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## JESP SYMPOSIUM

### CLIMATE CHANGE AND SOCIAL POLICY

**Ian Gough\*, James Meadowcroft, John Dryzek, Jürgen Gerhards, Holger Lengfeld, Anil Markandya and Ramon Ortiz**

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#### **INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>**

**Ian Gough**

Climate change is surely one of the most encompassing and egregious threats in Europe today, so it is appropriate that we consider its implications for social policy in Europe. It is true that climate change is a separate agenda, the preserve of a distinct academic and epistemic community, scholarly discourse, policy community, institutional structures and modes of governance; but the linkages between these two issues – climate change and its policy corollaries, and the ‘traditional’ domain of social policies – seem to us so strong and salient that they should be aired in a social policy journal.

Social policy is often conceived as the public management of social risks (Esping-Andersen 1999: 36). Some of these risks are timeless and universal, such as ill health, others are specific to certain types of society, such as unemployment or ethnic discrimination, others are more ephemeral. Climate change is a new risk that is big, global, long-term, persistent and uncertain (Stern 2006: 25). It thus confronts us with a qualitatively new agenda in social policy, or so I shall argue. Its implications for, and linkages with, economic policy are now centre-stage, yet there is very little on the linkages with social policy – for example, there is no reference to ‘social policy’ in the index of the 800-page Fourth Assessment Report (on Mitigation of Climate Change) of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC 2007).

The bald facts and high-consensus predictions of climate change are by now well-known and can be briefly stated. Most climate change models predict a doubling of pre-industrial levels of greenhouse gases between 2030 and 2060, which would result in a rise of global mean temperatures by between 2-5°C. The higher range would be far outside the experience of human civilisation and comparable to the difference between temperatures during the last ice age and today. Whatever is done now, because of inertia in the climate system past emissions of greenhouse gases will drive increases in global mean temperature for another several decades. Furthermore most of these models do not take account of likely positive feedbacks which will amplify the temperature rise. Alongside global warming the direct effects in the coming decades will include increasing risk of droughts and floods, more abrupt and large-scale changes in the climate systems and a rise in sea levels.

Most models predict significantly greater direct negative impacts on human habitats and livelihoods in tropical regions, which are also mainly poorer countries. This is of overwhelming importance in global debates. However, we shall restrict ourselves here to

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the implications for wellbeing, social risks and social policies in Europe. These fall into four categories.

1. *Direct* risks: Mediterranean regions will see rising water stress, heat waves and forest fires, and coastal regions of Europe are vulnerable to rising sea-levels, notably the Netherlands. However, more northerly countries may benefit.
2. *Indirect* risks: including greater distress migration from tropical regions, notably Africa, into Europe, recently highlighted by the EU....
3. Implications of climate change *adaptation* policies: there may be greater fiscal competition from necessary environmental policies to adapt to climate change, such as sea defences and removing housing from flood plains.
4. Implications of climate change *mitigation* policies: these include carbon budgets and/or higher carbon taxes and prices in the rich world which would be necessary to stabilise carbon emissions in the second half of the century.

A new research strategy should be aware of all four. In particular, new concerns with social justice and social policy are raised by the pressures (moral and practical) to drastically curb carbon emissions in Europe alongside the rest of the rich world. It is the nexus between environmental and social policies that needs to be urgently explored.

This symposium begins to rehearse the implications of climate change and climate change policies for the established ideas and practices of social policy and welfare states. After introducing the contributors the remainder of this introduction considers in turn the conceptual, empirical, policy and governance implications of climate change for social policy in contemporary Europe.

### **The contributors**

We have deliberately invited short contributions to this symposium from experts in climate change and environmental policy outside the field of social policy: from political science, sociology and economics.

James Meadowcroft holds the Canada Research Chair in Governance for Sustainable Development at Carleton University, Canada. He researches the ways in which governments are (or are not) adjusting their practices and policies in the face of emerging environment problems in order to promote more sustainable patterns of societal development. His publications include *Implementing Sustainable Development: Strategies and Initiatives in High Consumption Societies* (2000a) and 'From welfare state to ecostate?' (2005). In this contribution he compares the emergence of the environmental state with the earlier emergence of the welfare state. He considers a range of linkages between social and environmental policies today, concluding that they have the potential to draw together and reinstate the original impulse behind the idea of 'sustainable development'.

