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Foreward

Climate change is widely, if not universally, acknowledged to be the greatest challenge that we face. It is not surprising, then, that it should be a prominent object of public policy, nor that environmental movements and NGOs should have mobilized to make it and keep it so. Yet it would be wrong to assume that policy on climate change is a simple product of pressure by organized environmental activists.

Climate change is unusual among environmental issues in that it was not placed on the agenda by environmental movements or NGOs but by scientists, who by the 1970s had begun to notice a sustained rise in average global surface temperatures and were concerned about its possible impacts upon global weather patterns. The World Meteorological Organization, a specialized agency of the United Nations, served as a conduit by which scientists’ concerns might be communicated to national governments, and in 1988 an Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) was set up to evaluate the scientific evidence on climate change. This, in due course, led to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 1992 and thence to the Kyoto Protocol.

If climate change is a ‘super-wicked’ issue for governments, it is also a difficult issue for environmental movements and NGOs. Environmental NGOs and campaigns have mostly attracted attention, and achieved results, by focusing upon particular issues neglected by governments and by seeking specific remedies to the particular problems they identified. They were not accustomed to demanding, or seeking to mobilize the public to demand, systemic change. For that reason, they were often denounced as ‘merely reformist’, especially by the dwindling band of devout socialists and other leftists for whom capitalism is the root of all evil, and its abolition or transcendence the necessary condition of any meaningful assault on our environmental predicament.

Environmental NGOs’ rationale was to seek an endless stream of ‘small wins’ that might improve environmental conditions for humans and other animals and at the same time sustain the interest and optimism of their mass constituencies, and thus to maintain the momentum of an environmental movement. Climate change, however, was too big and complex for that. Nobody – and certainly not environmental NGOs, whose veterans were, from bitter experience, acutely aware of the difficulties of educating the public about less visible environmental issues – could have much confidence that the public would understand or, having understood, would prioritize action on a locally ‘abstract’, even hypothetical problem whose most immediate and most severe effects would be felt far away geographically and at some indeterminate time in the future. Climate change was, is, a global issue at a time when there was, and perhaps still is, no genuinely global environmental movement and when global environmental consciousness – in the sense of a proper understanding of the ecological interdependence and interpenetration of the local parts with the global whole – remains elusive even for the minority of people who are educated about such matters.

Effectively addressing climate change requires action at a level and in an arena – the international – in which environmental NGOs were illresourced to compete, either with national governments or increasingly powerful transnational corporations. Recognizing that, environmental NGOs from Europe and North America cooperated to form Climate Action Network, a specialized environmental network, designed to lobby at the appropriate transnational level.

The limitations of outsourcing lobbying on climate change to Climate Action Network became evident with the failure of the 2000 Conference of the Parties (COP) to the UNFCCC in The Hague, when US proposals to include nuclear energy in the Clean Development Mechanism incited anti-nuclear European environmental NGOs such as Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace to take up an issue made more urgent by the failure of the COP to reach an agreement and the subsequent withdrawal of the US, then the principal emitter of climate-jeopardizing greenhouse gases, from the Kyoto process.

Some national governments responded to scientists’ alarums about climate change more readily than others. If on some environmental issues, urban air pollution notable among them, the UK was a laggard among long-industrialized countries, UK governments were leaders on climate change and the need for action to mitigate it by reducing dependence on the most carbon-intensive fossil fuel, coal. It could not escape notice that there was an element of special pleading in this, because the UK was newly endowed with abundant North Sea gas and the Conservative government of Margaret Thatcher was determined to break the power of the coal miners’ union that was blamed for bringing down the Heath Conservative government in the 1970s. Nevertheless, there is no reason to doubt that Thatcher, the first science graduate to head a UK government, was sincere in her belief, publicly articulated as early as the 1979

meeting of the G7, that the burning of fossil fuels was endangering the balance of the global climate.

Although climate change quickly became an issue of cross-party consensus in the UK, it was during the Prime Ministership of Tony Blair (1997– 2007) that the UK took up climate change in international forums with missionary zeal. Yet, when it came to domestic action to mitigate climate change, the Blair government timidly demanded evidence of public support for action before it would itself act. Labour ministers professed concern about climate change, but insisted that the environmental movement should mobilise the public in order to give the government confidence that, if and when it acted, it was not getting ahead of public opinion.

