

GOVERNING CLIMATE CHANGE BEYOND THE NATION STATE

Dr Harriet Bulkeley, Durham University

The 2008 Linacre Lectures:
"Climate governance beyond
the nation state: how business,
the arts, and cities are
responding to climate change"

Wk 1: "A new politics? Governing
climate change beyond the state"
Dr Harriet Bulkeley, Durham
University

Wk 2: "Multinational corporations and
the changing landscape of climate
accountability."
Mr Geoff Lye, Vice-Chairman,
SustainAbility

Wk 3: "The business of governing
climate change"
Prof Peter Newell, ECI and James
Martin 21st Century School

Wk 4: "Financing the transition to a
low carbon economy"
Mr Nick Robins, HSBC

Wk 5: "Catalyzing the business
response"
Mr Mark Kenber, The Climate Group

Wk 6: "Good planets are hard to
find: a cultural response to climate
change"
Mr David Buckland, Cape Farewell

Wk 7: "Managing our civilisation's
greatest challenge: the roles
of governments, private sector,
academics and individuals."
Prof Sir David King, Director,
Smith School of Enterprise and the
Environment

Recent Publications by
Dr Harriet Bulkeley

Betsill, M. & Bulkeley, H. Looking
back and thinking ahead: a decade of
cities and climate change research.
Local Environment. 2008;12:447-
456.

Bulkeley, H., Watson, M. & Hudson,
R. Modes of governing municipal
waste. *Environment and Planning A*.
2007;39:2733-2753.

Bulkeley, H. & Moser, S.C.
Responding to climate change:
governance and social action beyond
kyoto. *Global Environmental Politics*.
2007;7:1-10.

Harriet Bulkeley opened up the 2008 Linacre Lectures by asking whether a 'new politics' has emerged in the arena of climate change. She approached this question by giving an historical overview of climate change since the 1990s and drawing on Albert Weale's (1992) discussion of the emergence of 'a new politics of pollution'. Weale (1992) identifies three dimensions of the 'new politics': (1) new scales of the problem; (2) new forms of interactions between members of the policy community; and (3) new intellectual and ideological conceptions of the policy problem.

Harriet argued that a new politics has emerged through a reframing of the spatial scale of (global) environmental politics and a re-conceptualisation of the roles of different actors in the governance of climate change. This new politics is questioning the taken-for-granted assumptions about the whereabouts of power and authority in relation to global environmental issues.

In the early 1990s climate change was framed as an inter-national issue and was subsequently addressed through approaches which sought to establish and assess international co-operation, the so-called 'regime' approach. Here, the state is considered sovereign and exclusive, and different scales of political organisation are layered like Russian dolls so that policy is 'cascaded' from the international to the local level. While some analysts recognised the role of non-state actors in shaping the climate change agenda, the focus remained on the role such actors had in shaping international institutions and the positions of nation-states. In summary, while the climate change politics of the mid-1990s bore two of the critical signs of the new politics Weale had suggested were coming of age in the environmental domain – the recognition of the new scale of the problems to be addressed and new forms of interaction between members of the policy communities - fundamentally these new

dimensions of environmental politics were being interpreted through a rather old and well-worn political map.

Harriet argued that the more recent debates on governance have started to open up the intellectual and ideological concepts of how governing takes place and where it is located. First, the debate on governance provides the conceptual space to interrogate how such actors might be involved in governing beyond the formal structures of government. Second, it opens up the potential to move beyond a 'cascade' model of the sites and spaces of global environmental politics. Importantly, this re-conceptualisation of the spatial and scalar dynamics of policy has started to raise questions about where 'properly political' responses to climate change might be found. No longer confined to the inter-national sphere, the potential arises for a politics of climate change to take alternative territorial and non-territorial forms, disrupting the assumed connections between power, authority, territory and sovereignty.

Drawing on the case of the role of cities in climate change governance, Harriet highlighted the new dynamics of governance and the multiple sites in which the politics of climate change is emerging. However, she argued that cities are not governing instead of the nation-state, but beyond it. Recognizing the critical role of the nation-state does not mean that we return full-circle to approaches in which the state is the only relevant actor. Instead, Harriet concluded by arguing for an approach which questions the nature and practices of the state, and acknowledges the multiple means through which climate governance is being achieved. In looking for the whereabouts of climate politics we have to look beyond the state – to the markets, behavioural change, corporate social responsibility - where critical decisions around ethics and policy choices are being made.