John Dryzek is Professor of Political Science at the Australian National University. His work in environmental politics ranges from green political philosophy to studies of environmental discourses and movements. His many publications include *Green States and Social Movements: Environmentalism in the United States, United Kingdom, Germany, and Norway* (2003) and *The Politics of the Earth* (2005). In this contribution he argues that coordinated market economies with social democratic welfare states tend to see economic and ecological values as mutually reinforcing, and are best placed to navigate the challenge presented by climate change to social policy. Liberal market economies with less developed welfare states tend to oppose environmental and

economic values and will face greater difficulties. Yet in the longer term, new forms of governance for climate change may undermine traditionally state-centric forms of social policy.

Jürgen Gerhards is Professor of Macrosociology at the Free University of Berlin, Germany. His main research concerns the cultural aspects of European integration and the value attitudes of European citizens. His publications include *Cultural Overstretch? Differences between old and new member states of the EU and Turkey* (2007). Holger Lengfeld is Professor of Sociology of Contemporary Societies at the University of Hagen, Germany. He researches social justice, social inequality and attitudes towards European integration and his publications include *Organisierte Ungleichheit: Wie Organisationen Lebenschancen beeinflussen* (Organised Inequality: How Organisations influence life chances, 2007). Here they provide an empirical study addressing two issues: the pioneering role of the EU in environmental policy, and the degree of support of EU citizens for the ideas of environmental protection.

Anil Markandya is currently Professor of Economics at the University of Bath, UK and Director of Applied Research in FEEM, Italy, and recently served as Lead Economist at the World Bank. He has published widely in the areas of climate change, environmental valuation, environmental policy, energy and environment, and green accounting. He was a lead author for Chapters of the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> IPCC Assessment Reports on Climate Change, which were awarded a share of the Nobel Peace Prize in 2007. Ramon Ortiz works with him as Research Officer in Environmental Economics at Bath University. They undertake an empirical survey of the impact of carbon taxation on social inequalities, concluding that these would be mildly regressive, but manageable, in the European context.

This introduction and the following contributions are intended to sketch out some of the ways that climate change will impinge on social policy in the coming years and to suggest a framework for research. We invite readers to take up this challenge. It may provide the topic for a Special Issue in the future.

### **Conceptual challenges**

If social policy is the public management of social risks, are the risks posed by climate change qualitatively different to those addressed by conventional social policies? There are certainly similarities as Meadowcroft notes: 'Both are political responses to long term societal change related to industrialization, urbanization and democratization. Both have been called into being to wrestle with issues that cannot adequately be addressed by markets and voluntary action. And both shift patterns of 'normal' economic interaction (through regulation, fiscal transfers, and so on), while operating within significant economic and political constraints'. Both also generate conflicts about the distribution of resources (witness the commitment to bio-fuels fuelling a record rise in world grain prices). These parallels may suggest that CC could be absorbed as an emerging risk into the corpus of social policies. In welfare states it could enter the political settlement as part of the collective responsibilities of governments. In existing welfare state regimes it may reconfigure the roles of states, markets and families, but it would not define a distinct new regime.

Another fruitful way of understanding the emergence and nature of 'social policy' in Western nations is as a reaction to capitalism and the commodification of labour power. Seizing on Marx's insight, Karl Polanyi regarded labour as a 'fictitious commodity'. While it must be organised in markets, and while these markets are an absolutely vital part of the economic system, labour is not a commodity because it is not produced for sale and 'cannot be detached from the rest of life' (Polanyi 1944/1957: 72). Thus social policies emerged in the 19c, piecemeal and in a wide variety of forms, to cope with the unplanned, humanly harmful and system-threatening effects of the commodification of labour: 'The extension of the market organization in respect to genuine commodities was accompanied by its restriction in respect to fictitious ones' (p.76). This has given rise to the concept of 'de-commodification' as a measure of the counter-movement of social policy, in the work of Esping-Andersen and others.

