Environmental Policy and Governance (Special issue)

Understanding coherence between policy spheres: The interplay between EU energy and climate policies

Paper 3

(De-)Constructing coherence? Strategic entrepreneurs, policy frames and the integration of climate and energy policies in the European Union

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Abstract

This paper looks at the way policy entrepreneurs construct horizontal coherence through problem definition and the promotion of policy frames that bond different objectives and instruments together. Building on the case of the 2009 climate and energy package, the paper analyses how the European Commission and successive EU Presidencies exploited a growing climate change momentum to devise, assemble and facilitate the adoption in an exceptionally short period of time of an ambitious legislative package cutting across traditional sectoral boundaries. The recourse to a narrative presenting Europe at the vanguard of a green revolution and the framing of European internal policies as a tool for international climate leadership, were instrumental in constructing the package as a coherent response to the joint energy and climate change challenges, and in rallying wide support. Yet, the paper concludes that the institutionalization of this framing has been undermined by the economic crisis and stalled international negotiations.

Keywords: climate change; policy coherence; discourse; energy; framing; policy integration; policy entrepreneur.

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1. Introduction[1]

Policy coherence has been a widespread mantra for decades. Few political systems have been sheltered from criticisms for their lack of coordination across policy domains or incoherent policies. The imperative of coherence, although not restricted to the European Union (EU), appears especially crucial and challenging in the European multilevel system of governance, which stands out for both its vertical and horizontal fragmentation. A multitude of actors – 28 member states, various European institutions, national and supranational private actors, European regions etc. – cooperate and compete to shape European policies without clear hierarchies in terms of steering and control mechanisms. This decentralized functioning has repeatedly led to the adoption of sectoral policy objectives and instruments that contradict or

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– worse – undermine each other. Greater coherence between policy spheres has been deemed necessary to reinforce the efficiency and legitimacy of EU policies, thus contributing to the broader objective of 'good governance' and enhancing the 'democratic legitimacy' of the EU system. However, if there is broad agreement on the need for more coherent policies, lack of coherence seems to remain the rule rather than the exception.

In environmental policy, the need for coherence has been especially salient and has received widespread attention. The concept of sustainable development, widely held has a central principle by policy makers and academics alike, implicitly entails enhanced coherence between environmental policies and the various sectors that directly or indirectly affect the environment (e.g. industry, energy, agriculture, transport). The EU and its individual member states have strived to better integrate environmental, economic and social policies. At the European level, the principle of Environmental Policy Integration (EPI) has been enshrined in the treaties. The so-called Cardiff process, launched at the highest level in 1998 with the aim to integrate environmental considerations and objectives into other policy sectors, has yielded limited results (e.g. Jordan and Lenschow, 2010). The energy sector is especially central to environmental protection. It is at the origin of various large-scale degradations, ranging from the impacts of combustion-based power plants on health and ecosystems (notably acid rains and climate change issues); to nuclear radiations and wastes; and to landscape and biodiversity issues associated with the implantation of new energy facilities (Collier, 1994).

The rise of climate change on the European agenda in the past fifteen years has gone hand in hand with the need to integrate climate concerns and objectives in related sectors such as energy – a process increasingly referred to as Climate Policy Integration (Nilsson and Nilsson, 2005). As argued by Adelle and Russel (2013), the promotion of Climate Policy

Integration, a more narrow and tangible goal than the broader EPI principle, has also been somewhat more successful. It is generally acknowledged that the impact of the energy sector – the main source of GHG in the EU (80%) – on climate policies is central. Yet, interactions go both ways. Climate objectives also affect energy security and the functioning of the internal energy market (Helm, 2014). For instance, the pressure to close or upgrade polluting coal-fired power plants in the name of climate protection affects energy security by favouring import of foreign hydrocarbons, notably from Russia. Similarly, the growth of low carbon electricity production from intermittent renewable energy sources affects the functioning and regulation of electricity networks. The issue of coherence between energy and climate policies should thus be regarded as an interactive process, rather than a one-way street.

Policy coherence and its various declinations (e.g. 'policy integration', 'policy interactions', 'policy coordination') have often been conceptualized in an instrumental and technical manner, as a way of minimizing conflicts and maximizing synergies between policies to increase their efficiency and legitimacy (e.g. Nilsson et al., 2012; Dupont and Oberthür, 2012). This has resulted in static and depoliticized understandings that fail to recognize that there is no single standard or understanding of coherence, and that the very definition of what is coherent is a matter of politics and power. By contrast, this paper takes a critical approach to coherence and reconceptualises it as a political process through which different policy objectives and instruments are *framed* as working towards common goals considered as legitimate by a wide range of actors.

The paper draws on the case of the Climate and Energy Package (CEP), often hailed as a positive development towards coherent energy and climate policies (e.g. Adelle et al., 2009; Adelle and Russel, 2013). The adoption of this ambitious and cross-cutting package – composed of no less than four pieces of legislation, three of which directly concern energy –

despite the involvement of a wide range of stakeholders with diverging interests, goes against the expectations of the literature, which predicts more coherent policies when interests are concentrated and hierarchical structures of coordination are strong (see introduction to this special issue).

The case study demonstrates how, in a decentralized and complex system of governance like the EU, competing policy entrepreneurs can discursively construct coherence across policy sectors. The Commission and successive Presidency used popular narratives on the 'green economy' and European climate leadership to stress synergies, downplay trade-offs and raise support for a legislative package that lays the foundation for a cross-sectoral energy and climate change policy. In doing so, these entrepreneurs helped redefining the boundaries of both the energy and climate sectors. Yet, for such a strategy to be successful in the long run, the new configuration needs to be embedded in institutional arrangements that can live through a changing political context. The economic crisis that unfolded from the Autumn 2008 onwards did not prevent the adoption of the Climate and Energy Package. However the crisis, along with the failure to adopt a post-Kyoto climate agreement at the Copenhagen conference, have challenged (but not overturned) the narratives on which the package relied, hindering further integration of energy and climate policies.

