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Chapter 7

Greening the State, American Style

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Abstract

Can the United States transform itself into a green state? This chapter examines the institutional and ideological barriers preventing the transition to low carbon, sustainable polity. Drawing on institutionalist and discourse frameworks, it shows how institutional barriers are today further entrenched by powerful discursive frames that favor anti-state, anti-climate advocates. The chapter then examines how such institutional, ideational and discourse barriers might be overcome to encourage a green state transformation. It argues that any such transformation must come from 'below' the state, and must involve a change not just in government policy and practice, but in discourse and citizen engagement.

Keywords: ecological modernization, institutionalism, discourse, framing, citizen action

Introduction

Over the last decade questions about the nature of the state and whether it can address contemporary global environmental challenges – especially those of sustainability and climate change - have preoccupied theoretical and practical debates. Some International Relations scholars suggest globalization has rendered the state impotent and that other actors – multinational corporations, NGOs, international organizations, have become more important in determining whether and how such issues will be addressed (Held and McGrew 2002; see also Lövbrand and Linnér this volume). Meanwhile many greens deeply distrust the state and the centralization and authoritarianism it implies (Torgerson 2005); some, especially those drawn towards eco-anarchism, would even advocate its abolition (Bookchin 1991). Other theorists, however (Eckersley 2004; Paehlke and Torgerson 2005; Connelly et al. 2012), have argued compellingly that the state is here to stay *and* that there is much promise in the idea of reforming (or transforming) the state so that it can respond to environmental challenges (see also Bäckstrand and Kronsell this volume). These green state scholars suggest the possibility of developing genuinely ecologically sensitive states that can fulfill the role of a “public ecological trustee” (Eckersley 2004, 12) and coax their polity toward addressing domestic and global environmental challenges. This chapter examines the prospects of and barriers to such a transformation in the United States.

The green state

A green state is one capable of developing policies and practices designed to limit harmful emissions and achieve a sustainable future for its citizens. Such a state would assume responsibility for environmental harm domestically but also seek to develop ecologically responsible statehood globally (In this chapter particular attention is paid to the state's ability to address climate change.). In her seminal work, Eckersley (2004) identified some key challenges to greening the state (including the dominance of sovereignty, capital accumulation and democracy deficit), but also countervailing positive trends (multilateral agreements, rise of ecological modernization, and deliberative democratic practices). Complementing Eckersley's work, other writers have investigated these challenges and opportunities in more depth (Hysing this volume). Ecological modernizationscholars have demonstrated how states can 'green' by developing economic strategies linked to reform of the market economy and production processes (Mol 1996; Hajer 1995). Dryzek et al.'s comparative study (2003) identifies the state and societal features more amendable to greening strategies. They find that greening the state is more likely when environmental strategies are linked to state imperatives such as security or economic growth. Paehlke (2005), Smith (2005), Meadowcroft (2004 and Eckersley (2004) focus particularly on the role of deliberative democracy in pushing a state forward.

Despite different arguments and emphases within green state literature there is a consensus that the contemporary US lags well behind others in the development of green statehood. This chapter shares that view: the US has not achieved the domestic or global role outlined above and is not close to green statehood as defined above. The main

concern of the chapter is to explain that laggard development as well as exploring how a transformation may be achieved. Most explanations for America's laggardness focus on either institutional (constitutional separation of powers; multiple veto points) or ideological barriers (neoliberalism or individualism) to greening the state. This chapter demonstrates that both institutions and ideology are important, but suggests they gain full potency only when embedded in public discourse. How the state and the challenges of climate and sustainability are understood by policymakers and the public are crucial to understanding the limits of the US as green state, as well as the possibilities of a transformation.

