



FORE

Climate clubs and the UNFCCC

“Clubs are not challenging the current governance architecture, and some are more conducive to the UNFCCC than others.”

Oscar Widerberg
Daniel E Stenson

FORE Study 2013:3

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Climate clubs and the UNFCCC — Complement, bypass or conflict?

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FORES study 2013:3

First editon, first printing

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www.fores.se

Printed at ScandBooks, Falun 2013

ISBN: 978-91-87379-15-4

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or conflict?**

About FORES

FORES—Forum for Reforms, Entrepreneurship and Sustainability—is a think tank that seeks to renew the debate in Sweden with a belief in entrepreneurship and opportunities for people to shape their own lives. Environment and the market economy, migration, entrepreneurship and civil society, integrity, gender equality, global democratisation and modernisation of welfare—these are some of the issues on which we focus. FORES is an open and independent forum for civil society, academics and policy makers throughout Sweden and Europe. Together with people in Sweden and abroad, we will find solutions to better meet the challenges that globalisation and climate change brings. We function as a link between the civil society, entrepreneurs, policymakers and serious research. FORES produces research papers and books, and organises seminars and debates.

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Acknowledgements

The authors are especially thankful for the support of Dr. Philipp Pattberg at IVM, who has been part of the project from the very beginning and given us comments, critique and encouragement on several occasions. We are also extremely grateful for the comments and critique provided by our eminent peer-review committee, Dr. Harro van Asselt at the Stockholm Environment Institute, Fredrik Hannerz at the Swedish Ministry of Environment, Dr Ulrika Stavlöt, research director at FORES and Dr. Stephan Slingerland. We would also like to thank Elliot Lyons for helping us out with language check and editing.

We would also like to express our thanks to the Tom Hedelius and Jan Wallander Research Foundation for providing support to print this report.

Besides the generous backing from FORES, Oscar would like to acknowledge the research support from the The Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO), grant no.016.125.330.

Foreword

The United Nations negotiations on climate change are supposed to deliver a global agreement in Paris in November 2015. The expectations for this meeting are similar to what preceded COP15 in Copenhagen, which ended as one of the most painful failures of all climate negotiations.

The Copenhagen negotiations proved that getting Barack Obama, Angela Merkel and Hu Jintao to be present for the very last days of a conference is no guarantee of reaching an agreement.

The failure led many to doubt whether the UN process is at all suited to deal with the very complex task of facilitating an agreement on climate change. Many started arguing that one should look towards cooperation outside the UNFCCC, with reduced number of members and issues.

Since 2009, the number of such “climate change clubs” has increased. Countries come together to discuss energy efficiency, short-lived carbon pollutants,

technological development and other issues in many different settings.

Whilst many have seen the benefits of this development, it has also been stated that it may lead to a fragmentation of climate governance and undermine the UN process.

In this study, Oscar Widerberg and Daniel Engström Stenson have analysed the merits and risks of this development. In particular, they have tried to understand if the climate change clubs are conducive to the UNFCCC process or not.

One important conclusion from this study is that there is no evidence that the current set of clubs is threatening the central role of the UNFCCC. Instead, these types of clubs can increase the chances of reaching an agreement in Paris. Some clubs provide an opportunity for country leaders to discuss complex issues and try to find common ground in smaller settings, which can facilitate multilateral UN negotiations. Other clubs may help countries to reduce their abatement costs, which is likely to increase their willingness to commit to mitigation action.

The current process may be the last chance for the UN to deliver on climate change. Initiatives that can help reducing abatement costs and increase chances of finding common ground should be welcomed. Pickiness about organizational ownership is not called for.

Unfortunately, it cannot be ruled out that the UN process may fail to deliver a global agreement with substantial emissions cuts. If this happens, these climate clubs may form the basis to build upon when international society is to regroup and consolidate for the continued fight against climate change.

Mattias Goldmann, Director FORES

Executive Summary

Clubs may lead the way to Paris

As the impacts of climate change are becoming increasingly visible, the process of carving out a global political deal to curb greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions is painstakingly slow. Under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), governments have only managed to agree to agree on ambitious action in 2015 at the 21st Conference of the Parties in Paris, making the next few years crucial to sealing that deal.