The following section presents a critique of the concept of coherence, reconceptualised as a political process of social construction. It then introduces the theoretical framework, which draws on the interplay between policy frames and policy entrepreneurship in the construction of coherence. Section 3 applies this framework to the case of the Climate and Energy Package. The last section concludes.

2. Policy frames, political entrepreneurship and the construction of coherence

2.1. Coherence as a political process

Coherence is an elusive concept. Practitioners and academics often point to the negative impact of incoherencies on the efficiency, credibility and legitimacy of public policies. However, there is no clear definition of what coherence actually is, or no easy way to evaluate it (May et al., 2006: 383). The academic literature has strived to unpack the concept, with definitions ranging from the minimalist 'absence of contradictions within and between individual policies', to the more ambitious objective of 'synergic and systematic support towards the achievement of common objectives within and across individual policies' (Hertog and Stross, 2013: 376-7). The literature has also gone some way towards specifying possible analytical frameworks and methods to approach it (Nilsson et al., 2012; Strambo et al. 2015). However, it has to date largely failed to provide a clear, consensual and operational benchmark.

This reflects the fact that there is no such thing as an entirely coherent political system. For functional purposes, modern political systems have been compartmentalized in sectors, which have their own logic depending on the different approaches, interests and values of their constituents. As a result, a degree of incoherence appears inevitable. A common explanation for the recurrent lack of coherence across policy domains is that they serve different purposes and publics (May, 2006). Policy domains are structured around the interests and approaches of a few powerful political actors, a situation which can often lead to diverging and sometimes irreconcilable priorities. Besides, full policy coherence may not even be desirable. Reinforcing the consistency and synergies between certain policy goals and instruments can lead to contradictions with other objectives. The objective of perfectly coherent policies is not

realistic and does nothing but to create some overly ambitious expectations that are unlikely to be met (Jordan and Halpin, 2006). Marangoni and Raube (2014) argue that the imperative of coherence, which is often hailed as a virtue, can become a vice when it represents a misplaced constraint on policy-making, for instance when it prevents realistic agreements between conflicting parties or with external partners.

Analysts who stress the need for coherence often emphasise synergies and disregard the necessity for trade-offs and political arbitrations between competing – and sometimes equally legitimate – objectives. It would indeed be naïve to think that all policies can be mutually reinforcing and that there is no need for political choices. In addition, different policy objectives within and across policy sectors may be in conflict for good reasons when they serve different but equally valuable objectives. For instance, some trade-offs between energy security and climate objectives may be necessary to devise efficient and politically acceptable energy policies (Brown and Huntington, 2008). Energy efficiency may well be beneficial for both the climate and energy security, contributing to the reduction of carbon emission and limitation of energy imports at the same time. It is however a mid- to long-term policy that does not address legitimate short-term concerns in terms of energy supplies and prices. The assessment of coherence crucially depends on the time perspective adopted: policies, which may be contradictory in the short-term, such as energy security and climate change, may well be mutually supportive in the longer run – and vice versa (Dupont and Oberthür, 2012; Strambo et al., 2015).

In any case, policy coherence always depends on the beholder's perspective (Carbone, 2008: 326). Actors within, as well as across policy domains often have different visions of what an efficient and legitimate transversal policy might be. What constitutes a 'coherent policy' is irremediably the subject of heated debates. Policies hailed as coherent by some are often

denounced as inconsistent by other, depending on their diverging approaches and priorities. As Jordan and Halpin rightly point out, in these debates 'it is necessary to accept the existence of competing interest demands rather than assume the conflict away' (2006: 38). Even when no controversy arises, the proclaimed or perceived degree of coherence between policies always depends on the (often implicit) principles and criteria according to which it is evaluated. Policies can be considered coherent according to one objective, but inconsistent according to others. For instance, promoting nuclear energy may be sensible from a climate point of view, but problematic from a wider sustainable development perspective (Rietig, 2013). It raises the question of who defines – and for which purpose – the end goals according to which coherence should be judged. Establishing a hierarchy between different, potentially conflicting objectives is by nature a political process rather than a mere technical matter.

Coherence has often been analysed based on static assessments of the interactions between different policies whose boundaries are taken for granted. It is regularly reduced to a simplistic instrumental-rational and technical search for efficiency (Nilsson et al., 2012: 413). This widespread understanding tends to objectify and depoliticize the concept, masking its fundamentally contentious nature. We argue that the quest for coherence is better understood as a *political process* in which the very definition of what is coherent, and for which purpose, is central. Coherence between policies is often contested and always the result of a political agreement between competing actors and visions.

2.2. Constructing coherence: the role of policy frames

This paper adopts a discursive approach to policy-making in order to explore the socio-political construction of coherence. Discourses represent 'shared way of apprehending the world' (Dryzek, 1995: 9). They are the means through which society(ies) attribute meaning to

both physical and social realities (Hajer, 1995: 42). In the process of discursive construction of material and social phenomena, some aspects of a necessarily more complex whole are included, whereas other are excluded and left undiscussed. Discourses are key to understand social action; actors need to make-sense of the world to be able to engage with it. Collective action always involves the definition of a problem and what needs to be done. But 'problems' do not wait out there to be discovered and solved, as rationalist and instrumental theories of policy-making posit. They have to go through a process of discursive construction to become problems in the first place. It is through this process – often described as framing – that they become apprehensible and amenable to a solution. Rein and Schön define framing as 'a way of selecting, organizing, interpreting, and making sense of a complex reality to provide guideposts for knowing, analysing, persuading and acting' (1993: 146). Framing always involves power. The ability to define the problem at hand is both a reflection of political power – it is shaped by power relations – and a source power – it represents a means to affect the policy process.

