

THE ROLE OF REGULATION IN INDUCING CLEAN ENERGY ADOPTION

The public's adoption of clean energy is often contingent on political leadership, and the institutional and economic environment of the day. Thus, policymakers need to factor these contexts in their analysis for inducing the public to adopt clean energy at present, and facilitate the creation of new social norms to solidify this practice to resist future volatility.

WHAT'S NEXT?

One of the major challenges is to convince the unconvinced about the need for clean energy adoption. An effective tactic is to emphasize the personal benefits to the individual. In other words, moving the discussion away from climate change at a macro-level, and focusing on the benefits of clean energy at the micro-level, may spur an increase in the public's enthusiasm for clean energy adoption.

Impacts

- Smart regulation: Policy resistant to changing political administrations
- Political and economic volatility: Preventing the undoing of long-term policy by future political leadership, or maintaining policy in times of economic hardship.
- Sustainable development: Learning from past mistakes, solutions for local problems, bottom-up development and innovation.
- Regional focus: Sub-national needs, focus on geographic areas, rather than nationwide.

ANALYSIS

Easing Political Volatility

The political feasibility of long-term clean energy adoption is affected by the fact that subsequent administrations can always change policies. Some political leaders, once in power, may completely **revoke a previous administration's energy policies** and install their own, or abandon the strategy altogether.

Behavioral Economics and Procrastination

Behavioural economists provide some solutions that can foster long-lasting and change-proof tactics.

Clean energy is an issue **prone to procrastination**, since the public generally believes its ultimate effects would not affect them directly. Fostering public adoption of clean energy thus requires moving away from the climate change debate at a macro-level. Instead, emphasis should be placed on stressing the micro-level benefits to adopting clean energy, such as economic benefits like job creation, diversification, new infrastructure, and creation of new business models. The example of wind farms off the coast of New England is an instructive one. The project itself was less about climate change and more about **job creation for the state**. This strategy galvanized the public's immediate support for the initiative.

Another way to alter public bias about climate change is to discuss smaller and more localized environmental changes, such as changes to local weather patterns, flooding or erosion in a particular area that directly affects the local public.

Carbon Taxes and Levies

A carbon tax or levy can be used as a tool to change public behaviour and generate revenue for clean energy research. Many states and localities are implementing a carbon tax and levy in an attempt to steer the public towards energy efficiency and clean energy adoption. However, it should be emphasized that this is not the only tool for policymakers, and does not guarantee a total transition to clean energy.

Varying Jurisdictional Goals

Each jurisdiction may have differing goals, and not all will have the same climate change-related goals. Some may focus more on cutting emissions, while others look to sustainable development. Each polity will tailor their clean energy policies to local needs; therefore it is futile to expect a uniform global clean energy transition strategy. Cultural norms also play a large role in transition; for example, how certain cultures perceive and demonstrate wealth may have a direct impact on how the public views and prioritizes clean energy. In many instances, these norms can be altered, and can be used, to promote clean energy transition in a specific cultural context.

Finally, we need to look beyond the West when observing and discussing clean energy transition. **Enormous progress** in sustainable development is being made in Africa and Asia, which should be acknowledged as part of a broader movement to foster clean energy adoption. Promoting sustainable development in developing states involves learning from previous mistakes in energy transition in the developed world and finding solutions to local problems; and conversely, the developed world can learn from the mistake and solutions coming out of the developing world.

Common to all jurisdictions is the fact that a bottom-up approach to clean energy transition can make clean energy adoption more economically, culturally and politically viable for local actors.