To examine these barriers and their interaction, this chapter adopts a hybrid framework combining an emphasis on institutions, ideology and discourse. It uses those insights to identify the institutional and ideological barriers stymieing progress towards green statehood. It then examines how each barrier is underlined and enforced by powerful frames that currently favor anti-state, anti-climate advocates. The subsequent section explores how these institutional, ideational and discourse barriers might be overcome to allow a transformation of the state. It considers first arguments that the US central state could, by adopting a weak form of ecological modernization, develop into a potential 'environmental neoliberal state' which would focus on promoting national economic activity and technological innovation (Christoff 2005; MacNeil and Paterson 2012). The chapter counters this claim, arguing instead that any transformation must come from below the state level and must involve a change in discourse as much as in policy and practice.

Framework

This chapter draws first on new institutionalist literature to help identify and analyze the institutional factors constraining US state action. Writers in this school suggest institutional structures and norms operating in the US constrain policy action in powerful ways (Weaver and Rockman 1993; Nivola and Jones 2008). These structures include formal institutions (e.g. legislative structures, constitutional and voting rules, federalism) as well as informal institutions - behavioral norms such as adversarialism - which shape actors' political behavior. I also draw on other institutionalists who focus more on ideology (Checkel 2005), especially the norms and values of neo-liberalism and individualism. I then supplement this institutionalist literature with insights from discourse analysis, which places greater emphasis on how problems are defined, framed, argued and debated.¹ Drawing on studies of media and public opinion data, I show how attention to discursive frames provides an important supplement for understanding public acceptance of state action and transformation.

Institutional Barriers

The institutional barriers to positive US state action are many. Chief amongst formal institutional constraints is the federal legislative system, which is “deliberately designed to restrain the scale and pace of change” (Nivola and Jones 2008, 13). The constitutional separation of powers makes policymaking difficult and gridlock more likely, especially

on politically divisive issues such as climate change. Competition between the executive and congressional branches of government is built into the US policymaking system, and judicial action – either pushing or resisting environmental change – is a further powerful dynamic. More generally the US political system is characterized by its multiple veto points: actors occupying positions (in different institutions, different branches of government and at different levels of governance) can block action at several points in the policymaking process. Each point creates an opportunity for some interest or constituency to demand a concession or to block progress. In the US, a plethora of organized interests can further stagnate change and can render any reform – especially the sort required by greening – particularly difficult (Kleiman and Teles 2006, 642; Christoff and Eckersley 2011, 440). Entrenched interests are apparent in US climate and environmental policy, which is marked by vociferous constituencies on either side of a given issue (Bomberg and Schlosberg 2008; Nijhuis 2014).²

In recent years, climate and other environmental legislation has faced additional institutional hurdles as adversaries within Congress employ institutional rules to block executive action. The use of filibuster – an on-going speech in the Senate intended to block legislative action – has increased sharply and has been invoked to block climate and environmental legislation. More recently, its use was threatened by Republicans keen to block Obama’s appointments to head the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) (Peters 2013). These strong veto players make it more difficult to re-evaluate existing policies and even harder to change them. The resulting ‘path dependency’ means that it is hard to change strategy or policy, even when it outlives its usefulness, because of

entrenched interests but also because of the ‘sunk costs’ (time and resources) already invested. It is an especially powerful explanation of current dilemmas of greening, and helps explain, for instance, the continuation of subsidies for fossil fuels, or the difficulty of developing more sustainable forms of transport (Paterson 2007).

These institutional dynamics have become more apparent in recent environmental and climate policy. The promise of transformational change in environmental and climate issues under an Obama presidency (Bomberg and Super 2009) soon reverted to legislative stagnation as congressional – executive relations soured and blockages increased. Although a modest proposal for climate legislation made it through the House in 2009 it did not survive the Senate and soon slipped off the federal (both congressional and presidential) agenda. The setback sparked dismay from environmentalists who complained of presidential broken promises and neglect. But the setback was more a product of institutional barriers rather than any personal presidential betrayal.