The existing literature has shown that a key condition for policy coherence is 'greater issue focus', that is the concentration of political attention in a specific policy domain on a smaller number of issues (May et al., 2006: 383). However, issue concentration is not a fixed property or precondition external to the policy process. It is rather a characteristic that is *discursively constructed through* the policy process. Policy images, or frames, play a crucial role in tying existing policies into a coherent whole. As May et al. put it, 'a diverse set of policy components can cohere if those components are linked by common set of ideas or objectives that limit inconsistencies' (2005: 39; 58). Policy frames act as policy glue – or organizing idea – binding issues and actors together. They bond measures that have often developed separately under the banner of an overarching cause. They also contribute to the promotion of

new objectives and instruments that escape traditional classifications. Policy images thus take a central part in the definition of what is coherent and what is not.

The coherence literature also suggests that policies are more coherent when interests are concentrated, that is when few interest groups are involved in, or dominate the policy process, (May et al., 2006: 384). Yet, interest concentration is also influenced by framing. Frames play a direct role in the construction of cohesive policy constituencies. They shape political debates by redefining the object of conflict, the actors involved in it, as well as the end goal and strategy to be pursued. They help constructing target constituencies by defining affected populations and by designating winners and losers (Ingram and Schneider, 1993). In doing so they influence the participation of citizens and interest group in the policy process and therefore the balance of power between them (Baumgartner and Jones, 1993).

By determining the issues at stake and influencing policy constituencies, transversal policy images are key in the redefinition of traditional sectoral boundaries and reconfiguration of the political space. Building on this conceptualization, we define coherence as *a process through which a policy image is created that binds different policy objectives and instruments across traditional sectors of government, according to a set of directing principles perceived as legitimate by a wide range of actors*.

2.3. Policy entrepreneurs and the shaping of horizontal coherence

Frames are not only cognitive and normative structures that influence and constrain social actors, but also *political resources* that they can harness in a strategic way. The implicit assumption is that, while actors' behaviours are shaped by their discursive environment, these actors are also reflective and dispose of a degree of autonomy that enables them to use,

question and – more occasionally – redefine existing discourses. Actors pursuing personal agendas can in particular utilize discourses to frame new political initiatives in a way that mobilize support, enhance their legitimacy and spur institutional change (Daviter, 2007). Frames can be employed as coordinative devices to bring various actors together into 'discourse coalitions' – be it by way of their 'constructive ambiguity' – in support of policy change (Hajer, 1995). They also have a communicative function as narratives for the presentation, discussion and legitimation of a policy programme to the general public (Schmidt, 2008). More specifically, policy frames can be used to raise support for cross-sectoral policies, by stressing absolute gains and synergies between different policies while downplaying conflicts and trade-offs.

Framing is an inherently political process. As Baumgartner and Jones put it, 'every interest, every group, every policy entrepreneur has a primary interest in establishing a monopoly – a monopoly on political understandings concerning the policy of interest, and an institutional arrangement that reinforces that understanding' (1993: 6). As a result, different frames are always in competition with each other. Usually, no actor fully controls the policy process or is able to impose single-handedly its preferred framing. Only in favourable circumstances can policy entrepreneurs with key positions in the policy process change the dominant policy image and foster institutional change. Kingdon notoriously defines policy entrepreneurs 'as advocates who are willing to invest their resources – time, energy, reputation, money – to promote a position in return for anticipated future gain in the form of material, purposive, or solidary benefits' (2011: 179). These entrepreneurs relentlessly use their legitimacy, social networks or institutional positions to push for specific understanding of the problem, build support coalitions and exploit windows of political opportunity when they arise (Mintrom and Norman, 2009). Policy entrepreneurs are brokers more than inventors; they skilfully recombine policies in novel ways, reframe familiar instruments and promote new ones. In

doing so, they participate to the construction of policy images and to the definition of coherent policies. In the decentralized, multilevel system of governance of the EU, policy entrepreneurs have an especially important role in bringing ideas and actors together.

Policy entrepreneurs operate under constraints however. Not all frames go: they have to make sense, be acceptable and appeal – 'resonate' in the terminology of the framing literature (Benford and Snow, 2000) – to a sufficiently large constituency to rally wide support. The most effective frames are usually those that appeal to well-established interest, cognitive scripts, norms and identities. Moreover, for a policy image to *durably* shape politics, it needs to become embedded in an institutional framework constituted of stable organizational, procedural and normative structures (Baumgartner and Jones, 1993; Lenschow and Zito, 1998; Nilsson, 2005). Only through such a process of 'frame institutionalisation' – or 'discourse institutionalization' in Hajer's terminology (1995) – can the reconfiguration of the policy space, and incidentally the coherence between certain policies, become generally accepted and durable.

2.4. Methodology

To apply this framework to the case of the Climate and Energy Package (CEP), the paper combines discourse analysis with process tracing. First, it looks at the framing of the CEP, based on the existing literature and a wide range of official documents, press reviews and speeches. The inductive analysis of these documents was used to reconstruct the narratives on EU climate leadership that were utilized to frame the package. Selected illustrative quotes have been included throughout the paper and two tables summarize the analysis. The narratives were also replaced in the broader literature on ecological modernization and EU climate leadership. Process tracing was used to identify the main policy entrepreneurs and

reconstruct the process through which they discursively tied energy and climate change policies together under the umbrella of international climate leadership. This part relies in particular on over thirty semi-structured interviews with EU civil servants, national representatives and interest group representatives conducted between 2010 and 2013 in Brussels. Interviews served to obtain primary information on the negotiations, but also to assess the concrete impact of the leadership narratives on the policy-making process. The last part of the paper discusses the partial institutionalization of the climate leadership frames and its effects.

