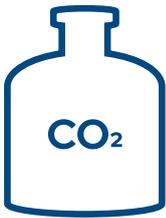


CCS in the political economy

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The challenge of rolling out large-scale and costly CCS solutions for deep decarbonisation is one of public policy and policy decision-making. This has linked strongly to political economy concerns and the need for political economy narrative development in Norway, the Netherlands and the UK, despite research focus on technology and cost concerns.

1.

Even in the case of Norway, where the only operational CCS projects in Europe exist, the history of CCS reflects the challenges of large-scale projects cancellation in the past.

2.

Costly participation in large-scale projects that are subsequently cancelled by Governments results in uncertainty and trust challenges among potential participants.

3.

Regardless of the stage of CCS development, there is clearly a perceived need to develop political economy 'narratives' around how CCS can sustain and potentially create economic value - in terms of jobs and GDP - through low/net zero carbon transitions.

4.

Policy narratives, and the underpinning ideas around societal impacts currently emerging for Norway, the Netherlands and the UK currently are clearly moving in directions specific to the conditions and aspirations of each individual nation.

5.

PLATON is a key initiative demonstrating the opportunity for political scientists, economists and other social scientists to play a key role in research to support CCS and other low-carbon policy development, including the development of policy narratives.

CCS in the political economy

How have institutions, interests and ideas aligned to enable CCS developments in different Northern European national contexts?

Government departments responsible for energy and climate policy around the world acknowledge the potential role of carbon capture and storage (CCS) technologies and systems. Projections by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, 2018) have shown that CCS is likely to be required to meet the ambitions of the 2015 Paris Agreement (UNFCCC, 2015). In practice, global CCS investment and deployment has been limited.

- A few CCS facilities exist in the United States and Canada linking to enhanced oil recovery in the latter stages of production.
- In Northern Europe, CCS activity is more limited, with much of the energy policy dominated debate and research focused on resolving technological issues and reducing costs. Less attention in the research community has been devoted to developing understanding of the wider public policy and political decision-making context, where impacts on the continued delivery of economic well-being and prosperity is generally of primary concern. In this regard, the research community largely lags behind the needs of policymakers and policy stakeholders, where increasing levels of strategic attention is arguably directed towards developing and building consensus around effective political economy focused policy narratives.
- This is an important gap, not least given the public funding demands of enabling the development and/or deployment of CCS systems.

Norway is the only country in Europe that has actually seen full deployment of CCS projects, first in 1996 followed by a second in 2008, both located offshore linked to production of natural gas and geological storage in the North Sea. Beyond this, CCS has been slower to develop, with a history troubled by the 2013 cancellation of a full-scale CCS project at Mongstad. Two onshore industry capture projects are in pilot phase. Policy narrative development has focused on the need to ensure the continued economic contribution of the traditional oil and gas industry in the context of enabling low carbon energy supply. In the Netherlands and the UK, current policy attention and narrative development seems to focus more on securing the continued contribution of high value on-shore industry activity.

Thus, there is clearly an alignment between CCS policy and distinct national societal and economic interests. This highlights the role of projects like PLATON in addressing the challenges of aligning different public and private interests in advancing CCS in specific national contexts.