Accompanying these structural constraints are informal norms such as increasing and intensified partisanship, entrenched adversarialism and severe fragmentation. In the US the constitutional brakes on policymaking described above are ever present, but they have been exacerbated in recent administrations by a fiercely adversarial atmosphere. The Obama administration promised to bring to Washington not just stronger environmental policy but a new mood of bipartisanship and working across the aisle. Obama stressed that US “efforts to create jobs, achieve energy security and combat climate change demand integration among different agencies, cooperation between federal, state and

local governments and partnership with the private sector” (Obama 2010), but cooperation amongst government, private and public actors remained elusive. By some measures the level of partisanship in US government today is the highest on record (Abramowitz 2013). Aspirational, positive environmentalism is easily sabotaged in this adversarial milieu. It means, for instance that the veto points and institutional blocks mentioned above are invoked more often and with more vigor. Such adversarialism was rife during earlier climate change bill debates³ but also present in more recent debates on Keystone XL oil pipeline and, especially, executive attempts to regulate carbon emissions. Using its authority under the Clean Air Act, the EPA issued rules in 2014 compelling new electricity utilities to limit emissions of any new facilities.⁴ The move sparked fierce, immediate opposition from Republican opponents who, insisting the rules would decimate coal industry and harm the economy, vowed to thwart further executive action.

Ideological Barriers

A closely linked set of explanations for America’s ‘un-green’ state focuses on ideological barriers, which exacerbate institutional constraints. The most dominant of these is a neoliberal ideology, which favors markets over state action and makes it difficult for governments to take a proactive role. Peter Christoff (2005, 304) for example, notes how neoliberalism leads states to eschew responsibility for natural resources protection and instead shift control and ownership to the private sector. In their comparison of the potential of states to achieve green statehood, several authors conclude that EM strategies

are easier to pursue in social democratic welfare states (Mol and Spaargaren 2000; Hajer 1995; Christoff 2005). Similarly the varieties of capitalism literature (Hall and Soskice 2001) draw useful distinctions between coordinated market economies and liberal market economies and suggest that the latter is less likely to develop state-led environmental leadership because of a highly antagonistic relationship between markets and state. In his explanation of the US's comparatively laggard pace on climate change, for instance, Driesen (2010, 112) underlines a culture of market fundamentalism and an "ideological climate that embraced free markets as the solution to all economic and social issues and regarded vigorous government action as anathema". Meanwhile a neoliberal preference for "more market, less state" has become especially evident in congressional voting patterns in the last decade (MacNeil and Paterson 2012, 236).

Linked to neoliberalism is a strong emphasis on individualism, a distrust of the state, and a limited conception of the public good (Bomberg 2003). Foley (2007, 37) outlines American's deep historical emphasis on individualism and distrust. American liberty, he writes, acquires its meaning through the agency of the individual rather than social classes or nationality: "In American eyes it is a matter of simple logic that a society dedicated to liberty should have as its hallmark the freedom of the most fundamental constituent unit of that society- the individual citizen". That logic is reflected in the constitutional blueprint that intentionally ring-fences state power with prohibitions and constraints. But the belief also underlines public attitudes towards the scope of government action, which is often summed up as: "freedom preserved by the state must always be qualified by guarantees of freedom *from* the state" (Foley 2007, 40). Put

bluntly, greening initiatives (to reduce harmful emissions, to ensure sustainability) are most likely to succeed when they do not invoke the central state.

In sum, institutional constraints and ideology defining US environmental policies and politics has led to a seemingly dysfunctional – or at least a severely challenged – green state. Its neoliberal ideology and adversarialism, in particular, seem to suggest the US would be far less likely to take a green lead compared to other, especially Nordic, welfare states characterized by greater cooperation among business, government and environmental groups (MacNeil and Paterson 2012, 234; see also others this volume).