3. The case of the climate change and energy package

3.1. Framing the climate energy climate package: two tales of leadership

3.1.1. An opportunity to lead the 'green industrial revolution'

Speaking to the European Parliament for the presentation of the climate energy package, on 23 January 2008, José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission, declared:

> 'But we must not forget the huge economic opportunity represented by Europe's transition into a low-emission economy. Europe's leadership also means showing the technology is there, how we will need an effective and competitive industrial sector up to the challenge. There are real opportunities there: the renewables sector alone will bring one million jobs by 2020. I am sure that once again, European industry will show its ability to innovate and adapt. Europe can be the first economy for the low-carbon age: we must seize this chance' (Barroso, 2008).

This statement is representative of the framing of the package. It was promoted as a 'climate change opportunity' that Europe should seize if it wants to become world leader in the new green economy. The main elements of this causal narrative, as reconstructed through policy documents, press releases and speeches of European leaders, are summarized in Table 1. This narrative should be replaced within the broader discourse on the 'green Europe' (Lenschow and Sprunk, 2010). Environmental policies have acquired a legitimizing role for the EU. The 'Green Europe Myth' serves as a brand, which carries a high potential for identification in the European public. Energy and climate, in particular, are issues for which EU action benefits from high public support[2]. The framing of the package as an instrument for leadership in the low-carbon economy contributed to enhance its legitimacy vis-à-vis European citizens.

[2] In a Special Eurobarometer survey conducted in Spring 2008, climate change was considered the second most serious problem currently facing the world as whole after poverty (Eurobarometer 2008).

Table 1: The Climate package and the ecological modernization narrative

Climate change and fossil fuels depletion make our model of industrial development unsustainable. To avoid an ecological crisis, a new economic model is necessary.
The world is about to experience a 'third industrial revolution' through which the old, hydrocarbon-based economy will be replaced by a new, green economy founded on low carbon technologies[3].
Europe, which is already a forerunner in environmental and climate policies, should take further action.
The Climate Energy Package is the most ambitious set of climate measures in the world. It represents a chance to foster the development of clean technologies and create new jobs.
The adoption of the package will enable the EU to remain a global economic power and a leader in the new green economy.

The framing of the CEP represents an instance of the ever growing 'ecological modernization discourse' (Tienari and Uusi-Rauva, 2010). Ecological modernization, a discourse that emerged in Germany in the 1980s and has subsequently gathered momentum in Europe, represents a variant of the sustainability discourse (Mol and Spaargaren, 2000). It is based on the premise that economic growth and environmental protection are compatible and can even

[3] The term 'third industrial revolution' was popularized by the American essayist Jeremy Rifkin, who was especially influential in the period as a political advisor to several EU leaders.

go hand in hand. Contrary to radical environmentalist discourses, the environmental modernization narrative contends that capitalist institutions can be reformed to integrate environmental concerns and address the global environmental crisis (Dryzek, 2005). This is because pollution prevention pays: there are profits to be made in saving limited natural resources and developing green technologies (Hajer, 1995). The climate and energy package was framed according to this ecological modernization perspective as a set of ambitious measures to develop a low-carbon economy, with joint benefits in terms of climate protection, technological innovations, energy security, economic growth and job creations. In order to demonstrate that the package was not a threat to European competitiveness, the Commission systematically put forward figures showing that, in the long-run, the economic benefits of the package – in terms of energy savings, jobs and growth – would exceed its short-term costs (e.g. Commission, 2008a; 2008b). References to the Stern Review on the economics of climate change (2006) – which argues that the costs of inaction largely outweigh the costs of early mitigation efforts – to justify the package should be understood in this perspective[4].

The ecological modernization frame was key in increasing the acceptability and legitimacy of the package, as well as in connecting energy policy to climate action as part of an innovative industrial strategy for green growth. It was not uncontested however and, following the burst of the financial crisis, this discourse came under attack. The arguments of the Commission and French Presidency that the economic crisis should not be taken as an excuse not to address climate change issues and that the package constituted a stimulus for growth and a response to the crisis itself proved to have a limited impact. When the discourse on the

[4] By putting a figure on the costs of global warming, and translating environmental concerns in the language of economics, this report had a strong impact on decision-makers (Ockwell and Scrase, 2010: 2231).

benefits of a green economy lost momentum, it was the pledge for leadership in international climate negotiations that kept the decision-making process alive.

3.1.2. An instrument of leadership in international climate negotiations

Since the late 1980s and the run up to the Rio Conference, the EU has promoted itself as an international climate leader (Huber, 1997). Although the architecture of the Kyoto protocol was largely shaped by the US, the EU pushed for ambitious goals for industrialized countries and committed itself to the highest target of 8% emission reductions for the period 2008-12. After the US withdrawal in 2001, it lobbied other large powers – especially Russia – to ratify the protocol so that it could come into force in 2005. In March 2007 the EU unilaterally pledged to reduce its GHG emissions by 20% in 2020, with the aim to demonstrate its commitments, speak with one voice and lead negotiations on a post-Kyoto framework. Existing studies have all established some form of leadership for the EU and explore its origins, nature and future (e.g. Wurzel and Connelly, 2011). It is often argued that implementation has been the Achilles' heel of the Union (Gupta and Grubb, 2000; Karlsson and Parker, 2010). The 20.20.20 targets and subsequent adoption of the climate and energy package have been hailed as means to close the 'credibility gap' (Oberthür and Roche Kelly, 2008; Oberthür and Pallemaerts, 2010). Existing studies tend to treat European climate leadership as an objective phenomenon, or to be limited to an investigation of the gap between the European commitments and realisations. Few have looked at the effects of the climate leadership discourse, conceptualized as a discursive construction rather than as an objective attribute, on EU politics and policies.