Some countries have decided to create or join climate initiatives running parallel to the UNFCCC. We call such initiatives clubs. The G8, the Climate and Clean Air Coalition (CCAC), and the Major Economies Forum (MEF), are prime examples of these climate clubs, and are made up of countries and non-state actors sharing a common, climate related interests. There exists significant uncertainty about the

ability of climate clubs to support the negotiations towards a global climate deal in Paris 2015. This report is an attempt to address this question by scrutinizing 17 clubs, divided into Energy clubs, State clubs and Implementation clubs based on their function and memberships, against four criteria for conduciveness: 1) to what extent clubs adhere to core norms and principles of the UNFCCC; 2) if club members are responsible for more than 50 % of GHG emissions; 3) if the clubs fill a governance gap; and, 4) if clubs are implementing the agreements under the UNFCCC.

Our results show that there are few signs of a conflictive relationship between the clubs and the UNFCCC, and that they could play an important role in paving the road to Paris.

This finding contradicts the opinions of some observers who argue that clubs could have detrimental effects on the UNFCCC, mainly by moving away from legally binding targets to more voluntary and flexible instruments. There are also legitimacy concerns when smaller groups of countries take decisions that influences the whole world. However, for the sake of curbing GHG emissions, a small but important group could make a huge difference, and is likely to yield followers in less powerful countries by using financial and other leverages to gain supporters for a global deal under the auspices of the UNFCCC. Moreover, the support

of important states in, e.g. G8 countries, is essential since they otherwise can play an obstructionist role and block the entire UNFCCC process.

Clubs can also facilitate creating what former chief UNFCCC negotiator for Sweden, Bo Kjellén, calls “enabling conditions”, meaning that agreement at the international level can only be met when national conditions are favourable for an agreement. For instance, implementation and energy clubs can be conducive to lowering abatement costs of climate change and thereby make national interests more prone to action.

Finally, clubs can also be important for translating words into actions and filling governance gaps in the UNFCCC. REDD+, biofuels and black-carbon, for example, are climate topics which are discussed at length in the negotiations, but only operationalized in clubs.

In sum, we have formulated what we like to call the UNFCCC paradox: It is highly unlikely that a ground-breaking multilateral climate agreement would be adopted outside the UNFCCC process. At the same time, a ground-breaking climate agreement agreed under the current format of the UNFCCC is likely to depend on initiatives occurring outside of its control.

Chapter 1

Setting the stage

In October 2013, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) published its Fifth Assessment Report (IPCC - AR5), which forms a forceful reminder that climate change continues to pose unprecedented challenges to humankind. Despite international efforts to mitigate anthropogenic climate change and the ongoing global economic crisis, current greenhouse gas (GHG) concentrations are at record-breaking levels. Unfortunately, players in the most important forum for global climate negotiations, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), find themselves in a gridlock with few transformative solutions in sight.

Parallel to ongoing UNFCCC-negotiations, new initiatives addressing the challenge of climate change have emerged. Club-like arrangements between states that share common climate-related concerns, and

sometimes in partnership with non-state actors such as companies and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO), are attempting to pave new roads for common ground. The Climate and Clean Air Coalition (CCAC), the Major Economies Forum (MEF), and the G20 are good examples of the various ways in which states address climate change beyond the UNFCCC. In line with previous research, we call these arrangements 'climate clubs'. The clubs, while not having reached the degree of institutionalization of, for example, an international organization, contain at least two, but not all, of the countries party to the UNFCCC (Weischer, Morgan, and Patel 2012).

Climate clubs could potentially play important roles in the emerging post-2015 climate governance architecture to be decided upon at the Conference of the Parties (COP) 21 in Paris in 2015. Any international climate initiative outside the UNFCCC, however, raises a number of questions. Are climate clubs conducive to ongoing negotiations under the UNFCCC? Or do they potentially obstruct constructive global approaches to the climate change challenge? In this report we address these questions and try to understand what makes a club conducive to the UNFCCC negotiations.

