

Franziska Ehnert, *Climate Policy in Denmark, Germany, Estonia and Poland, Ideas, Discourses and Institutions* (Northampton: Edward Elgar, 2019)

The book of Franziska Ehnert, entitled *Climate Policy in Denmark, Germany, Estonia and Poland, Ideas, Discourses and Institutions* approaches climate change in terms of interaction of institutional, policy and discourse aspects that form the path from reality to political priority, policy and solution. This topic is part of current political debates that began in the 1980s, despite climate scepticism or climate change denial, and despite the resistance to the transformation of lifestyles and infrastructures. Environmental movements succeeded in bringing science and policy together, to sustain a climate change critique of the status quo and to promote ecologist alternative values and solutions via environmental policy.

Climate policy analyses are paramount to assess the manner in which the “ministerial administrations” implement or change a policy to answer environmental issues, redefine problems and maintain the adequacy and efficiency of climate change policy.

Considering that previous studies have shown the tension between the expert public officials and the politicians, the research conducted by Franziska Ehnert argues that “policy change will be better understood by studying the actors formulating these policies, namely ministerial administrations. It captures, not merely party politics and interest group politics, but the departmental politics of policy change. The book therefore focuses on the coordinative discourses within governmental institutions (...) among the actors participating in the construction of a policy, which stand in contrast to the communicative discourses through which politicians communicate and justify their policies vis-à-vis the public”. (p. 5)

Thus, the investigation follows the factors and aspects involved in the continuation or change of a policy; how is policy shaped, how coordinative discourses, policy frames, institutional contexts and particular identities relate and evolve; and how can one assess the reframing of values, the redefinition of interests or the reinterpretation of the guiding ideas.

Methodologically the study combines ontological, epistemological and methodological characteristics of the positivist and interpretative research paradigms in a comparative research with qualitative and quantitative dimensions based on the singularities and not on the similarities of the cases. Literature reviews, document analyses and expert interviews are also combined. Moreover, state and non-state actors are taken into consideration via expert interviews. Interpretation plays an important role as well following the data-generation stage: meaning-focused methods are used to analyse empirical data (p. 15). The investigation has as its own particularity the fact that the researchers acknowledge the characteristics of the cases only in the process of data generation, which increases objectivity. The countries compared are similar enough as regards institutional democracy, rule of law and market economy, and, as EU members, they share similar political commitments to EU climate and energy policy. Having under investigation older and

younger democracies, varied indicators such as historical backgrounds, territory, economic, political, military and financial power or population size, differences in policy styles and discourses are to be expected.

The analytic framework introduced in the second chapter investigates the causes and means for the continuation of policies, provided that ideas and narratives shape and do not merely reflect the field of action. Political power has an important dimension in the power of ideas. The agents have an activity expressing the “following of the rules” and the “reproduction of the institution”, but also one that indicates the meta-level of discourse, for they think about and outside their institutions too. In terms of “ideal types”, the entrepreneurial-style bureaucrats are more likely to perform as “policy brokers”, while servant-style bureaucrats are more likely to “refrain from mediation and brokerage” and be, more likely, policy followers. (pp. 21-31)

In contrast, the following chapters approach the empirical data and associated analyses and interpretations concerning the making of climate policy in two Western European countries (Denmark and Germany) and in two Central Eastern European countries (Estonia and Poland). The researcher finds that Denmark is performing an important role in climate policy (“a small, green state”) due to a consensus-seeking policy style, a coordination apparatus among cabinet committees, and extensive specialization of the ministerial administration on climate policy. (p. 36)

These aspects, next to the policy ideals, objectives and instruments that are investigated, indicate a multitude of actors sustaining and opposing climate policy, but at the same time a resulting strong societal support for climate policy arising from this polyphonic conversation. However, Denmark is not and does not aim to be a “green Leviathan”, but a green democracy and market economy, with a policy orientation towards consensus, openness and inclusiveness. (p. 61)

The coordinative and consensus-seeking discourses are the most important in this respect. In the case of Germany, the size of the country induces different consequences to the similar reality of the multitude of actors involved in the climate policy “conversation”. Political acceptance might be the result of the “early participation of stakeholders in policy deliberation” in improving policy implementation. In this respect, even if lobbying may be seen as a risk factor, it could be also a democratic-openness enhancement factor. (p. 94) The main climate policy discourse in Germany has become that of increased “participation and transparency in policy deliberation processes”, calling more attention to institutional policy aiming at a more consensus-seeking attitude.

The “small state” discourse is central to Estonian identity, influencing both politics and policies. The EU was the agenda setter in Estonian climate policy and in Estonian energy efficiency policy. Fighting the communist heritage of authoritarian rule, a paradoxical weakness of the culture of coordination, the institutional fragmentation, the limited resources, the poor interministerial consultations, the weak citizen participation and the low professionalization of the environmental NGOs, the situation was improved slightly by the planning for the European Structural Funds (2014-2020), by the design and continuation of the National Development Plan of the Energy Sector until 2030, and by the academic expertise, making the discourse of the technocrats and departmental politics officials prevalent, to the detriment of other actors. (pp. 120-123)

Central to Polish identity is the idea of catching up with Western development and requirements. On the one hand, the “relationships between state and society were fluid and fragmented” and, on the other, we have the communist heritage of authoritarian rule “undermining parliamentary independence” and weakening the institutionalized character of the “informal practices of interministerial and public consultations” (p. 151) Environmental NGOs are professionalized in Poland, but they remain marginalized. Their discourse attempted to sustain a core idea of ecological modernization, which has gained more adepts with the support of the Ministry of Economy, academic experts and environmental NGOs (keeping the white certificate system in the EEA).

The volume advances a very interesting methodology approaching the climate policies in the EU and it emphasizes an important and original evolving perspective in assessing climate policy. Both environment issues and political “landscapes” are changing, inducing more debate over competing ideas and ideals, values, facts and interests. As a consequence, discursiveness becomes more important in the lives of the institutions, states and societies. At the same time, interpretive analysis emphasizes potential improvement on scientific arguments and agendas as a result of the improvement of the deliberation processes on climate change.

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