The leadership discourse, which is well established both among EU policy makers and within academia, was used to frame the climate and energy package. A set of new climate and

energy legislation were promoted to show that the EU could lead effectively in policy outcome and influence international negotiations (Lenschow, 2009). As a case in point, on July 2008, the French Minister for Ecology and Sustainable Development Jean-Louis Borloo presenting the energy priorities of the French Presidency to members of the European Parliament's committee on Industry, Transport, Research and Energy (ITRE) stated:

> ‘The real question is how one can go from an international agreement between countries that are different in their degree of wealth, the size of their territory, their geology, the amount of sunshine they receive, their energy history, and their political decisions. How can one convince the polluting countries? By showing them that it is possible by adopting the energy/climate package’ (Agence Europe, 2008).

This quote illustrates elegantly the narrative of European climate leadership in which the package was inserted. This narrative is summarized through the following causal story.

Table 2: The climate package and the international climate leadership narrative

The world is facing a climate crisis. As has been forcefully demonstrated by well-established climate science (notably the IPCC).
The EU has demonstrated its strong commitment to fight climate change and has been a leader in international climate negotiations (leadership position taken for granted).
As a leader, it is the EU's duty to demonstrate that climate action is possible and to act as model for other countries, especially the US which is both 'the bad guy' since its withdrawal of Kyoto and a 'desired partner'.
The EU needs to adopt new climate legislation in time for Copenhagen where a global climate deal for the post Kyoto period will be adopted.
The 20.20.20 targets and the climate energy package represent the 'most ambitious programme in the world'.
By adopting the package in time, the EU will be an example, make an international agreement possible and ultimately 'save the climate'.
This leadership role will further strengthen the EU's role at the international level.

This narrative, which found a wide echo among European elites, was in line with EU's identity and normative commitments to climate science, international environmental regulations, mutltilateralism and norm-driven influence (Schunz and Van Schaik, 2012). The

leadership discourse served as a rationale for the linkage of energy to climate policy. It was also instrumental in the connection of European energy and climate decision-making processes to international negotiations. This fostered a sense of urgency and, ultimately, the swift adoption of the package. A sign of the influence of the leadership discourse is the fact that Poland, which remains reliant on coal for 86% of its energy production and has been one of the most critical countries, could not oppose the CEP frontally. As a Polish official puts it: 'in the end we accepted the package, but it was not the wisest decision for Poland … there was a momentum and Poland accepted'[5]. The EU Climate leadership discourse was turned into collective action thanks to the involvement of key policy entrepreneurs. The following section analyses the political process through which energy and climate policies were linked under the banner of EU climate leadership.

3.2. Linking energy to climate policies in EU policy-making

3.2.1. Framing and assembling a cross-sectoral legislative package

The shaping of what was to become the climate and energy package took place progressively over several years. The informal European summit held in Hampton Court in October 2005, during British Presidency, aimed at reinvigorating European Cooperation after the Dutch and French 'no' in the referenda on the Constitutional Treaty. Prime Minister Tony Blair played an active role in persuading other leaders of the opportunity to step up energy cooperation as a project with direct significance for EU citizens[6]. The summit was decisive in giving the Barroso Commission a mandate and legitimacy to propose further action (Buchan, 2009:

[5] Interview with a Polish environment official, Brussels, 21 June 2012.

[6] The UK, which had just become a net energy importer due to North Sea hydrocarbon depletion, was also a strong climate advocate, commissioning for instance the Stern report.

114)[7]. In response, the Commission released the following year a landmark Green Paper entitled 'strategy for sustainable, competitive and secure energy'. It called explicitly for an 'integrated approach to tackling climate change' in order for the EU to continue to 'lead by example', suggesting additional measures on energy efficiency, renewable energy and Carbon Capture and Storage (European Commission, 2006).

The Commission's proposals have to be replaced in the context of growing concerns over energy and climate change, notably revealed by the intense media coverage of climate issues (Boykoff, 2011: 22), as well as by the joint attribution of the 2007 Nobel peace prize to Albert Gore and to the IPCC. The publication of the Stern review in 2006 and release of the IPCC Fourth Assessment Report in 2007 contributed to the emergence of an intellectual and political context favourable to climate action[8]. In addition, the perspective of forthcoming international negotiations on a post-Kyoto agreement raised expectations among European elites. As regards energy, soaring oil and gas prices combined with geopolitical developments in producing countries reinforced concerns over energy security. The gas crisis that opposed Russia to Ukraine in February 2006, and led to supply disruptions in Central Europe, gave further impetus to energy cooperation.

This context opened a window of political opportunity that was exploited by the Commission. Energy and climate came to be regarded by the Commission as potential 'saviour issues for the European integration project' and a means to enhance the EU's international profile (Schunz and Van Schaik, 2012: 177). In January 2007, DG Energy and DG Environment jointly presented a comprehensive but heterogeneous review of both energy and climate policies – spanning from internal market legislation to the Emission Trading Scheme. The

[7] Interview with an Environmental NGO lobbyist, Brussels, 29 November 2011.