After this short introduction, chapter 2 elaborates on what is already known about climate clubs. It builds on empirical evidence and international relations

theory to explain the rationale behind club formation, which might help us assess their relation to the UNFCCC. In chapter 3, an assessment framework is introduced whereby a number of criteria are presented. The framework is then applied to 17 climate club. Finally, in chapter 4, the report outlines the lessons learned and discusses the policy implications of the findings.

Chapter 2

What we know about climate clubs

Climate change is a complex issue that invokes difficult governance questions. The drivers of GHG emissions that exacerbate climate change – energy production and consumption, transport, land-use, etc. – permeate our entire global economic system, meaning that the current fossil fuelled path of increasing material wealth for individuals leads to a more polluted world for everyone. Climate change is therefore a global problem and responsibility, and accordingly calls for global solutions.

To address climate change, the international community created the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 1992. It became the main forum of climate change negotiations, and in 1997, the Kyoto Protocol was adopted and set legally binding GHG emissions reduction targets for 37 industrialized countries. The UNFCCC process

and its Kyoto Protocol have, in addition, contributed to the development of concrete policies and tools to reduce emissions at the domestic and regional level. The emergence of carbon markets, including initiatives such as the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) and the European Union Emission Trading Scheme (EU-ETS) are mechanisms that stem from the ambition to fulfill the targets of the Kyoto Protocol. However, as global GHG emissions continue to rise, the UN-led process has been widely criticized for not delivering agreements with sufficient emission reductions. Several reasons can be observed. The consensus rule, which requires consensus on decisions, for instance, has led to agreements that have low, rather than ambitious, targets. Additionally, the division of states into two annexes, where only the developed countries should commit to emission reductions, is outdated and prevents an agreement including all major emitters. Moreover, the large number of items on the UNFCCC's agenda has been accused of taking time and energy from the critical issue of emission reductions. In sum, under the current framework, states have been unable to agree on the necessary GHG emission reductions to keep climate change within safe level.

Beyond the UNFCCC, a great number of initiatives have emerged, leading to what has been termed the

“regime complex for climate change” or the “global climate governance architecture” (Keohane and Victor 2011; Biermann et al. 2009). These terms refer to the fact that the UNFCCC is complemented by a large number of public, private and public-private arrangements, all trying to steer society in a certain direction in its fight against climate change (Abbott 2011; Bulkeley et al. 2012). The international institutions situated in the architecture are highly diverse in terms of their character, constituencies, spatial scope, and subject matter (Biermann et al, 2009). The architecture is also fragmented, meaning it is not coordinated by a single actor, which leads to intentional and unintentional interaction, overlaps, synergies, conflicts and governance gaps.

Climate clubs are one type of player in the emerging fragmented global climate governance architecture. They are particularly interesting since they are by and large initiated and sustained by states that also are members of the UNFCCC. Clubs have both been accused of and praised as presenting an alternative to the UNFCCC; however, an appraisal to what extent they are conducive to ongoing negotiation is still missing.

Clubs: rationale and consequences

Most observers perceived the outcome of the 2009 UNFCCC/COP15 in Copenhagen as a failure of the global community to take action on climate change. This became a catalyst for a stream of ideas on how to complement or, in some cases, bypass the UNFCCC process. It ranged from a focus on small-scale bottom-up approaches, to proposals for replacing the entire UNFCCC process by some other forum.

Why do states give these often voluntary initiatives, where states and sometimes non-state actors form smaller groupings to address climate issues, more attention?

Mancur Olson (1971) argued that larger groups tend to reduce the likelihood of optimal outcomes and therefore advocated a smaller amount of group members. Since Olson's argument, several scholars and observers have proposed possible positive effects of clubs also in negotiations on climate change. Clubs could, for example, increase the benefits of working with a small group of 'climate-friendly' countries; specialize in topics which the UNFCCC are not able to cover as a whole; address the more contentious issues; and, mobilize support on a national level (Moncel and Asselt 2012; Victor 2011). Once they accrue visible

benefits, other parties can join and the total benefits of the club would increase.

