further, she suggests this makes ‘state and intergovernmental actors’ liable for prosecution in the International Criminal Court, and thus subject to a vaguely described ‘pre-emptive’ response. This kind of theorising is at best a distraction from hard-fought compromises on the issue of responsibility for climate change, and at worst inflammatory and polarising.

3 Justin Donhauser ‘Climate Refugees: Realizing Justice through Existing Institutions’ in *ibid* 118–131, 122.

4 Art 8.4 Paris Agreement.

5 Donhauser (n 3) 125.

6 *ibid* 124.

7 *ibid* 125.

8 Art 8.3 Paris Agreement.

9 *ibid*.

10 Decision 1/CP.21 ‘Adoption of the Paris Agreement’ FC-CC/CP/2015/10/Add.1 (29 January 2016) para 51.

11 Selina R. O’Doherty ‘Pre-emptive justice for future generations: reframing climate change as a “humanitarian climate crime”’ in Paul G. Harris (n 1) 131–143, 138, 136.

Donhauser's chapter at least, provides a helpful review of normative proposals to aid those suffering climate-related displacement. Both chapters' weakness on sober and informed interpretation of international law is fundamentally a testament to the difficulty of enacting sound interdisciplinary research in a field as dynamic and complex as global climate governance. For whatever reason, legal scholars and the law were not included directly in the ambit of this volume. When the authors do touch on issues of international law, this absence becomes particularly stark.

In general, the book is worthwhile for scholars seeking an introduction to climate justice that emphasises the breadth of scholarship on the topic and how it might develop. The chapters are refreshingly succinct, but several focus too heavily on outlining the shortcomings of current research. This leaves little space to outline the vision for future research. An-

other drawback is that the empirical details of some valuable chapters, such as Kopra's, have quickly become outdated in a rapidly moving field. Given the problem of dynamism and the aforementioned need for more disciplinary cross-pollination, one wonders if traditional publishing models are the best fora for interdisciplinary cutting-edge topics such as climate justice. Perhaps there are more useful and responsive open-access publishing models on the horizon for policy-relevant academic work, although these will need to be well designed to maintain scholarly integrity.

I suspect scholars will find individual chapters of this book particularly stimulating, both those on one's own speciality, but especially those providing windows into subfields of climate justice that one is less familiar with. This is a research agenda for climate justice that provokes more than illuminates, but does enough of each to be worth looking at.