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Mobility and Transport Policy in Times of Policy Coherence A POLITICAL AND SOCIAL SCIENCE PERSPECTIVE ON MULTI-LEVEL MULTI-ACTOR POLICY MAKING

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A POLITICAL AND SOCIAL SCIENCE PERSPECTIVE ON MULTI-LEVEL MULTI-ACTOR POLICY MAKING

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ABSTRACT

Transport policy will need to become systemic and integrated to improve the sustainability of the sector. This paper argues that policy coherence and continuity are vital success factors for sustainable transport policy and that these factors are particularly strong in the multilevel governance system of the European Union. Driven by common goals and the growing demand to coordinate policy making among policy areas, transportation policy transforms into sustainable mobility policy, which aims to create synergies rather than trade-offs between policy objectives. This drive for coherence is partly driven by the consensus focused political structure of some of the EU's member states (e.g. Germany and France), which have considerable influence on EU policy agenda setting.

The paper will look at mobility and transport policy from a political science perspective to better understand the institutional and governance arrangements that have an influence on policy agenda setting and on the effectiveness of policy development and implementation. The outcome will be an overview on different ways of policy making in transport and mobility public policy and on the governance institutions that define them. This will shed light on the relationship between institutional arrangements the success or failure of policies to increase transport energy efficiency.

Keywords: transport and mobility policy, governance and institutions, sustainable transport

MOBILITY POLICY IN TIMES OF POLICY COHERENCE

POLICY COHERENCE TRENDS IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

While there is a wealth of information about the need for more sustainable transport and policies and practices that can be implemented, progress in this area varies greatly between countries. There is a generalised assumption that political and institutional frameworks can and will implement best-practice policies as long as technical information is provided (e.g. through a case study). This is considered to be overly optimistic by this project and lacking conceptual and empirical sophistication, in particular considering the institutional conditions in many countries. There is a critical difference between policy potential and the extent to which this potential can be utilized.

Provided that technologies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions are available (UBA, 2008) and policy mechanisms to support the uptake of these technologies are proven to be effective (Gross et al. 2009) then the question arises: What factors influence the policy environment in which transport energy efficiency policies can be successful over the long-term?

This paper argues that sustainable transport policies are more likely to appear on the agenda in a policy environment that is based on shared methods and values, and more likely to be successful over the long-term in a consensus orientated policy environment, which is facilitated by national and supranational institutions that foster continuity and coherence.

CONSENSUS FOCUSED NATIONAL POLICY FRAMEWORKS AS DRIVER FOR POLICY COHERENCE

Democracies are different and the institutions that define these differences are described by a large number of scholars using different approaches and definitions (Kenworthy 2000). This paper will aim to apply these theories in a combined approach to sustainable transport policy. This will allow an assessment of institutional relationships that goes broader than isolated approaches that have been used in many previous studies, which aim to relate particular institutional features to high level socio-economic indicators. There are a number of studies examining the influence of the concepts of corporatism, coordinated market economy, consensus democracy and European integration on environmental performance (for example: Haas 1992, 1999; Jahn, 1998; Scruggs, 1999, 2001; Neumayer 2003; Bernauer & Koubi, 2009). None of these looks at the interrelations of these concepts and applies this to the context of climate change mitigation strategies in the transport sector. Most studies focus on higher-level performance indicators (Lundquist 1980; Scruggs 1999, 2001; Congleton, 1992; Jahn 1998), which could be considered as too broad, as it neglects the complexity in policy making and many other factors. This paper focuses on a specific policy area to disentangle drivers that influence policy development and outcomes. The

approach also allows the illumination of nuances in political attitudes, policy makers' perceptions of different institutional structures and aims to demonstrate causal connections between various factors and policy outcomes. The discussion in this section about institutional and governance structures relates directly to policy impact and agenda setting, implementation and outcomes. The institutional factors will be compared to transport relevant climate indicators for a selection of OECD countries for a high level analysis in the following section. This will highlight contextual clusters and may give an indication of the linkages between institutional structures and their impact on policy outcomes.