Biermann and colleagues (2009, 29) list four types of benefits that derive from using clubs as a governance arrangement, including: Speed - A smaller set of countries may be faster negotiators and able to deal with more contentious issues; Ambition - Smaller groups can be “narrow but deep” when it comes to substantial policy goals, in contrast to the often “broad but shallow” multilateral agreement. Clubs may also possess more innovative capacity; Participation - fewer barriers to entry for a wide range of stakeholders, including non-state actors, may increase the involvement of important actors; and, Equity - Clubs might offer solutions that are specifically tailored for specific regions. Moreover, smaller groups simplify monitoring and thereby bolster reciprocity, which could increase the chances of reaching an agreement and mitigating non-compliance (Keohane and Victor 2011).

Biermann and colleagues (2009) also counter their four potential benefits of clubs with four potential problems. Speed, they argue, could be detrimental to longer-term effects, disincentivize non-club members to take action, and threaten to disintegrate the entire negotiation system. Linked to speed, ambition might also suffer in the long-term as new constellations

emerge which are then inhibited by the piecemeal treaty structure. Package deals also become more difficult in a fragmented negotiation landscape. Similarly, if fragmentation occurs to the point of conflict, linking different issue and policy areas becomes more difficult. Finally, addressing global problems in small groups creates equity concerns, and countries who do not participate in clubs may perceive the structure as unfair, which in turn could impact effectiveness (Biermann et al. 2009, 24-30).

Moreover, international relations and legal scholarship can provide insight into the functional and strategic reasons behind club formation. Functional explanations posit that a club fills governance gaps and emerge due to a need-driven demand for governance. A prime example is the Climate and Clean Air Coalition (CCAC). The focus of the CACC - reducing emissions of methane, black carbon, and Hydroflourocarbons (HFCs) - are currently regulated by different regimes such as Kyoto or Montreal Protocol, LRTAP, or not regulated at all, such as the case of black carbon. The gasses' large impact on climate change has created a common problem that needs to be addressed, and states respond by setting up a coordinating forum. Strategic reasons for club formation occur when states attempt to reframe the response to climate change by forming a club which is more in-line with their own

interests. When states feel that they can't optimally fulfill their interests, they can either create new clubs or join other existing clubs. This behavior has been referred to as 'forum-shopping' and involves the strategic selection and use of policy forums by actors to advance their policy goals (Alter and Meunier 2009; Murphy and Kellow 2013). Forum-shopping has been severely criticized from a fairness perspective, since actors could use forum-shopping to exit venues if the conflicting interests and ideas from weaker actors receives greater traction and influence the process. Instead, new forums are created where the influence of the major states is maintained (Benvenisti and Downs 2007).

Club formation could also lead to a situation where the rules agreed in one forum are inconsistent with those of another, which is indeed the most problematic side of fragmentation. This phenomenon was observed by Raustila and Victor who termed it 'strategic inconsistency', when states engage in conflict-seeking behavior where they "jolt rules in one or another direction" (2004, 360). There are also functional arguments as to why clubs could be a problem. Benefits from international regimes are likely to increase with the number of members, such as in the Law of the Sea, and reducing the size of the group "generally diminish the gains from co-operation, while [increasing] the

likelihood and robustness of co-operation” (Kahler 1992). While the club creation and forum shopping has been observed in global governance architectures, the jury is still out whether it is conducive to solving a policy problem. In the next section we begin to address this problem.

Criteria for clubs to be compatible with the UNFCCC

To assess whether climate clubs have a synergistic, cooperative or conflictive relationship to the UNFCCC, i.e. to measure their ‘conduciveness’ or compatibility with the UNFCCC, a number of criteria need to be developed. Biermann et al (2009) suggest three indicators: institutional integration, norm conflict, and actor constellation. Building on these criteria, we create our framework.

First, core norms and principles should be aligned in a synergistic relationship. We have selected two core norms:

- **Cap on GHG emissions:** The UNFCCC calls for the stabilization of greenhouse gases in order to prevent dangerous climate change. This means that any club with a global goal

of increasing GHG intensity instead of capping total GHG emissions is not in-line with UNFCCC norms. For example, a club that promotes increases energy efficiency for a certain technology wouldn't necessarily be at odds with the goals of the UNFCCC and result in 'cooperative fragmentation'.

