GOVERNING CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate change governance is in a state of enormous flux. New and more dynamic forms of governing are appearing around the international climate regime centred on the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). They appear to be emerging spontaneously from the bottom up, producing a more dispersed and multilevel pattern of governing, which Nobel Laureate Elinor Ostrom famously described as ‘polycentric’. This book brings together contributions from some of the world’s foremost experts to provide the first systematic test of the ability of polycentric thinking to explain and enhance societal attempts to govern climate change. It is ideally suited to researchers in public policy, international relations, environmental science, environmental management, politics, law and public administration. It will also be useful in advanced courses in climate policy and governance, and for practitioners seeking short, incisive summaries of developments in particular sub-areas and sectors. This title is also available as Open Access on Cambridge Core at http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/9781108284646.

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GOVERNING CLIMATE CHANGE

Polycentricity in Action?

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Preface

Among the very many scholarly contributions made by Elinor Ostrom, the work she partially completed on climate change is the one now attracting increasing attention. Though the concept of polycentric governance was originally coined in the 1960s by her husband, Vincent Ostrom, her attempt to refashion it to understand and influence the everyday practices and study of climate change is inspiring a great deal of new work, including this book.

Climate change is often characterised as a ‘wicked’ – possibly even the most wicked – policy problem. Many decades of multilateral climate diplomacy have arguably resulted in very meagre progress; global emissions have not yet peaked and the probability that warming will eventually exceed two degrees centigrade above pre-industrial levels remains high. When Elinor Ostrom entered the climate governance debate in the late 2000s, the political world was in a very different place from where it is today. Diplomats were still reeling from the unexpected failure of the 2009 Copenhagen conference to adopt a new international climate agreement. Since then, political conflicts have continued to bedevil the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, in spite of the provision of even more scientific information (ably marshalled by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) on the causes and consequences of warming. The 2015 Paris Agreement was hailed as an unexpected success and a reminder that international diplomacy should not be entirely written off. Yet barely a year later, the fickle nature of politics was powerfully re-emphasised when Donald Trump announced his decision to withdraw the United States from the Paris Agreement, even though it arguably hands states more decision-making power than its predecessor, the Kyoto Protocol.

By contrast, Elinor Ostrom’s message was a much more hopeful one: do not despair if politics moves slowly at the international and national levels because a diversity of actors and institutions is already self-organising in ways that will help to compensate for the collective action problems at the higher levels. No wonder
that it resonated so widely and so powerfully amongst scholars and practitioners. Not only was it politically refreshing but it was also conceptually and theoretically unconventional in the way it sought to comprehend climate governance in toto rather than from a series of well-established, but partial, perspectives.

Although scholarship on polycentric climate governance has grown exponentially since Ostrom’s passing in 2012, nobody has attempted to perform the systematic test of the ideas that she originally envisaged. As polycentricity attracts growing interest, now seems a particularly opportune moment not only to clarify her theoretical claims but to test them out more fully. As we explain in Chapter 1, the fact that the literature has expanded so much in the past decade indicates that this important task is considerably more challenging than she had originally thought, going well beyond what can be realistically delivered by a single research team. This book seeks to address that challenge by combining the expertise of established and upcoming scholars, each drawing on many different bodies of work. In many ways, the production of this book itself became an exercise in polycentric scholarship.

Although many book projects have a long gestation, we have been very fortunate to have worked with a group of very dedicated and responsive experts on climate governance who were able to deliver very rapidly. Their hard work and commitment has made our editorial task an especially pleasant one. Specifically, we would like to thank all the contributors for entering into the spirit of collective scholarship, pushing the boundaries of their existing research and engaging critically with the concept of polycentric governance. We believe that the joint author workshop (and subsequent Spring School) held at the Open University of the Netherlands in Heerlen in March 2017 allowed everyone to start from the same page. We would like to thank Angela Oels, Raoul Beunen, Pia Buschmann, Mimi Crijns, Judith Floor, James Patterson and Danielle Tissingh for their very capable assistance in organising both meetings. Without their work, this book would quite simply never have come to fruition.

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A number of other individuals played an important part in the publication of this book. Within the INOGOV core group, Mikael Hildén and Jonas Schoenefeld...
provided very thoughtful comments on various chapters, and Clare Shelton stepped into the breach when one of us, Johanna, took maternity leave from her role as INOGOV’s Network Manager. At Cambridge University Press, Matt Lloyd, Emma Kiddle and Zoë Pruce have been very supportive from the early stages. We are grateful to them and the three referees who provided very helpful feedback at an early stage in the production process. The considerable logistical challenge of completing a 20-chapter book involving 40 separate authors was made considerably easier by the tremendous editorial assistance provided by Zoha Shawoo. Zoha – we bet that you will never pick up and ‘read’ a book in quite the same way ever again!

Finally, we would like to thank our families for their continuous support (and patience!) throughout the writing of this book.
Abbreviations

APP Asia-Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate
CBD Convention on Biological Diversity
CCI Clinton Climate Initiative
CDM Clean Development Mechanism
CDP Carbon Disclosure Project
CEO Chief executive officer
CFCs Chlorofluorocarbons
CIF Climate Investment Fund
CLASP Collaborative Labeling and Appliance Standards Program
COP Conference of the Parties
CTCN Climate Technology Centre and Network
CTI Climate Technology Initiative
ETS Emissions trading system
EPA Environmental Protection Agency
EU European Union
G8 Group of 8
G20 Group of 20
GEF Global Environment Facility
GHG Greenhouse gas
GRI Global Reporting Initiative
HCFCs Hydrochlorofluorocarbons
HFCs Hydrofluorocarbons
ICAO International Civil Aviation Organization
IEA International Energy Agency
IFI International financial institution
IGO Intergovernmental organisation
IMF International Monetary Fund
List of Abbreviations

IMO International Maritime Organization
IPCC Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
IPEEC International Partnership for Energy Efficiency Cooperation
IRENA International Renewable Energy Agency
JI Joint Implementation
LPAA Lima-Paris Action Agenda
MLG Multilevel governance
MP Marrakech Partnership for Global Climate Action
MRV Measurement, Reporting and Verification
NAZCA Non-state Actor Zone for Climate Action
NDC Nationally determined contribution
NETs Negative emissions technologies
NGO Non-governmental organisation
OECD Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PAS Publicly Available Specification
REDD+ Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation
REN21 Renewable Energy Policy Network for the 21st Century
SCE Solar Climate Engineering
SE4All Sustainable Energy for All
TCCG Transnational climate change governance
TEC Technology Executive Committee
UK United Kingdom
UN United Nations
UNEP United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFCCC United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNSG United Nations Secretary-General
US United States
VCO Voluntary carbon offset
VCS Voluntary Commitment System
WTO World Trade Organization