Yet these barriers alone do not explain US laggardness. First, the institutional barriers outlined above are not unique to the US; analysts of European Union (EU) policy have revealed a similarly rich vein of institutional hurdles, contestation and policy convolution (see Peterson and Shackleton 2012). Yet the EU has been able to take a significant leadership role on climate and sustainability (Bomberg 2009; Schreuers and Tiberghien 2007). Secondly, despite long standing entrenched ideologies and barriers, the US has showed itself capable of far reaching environmental action, including under Republican presidents (Bomberg 2003). Nor must neoliberalism itself be a barrier. Christoff (2005, 304), for example, refers to Australia as a possible “neoliberal environmental state” active in promoting economic growth through environment-related state funding and activity. The hurdles facing the current US, in other words, are neither unique nor new. What is distinctive is the extent to which these hurdles are accompanied by an increasingly powerful anti-state discourse, which renders pro-active state action

extremely difficult. We explore below how actors opposed to state action have successfully framed environmental action – and especially climate change – as an unimportant problem, and the state’s role on climate as negative, intrusive and even ‘un-American’.

Discursive Barriers

Discourse analysis focuses on how problems are defined and debated, and how through that process an overall narrative (or story) emerges (Hajer 1995). In the area of climate change, opponents to action have sought to construct an overall narrative of *climate denialism* which acts as a discursive barrier to state action on climate. Key to this narrative-building is the act of framing which refers to how actors select and emphasize particular aspects of an issue according to an overarching shared narrative and set of assumptions (Miller 2000, 211). Frames can be used to draw attention to a problem (or solution), but also to deflect attention away from an issue (Baumgartner and Jones 2009).⁵ In the discourse battle surrounding climate change, one of the most powerful frames employed by opponents of climate action is the “doubt frame”. Corporate interests threatened by more rigorous climate legislation have long employed such a frame in an effort to downplay the link between greenhouse gases and warming temperatures and thus call into question the need for state action or regulation. A range of scholars (see Christoff and Eckersley 2011; Dunlap and McCright 2011; Jacques 2009; McCright and Dunlap 2003) have outlined how corporate funded organizations generate intentionally

conflicting or misleading knowledge to underpin the doubt frame, and use the media links to limit and mold available information about climate change (Norgaard 2011).

The use of the doubt frame is evident in opponents' response to the Obama Administration's recent efforts to reduce emissions through EPA regulations. An example is provided by the Environmental Policy Alliance (it has intentionally appropriated the acronym of the federal Environmental Protection Agency), which was created in 2014 by a public relations firm representing large corporate interests opposed to legislation on energy or climate. On their website, the Alliance repeats claims of the well-known climate-denying Heartland Institute that the International Panel on Climate Change's (IPCC) science is "seriously flawed", the link between emission and changing climate is "still unclear" and that alarmists have created a "fictitious global warming crisis" (Heartland Institute 2014).

According to discourse analysts, a narrative is successful if it achieves discursive dominance in public debate. Such dominance is reflected in public opinion polls and media reporting or government pronouncements (Hajer 1995). According to several criteria it appears that the climate opponents' narrative of climate denialism has taken hold in the US public debate and consciousness. Opinion polls show significant skepticism surrounding the science of climate change. Compared to citizens in most other countries Americans show much greater doubt about the existence and severity of climate change and its anthropogenic causes. That trend is well documented by Gallup and Pew opinion polls, which have tracked the percentage of Americans agreeing that "there is no

solid evidence for global warming” (Gallup Organization 2014). Although the percentage doubting the existence of climate change has decreased since 2008-9, it still remains over a quarter of the population. A much greater percentage continues to deny that humans are responsible for that change.⁶

Media portrayals, too, illustrate a dominant narrative of denialism communicated through frames of doubt.⁷ A recent study analyzing television coverage of both national and international climate change reports showed that coverage of climate by major networks is low overall (an IPCC report received a total of two minutes on CNN), with an overall emphasis on doubt and even superstition. (A Fox News announcer introduced the scientific consensus on climate change as “the oldest superstition around” (Media Matters 2014)). According to other studies, most networks also tend to feature false balance by providing equal time and credibility to scientists confirming or denying climate change (see also Boykoff and Boykoff 2004). Similarly the doubt frame is reflected in US media’s increasing use of hedging words (such as perhaps, speculative, controversial, blurry and disagreement) when reporting on climate scientists’ reports. In their comparative study of coverage of the 2014 IPCC report, Bailey et al. (2014) note how US newspapers increased their utilization of such words even as the scientific consensus that climate change is real and humans are contributing to it has substantially strengthened.

