

# Capitalism and Climate Change: Producing and Using Technologies to Save the Planet

## Workshop Final Report

### Workshop Conveners

Dr Neil E. Harrison, Executive Director, The Sustainable Development Institute,  
Laramie, Wyoming, USA

Dr John Mikler, Department of Government and International Relations, University of  
Sydney, Australia

### Participants

|                |                    |                                       |
|----------------|--------------------|---------------------------------------|
| John Mikler    | Senior Lecturer    | University of Sydney                  |
| Neil Harrison  | Executive Director | The Sustainable Development Institute |
| Jeff McGee     | Senior Lecturer    | University of Newcastle, Australia    |
| Mark Huberty   | Doctoral Student   | University of California              |
| Robert MacNeil | PhD Candidate      | University of Ottawa, Canada          |
| Hinrich Voss   | Research Fellow    | University of Leeds, UK               |
| David Levy     | Professor          | University of Massachusetts           |

### Workshop Purpose

The workshop brought together scholars from North America, Australia and Europe to coordinate research on concepts of capitalism that encompass dimensions beyond the economic in order to design policies to generate technological innovations that will significantly mitigate climate change and rapidly diffuse them throughout society ("climate innovation").

The purpose of the Workshop was to:

- Review current knowledge from across a variety of perspectives of the institutional influences on firm decision-making
- Develop a theoretical framework of the potential institutional influences on firms' decision to pursue technological innovation
- Frame the research required to evaluate the relative influence of economic, social, cultural and political institutions on firms' choices to invest in technological innovation for mitigation of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

### Workshop Agenda

The workshop was split into four sessions:

- *Political and Economic Institutions*—in this session Mark Huberty, Robert MacNeil, and Jeffrey McGee summarized the common constituents of industrial policy for technological innovation, compared the role of US and Canadian governments in technological innovation, and presented an interpretative policy analysis that assessed the relative influence of two opposed approaches to climate innovation.
- *Social and Cultural Institutions*—John Mikler and Neil Harrison presented a brief overview of the empirical research in this area. Discussion focused on the design of possible original research contributions on the effects of social and cultural institutions on technological innovation.
- *Session 3: Firm Responses to Institutions*—David Levy summarized how 'green' ideas and institutions may have different influence within firms and how the national institutional context may affect that influence. John Mikler and Hinrich Voss critiqued previous studies from international political economy and international business that primarily consider MNCs from a uni-national perspective.
- *Session 4: Theoretical Framework and Research Design*—Building on the results of the previous three sessions and their review of several relevant literatures, John Mikler and Neil Harrison, the workshop conveners, gave a broad overview of the literatures that can contribute to relevant knowledge about how external institutions influence firms' decisions on technological innovation and led discussion on how to integrate the separate papers into a cohesive research report.

## Workshop Results

Our original intent had been to develop an edited volume that took a *comparative institutionalist* approach within a framework drawn primarily from three key literatures: comparative capitalism; ecological modernization; and comparative governance. The book was to synthesize the insights of these diverse literatures, develop an appropriate theoretical framework, and present empirical evidence that begins to answer the question of which institutions most influence climate innovation. However, based on the papers presented and the discussions in the workshop, the workshop conveners decided to keep the theoretical approach outlined above but to narrow the focus of the research to the US variety of capitalism.

While at ISA in San Diego the workshop conveners met with the Senior Commissioning Editor for International Political Economy at Palgrave/Macmillan. She has enthusiastically embraced the project and has asked us to prepare a book proposal, which we are in the process of doing. Tentatively entitled "Institutions for Climate Innovation: How Liberal Capitalism Limits Capacity to Respond to Climate Change" the book will almost exclusively examine the US case. We see this as a necessary first step to development of a more complete comparative institutionalist approach that would assess the effects on climate innovation of differences in national innovation systems.

The proposed book may include two or three chapters additional to those to be prepared by the workshop participants. One planned additional chapter would report the results of survey and interview data with US corporate executives on their view of the effects of the institutions within which they operate on firm decision-making. Another additional chapter may preview the later comparativist research by offering a brief overview of European technological responses to climate change.

We anticipate that most of the Workshop participants will join us at 2013 ISA in San Francisco to present their book chapters and begin to market the book that should be in production at that time.