However, Polanyi identified two other fictitious commodities alongside Labour: Money and Land. The supply and regulation of money has for centuries been a central function of nation states. The ownership and regulation of land has also been central to feudalism and capitalism, but Polanyi is concerned with something much wider, since Land 'is only another name for nature, which is not produced by man' (p.72). It is clear now that the commodification of land, natural resources, the oceans and nature generates collective 'bads' which stretch out over space and time and which 'call forth' (to use Polanyi's phrase) a variety of societal responses. Climate change is the latest and most egregious example. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century it is likely that this will dominate policy-making in a parallel way to the 'labour question' in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries in the West. This suggests another conceptual parallel: just as the 'social question' fostered the welfare state, now the climate threat is fostering the rise of the 'environmental state' or 'eco-state', as discussed by Dryzek and Meadowcroft.

But these parallels are weak, others argue. The risks addressed by social policies are typically individually unpredictable but collectively predictable; those of climate change are collectively unpredictable. The Stern Report (2007: 25) points out that CC is global in its causes and consequences; its impacts are long-term and persistent; and there is serious risk of major, irreversible impacts with non-marginal economic and social effects. Furthermore, the uncertainties over the probability distributions of likely outcomes are great. According to some theories of uncertainty this itself argues for an explicit "precautionary principle" (2007: 38): an additional 'aversion to uncertainty' in addition to standard 'aversion to risk' as a basis for public policies. This is because of the strong asymmetry between unexpectedly fortunate and unexpectedly bad outcomes (2007: 328). The implications are that the risks of CC are quantitatively and qualitatively distinct from traditional risks which in the past have fostered the emergence of social policy responses.

Furthermore, the consequences (externalities) of early industrialisation were visible and directly felt by many people, which fostered collective organizations and social movements to correct them. In contrast the externalities of climate change are distant in time and global in space; the material bases for collective mobilisations are weaker. These and other theoretical concerns suggest a conceptual separation between traditional social policy and the set of environmental policies addressing climate change. But the linkages between the two are critical and of growing salience.

However, we may note one other conceptual parallel between the two – the distinction between adaptive and mitigating policies. Adaptation refers to 'measures to reduce the

vulnerability of natural and human systems against actual or expected climate change effects', while mitigation refers to 'policies to reduce GHG emissions and enhance sinks' (IPCC Glossary; see also Stern 2007: 346). There are certain parallels between this distinction and an earlier one between protective and productive social policy: whether to accept the quantum of human capital or to invest in increasing it, whether to accept and protect against unemployment or pursue demand- and supply-side interventions to reduce it, whether to adapt to 'sink estates' and minimise their harmful effects or to invest in community development, and so on (Room 2000). Since the 1930s the productive role of social policy has been recognised, though it took back stage during the 1980s when the 'burden' model was promulgated by neo-liberal economists and policy-makers. Meadowcroft sees a potential role for such productive social policies to mobilise societal resources to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

### Empirical questions

Climate change is likely to exacerbate social inequalities, lines of conflict and patterns of migration. These repercussions need to be explored empirically from a European perspective. The table below develops a four-fold analysis of CC implications for social policy and gives examples. This suggests some of the dimensions of the future research agenda (policy implications are further considered in the next section).

### Mapping the impacts of climate change in Europe

	Predicted effects: examples	Social policy implications: examples
1. Direct impact of forecast climate change up to 2050	Modest direct impact, more adverse in coastal areas, Mediterranean regions.	Precautionary policies on housing and settlements, new insurance costs, health demands of extreme climate events
2. Indirect impact of forecast climate change up to 2050	Climate migration from developing world	New demands for housing, jobs, education, health services and social protection (but offsetting benefits from younger age groups?). Challenges to social integration.
3. Impact of likely CC <i>adaptation</i> policies	Opportunity costs of making settlements and buildings more resilient to CC	Fiscal competition between welfare state and environmental state, unless synergies are exploited
4. Impact of potential CC <i>mitigation</i> policies	Higher energy costs in production, electricity, travel, housing.  Restrictions on consumption patterns.	Regressive effects of carbon taxes and pricing and new energy policies: implications for social protection. New social investment demands to reduce carbon emissions of housing, transport and employment. Numerous policies to change consumption behaviour.

