

Book Reviews

Democratizing Global Climate Governance, by Hayley Stevenson and John S. Dryzek

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.
267pp., £18.99, paperback.

Okka Lou Mathis and Sander Chan*

In *Democratizing Global Climate Governance*, Stevenson and Dryzek apply a deliberative systems approach to the analysis of global climate governance. In view of the limited success of current international climate politics, this timely and accessible book makes useful proposals to improve the deliberative quality of global climate governance, making it more democratic, and ultimately more effective.

Arguing that “democracy cannot just give up its historical struggle just because power is migrating from nation-states to international governance” (p. 156), the authors set out to demonstrate how deliberative democratic practices may help to overcome deficiencies in current global climate governance. They regard a higher degree of deliberative democracy as an intrinsic value of global governance and also argue that deliberative processes enable better – more transparent and legitimate – policy outcomes than the status quo.

Initially, the authors define logical elements of a deliberative system; the *public space*, where ideas and critique are generated; the *empowered space*, where collective decisions are made; *transmission* of discourses from the public space to the empowered space; accountability from empowered spaces to the public space; and meta-deliberation, the ability of the system as a whole to learn and to improve. In the following chapters, the authors systematically evaluate these elements, finding deficiencies in for example the authenticity of deliberation under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), as many negotiators have little intention to change their position in response to persuasion; “enclave deliberation” in the public space (preventing productive contestation); the limited inclusion of

actors other than market players in networked governance; and the failure to transmit discourses in the public space into the empowered spaces of the UNFCCC and governance networks. In spite of many deficiencies and formidable challenges in the deliberative system of global climate governance, the authors see prospects for improvements, including the extension of chains of accountability within the UNFCCC to actors in the public space, the engagement of multiple discourses and climate science in forums in the public sphere, and the representation of a greater range of interests in networked governance. In suggesting reforms, the authors do not juxtapose decentralised and state-centred governance, but assume a high degree of complementarity instead. Strengthening deliberative elements within global climate governance may not produce a completely different (democratic) model of governance, but it would unlock the democratic potential as a necessary precondition for more legitimate and effective global climate policies.

Stevenson and Dryzek present a highly relevant and well-structured book on the pressing issue of improving the system of global climate governance, drawing attention to democratic practices as normative guidelines for societal organisation that apply as much to the national level as to a globalised world society. In times when climate policies are being discussed in an increasingly technical manner, this book invites its readers to take one step back and assess the normative foundations of global governance. Moreover, the book presents a useful exercise of meta-deliberation on global climate governance, culminating in pragmatic reform options. The authors acknowledge that their proposed reforms do not amount to a comprehensive package. To better assess and understand (e.g. institutional) implications, however, they could have been more explicit about how reforms should be implemented and by whom. Methodologically, the book could have benefited from a broader evidence base. For instance, while the chapter on emerging centres of networked authority exemplifies deliberative features of three very insightful cases, it could have reflected a larger sample by building on research efforts involving larger sets of transnational governance networks. Furthermore,

* Okka Lou Mathis and Sander Chan are both researchers at the German Development Institute/Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik (DIE).