The institutional structure and relationships between political and societal actors are influencing policy agenda setting and policy continuity. Institutional structures can be the foundation of coalition building and can enable the creation of epistemic communities or they can inhibit. Democratic systems are different and can largely be divided into two major categories: majoritarian and consensus democracies (Crepaz 1995, Lijphart, 1999). Majoritarian systems (e.g. Australia, Canada, New Zealand, US and UK) are characterised by the concentration of power in one-party and minimal winning majority cabinets, a two-party system, non-proportional election systems, interest organisation pluralism, centralised forms of government, unicameral parliaments, constitutional flexibility, absence of judicial review and executive control of the central bank (Lijphart 1984). Consensus focused democracies (e.g. France, Germany and Sweden) on the other hand are characterised by coalition government, balance between executive and legislative power, proportional representation, interest group corporatism, federalism, bicameralism, constitutional rigidity, judicial review and independence of the central bank (Lijphart 1984). It is to note these combinations are not a definitive list of characteristics, but an indication of typical elements of countries that can be described as majoritarian or consensus democracies. Due to its characteristics, it could be argued that majoritarian democracies are more decisive and able to implement climate change mitigation measures faster than their consensus-focused counterparts (Beer 1998). This view is challenged in this paper and it is argued that the institutional structure, consensus focus and shared values provide a more favourable basis for sustainable transport issues to appear on the policy agenda and also a more stable policy environment to remain in place over the long term (Lijphart 1999). It is argued that consensus democracies are more responsive and decisive than majoritarian systems, because of the more coordinated interaction with societal actors (Crepaz 1998), which is fostered by the supranational framework of the European Union. The relevance of the continuity and coherence factor EU is highlighted by the case of the United Kingdom. The UK is a typical majoritarian system, yet it has shown a relatively high level of policy continuity and progress in stabilising transport CO₂ emissions, which is considered to be largely driven by policy coherence and continuity from the EU level.

A central element of many consensus democracies is a corporatist institutional structure that allows a more coordinated approach to policy making with a small number of large peak organisations (Goldthorpe 1984). This closed shop approach enables the formation of epistemic communities as it substantially limits number of players that need to be convinced. The comparative advantage of consensus democracies also relates to a number of other elements that characterise these countries, such as the 'shadow of state regulation' (Scruggs 1999) and a broad acceptance of government regulation due to a history of strong penetration of the state in areas such as the labour market and social policy (Woldendorp

1997). The institutional structures of a consensus democracy are the primary drivers behind political stability and continuity that creates better environmental policies over the long term (Lundqvist 1980; McGuire & Olson 1996). Corporatist institutional arrangements characterised by a strong relationship between large encompassing groups that enable decision makers to negotiate policy in a way that is distinctively different from policy making in pluralist, majoritarian democracies (Hall and Soskice 2001). These groups are integrated into the policy process in a corporatist country and broaden the basis of policies, which creates a high level of continuity that is required for long-term investments (Lehmbruch and Schmitter 1982). This coalition building locks groups into certain policy directions that further enhance policy progress, which is almost self-reinforcing (Katzenstein 1977; 1987).

In countries with corporatist institutional structures major policy issues are negotiated in a concerted effort by organised interests. Studies in this domain usually focus on the interaction between unions and employer organisations to negotiate socio-economic policies. Policy coordination among organised interests facilitates favourable policy outcomes, which relates in the case of this paper to high levels of energy efficiency and low levels of greenhouse gas emissions. Arguably, a high level of corporatism may influence the implementation and improvement of policies with a long-term focus. There are a number of elements which may support this, for example: comparatively encompassing interest groups, a consensual social partnership, the 'shadow of state regulation' and a broad acceptance of government regulation due to a history of strong penetration of the state in areas such as the labour market and social policy (Scruggs 1999). Interest groups are integrated into the policy process in a corporatist country and broaden the basis of policies, which creates a high level of continuity that is required for long-term investments. This coalition building locks groups into certain policy directions that further enhance policy progress, which is almost self-reinforcing (Katzenstein 1977; 1987). As response to economic downturn, high unemployment and inflation rates, triggered by the 1970s oil price shocks, several countries with an open economy used corporatist structures to cope with increasing policy pressures (Goldthorpe 1984; Katzenstein 1985; Woldendorp 1997).

