

Introduction

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We are writing this introduction just as COP 26 is wrapping up and the world (and GEP community) are assessing the work ahead to turn pledges and promises into action. The current issue includes investigations on a range of topics that inform the very agendas and politics that are underway and needed.

The issue begins with a forum on the Paris Agreement, the unquestioned center of gravity for the global response to climate change even while many question its effectiveness in the aftermath of Glasgow. In “The Paris Agreement as Analogy in Global Environmental Politics,” Nicholas Chan explores how it has come to dominate the way the international community imagines and structures global environmental cooperation. He details the discursive and institutional “gravitational pull” of Paris, but also warns against the potentially problematic effects of the powerful Paris analogy, if applied too broadly to diverse problems in environmental politics.

A second forum by Olúfẹmi Táíwò and Shuchi Talati, “Who Are the Engineers? Solar Geoengineering Research and Justice,” contributes to the growing body of work on the politics of solar geoengineering. In response to calls to abandon solar geoengineering research that range from environmental impacts to Northern dominance of the field itself, Táíwò and Talati argue instead for a more inclusive framework that is sensitive to concerns of global injustice and inequality. The forum provides concrete suggestions for supporting more inclusive research and governance, including bolstering alternative research programs to fund and build capacity of researchers and policymakers from the Global South.

The research articles begin with a cross-issue exploration of global environmental negotiations. In “Design Trade-Offs Under Power Asymmetry: COPs and Flexibility Clauses,” Jean-Frédéric Morin, Benjamin Tremblay-Auger, and Claire Peacock explore how states navigate power asymmetries in environmental negotiations. They argue that the adoption of flexibility clauses helps powerful states signal their commitment to not unduly influence the work of COPs by providing weaker states with insurance against abuse of power differentials. They find support for this argument through an analysis of a database of over 2,000 international environmental agreements.

The broad analysis of international cooperation is followed by a specific examination of the complex case of carbon dioxide removal (CDR). In “The International Politics of Carbon Dioxide Removal: Pathways to Cooperative Global Governance,” Bryan Maher and Jonathan Symons expound on the potential and challenges for this new area of climate diplomacy. They suggest that efforts towards multilateral cooperation around accounting and reporting, pilot projects, incentives for deployment, and governance and accountability could enhance and accelerate emerging national CDR efforts.

A second pair of articles delves into the politics and context of climate finance: subnational co-benefits and carbon pricing in one, and distributive justice and global finance for renewable energy in the other.

In “The Potential of Co-benefits to Spur Subnational Carbon Pricing in North America,” Daniela Stevens explains the gap between the many subnational initiatives for carbon pricing in North America and the much more limited number that get implemented. She finds that a key determinant of implementation is whether pricing mechanisms are designed to produce visible and immediate local co-benefits. The study highlights that designing pricing mechanisms is not just a technical or efficiency question but must be concerned with the political economy of the effects of pricing, distributional politics, and co-benefits.

Diana Dorman and David Ciplet, in “Sustainable Energy for All? Assessing Global Distributive Justice in the Green Climate Fund’s Energy Finance,” look even more centrally at distributional implications of climate finance. Using theories of global distributive justice, they examine the large financial gaps that prevent the achievement of global energy justice. They propose three guiding principles, rooted in cosmopolitanism, to assess what global distributive justice for multilateral renewable energy finance should look like in practice and apply the framework to the Green Climate Fund’s energy portfolio.

The following two articles explore the relationship between support for domestic climate policy and the climate actions of other states in both positive and negative directions. Liam Beiser-McGrath and Thomas Bernauer, in “Domestic Provision of Global Public Goods,” add to the timely discussion of global climate policy through a focus on public support for domestic climate policies. With the use of survey experiments in China and the United States, they elucidate the mechanisms by which different actors condition their policy support—in this case, for mitigation policy—on the behavior of other countries. The article underscores the importance of research on climate governance that links the international context to unilateral climate policy at the domestic level, especially concerning public preferences toward domestic policies.

However, in “Nationalist Backlash against Foreign Climate Shaming,” Matias Spektor, Umberto Mignozzetti, and Guilherme Fasolin show that concerns over popular backlashes against naming and shaming by foreign states may be overblown. Based on the results of survey experiments in Brazil, they find that nationalist sentiment can make publics more likely to react against

foreign shaming. However, even those with strong nationalist sentiments expressed little virulent defiance against foreign critics, which suggests that foreign critics of climate policies should not be overly cautious in calling out or putting public pressure on laggard states, as the risk of populist or anti-globalist backlash against global environmental norms or institutions is limited.

Rounding out the issue with a research note, Paasha Madhavi, Jessica Green, Jennifer Hadden, and Thomas Hale in “Using Earnings Calls to Understand the Political Behavior of Major Polluters,” tackle the question of how to measure the political behavior of multinational firms. Keeping with the articles on climate policy in this issue, Mahdavi et al. offer a new data source that will shed light on the behavior of major multinational polluters. To understand oil and gas firms’ political behavior on climate change, the authors’ original dataset compiles earnings calls from major oil and gas firms. This dataset should be of tremendous use for scholars of global environmental politics interested in private governance and climate policy.