[8] Interview with a Commission official, 27 April 2010, Brussels.

review aimed to prepare and shape the Spring European summit discussions. In what came to be called the 'energy and climate change package', the Commission proposed a unilateral 20 % reduction in GHG emissions by 2020 (compared with 1990), this share rising to 30% in case of international agreement; a 20 % share of renewable energy in the EU's total energy consumption, including a 10% biofuel share in transport; and 20 % energy savings in the EU by 2020. Climate action was placed at the heart of EU energy policies, with the aim to achieve international leadership:

> 'Climate change is happening. Urgent action is required to limit it to a manageable level. The EU must adopt the necessary domestic measures and take the lead internationally to ensure that global average temperature increases do not exceed pre-industrial levels by more than 2°C' (European Commission, 2007b: 1).

In this perspective, energy policy was harnessed as a way to achieve 'world leadership in a diverse portfolio of clean, efficient and low emission-technologies' (European Commission 2007a: 17). Incidentally, the linkage of energy to climate issues was also a way for the Commission and DG Energy in particular to advance their prerogatives against jealously guarded national energy sovereignties. While the Commission emphasised the benefits of renewable energy promotion and energy efficiency in terms of security of supplies, technology developments and job creations, potential conflicts were largely swept under the carpet (Skjaerseth, 2014).

The review received strong support from traditional climate advocates – Green member states, environmental NGOs and the European Parliament ENVI committee – many calling for even more ambitious objectives. Most importantly, the Commission's strategy received strong backing from the German Presidency. The country, a longstanding climate leader and renewable energy pioneer (Jänicke 2011), adopted a broad domestic package of cross-sectoral

measures in 2007, the so-called 'Integrated Climate and Energy Programme'. It is thus no surprise if the 2007 German Presidency put energy and climate at the top of its agenda and was instrumental in linking them together (Wurzel, 2010). Following the presentation of the EU's strategic review, the German Federal Minister for Environment Sigmar Gabriel declared:

> 'I support the Commission proposal … This would be a clear indication that Europe will keep up its leading role in climate protection and it would be a clear signal to all investors in the European energy sector: Europe will, at any rate, step up its efforts in the field of climate protection' (BMU, 2007).

Working closely with the Commission, the German presidency used its political weight and the Presidency's prerogatives to convince the most reluctant member states (Wurzel, 2010: 467). At the March European Council, the German Chancellor Angela Merkel personally brokered a deal, emphasizing synergies between energy and climate policies in terms of GHG emission reductions and green job creations, as well as the need for the EU to act as a driver in international climate negotiations (EPC, 2007; Boasson and Wettestad, 2013: 46). Against the expectations of many, the Heads of state and government endorsed binding GHG and renewable energy targets, as well as a non-binding energy efficiency objective, and adopted an energy action programme for the period 2007-2009, calling the Commission to follow up with appropriate legislation (European Council, 2007). This reinforced the Commission's legitimacy and gave it a strong mandate.

The March agreement was crucial in tightly bounding together European and international climate negotiations. The European pledge gave a decisive impulse to international discussions on a post-Kyoto framework (Oberthür and Roche Kelly, 2008: 36). In December 2007 the parties to the UNFCCC, meeting in Bali (COP13), agreed on a Roadmap setting the

path towards an international agreement on a post-Kyoto framework, to be concluded at the Copenhagen summit in December 2009 (COP15). The EU acted as a major driving force in the Bali negotiations, which further reinforced its self-perception as a leader. The climate and energy package became the symbol of European climate commitments and a test case for the EU's international credibility.

On 23 January 2008, José Manuel Barroso and his Environment and Energy Commissioners, Stavros Dimas and Andris Piebalgs, jointly presented a legislative package of four legislative proposals to achieve 20% GHG emission reductions and a 20% share of renewable energy by 2020 (European Commission, 2008)[9]. The energy efficiency objective, considered too controversial, was left aside. The package was entirely geared towards climate mitigation objectives. To achieve the 20% GHG reduction target, a revised version of the flagship 2003 Emission Trading Directive (ETS) was proposed, along with an Effort Sharing Decision (ESD) for sectors not included in the ETS. Taking stock of the experience acquired in the initial period (2005-2008), the ETS proposal entailed the centralization of the mechanism for carbon allowance allocation at the European level and the setting of a EU-wide cap[10]. The progressive reduction of the cap was calibrated to achieve 60% of the required emission reductions. The ESD distributed efforts in non-ETS sectors, based mainly on GDP, to achieve the last 40%. These two interlinked proposals were accompanied with two technology specific directives. The Renewable Energy Directive (RED) established a framework to achieve the renewable energy target. It distributed the EU's 20% objective by setting binding national targets; a 10% sub-target for renewable energy in transport was also included. The

[9] Three pieces of legislation (the ETS, ESD and CCS) fell under the remit of the respective environmental administrations in the Commission, EU Council, and European Parliament, while their energy divisions dealt with the RED.

[10] It also generalized the principle of allowance auctioning to reach 100% in 2020.

Carbon Capture and Storage Directive (CCS) set a legal framework for the development of this new technology to stock carbon in the ground, with a view to appeal to those member states most reliant on fossil fuels[11].

Coherence and synergies between the different instruments and objectives were emphasised, while no mention was made of potential contradictions. The communication introducing the package stated:

> 'The package of measures proposed by the European Commission represents a coherent and comprehensive path to preparing Europe for the transition towards a low-emission economy. It shows that the efforts required make sense. Measures are designed in a way so that they are mutually supportive' (European Commission, 2008a).

Similarly, the impact assessment accompanying the package analysed varying scenarios, pointing to synergies between the EU ETS and renewable policies, shrugging off the impact of renewable energy promotion on the carbon price, and concluding that the different policy goal are 'mutually-reinforcing' to achieve EU's objectives 'in a politically acceptable as well as an economically efficient way' (European Commission, 2008b: 2-3). As Helm (2014: 32) sarcastically puts it, 'so certain was the European Commission about its chosen policy instruments and its international leadership role that core design faults were either ignored or glossed over'.