The concept of a coordinated market economies is very similar to the general concept of corporatism, as it relies on formal institutions to regulate the market and coordinate the interaction of firms and firm relations with suppliers, customers and employees (Hall and Soskice, 2001). Coordinated market economies can be characterised as having long-term relations between key actors in the economy. A particular focus in research has been the relationship between trade unions and employer associations. These long-term, cooperative relations provide coordinated market economies with a comparative advantage that affects positively the policy continuity and policy capability of a country in a similar way as corporatist structures do. Hall and Soskice (2001) argue that the hands-off policy approach and uncoordinated interaction between policy makers, economic and societal actors, which characterises liberal market economies puts these countries on a relative disadvantage compared to coordinated market economies. The strong interlinks between industries, banks, government and non-governmental organisations in coordinated market economies are considered to cause inertia, but also continuity and policy stability (Amable 2003; Hall and Soskice 2001; Schmidt 2002; Streeck 2001; Whitley 2000).

EUROPEAN INTEGRATION AS FRAMEWORK FOR POLICY CONTINUITY AND COHERENCE

The interrelations between European and member states policies and politics create a new dimension for societal and political actors (March and Olsen 1989, 1998; Hall and Taylor 1996). The European level opens new opportunities, but potentially also constraints to pursue particular political interests. This provides societal actors with an opportunity to advocate for policy measures even if the particular issue has no or little priority on the national political agenda (Boerzel and Risse 2009). Even more important are the formal institutions of the European Union, which provide the opportunity for new policy initiatives. They also create a policy environment that is less dependent on national elections and hence less likely to become subject to radical change after an election (Weidenfeld et al. 2010). The “logic of appropriateness” (March and Olsen 1998) and processes of persuasion in the European Union are mediated by the influence of change agents who persuade others to adjust national interests to the overarching European framework and a European political culture which aims for political consensus and cost-sharing (Boerzel and Risse 2009). The European Union influences directly and indirectly climate and energy policies of its member states (Vogel, 1986; Jordan 2002; Boerzel and Risse 2009). Due to its supranational character the European Union is a significant policy driver and can add significantly to policy continuity and coherence, for example the United Kingdom and Germany are both members of the European Union, differ significantly in their level of corporatism but have similar developments in energy intensity in the transport sector. Membership in the European Union and the common policy framework can hence indeed be considered as a contributing factor to more political and policy continuity and coherence.

In contrast the participation in international governance structures, e.g. the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) appears to have very little influence on national climate policy strategies over the longer term. Pressures on countries for acting on climate change in international negotiations may vary depending on the country's role in the international community and its track record on climate change policies. This may influence a country's motivation to implement policies that curb emissions. However, international agreements are relatively weak compared to supranational policies and its governance structures and comparatively loose. Compared to the supranational character the European Union is a much more significant policy driver for its member states than international agreement, aside from the fact that the negotiations under the UNFCCC are currently stalled.

An additional role the European Union currently takes is as a facilitator and platform of knowledge sharing and mutual learning among member states policies. Key policies, required to curb transport-related greenhouse gas emissions are relatively well known and best-practice examples to move towards CO₂ reduction targets in the transport sector are widely disseminated, through various research and cooperation programmes such as Intelligent Energy Europe and the Seventh Framework Programme. However, only a few countries have managed to curb transport energy consumption respectively. Some have made noticeable progress whereas others have almost entirely failed to tap into the efficiency potential. It is argued in this paper that the main factors that influence sustainable

mobility policy relates to a sizeable amount to the ability of society to reach consensus on key policy issues and the ability of institutions to achieve a certain level of strategy and policy continuity. The strive towards policy coherence at the supranational level of the European Union and consensus oriented institutional arrangements are considered to be the key factors that contribute to political and policy coherence.