- Common, but differentiated, responsibilities: A club should act in the spirit of common, but differentiated, responsibilities to be in-line with UNFCCC norms. This means, for example, that the states that have historically have emitted the most GHG gases should do more than others to mitigate climate change. Hence, the "differentiation" comes in proportioning responsibility in terms of culpability for a certain aspect of combatting the common foe of climate change (Yamin and Depledge 2004).

Moreover, either major emitters, or at least a group of countries representing a significant part of global emissions, should be included in the club so that it can effectively facilitate UNFCCC objectives. Thomas

Hale writes “No deal excluding the United States and China which together emit more than 40 percent of the world’s GHGs, is worth the paper it is written on” (2011, 89), and while he is probably exaggerating the worthlessness of such a deal, the point is that a club must at the very least target a significant part of the world’s emissions in order to have any potential impact on UNFCCC objectives. To fulfill this criterion, the members of the club should account for more than 50 % of global GHG emissions.

The issue of governance gaps and whether and how clubs address them is also important. Such governance gaps occur when causes of climate change are left out of multilateral solutions to the problem. Measures to decarbonize energy production or certain gasses for example, are good examples where there is a governance gap in the governance regime. One could say that the UNFCCC only establishes a framework for action and parties are free to implement it. Nevertheless, with some issues, such as forestry, the UNFCCC has come much further in their work than others, such as promoting low-carbon energy production.

Finally, combatting climate change is likely to involve a number of policies, agreements and instruments, including a range of sectors and actors. Here, one could argue that the UNFCCC merely sets goals and a framework for action and the actual implemen-

tation of agenda issues could partly be carried out by clubs. To test this claim we need to understand whether the clubs could indeed be seen as implementing issues already discussed and targeted under the UNFCCC umbrella. In sum, scholarship on the effects of clubs is rather nascent, and a large-N or in-depth analysis has not yet decided what their impact is on problem-solving and other institutions. To improve the empirical understanding of what their impact is on the UNFCCC, the next chapter addresses assess the relationship between the UNFCCC and 17 climate clubs.

Chapter 3

Clubs and the UNFCCC

A large amount of other institutions have emerged around the climate governance core that is the UNFCCC (Zelli 2011). The issue regarding these outside institutions, specifically clubs, and the UNFCCC is whether the existence and behavior of the former is conducive to negotiations within the latter. Here, compatibility is illustrated by the degree of fragmentation between the institutions or clubs and the UNFCCC, and to this end, a typology developed to determine fragmentation in a governance architecture is used (Biermann et al. 2009). The typology distinguishes three degrees of fragmentation: Synergistic – when there is one core institution with other institutions being closely integrated; Cooperative – when there are different institutions and decision-making procedures that are loosely integrated, and the relationship between norms are ambiguous;

and Conflictive – when there are many largely unrelated institutions (Biermann et al. 2009). Returning to our research question, if there is a synergistic relationship between the clubs and the UNFCCC, there is a compatible relationship. The following chapter aims to find the degree of fragmentation between the UNFCCC and the clubs.

A mapping of clubs and their relationship to the UNFCCC

To illustrate the assessment scheme presented in the previous chapter, we selected a sample of clubs fitting the definition. The number of clubs is unknown, and the sample selection is taken from a list of 17 clubs described by Weischer and colleagues (2012) published in the peer-review journal, *Review of European, Comparative & International Environmental Law (RECIEL)*. The article represents one of the few empirical accounts of clubs and their potential to transform the current gridlock in global climate governance.

Moreover, clubs' relative novelty poses a considerable research challenge: most climate clubs exist for less than 10 years, and few clubs allow for ex-post evaluation. Instead we have to rely on mission statements and second-hand data in our investigation. Data

gathering has been carried out in three steps: first, homepages have been used to identify the objective, organizational set-up, membership, and working areas of the club; second, academic databases have been scanned for available case-studies; and third, newspaper articles have been consulted to learn about the latest developments. The data has been screened for positive or negative links to the UNFCCC, following the criteria set out in the previous section, scored, and gathered into a matrix. Based on their function and membership, the clubs have been divided into three broad categories: Energy clubs, State clubs, and Implementation clubs. The relationship between each club and the UNFCCC has been scored qualitatively where a plus indicates a positive, or conducive, link, a minus an explicitly conflicting link, and a blank space indicates that there is no clear relationship between the club and the UNFCCC.