Although scholars have given much attention to this sort of climate framing, fewer have focused on the framing of the state and how that might shape public understanding of climate and environmental policy (but see Antonio and Brulle 2011). In their public

discourse many opponents of green or climate action often portray the state as oppressive, stifling prosperity and infringing economic and individual liberty. This “oppressive state” frame is highly resonant in current debates and illustrated in the Environmental Policy Alliance’s full page advert in the *Wall Street Journal* (3 July 2014) warning that “Obama’s EPA...is moving full steam ahead with oppressive energy regulations to make higher costs a reality”. Similarly, opponents to climate initiatives in Congress accused the administration not just of imposing an economic burden but of executive branch “suffocation”, “over-reach” and a President “hell bent on adding layer after layer of harmful red tape” Republican Congressman quoted in the *Washington Post* 15 July 2014.

Although the resonance of the anti-state frame is often overlooked, it can be powerful. One telling indicator is the consecutive Gallup polls which gauge over time Americans’ view of the state, business and trade unions. Asked in 2013 which will be the biggest threat to the country – business, labor or government – an overwhelming 72 % believed big government posed the gravest threat. Moreover that percentage has risen significantly in the last decade (Gallup Organization 2013).⁸ In sum, according to several indicators an anti-climate and anti-state narrative currently enjoys discourse dominance in US debate. Such dominance suggests a different sort of transition may be needed to green the state, one that tackles institutional and ideological barriers, but also re-frames climate, the state, and citizens’ relationship to both.

Transformation of the state?

The institutional and ideological barriers to a green US state are formidable. Crucially, these features gain potency when combined with a narrative eschewing action on climate generally, and especially action by the state. But we also know the US system can feature dynamism, and the ability to change, innovate and adapt. It has done so in the past on issues linked to the environment (Bomberg 2003). Moreover the state, and our conceptions of it, can transform and have done so throughout history (Micklethwait and Wooldridge 2014). So how might the US state be greened? What are prospects for a transition? While the barriers outlined above cannot be entirely removed, several avenues for reform are possible and underway.

Empowering the central state

One way to bypass veto points outlined above has already been attempted: it involves the executive taking a more active unilateral role in promoting climate care and sustainability. As mentioned above, the Obama administration has used enacting legislation to pursue carbon reduction objectives through unilateral authority in the form of federal greenhouse gas reduction regulations (Kahn 2014). The measure is an example of how the administrative state has been able to use powerful direct state intervention to reduce harmful pollutants and improve public health. However, this top-down move is politically unpopular and subject to considerable pushback.

Likely to be more successful are executive actions re-framed not as climate or carbon reduction initiatives but as economic opportunities. Echoing descriptions of Christoff's

environmental neoliberal state (2005), this ecological modernization approach shifts the “capital accumulation imperative” from acting as a hurdle (Eckersley 2004) to a key tool in shifting to a low carbon society. The shift is in evidence within the Obama administration. His earlier global emphasis on the need to protect the environment and avoid a “Planet in Peril” (Obama 2009) has shifted to a frame of economic opportunity for the nation. Similarly Fletcher (2009) tracks the development of a positive “opportunity frame” (the ‘Apollo’ frame) with an emphasis on industrial transformation, technological innovation, and economic opportunity.⁹ MacNeil and Paterson (2012, 241) also note Obama Administration’s increasing tendency to present climate initiatives (such as renewables) as a technologically savvy, neoliberal economic opportunity.