Policy coherence is advancing. In many policy areas strategies and objectives are merging with objectives and strategies of other policy fields. Particular horizontal policy dimensions e.g. climate change policies are increasingly incorporated into existing policy areas like energy or transport policies and politics and are changing strategies and policy priorities in these areas. Programmatic changes reflect policy coherence more than political shifts, for example be seen in the move away from singular “transport policy” to a more integrated and systemic “mobility policy” which include climate objectives along with other social and economic objectives. The transport policy domain that evolves into mobility policy gains momentum with programmatic change and integration, which bring up a wider set of policy priorities for the transport sector, reflecting the relevance of the sector for society. This move towards policy integration and coherence affects different levels in the European multilevel policy system. At the European policy level there is a particular frontrunner advantage emerging as the European Commission serves as a political platform for deliberation and consultation without a national but with a European agenda, setting new targets and priorities.

FACTORS FOR POLICY COHERENCE AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON EUROPEAN MOBILITY POLICY

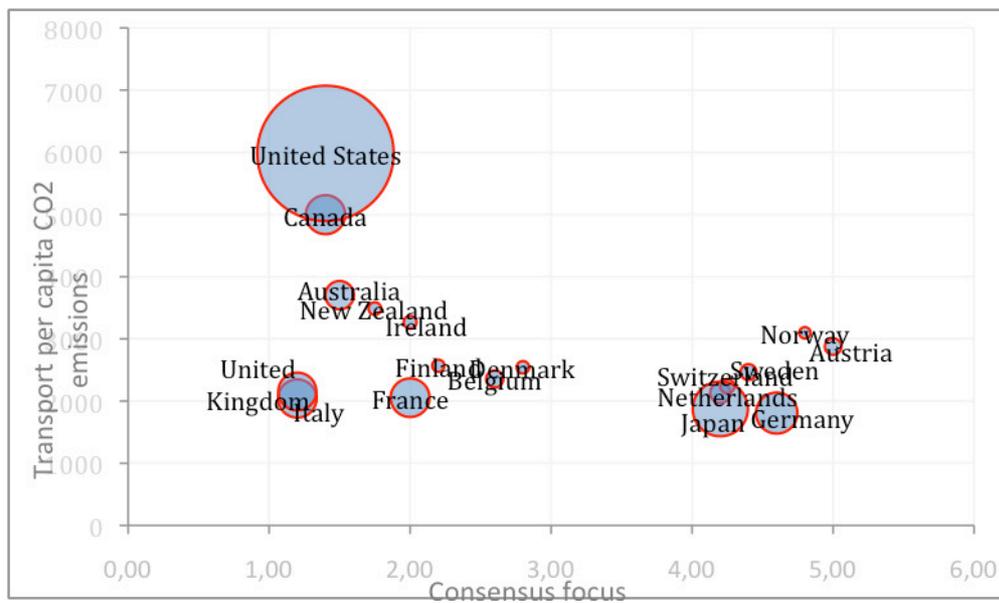
The combination of economic and environmental policy objectives makes the transport sector a particularly interesting case for an in-depth analysis of climate change policies. Transport energy efficiency policies will be used as an example to examine, in more detail, the differences in policy making in different institutional arrangements. Transport energy consumption is influenced by a number of factors, such as GDP per capita and population density. To be able to compare trends in different OECD countries on a relatively equal basis this study will focus on the efficiency of the light vehicle fleet. The adoption and diffusion of new technology, for example electric vehicles or plug-in hybrids, is likely to be dependent on the average household income in a country, in the same way as the development of efficient public transport modes is dependent on population density. However, the average efficiency of the light vehicle fleet is considerably less dependent on these factors and much more dependent on policy settings.¹

¹ Smaller vehicles with respective higher levels of fuel economy are generally more affordable and lower shares of alternatives transport modes (public transport, walking and cycling) would increase the need for higher efficiency in the vehicle fleet.

Comparison of key indicators

In the following paragraph the general concepts of institutional structures will be discussed and models will be compared to climate and energy efficiency indicators of OECD countries. This high level comparative analysis of institutional indicators and aggregated quantitative data on transport sector energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions will give a first indication of relevant patterns. The indicator comparison of OECD countries (Figure 2) highlights the relationship between institutional structures and climate policy performance in the mobility and transport sector.