1 Introduction

Flooding of densely populated urban areas (McGranahan et al , 2007); droughts leading to widespread famine (IPCC, 2014, ch. 9); mass extinction of plant and animal species (Thomas et al , 2004); the devastation of entire nations (Barnett and Adger, 2003). This is the harrowing picture painted by the scientific community as they attempt to predict the effects of climate change. Some of these effects are already being experienced as the rates of abnormal and extreme weather events connected with climate change rise (Coumou and Rahmstorf, 2012).

Climate change, as we experience it today, is largely a product of the intense increase of greenhouse gas emissions since the period of industrialization. It is a global problem that is still in search of a solution. International negotiations have failed to adequately address the major task of cutting greenhouse gas emissions. Political calculations made by policymakers thus far, given the present national, international, and economic conditions, have not added up to produce policies that will significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions. What can change this calculation, generating enough pressure to force serious mitigation measures to be taken?

It is possible that the devastation caused by additional warming will force the hand of politicians, but by then it may take decades to reverse the warming trend (Schlanger, 2014). Another option is pressure from civil society, from social movements. Activists and organizations can work to pressure policymakers to address climate change. They attempted this when international negotiations on mitigation began to take place, pushing for a strong global treaty. Chapter 2 describes this process and the influence the climate change movement had on international environmental policy. Despite these efforts, and some small successes, strong international policy has failed to materialize. In large part, this is due to national-level calculations by major greenhouse-gasemitting countries. For the international community to work together on climate change, national policymakers will need to redo their calculations based on new information. Social movements can play a role by influencing these national-level calculations in a wide variety of ways, including the development of important national policies to reduce emissions and help mitigate climate change. This book explores the outcomes of activists and organizations that make up the climate change movement in their attempts to influence national climate change policy following what the movement perceived as a failure of international policymaking. Specifically, the book looks at the changes the climate change movement in the UK was able to make regarding three important national policies concerning emission targets, carbonintensive infrastructure, and funding for renewable energy.

The climate change movement and movement outcomes The climate change movement is an amalgam of loosely networked individuals, groups, and organizations springing out of the environmentalist, development, anti-capitalist, and indigenous movements, combined with a new wave of activists and groups that had no previous ties to other social movements. A social movement is ‘a loose, noninstitutionalized network of informal interactions that may include, as well as individuals and groups who have no organizational affiliation, organizations of varying degrees of formality, that are engaged in collective action motivated by shared identity or concern’ (Rootes, 2007a, 610).

Like other movements, the climate change movement has a general objective – in this case, the objective is to reduce the negative impacts of climate change on people and the planet. The successes the movement has in achieving this goal are known as outcomes. Outcomes represent conscious attempts at influencing political, economic, and social change. They can be contrasted with unintended outcomes or consequences of movements. It must be said that outcomes and consequences are not always easy to distinguish. Different individuals, social movement groups, and social movement organizations may have different aims and objectives. However, by defining the climate change movement as having the goal of ‘reducing the negative impacts of climate change on people and the planet’, only those efforts will be considered here.

One type of outcome sought by many movements, including the climate change movement, regards government policy (Amenta and Caren, 2007). Movements can attempt to achieve all or some of their goals by getting policymakers to use the power and resources of government to address particular issues.

The three campaigns Introduction 3 This book examines the climate change movement’s attempts to influence national climate change policies in the United Kingdom. The United Kingdom represents an interesting context for the exploration of climate change movement outcomes for a variety of reasons. First, the UK has been an outspoken leader of international negotiations on climate change since the premiership of Tony Blair but has failed to implement effective domestic policies prior to the cases examined here. Second, the UK was on track to meet its climate change targets as set in the Kyoto Protocol as a result of unrelated policies that led to the reduction of coal use. This meant that the UK had less incentive to implement climate change policies nationally. Third, the climate change movement had campaigned for several national-level mitigation policies, providing a variety of cases to examine. I examine three of these campaigns focused on three separate challenges to reducing greenhouse gases: legislating emissions targets, opposing new carbon-intensive infrastructure, and increasing funding for renewable energy.