Similarly, central state action could be further empowered if climate and environmental goals were couched in terms of national security. Schlosberg and Rinfret (2008) note how re-framing climate as security issue makes clear the links between climate and the need for government action. For the US that security frame would encompass security of lives and livelihoods. Such a shift is now more relevant following recent dramatic weather events, which proponents of climate action can link to climate change. This “scary weather” frame – invoking a threat to American infrastructure, farm land and lives – is very pertinent when conveyed as an immediate economic threat. The third US National Climate Assessment (NCA), which was released by the federal government in May 2014, outlined the direct consequences for the US economy if no action were taken. With a heavy emphasis on US producers it warned:

Climate change, once considered an issue for a distant future, has moved firmly into the present. Corn producers in Iowa, oyster growers in Washington State, and maple syrup producers in Vermont are all observing climate-related changes that are outside of recent experience... (US Global Change Research Program 2014, 1)

A tandem security frame – that of energy security or independence – held promise in the early 2000s. This frame stressed the need to conserve and limit fossil fuel use to avoid dependence on dodgy foreign energy sources. But this frame is no longer as resonant following the recent boon in shale gas, which has increased remarkably the US access to domestic energy. Exploitation of shale gas through hydraulic fracturing (or fracking) is not new, but it has experienced an astonishing revival in the US. Despite profound environmental concerns fracking operations have increased dramatically, with yields jumping from less than 1% percent in the late 1990s, to 20 % of domestic gas production by 2010 (EIA 2012). While its contribution to low carbon state remains controversial¹⁰ shale gas has certainly rendered far less powerful the notion that energy conservation and climate reduction is the key to ensuring US energy security. Nonetheless, wider national security framing remains potentially potent.

For its proponents such re-framing could herald a wider, much more fundamental re-framing of green issues away from a vaguely altruistic goal to a central organizing principle of the state's domestic and foreign policies. Some writers have suggested these measures herald the emergence of an “American style” ecological modernization

(Schlosberg and Rinfret 2008). But there are limits to this strategy and its contribution to a US green state. First, while the Administration's focus on unilateral action is understandable, Obama's measures will be subject to challenge (they already are), not just by corporate interests but other organs of the state (including Congress and perhaps also the Courts). Also, while this strategy involves re-thinking and re-framing climate change and its effects, it does not re-think the state. Nor does it involve citizens or change their view of the state. Finally, this re-framed narrative has become strikingly inward looking and does not focus on a direct global role for US. Proponents argue that the US acting domestically would inevitably address global responsibilities, but this domestic focus calls into question the green state requirement of multilateral action and engagement (see Eckersley 2004). In short, this path alone will not lead to an American green state.

Re-locating the state

Another approach is not to empower the state but to re-locate its locus of power. Americans' view of a/the central state is distrustful, and becoming more so (Micklethwait and Wooldridge 2014). But views of their own state (e.g. California, Wisconsin, New Hampshire) or local governments tend to be much more charitable (McKay 2013, 66). Thus empowering the sub-state and local level is a way to re-shape citizens' views of government and state action. It might, in other words, form part of a slow move to rehabilitating the state in the eyes of its citizens and counter opponents' depiction of state action as oppressive and threatening. Moreover, while the federal institutional obstacles

outlined above are not absent on the state level, they are more easily overcome. The expanding literature on US cities, states and climate suggests how on the subnational level climate advocates are creating new initiatives or expanding existing ones (Selin and VanDeveer 2009, 309). Barry Rabe (2004; 2010) and others have documented a plethora of state-led collaborative initiatives to combat climate, including greenhouse gas (GHG) inventories, mandatory caps, and multi-state carbon cap and trade programs. These same measures have struggled to gain acceptance on the federal level. Also significant is the extent to which these government-led initiatives are (partially) able to circumvent the partisanship and adversarialism of the federal level. In contrast to federal level stagnation, state government climate initiatives have been generally bipartisan and consensual (Rabe 2004). Also striking is states' growing willingness to engage beyond the nation-state to forge international networks of climate initiatives and ideas (Selin and van Deveer 2009, 312; Climate Group 2014; Cashmore and Rozema, this volume). Of course states vary significantly in their embrace of green policies and it is easy to overstate the sub-state green transformation. While Vermont, California and others have introduced far-reaching innovative climate measures, other states remain inactive if not downright hostile to climate action.¹¹