Figure 2 Consensus focus vs. transport per capita CO2 emissions (2009)²

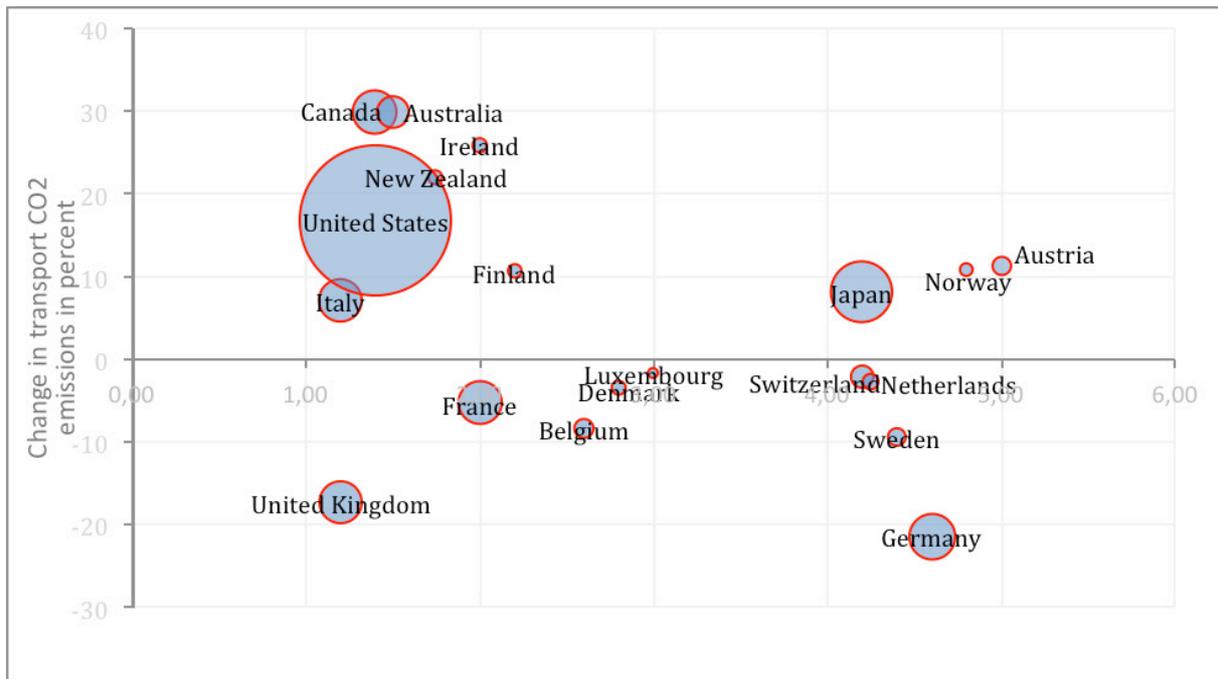


Source: IEA database for CO2 emissions and Siaroff (1999) for the consensus focus.
The size of the bubbles indicates the amount of the overall emissions

The analysis of the potential relationship of carbon intensity and continuity and coherence indicators gives some indication of clusters of countries that represent certain institutional arrangements and governance structures and their transport CO2 emissions per capita. Rather pluralist and less consensus oriented countries, such as the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand have higher levels of per capita transport CO2 emissions than nations with a strong focus on consensus building in deliberation, such as Austria, Sweden, Germany and Switzerland. There are some countries, such as the UK and France that have both, low levels of CO2 emissions. For these countries it is argued that the membership in the European Union acts as a factor of policy stability (Jordan 2002; Boerzel and Risse 2009). In addition cohabitation (France) and the strength of the Labour Party (UK) are considered to have contributed to emission reductions in these two countries (Vogel, 2003; Wurzel, 2006). The divide between various countries becomes even more obvious when comparing the level of consensus in various EU and non-EU member countries with the changes in emissions (emission reductions vs. increases) in the respective transport sectors (Figure 3), which reflect the actual progress in low-carbon transport policy (or the lack thereof).

