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Low Carbon Governance in Indonesia and India: A Comparative Analysis with Recommendations

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Abstract

The Paris Agreement was adopted in 2015 by the 21st Conference of the Parties (COP 21) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) marked a milestone in that many developing countries submitted their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). Nationally appropriate mitigation actions (NAMAs) could serve as one foundation to achieve their NDCs. Much of the literature on NAMAs has focused on discussions on the basic concept, and its variance from past initiatives. The lack of attention to the governance aspect is a sizable blind spot since cities will require new institutional arrangements as well as implementing capacities to realize projected reductions. This is particularly pronounced at the sub-national level where knowledge of NAMAs remains relatively limited. The paper indeed finds that the significant variation between India and Indonesia's low carbon development is indeed attributable to these governance arrangements. Low carbon actions in India's cities exhibit a higher degree of institutionalization because of a relatively longer history of delegating national government responsibilities to subnational governments. In the case of Indonesia, city efforts started more recently and are primarily standalone or small pilot projects with minimum coordination with the national or within the subnational government.

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1. Introduction

The Paris Agreement was adopted on 12 December 2015 by the 21st Conference of the Parties (COP 21) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The agreement marked a milestone in that many developing countries submitted their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) outlining their plans to reduce GHGs from 2020 through 2030. At the same time, many of the NDCs will be built off of a set of nationally appropriate mitigation actions (NAMAs) that were pledged to the UNFCCC several years prior. NAMAs is catchall term that refers to voluntary projects, programs and policies that developing countries formulated to mitigate GHGs following the first commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol (post-2012). As a bottom-up, nationally driven set of actions, NAMAs are more narrowly focused precursor to the NDCs (Ecofys, 2014). Their performance will also have a strong bearing on the NDCs.

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The performance of the NAMAs will further rest heavily on two issues that are central to this paper. The first is the local actions of developing country cities. Around 70 percent of the world's population will be concentrated in cities by 2050 (UNEP, 2013); even at relatively early stages of development investment and financing decisions made in developing country cities will leave a marked impact on future global GHG emissions. Failure to act quickly and decisively on climate change could lock cities into the unsustainable development patterns that characterize much of the developed world. The performance of cities in making this low carbon transition, however, depends on a second key factor: namely, governance. Governance—or the way that authority is exercised—involves building skills and knowledge; establishing effective institutional structures; creating compliance incentives; and instituting monitoring protocols.

To date, much of the literature on NAMAs has had a rather normative orientation. It has offered countries guidance on what *should or ought* to be done to design and implement a NAMA. A parallel body of literature has employed energy models to identify the technologies and measures needed to achieve reductions envisaged in low carbon scenarios (that often underpin NAMAs). At the same time, a growing empirical literature on climate governance has highlighted that local governments have been actually more adept and innovative than national governments when crafting and implementing climate actions. This literature, however, has concentrated chiefly on cities in developed countries. This paper draws on the insights of these three streams of thought by offering an empirical (as opposed to normative) assessment on how cities (as opposed to national governments) are governing low carbon actions in Indonesia and India.

Indonesia and India are chosen for several reasons. The first is that they are large rapidly developing countries that are home to numerous dynamic cities. The second is that both countries put forward relatively ambitious mitigation targets in 2009 as NAMAs; these targets have since been broken down into sectoral plans that cities are currently trying to translate into tangible actions at the subnational levels. The third is that relative success of these actions could hinge on existing governance arrangements meant not only to mitigate GHGs but to achieve other development objectives. The final consideration is that observable differences in how effectively these actions are governed may be attributable to the variation in these existing arrangements.

The paper indeed finds that the significant variation between India and Indonesia's low carbon development is indeed attributable to these governance arrangements. The paper shows that low carbon actions in India's cities exhibit a higher degree of institutionalization. This may be because India has a relatively longer history of delegating national government responsibilities to subnational governments. In the case of Indonesia, city efforts started more recently and are primarily standalone or small pilot projects with minimum coordination with the national or within the subnational government.

Even with this variation, the paper also arrives at some conclusions that apply to governance for low carbon development more generally. First, international donor funded programs can offer cities soft capacity (e.g. design of low carbon integrated action plans, knowledge on effective steps for stakeholder engagement) that serve as foundation for larger initiatives. Hiring an external consultant through a tender process can supplement needed capacities. Second, city officials who joined overseas workshops seemed best positioned to develop new initiatives and coordinate with multiple stakeholders: national and state governments; civil society; private sector and academia. This then led to innovative efforts that had attracted additional investment in the city. Finally, existing systems that keep track and log policy performance could be developed into a robust MRV system when linked with data collection for GHG emissions reduction.

The remainder of the paper is divided into seven sections. The next section reviews literature on NAMAs. Section 3 presents a conceptual model and hypotheses. Section 4 shows the research method. Section 5 shows the case studies. Section 6 discusses results. Section 7 outlines areas for further research.

2. Setting the Scene: Literature review

In 2005, countries ratified the Kyoto Protocol with the intent of avoiding dangerous anthropogenic interference in the world's climate system (Dubash et al, 2012). A distinguishing feature of the Kyoto Protocol were provisions that committed developed countries to mitigate GHGs in line with an overall five percent emission reduction target off of 1990 levels by between 2008 and 2012. Developed countries (also known as Annex 1 parties) committed themselves to sets of political negotiated targets that would collectively sum to this five percent overall target. While developing countries were not required to take mandatory emissions reduction targets under the Kyoto Protocol, they were not passive bystanders. One of the ways in which developing countries participated in the Kyoto Protocol was through the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM). The CDM was an offset mechanism that enabled developed countries to acquire carbon credits by investing in a GHG mitigation project in a developing country.

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