These questions must also be interpreted in light of a central concern of social policy, both as practical action and academic study: the equity, fairness or justice of particular policy outcomes, the distribution of costs and burdens between social groups, and the case for redistributive public policies. I consider two dimensions of distribution here –

regional and socio-economic – though many more should be considered, including gender and age.

*Regional* differences across Europe mainly apply to 1 and 2: direct and indirect impacts of CC itself. There is a clear north-south gradient in the impact of CC on water supplies, food production and health (Stern 2007 ch5). In Europe, the burden of warming and of distress migration is likely to impact mainly the Mediterranean countries, as evidenced the European heat wave of 2003 and the high rates of illegal immigration in countries such as Greece.

*Socio-economic* equity is raised by both CC impacts and policies. In the developed world, the poorest will be on average more vulnerable to CC for various reasons: lower income households are more likely to live in higher-risk areas, marginal lands and floodplains; they have fewer resources to cope and have much lower rates of insurance cover; they may also suffer from poorer health and resistance (Stern 2007: 148). However, the impacts of CC mitigation policies may be still greater. It would appear at first sight that essential policies to ration carbon emissions by whatever means would hurt the richest, higher-consumption households the most. *Ceteris paribus* 'contract and converge' strategies should equalise living standards. However, the immediate overall impact of carbon taxes in the EU would be regressive, as Markandya and Ortiz show below.

The distributive consequences need careful research within policy areas, perhaps most notably in housing. For example, in the United Kingdom, 30% of the poorest quintile of households use more energy than the national average, mainly because they live in such fuel-inefficient houses (Monbiot 2006: 47; Ekins and Dresner 2004). Thus a fair carbon-rationing scheme requires complementary social policies, both to invest in low-emission housing, transport and communities, and to protect those on low incomes. Building standards are much more stringent in Norway, Sweden and Germany: houses meeting their building codes use around one quarter of the energy of houses meeting the required standards in England and Wales (Monbiot: 66).

## **Policy issues**

Before turning to governance, I adumbrate just three policy issues where climate change mitigation policies suggest implications – and some possible synergies - for social policies. First, the move towards individual (as well as national) carbon budgets holds out potentially radical consequences for the theory and practice of redistribution and equity, as mentioned above. Strong social policies may well be necessary to address emerging inequalities and conflict. The 'Weitzman paradox' is relevant here (Weitzman 1977). This demonstrates that the price mechanism works less well in more unequal societies, because prices that discourage carbon consumption by poorer groups will be inadequate to restrain the affluent. Thus income redistribution, a concern of traditional social policy, could facilitate the use of carbon pricing. In the absence of policies to improve social justice the pursuit of environmental justice will require more directly interventionist policies such as rationing.

A second area of synergy concerns housing, transport, urban policies and community development – areas of social policy relatively neglected by JESP in the past. Heating residential homes, and associated residential travel, are major sources of carbon emissions in Europe (though far below the USA). The IPCC Report (2007: 389) shows

that baseline carbon emissions could be reduced in the residential sector by 29% at effectively no cost – the highest scope for reductions in any sector. Countries with very inefficient houses, such as the UK, could achieve a win-win outcome by improving quality and reducing emissions, if the political will was there. Given the high efficiency of housing in some other European countries, there is great scope for policy learning and transfer within the EU. Moreover, innovative housing and urban settlements provide great scope for the strategy of ‘ecological modernisation’ mentioned by Dryzek.

Climate change mitigation policies will require substantial and rapid shifts in consumer and producer behaviour, and this promises a third significant area of interaction with social policy. Four basic means are available to governments and other policy makers to shift behaviour: education and persuasion; taxation, subsidies and other monetary incentives; regulation (including rationing); and environmental engineering. Some national and EU health policies, such as discouraging smoking, utilize all four. But there is critical experience in social policy of their limits. Incentives that appeal solely to self-interest may fail when they degrade intrinsic motivations such as altruism and solidarity (Jones and Cullis 2000; Bowles 2007). Others recognize the limits of top-down approaches and stress the need to engage people and communities in changing behaviour. These are lessons also stressed by campaigners for climate change policies: Jackson (2005) for example argues that co-production of policies will be necessary if fundamental shifts to a low emission economy are to be achieved. There is scope for mutual policy learning here.