Empowering the citizens

Re-locating state power down to a level closer to citizens is also a way to empower greater citizen action, whatever their home state. Eckersley's vision of the green state is based on notions of citizen input because "all those potentially affected by ecological

risks ought to have some meaningful opportunity to participate, or be represented in the determination of politics of decisions that may generate risks” (Eckersley 2004, 243). Similarly Dryzek et al.’s comparative study underlined the core role of social movements and NGOs. In the American context, citizen action to green the state will be most powerful when framed in a distinctly American context. In particular it will be strongest when wedded to two powerful trends in US political culture that were first observed by de Tocqueville in the 19th century. The first is an appeal to the individual as an agent of social dynamism (Foley 2007, 43). But the second American trend is equally important. It involves tapping the ethos of communal responsibility through the building of community groups and organizations. That appeal would both moderate the effects of the individual and create an intermediary organization that would resist the intrusion of “any large scale organized force” (*i.e.* the state) (de Tocqueville in Foley 2007, 45). Americans are individualists but they are also joiners. Both strands can be harnessed for climate action (see Paehlke 2005).

In short, an ecological modernization approach - re-framing climate as economy-boosting, technology-rich, security-enhancing project aiding America’s current and future generations - is an important step in the construction of a green state. But equally important is re-framing the state, society and individual as outlined by Christoff (1996) in his version of strong ecological modernization. How citizens view the state and their own role within it, will be crucial. In practical terms that means action must come from below. We have already seen such initiatives in the area of city or local measures on climate mitigation (Gore and Robinson 2009). These mitigation initiatives are small scale

and most are non-binding, but they allow local actors to shape policy and behavior on day-to-day activities and thus can alter citizens' conceptions of climate and climate action. Such activity resembles what transition theorists refer to as micro niches: protected spaces for experimental activity and developments, which can over time, challenge or transform dominant practices (Bäckstrand and Kronsell this volume; Berkhout et al. 2003).

While such micro mitigation activities are well documented, less attention has been given to climate adaptation initiatives, perhaps because adaptation measures do not combat climate change and thus are not immediately seen as part of greening or low carbon transition. Yet adaption projects can play an important role in re-framing how citizens view climate and the state. Crucially, recent activity in the area of climate adaptation has involved federal authorities, but not in a visible role. Federal authorities have worked with local governments and groups, providing funding and expertise for adaption projects. Because that federal action is low profile it tends to sidestep high profile political battles. As one observer noted, "the idea is to get this conversation on climate change into town halls and city halls and planning boards and zoning board where it's not partisan: it's just very practical" (quoted in Khan 2014: 2). This re-framing strategy is indirect but vital. First it counters the climate denial narrative: climate change is real and these are its impacts. Secondly it encourages and builds partnerships: you need to develop common sense strategies to deal with climate change (and we can help). These programs are growing in strength and number (CEQ 2014) and suggest how communities, towns, cities and states might act as incubators of new policies or ideas which may eventually

lead to a major federal shift. The next challenge is how to enact that shift – how to scale up sub-state initiatives to the federal or central state or, in the language of transition theorists, how to ensure norms and practices adopted in the niche become practiced more widely (Berkhout et al. 2003).