² The size of the bubble represents the overall transport sector CO2 emissions

Figure 3 Consensus focus vs. change in transport CO2 emissions 2009 relative to 1990³



Source: UNFCCC for CO2 emissions and Siaroff (1999) for the consensus focus.

Taking two examples from different sides of the spectrum Germany and New Zealand and looking into more detail in the differences in the policy making process helps understanding the key issues of corporatist or coordinated market economies and liberal market economies. Legislators in Germany have a “manageable number of negotiating partners” (Bury in Lah 2009) with which to reach agreements, and large constituencies back them. Consultation with the major peak organisations leaves the German Members of Parliament and Ministers with a relatively high level of certainty about the positions of relevant stakeholders, which helps to shape policies and to pave the way for successful implementation. In New Zealand however, “politicians simply don’t know who to talk to”, said former MP Tim Barnett (in Lah 2009), who has trained lobbyists for small interest organisations to encourage them to get involved in the policy process. According to the former Senior Government Whip, the consultation process in New Zealand does not ensure that the government is informed about the positions of relevant stakeholders, and influence policy outcomes. This is mainly because a large number of relatively small groups, in particular from the non-business side, participate in the process individually, instead of a few peak organisations that speak for them and have a mandate to bargain. The policy makers’ perception translates into tangible numbers when comparing the consultation process of the German Eco-Tax legislation and the New Zealand Emissions Trading Scheme, two pieces of legislation of similar magnitude. In Germany 45 chief executives of the key interest organisations (unions, employers, energy industry, environment, energy consumers, tenants, landlords etc.) were heard by the members of the select committee. Each interest domain was represented by no more than three individual organisation, some were even represented by only one. New Zealand’s proposal of an Emissions Trading Scheme attracted 259 written submissions, of which 98 were presented

³ The size of the bubble represents the overall transport sector CO2 emissions

orally to the select committee. Taking population disparity into account (about 20:1) German legislators would have received some 6,000 written submissions (a form of consultation that is not usual practice in Germany) and about 2,000 oral presentations would have been delivered in the German Bundestag. New Zealand's consultation practice results in a considerably higher number of submissions and presentations and also in a broader diversity of opinions articulated in them. It could be described as fragmented and individualistic. While in Germany an interest domain is represented by a very small number of representatives, who have a sufficient mandate to bargain, in New Zealand organisations and businesses represent themselves individually and if umbrella organisations are present they do not have a mandate to negotiate effectively.

The German desire for political balance and a broad policy coalition stands in stark difference to New Zealand where legislation, regulations and other government schemes are often subject to change or repeal when the Government changes. Germany on the contrary is well known for its tendency to regulatory interventions that tend not to be repealed. Even though 'red tape' is also disliked in Germany, regulations and, in particular, sensible ones are at least accepted. As in other corporatist countries, Germans are used to being regulated and German legislators are used to regulating (Scruggs 2001). It is important to note that corporatist structures alone do not necessarily lead to better environmental outcomes. Until the 1970s the German corporatist structures, particularly unions and employers, resulted in more negative environmental performance. The focus of the unions was to ensure high employment rates through economic growth, often at the expense of environmental sustainability. However, when environmental and energy resources pressures increased, sustainability issues were incorporated and a new consensus was formed.

Conclusion

Sustainable transport policies require a consensus on the need for policy intervention and a strategic, coherent and stable operating environment. Policy interventions in the transport sector are highly visible and politically sensitive. They require a strong political commitment to appear on the policy agenda and to remain in place as they rely on investments that are only cost-effective over the medium to long-term. A number of factors impact on a country's policy environment. Institutional arrangements, such as consensus democracy and supra-national integration were explored in this paper. The preliminary analysis indicates that these factors indeed may have an influence on political and policy stability and with that on policy outcomes. Some of these factors are particularly strong in some member states of the European Union where some countries have the combined effect of national and supranational institutional factors that support stability, which fosters a relatively high level of continuity that can mitigate political volatility to a certain extent and fosters policy coherence through integration.

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