### **Governance: welfare state and eco-state**

One might expect that a new unprecedented set of risks will generate new modes of governance, and that is what is happening at national, regional and global levels. After several decades of increasing resort to market solutions and the progressive marginalisation of the role of governments, the climate change debate brings back centre stage the role of public governance. This in two senses: a recognition of the contributions to be made by a wide range of actors: government at all levels, the private sector, non-governmental actors and civil society (eg IPCC 2007: 82). And a recognition that only governments can harness these different components into an effective strategy in a short time.

Meadowcroft and Dryzek both address these issues. Meadowcroft charts the emergence of environmental governance in the OECD world since the 1960s and identifies five major shifts. Both agree that we can now speak of the emergence of an environmental *state* or eco-state. But both contend that this is much more weakly embedded institutionally than the welfare state: Dryzek writes ‘we have gazed with envy upon social policy, wondering how environmental concerns might ever come to be taken anywhere near as seriously by governments as social policy concerns’.

Arriving much later, the eco-state is ‘laired on top of’ different economic systems (‘forms of capitalism’), political systems and welfare state regimes (Meadowcroft). One finding here is that social democratic welfare states have been pioneers in developing comprehensive environmental policies, including climate change mitigation. Using Scruggs’ cross-national database Dryzek concludes: ‘Social democratic welfare states and what Hall and Soskice call coordinated market economies (the two categories overlap substantially) are better placed to handle the intersection of social policy and



climate change than the more liberal market economies with more rudimentary welfare states'. Similarly, in their research on public support for environmental priorities, Gerhards and Lengfeld conclude: 'Denmark, Finland and the Netherlands, i.e. countries, which have developed strong welfare states, have at the same time the highest approval rating for environmental protection'.

One reason for this, according to Dryzek, is the discourse of 'ecological modernisation': a strategy that recognises that climate change can be good for business but which requires the governance capacities of coordinated political economies. There are important parallels here with the earlier emergence of productive social policies in Sweden and other Nordic countries in the 1930s. This policy synergy also builds on the greater salience of equity issues in these North European countries. The IPCC Reports and the Stern Report illustrate that the threat of global climate change almost inevitably raises in stark forms questions of *equity* and *sustainable development* (IPCC 2007, chs 2.6, 12). North European welfare states are therefore best prepared to engage with these issues because of their more developed welfare systems. The contemporary result is the mainstreaming of both environmental and equality concerns across all areas of government in Northern Europe.

However, this rosy picture of synergy may be changing, argues Dryzek. The novelty and scale of climate change risks is driving a new governance agenda. Climate change policies might displace social policy, providing a new focus of countervailing governance in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. There is a possibility that environmental justice may capture the political imagination weakening the traditional concerns of social justice.

Because climate change is an intrinsically global issue, all these pressures and issues are multiplied at supra-national levels of governance. This alone would raise the profile of EU policies and institutions. But what was perhaps unexpected has been the pioneering role of the EU in this area. As Gerhards and Lengfeld note, the EU's record of innovations is extensive, from steering the Kyoto Protocol in 1997 through the first major Emissions Trading System (ETS) launched in 2005 to the decision in 2007 to set binding emission targets for EU member states. This was enabled, they argue, by the EU strategy of 'frame-bridging', a specific form of governance spillover. This enhanced role for European-level action further builds European governance capacity and may reshape the debate on European action in the social domain. Indeed, might one argue that the EU remit on environmental action already exceeds its still marginal social dimension?

Finally, in the longer term carbon budgeting will likely lead to a questioning of economic growth as a meta-goal of public policy. In the past growth has been broadly perceived as a win-win means to accomplish other goals – now it may directly threaten them. This has many parallels with new thinking in social policy about non-monetary concepts of poverty, capabilities, qualitative indicators of quality of life, concepts of social inclusion and exclusion and human wellbeing. This more radical social agenda has never displaced the primacy of growth in European policy-making and governance; maybe the threat of climate change will force the issue.

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