1 Friends of the Earth’s Big Ask campaign called on the government to legislate an annual 3 percent cut of greenhouse gas emissions that would result in a reduction of 80 percent by 2050. Friends of the Earth, engaging its local branches and celebrity supporters, mobilized the public to lobby the government, getting nearly 200,000 people to participate in the campaign. While eventually succeeding to pressure the government to propose their own climate change bill, the government’s draft was a weaker bill than campaigners had in mind. The campaign reignited to call for amendments to the government’s bill.

2 The campaign against a proposed third runway at London’s Heathrow Airport represents a campaign to stop the construction of carbon-intensive infrastructure, or as a spokesperson for the group Campaign against Climate Change (CaCC) put it: ‘This is not just about Heathrow, this is about drawing a line in the sand against big investment decisions that are locking us into a headlong plummet into climate catastrophe’ (in Vidal, 2008). The expansion of Heathrow Airport would result in increased flights, and research at the time found that growing aviation emissions could hamper attempts to mitigate climate change. Local campaigners mobilized around various local issues including air and noise pollution as well as the demolition of houses and other buildings. At the same time, a key figure in the campaign also encouraged climate change activists to mobilize against the airport expansion plans, which resulted in sustained direct action that generated unprecedented levels of media attention. Campaigners were able to convince the major opposition political party to oppose the third runway, which resulted in political jousting during the election cycle. When two opposition parties formed a coalition government in 2010, they put an end to the threat of the third runway at Heathrow…for the time being.

3 The book discusses the case of government investment into renewable energy, energy efficiency measures, and low-carbon technologies. Research had shown that to meet the UK’s climate change targets, over £160 billion was needed by 2020 just for the centralized energy infrastructure. This meant large levels of private-sector investments were needed, but the private sector was hesitant to finance high-risk projects without government support. In order to reduce the risk and increase investment, environmental non-governmental organizations (ENGOs) developed the idea of and campaigned for a green investment bank , a legislated institution that would provide public investment for climate change mitigating projects such as energy efficiency measures and renewable energy sources. A closely networked coalition formed in order to lobby the government, provide policymakers with detailed policy information, and mobilize the support of the finance sector. In doing so, they attracted the attention of policymakers who adopted their idea but proposed an institution that was very weak. The campaign then worked to strengthen the policy as it made its way through Parliament, but it failed to realize many of the coalition’s desired amendments.

Chapter 3 discusses the histories of these campaigns in order to gain a better understanding of the efforts involved. The chapters that follow will examine the cases regarding the central research questions that surround movement outcomes: what , when, and how .

Research questions: what, when, and how

Many questions arise when researching social movement outcomes. Naturally, when exploring a given case, we are interested to know if any outcomes were achieved by the movement, and if so, which. This is the what question of social movement outcomes (that is, what are the outcomes achieved by the movement?). Early social movement scholars have answered the what question relatively simply: success or failure. While success and failure can be attributed to various types of outcomes, such as ‘new advantages’ for the beneficiaries of a social movement or ‘acceptance’ of a movement or organization by powerholders (Gamson, 1975), the problem arises as to what constitutes success or failure. If a movement is composed of a variety of organizations, groups, and individuals, who determines the precise accomplishment that would indicate success or failure (see Giugni, 2004)? In trying to circumvent this binary position, some scholars attempted to use a scale of success and failure and apply it to more ‘objective’ criteria. For example, Giugni’s important text on the subject of movement outcomes examines the environmental, anti-nuclear, and anti-war movements’ influence on national and local environmental spending, nuclear energy production and the number of construction permits granted for new nuclear energy plants, and ‘defense’ spending, respectively (Giugni, 2004). Other studies have also utilized similar quantitative measures (Agnone, 2007; Andrews, 1997; Giugni and Yamasaki, 2009; Kolb, 2007; McCammon et al , 2001; McAdam and Su, 2002). These quantitative measures allow us to see the extent to which movements influence these variables beyond a dichotomy of success and failure, but they mask the nuance of demands social movements make, and they fail to test outcomes on other important factors concerning policy.