The following sections elaborate our results.

Energy clubs

The core aim of energy clubs is to spread clean energy technologies and improve energy efficiency. Generally, climate change is only one out of many goals, and energy clubs are particularly attractive due to potentially high co-benefits (relative pure emissions-reduction initiatives); for example, gains in energy

| Clubs | Cap on GHG emissions | Common but differentiated responsibilities | Major emitters included | Governance Gap | Implementing UNFCCC agenda |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------|----------------------------|
| Energy clubs | | | | | |
| IEA Multilateral Technology Agreements (Implementing Agreements) | | + | + | | + |
| Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Partnership (REEEP) | | + | + | | |
| REN 21 | | | | | |
| Energy+ | + | + | | | + |
| Clean Energy Ministerial (CEM) | + | | + | | |
| Asia-Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate (APP) | - | | + | | |
| State clubs | | | | | |
| GB | + | | + | | |
| G20 | | | + | + | + |
| Major Economies Forum (MEF) | + | + | + | | + |
| Implementation clubs | | | | | |
| Carbon Sequestration Leadership Forum (CSLF) | | | + | | + |
| Global Bioenergy Partnership | | + | + | + | |
| REDD+ Partnership | | | + | + | + |
| Global Methane Partnership | | | + | | + |
| Global Green Growth Institute (GGCI) | | | | | |
| International Partnership Measurement and Mitigation, Reporting and Verification (M-MRV) | | | + | | + |
| LEDS Global Partnership | | | + | | + |
| Climate and Clean Air Coalition to Reduce Short-lived Climate Pollutants (CCAC) | | | + | + | |

efficiency can reduce GHG emissions and improve energy security (De Coninck et al. 2008). They engage in »push« activities by trying to increase R&D in energy technologies, or »pull« activities aiming to increase market-uptake of a technology (Ibid.).

There are large differences in the extent to which energy clubs explicitly associate themselves with UNFCCC goals and aims. An example of one such club that clearly chooses to associate with the UNFCCC's aims and goals is the Climate Technology Initiative (CTI), which supports technology transfer under the UNFCCC and was initially established by the UNFCCC's COP1, and since 2003 is an IEA Implementing Agreement. It aims to work closely with the UNFCCC secretariat and the newly established Technology Mechanisms (UNFCCC Decision 1/CP.16) to accelerate development and diffusion of low-carbon technologies. However, the link between the UNFCCC and the energy clubs aren't always as straight-forward. Some energy clubs, such as the Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Partnership (REEEP), choose to focus only on energy issues (Pattberg 2010). For instance, REEEP's homepage and its 2012 – 2015 strategic overview makes no mention of the UNFCCC process or the international policy process. Consequently, REEEP neither contests nor aligns itself with the UNFCCC, its goals or mechanisms. Indirectly,

however, REEEP fashion themselves very much in the spirit of the UNFCCC by focusing on low-carbon energy transition in developing countries (Parthan et al. 2010). The weakest links between energy clubs and climate are those that deny any link to the UNFCCC and engage only a fraction of the world's largest emitters. REN21, for example, is devoted to increasing the spread of renewable energy. It lacks the membership of major emitters and is highly focused on capacity building and knowledge exchange through annual publications on renewable energies, promoting conferences and hosting an online web-platform for members. In fact, REN21 does not score at all in any of our five categories used to determine support or conflict with the UNFCCC.

Some energy clubs are outspoken in their adherence to the UNFCCC. The newly created Energy+ initiative clearly links its activities to those of the UNFCCC. Its focus – to promote energy efficiency and renewable energy on a sectoral level – is not very different from, e.g. REN21 or REEEP, but it explicitly supports the work of the UNFCCC by stating that “[p]artners will be refining the overall concept [Energy+] and methodologies together, in harmonization with existing and ongoing work under the UNFCCC” (Energy+, 2011). Energy+ even outlines how it aims to support the UNFCCC by accelerating and planning

for NAMAs, and by piloting the sectoral approach in line with UNFCCC standards.