3.2.2. The framing effect: demonstrating international leadership in a hard climate

[11] For a comprehensive overview of each piece of legislation, which is outside the scope of this paper, see Buchan (2009), Boasson and Wettestad (2013) and the various contributions in Oberthür and Pallemaerts (2010) and Jordan et al. (2010).

Formal negotiations on the climate energy package were characterised by a tight schedule. The initial objective of the Commission was to reach an agreement on the package by Spring 2009 at the latest, in order to present a strong and united position in Copenhagen. A quick agreement was especially necessary since the European Parliament (EP) elections were due to take place in June 2009 and the Barroso Commission's term was ending in October. France, which was to take over the council Presidency in the summer 2008, made it clear from the start that the adoption of the whole package was one of its top priorities and that it aimed to reach an agreement by the end of its term, in December 2008[12]. Nicolas Sarkozy, who had placed the environment at the core of his Presidential campaign in the 2007 and launched after his election,a participative process – the 'Grenelle de l'environment' – aiming at greening the country's economy, saw the package as a mean to demonstrate the seriousness its environmental commitments, as well as an instrument of international prestige. With Copenhagen in everybody's mind, all parties accepted this the tight schedule and intense negotiations imposed by the French Presidency. The Heads of state and government eventually reached a political compromise at their 12-13 December meeting. The EP approved the agreement a few days later on 17 December.

The Commission and Presidency used time pressure as a rationale to introduce procedural innovations. From the start it was decided that the package would be adopted at first reading, despite the European Parliament's initial resistance. The French Presidency imposed an intensive work programme, which would have been usually unacceptable but that member states and the European Parliament consented to due to the perceived 'unique political situation'. The second important procedural innovation was the direct participation of the Heads of state and government in the legislative process, a sign of the utmost importance of

[12] Interviews with two French officials, 30 November 2011 and 13 February 2012, Brussels.

the package. In the Autumn 2008, to reassure the most sceptical governments, and show that their demands were taken into account, the French President Nicolas Sarkozy proposed that, albeit Qualified Majority Voting formally applied, all decisions would be taken unanimously and key issues would be decided at the December European summit.

The time pressure of Copenhagen acted as a 'disciplining context', which tamed debates across Council's sectoral formations, between member states, as well as between parties and committees in the European Parliament (Lenschow, 2009: 6)[13]. Fundamental opposition was limited by a clear sense that a deal on climate change was absolutely vital and that it was 'Europe's leadership moment'. As a senior environment official puts it, 'in the Council, support for the package was generalized because it was politically good, people were sympathetic to the idea of leadership'[14]. This is not say that the negotiations were consensual however. Barely any part of the package was left undisputed and some issues, such as 'carbon leakage' – the relocation of polluting industry subjected to international competition in third countries – or solidarity and redistribution between Western and Eastern member states, were fiercely debated until the end. However, the main architecture of the package – the 20.20 targets, the national targets for renewables and non-ETS sectors, the centralization of the ETS – remained untouched. The March 2007 agreement represented a firm commitment at the highest level that was hard for national negotiators to challenge directly. In addition, there was a clear sense that calling into question the targets and main features of the proposals would lead to the unravelling the whole package and thus to a failure to meet the December

[13] In the Council, the Transport Telecommunication and Energy (TTE) and the Environment formations were directly involved. In the Parliament, the Industry Transport Research and Energy (ITRE) and Environment (ENVI) Committees were jointly in charge.

[14] Interview with a Council official, 28 November 2011, Brussels.

deadline[15]. A certain restraint in member states' criticisms was certainly matched by the willingness of the Commission and French Presidency to calm down the most ambitious and accept significant compromises and concessions to make the adoption of the package possible[16].

With the eruption of the financial crisis in Autumn 2008, several governments and industries intensified their concerns regarding the package's impact on economic competitiveness. Germany expressed serious reservations regarding the risk of 'carbon leakage' for its energy-intensive and export oriented industries, insisting that this issue should be better reflected in the ETS proposal. Italy and a group of Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries led by Poland even threatened to block the whole package if their demands were not addressed[17]. Italy asked for a revision clause depending on the outcome of the Copenhagen summit, while CEE countries demanded special arrangements for their coal based power plants and heavy industries, in the name of 'European solidarity'. Trade-offs and side payments played a key role in making the package acceptable to all member states (Skjaerseth 2014). More free allowances were granted to industries at risk of carbon leakage and CEE countries were granted more revenues from allowance auctioning than was initially planned as part of a solidarity fund. In addition countries highly dependent on a single energy source were also granted free allowances for their power sector until 2027. In return for these concessions, the

[15] Interviews with French officials, 30 November 2011 and 13 February 2012, Brussels. Interview with a Commission official, 2 December 2011. Interview with a Council official, 15 February 2011, Brussels.

[16] Interview with Council officials, 28 November 2011 and 15 February 2012. Interview with a French official, 30 November 2011.

[17] The coalition was constituted of Poland, Bulgaria, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania and Slovenia.

EP obtained the co-financing of 12 CCS and renewable energy demonstration projects through auction revenues from 300 million allowances. These trade-offs – although affecting the package's 'climate integrity' and despite being denounced by environmental activists – were largely considered necessary to conclude a final deal in time to display international climate leadership. The EP's reluctant acceptance to discuss with, and eventually endorse the European Council conclusions in December 2008, was crucial to the adoption of the package in time for Copenhagen. According to a former political advisor in the Parliament: 'the European Parliament had to accept the deal. There were bad feelings, but could they say no? … The Parliament went to save the world'[18].