In order to answer the what question as thoroughly as possible, we must break down the policy process into component parts and examine outcomes as a scale in each component, since it is possible that one component was affected by the movement, while another was not. In order to do this, I have designed the Policy Outcomes Model, which includes the following components: policy consideration (the extent to which pro-movement policies are considered), political support (the extent to which policymakers ally themselves with pro-movement policies), political action (the extent to which political action is taken to deliver pro-movement policies), desired change (the extent to which policy change is formulated and functions to serve movement goals), and desired outcome (the extent to which the policies achieve a movement’s broader goals). Chapter 4 shows the extent to which the campaigns were able to influence each of these components.

The next major question that social movement outcomes pose is when do movements have the ability to influence policy? This question pertains to the political and social contexts in which movements operate. Much of the outcomes literature has observed that movements were able to influence policy when ‘the time…was right’ (Ganz, 2004, 178). This is particularly important to the political process school of social movement research that sees political opportunities and political opportunity structures as crucial to movement outcomes. The general argument is this: variables outside of the control of movements, and largely

within the political arena, will determine the ability of movements to engage with policymakers and create policy change. These variables can be structural, in that they represent long-term conditions within political institutions, or dynamic, in that they are readily subject to change. For example, political systems that are ‘open’ to movements by having citizen referenda or high levels of elite conflict may result in movement outcomes, whereas closed systems may result in fewer outcomes (Kitschelt, 1986; Kolb, 2007). This line of argument is put to the test in Chapter 5. The chapter pays special attention to the opening of policy windows as an answer to the when question.

The final question I will tackle in this book is how are outcomes achieved? I will do so by separately examining two key concepts found in the social movement outcomes literature: strategic leadership and mechanisms.

Strategy, in some regards, can be viewed as the antithesis of the political process school. Whereas the when question looks at variables outside of the control of movements, strategy focuses particularly on the agency of movement actors in devising plans to influence policy. Strategies are often a product of leadership decisions made with regards to a particular campaign or a long-term group or organizational decision. These can be understood as strategic domains. Within these domains, several strategic decisions can be made pertaining to how open the campaign is to others (extension decisions); what relationship the campaigning organizations have with external actors, target institutions, and between themselves (relational decisions); and what tools and tactics will be used to attempt to achieve their goals (tactical decisions). I explore strategy and the role of strategic leadership in Chapter 6.

The second part of the how question concerns mechanisms, or the causal processes by which social movements can influence policy change. When looking to see how outcomes were achieved, it is important to examine all possible mechanisms in order to consider the relative importance of each without missing a crucial causal pathway to policy change. However, such thorough examinations have rarely been done (although see Kolb, 2007). In his 2007 book on social movement outcomes, Kolb produces a list of five mechanisms (disruption, public preference, political access, international politics, and the judicial mechanism), which I will test. Disruption regards the ability of movements to interrupt the normal processes of political or social life to the point that policymakers concede to movement demands in order to return to a state of normalcy. Public preference refers to a movement’s ability to influence public opinion and issue salience to the point that policymakers make pro-movement policy decisions due to electoral concerns. The political access mechanism posits that movements can influence policy by gaining new political rights or powers for themselves or their beneficiaries. International politics refers to several means by which movements can leverage others outside of the national political arena in which one is campaigning. The judicial mechanism is a process by which movements can influence policy by referring their complaints to the judicial system and for those judicial decisions to then change policy. I examine each of these mechanisms in Chapter 7 before concluding (Chapter 8).

This book seeks to contribute to our understanding of social movement outcomes by taking a detailed look at several cases within the same structural context but with differing outcomes that are a product of campaigning by different groups and individuals within the same movement. This allows us not only to gain a better understanding of the role of civil society in the formation of national policies, but also offers lessons to campaigners on how such policies can be made, shaped, brought to light, and legislated. By specifically looking at the climate change movement, this book also allows us to better understand the processes involved in attempts to mitigate the devastating consequences of climate change.

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