Conclusion

Efforts to green the US state have been bogged down by features distinctive to the US: these include specific institutional pathologies, competition between entrenched interests, a privileging of the economy, and a limited conception of the public good. This chapter has identified several such barriers but has also suggested how each is cemented by powerful frames and a discourse dominance currently enjoyed by opponents of any green state action. Overcoming such barriers requires bypassing veto points but also – as advocated by ecological modernization proponents - re-framing climate in terms of economic opportunity and security. This chapter has suggested further, however, that this ecological modernization approach is not enough to green the state because it ignores the role of citizens. Re-framing climate initiatives as economy-boosting does little to assuage citizen concerns of an overweening state, or involve them in a transition. Efforts to green the American state will thus need to re-frame the state and citizens' role within it. In the US, at least, it will mean ensuring green initiatives are not concentrated at central level but are re-located to the subnational level and citizens themselves. In short, greening needs to come from below. It needs to be re-framed not as a centralized green state endeavor but as a bottom up, citizen-inspired venture.

While this chapter has focused on the US and highlighted its distinctive role, the analysis offers wider insights into the nature of green state transformation. First, attention to institutional and ideological factors is clearly important; they can spur or block sustainability and climate initiatives. But equally important is an understanding of how climate, sustainability and the state are themselves understood and framed by citizens, interests and policymakers. Secondly, any analysis of the state's role must include attention to its citizens. Ecological modernization accounts often neglect this aspect of green state development. The chapter has thus underlined the argument made by Eckersley, Paehlke, Smith and others: green measures are unlikely to be successful without opportunities for democratic participation. Further, this chapter has shown not only that participation is important, but that citizen and grassroots niche activity can thrive even when the central state is stymied. That suggests grassroots action might not only supplement, but could even trigger or spark broader initiatives. Finally while this chapter has made much of the US' distinctive, if not exceptional, characteristics, every state is distinct and greening solutions must recognize that diversity. There is, in other words, no one way to green or transform the state, but rather a mix of framing strategies and initiatives which should reflect individual state characteristic even while seeking common global solutions.

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¹ New Institutionalists do not ignore discourse but it is not usually central to their analysis (see Schmidt 2008).

² For a recent example of seemingly implacably opposed interests clashing over environmental issues, see Nijhuis' (2014) coverage of on-going debates concerning the Keystone XL pipeline which, if approved, would create a direct link between the Alberta oil sands and the Gulf of Mexico.

³ Typical was John Boehner's (House Republican leader) heated claim that the proposed climate change bill's cap and trade "will increase taxes on all Americans who drive a car, who have a job, who turn on a light switch, pure and simple" (quoted in the *Economist* 7 March 2009, p48).

⁴ Under the Clean Air Act (as interpreted by subsequent court rulings) federal executive agencies have the power to regulate CO₂ emissions. The new rules announced by Obama administration in 2013 and unveiled by the EPA in 2014 require all new power plants to cut carbon emissions by 30 % by 2030.

⁵ Frames and narratives are sometimes used interchangeably in the discourse literature. In this chapter, narratives refer to the overarching idea or story being portrayed (e.g. climate denialism), while framing (e.g. the doubt frame) is the technique used by actors to simplify and communicate that wider narrative.

⁶ The results indicate sharp partisan differences, with over 50 % of Republicans in the 'skeptical' camp compared to only 15 % of Democrats. (Gallup Organization 2014; See also Pew Research Center 2013).

⁷ While this section is concerned primarily with the media as reflecting or representing public understanding, its role is of course interactive: the media not merely reflects but can also shape public perceptions. See Boykoff and Boykoff 2004

⁸ The precise question asked was: "Which will be the biggest threat to the country in the future: big business, big labor or big government"?

⁹ The Apollo metaphor compares the task of controlling climate to the America's successful 1960s effort to put a man on the moon.

¹⁰ Advocates promote shale as a 'transition' fuel: cleaner than coal and therefore a step towards a more sustainable energy future. Opponents however note that coal will simply be shipped and burned elsewhere. They also highlight the risk during drilling operations of escaped methane, a greenhouse gas more potent than CO₂ (See Small et al. 2014).

¹¹ To illustrate, Louisiana and Texas have introduced state measures requiring educators to teach climate change denial as a valid scientific position (Bidwell 2014).