3.2.3. The future of the climate-energy frame: institutionalization or dismantlement?

Although effective in the short-run, the strategy of rallying energy and climate policies under the common banner of climate leadership appears more questionable in the longer term. This discourse has been challenged in two major ways. First, the financial and economic crisis has relegated environmental and climate issues to the background, while reinforcing economic competitiveness concerns. The attention of policy makers has since increasingly shifted towards the reliability and cost of European energy supplies. In several European countries debates have emerged about the cost of national renewable energy support systems for industries and individual customers, as well as their compatibility with internal market rules. While during the negotiations on the energy and climate package renewable and climate policies were largely constructed as mutually reinforcing, since the outbreak of the crisis, renewable energy support has increasingly been regarded as responsible – along with the sharp decline in energy demand – for plummeting carbon prices, and therefore as undermining effective climate policies (Skjaerseth, 2014). In contrast with the earlier period,

[18] Interview with a former EP advisor and renewable industry representative, Brussels, 26/04/10.

when coherence issues tended to be glossed over, the impact assessment of the 2030 Climate and Energy Package, presented in January 2014 by the Commission, establishes coherence as one of its guiding principles (Commission, 2014). Yet, the analysis of the stakeholder consultation process that preceded the release of the Commission's proposals for 2030. While the industry and business associations preferred a single climate target as more coherent, environmental NGOs and renewable energy industries stressed the synergies between climate and energy objectives (ibid: 206).

Second, the failure of the Copenhagen summit, during which the US and China negotiated directly together side-lining the EU, has called into question the climate leadership discourse (Groen and Niemann, 2013). Several member states, especially from Central Europe, have become increasingly and overtly critical of unilateral moves that may compromise their economy and international competitiveness. This is especially the case of Poland, which has blocked several climate documents. In 2010, and again in 2012, Poland and other CEE countries blocked the proposal to step up to a 30% GHG target by 2020, arguing that there was no reason for making additional efforts if other countries were not following suit (Skovgaard, 2014: 10). In 2012, Poland opposed alone a resolution on the Commission's Energy Roadmap 2050 on decarbonisation (Euractiv: 2012). As a Polish climate official presents it: 'Copenhagen was a failure. If we squeeze ourselves, not everybody will follow. Everybody is not just looking at us. And there is a risk of carbon leakage'[19]. In this new context the leadership narratives have lost a large part of their momentum. The delayed adoption of the 2030 targets in October 2014, and their lower level of ambitions – 40% for GHG reductions; but only 27% for renewable energy and energy savings[20] – indicate a more

[19] Interview with a Polish environment official, Brussels, 21 June 2012.

[20] The renewable energy target is binding at the European level only (but not national targets) and only slightly above business as usual scenarios, while the EU-wide energy efficiency target is non-binding.

cautious approach from EU leaders in the run up to the Paris 2015 Climate conference. No new ambitious legislative measures have, as yet, been adopted to implement these commitments. Although both José Manuel Barroso and the then Climate Commissioner Connie Hedegaard have both emphasised the signal and example that EU sets for the rest of the world, as well as the effort towards a low-carbon economy (e.g. Barroso 2014) – a sign of the relative resilience of the leadership narratives – no mention is even made of these objectives in the European Council's conclusions.

This raises the question of the effective institutionalization of the integrated climate and energy frame. Although some innovations introduced by the Climate and Energy Package – such as the 'three targets' format and involvement of the European Council in giving political impetus to energy and climate policies – have been normalized, it appears that the climate leadership strategy has reached its limits. The leadership narrative has lost a large part of its appeal and credibility. In fact, without a favourable political climate, conflicts and trade-offs have resurfaced between energy competitiveness and security on the one hand and climate policies on the other. The 'Energy Union' promoted by the new Commission does not place climate at the centre of EU energy policy and, in a context of ongoing conflict in Ukraine and enduring economic crisis, is more focused on competitiveness and security of supplies.

4. Conclusion

Coherence, usually held as trait of 'good governance', remains an elusive concept both in theory and practice. In contrast with technical and depoliticized understandings, this paper argue that what constitutes coherent policies is always a matter for political debates since any assessment ultimately depends on the beholder's perspective and criteria. Far from being an

intrinsic characteristic, political coherence needs to be politically constructed as such. Adopting a discursive perspective, we show that framing is central to the political construction of coherence across policy areas. Cross-sectoral frames can be harnessed by powerful policy entrepreneurs to foster certain types of horizontal policies perceived as coherent by a wide range of actors, thus contributing to the redefinition of the traditional policy space.

Drawing on the case of the EU climate and energy package, an ambitious set of legislation often hailed as a working example of coherent policy-making, the paper shows how coherence was constructed by anchoring energy to climate policy. By framing energy and climate policies as a means to demonstrate leadership in international climate negotiations and be at the vanguard of the emerging 'green economy', the Commission and successive EU presidencies shaped and managed to push through a cross-sectoral package in an exceptionally short period of time. The framing, which stressed synergies between energy and climate policies while downplaying trade-offs and conflicts, was successful in rallying a wide range of actors across the decentralized and multilevel EU polity.

However, stalled international climate negotiations and a sluggish economy have called into question these narratives and, the integration of energy and climate policies. Although new targets have been adopted in the perspective of the Paris Conference in December 2015, energy has increasingly been reframed in terms of competitiveness and security. The leadership narratives and linkage between energy and climate have not disappeared but their appeal weakened. This shows that the power of integrative and synergistic framings depends in part on the wider political and economic context. Unless they become embedded in strong institutional structures that can live through changing circumstances, cross-sectoral policy

frames are at the mercy of events and context. More work is indeed needed to explore further the relationship between discourse and changing political circumstances.

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