In 2009, the members of the Major Economies Forum (MEF) launched a Global Partnership for low-carbon and climate-friendly technologies, which in turn released 10 Technology Action Plans (TAPs) based on a gap-analysis made by the IEA. Each of the TAPs was developed by a country, or countries, with an interest in the issue. Inspired by the MEF's TAPs, the Clean Energy Ministerial (CEM) was announced at the UNFCCC's Copenhagen meeting in 2009. Its core activity is to meet at ministerial level regularly and foster clean energy development and dissemination through 13 initiatives, which largely overlap with the TAPs of the MEF. Among the 13 CEM initiatives, the Global Superior Energy Performance Partnership (GSEP) is working on energy efficiency in commercial buildings and industrial facilities. Parts of the GSEP are a remnant of the now defunct Asia-Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate (APP) (CEM 2013). While the APP looks like most of the other energy clubs, at the time of creation it was seen by some as a challenger to the UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol, and the BBC called it "a fig-leaf to cover the embarrassment of George Bush and John Howard, the only western leaders to have reneged on commitments their predecessors made at the UN Kyoto conference

in 1997” (“Business Deal or Bright Idea?” 2006). However, others embraced an initiative of countries willing to move from words to action (Kellow 2010).

The APP warrants closer attention, since it is the only case of an alleged “conflicting” relation with the UNFCCC (Biermann et al, 2009), and has spurred a wealth of academic interest (Karlsson-Vinkhuyzen and Van Asselt 2009; Kellow 2010; McGee and Taplin 2009). In a certain aspects, the APP looks like a blueprint for many current energy partnerships: it promoted a sectoral approach, which later dissipated into the discussions regarding the post-2015 climate regime, and focused on low-carbon technology through partnerships with and between businesses in the partner countries. However, the APP departs from the UNFCCC norms on a number of other levels: first, it focused on GHG intensity rather than an absolute emission ceiling; second, there was an absence of binding reductions and timetables; third, it included no carbon markets or price signals; and, finally, it lacked any type of compliance mechanisms (Christoff and Eckersley 2007). Yet, the APP share these problems with many other energy clubs. What truly set the APP apart is that it was set-up by two countries that had not signed the Kyoto Protocol and were looking to shape climate governance according to their own interests.

State clubs

Clubs, in the more traditional sense of the word, are exclusive communities. What we call “State clubs” fulfill this condition of exclusivity and only invite a select group to the table. Based on wealth, such as with the G8 and G20, or by importance to climate negotiations, such as with MEF, countries form State clubs.

The G8 and G20 are odd figures among the climate clubs, mainly because they do not exclusively focus on climate change. Yet, perhaps surprisingly, they are both frequently mentioned as potentially more effective forums than the UNFCCC to address climate change (c.f. Busby 2010). The G8 and G20 have both introduced climate change to their agendas on top of other issues. In the G8’s case, it might have been easy, given their “perennial search” for agenda issues (Keohane and Victor, 2011), and the G20 has found a governance niche by aiming to reduce fossil fuel subsidies and improve delivery of climate finance, i.e. addressing issues discussed during the UNFCCC sessions. Some concrete action, though, can be seen from the state clubs. The G8, for example, has taken substantive action and introduced long-term carbon emissions cuts (80 % by 2050) and limiting warming to 2 degrees Celsius, of which the former and latter were articulated in the Copenhagen Accord. In a similar vein, in 2013, the G20 moved to an agreement to reduce HFCs,

under the Montreal Protocol, and reiterated their commitment to implement the outcomes of the last three UNFCCC COPs (G20 2013). However, in 2013, climate change for the first time since 2005, slipped off of the G8 agenda. It is not clear how to interpret the absence of climate change, but it is a reminder that the forum can simply drop climate change when seemingly more pressing issues arise, such as in this case trade, transparency, taxes, the economic crisis, and the war in Syria (Falkner 2013). It severely undermines the proposal by some observers to have non-climate groupings, such as the G20 and the G8, take lead action on global climate change.

In contrast to G8 and G20, the Major Economies Forum (MEF) was created exclusively to “facilitate a candid dialogue among major developed and developing economies, help generate the political leadership necessary to achieve a successful outcome at the annual UN climate negotiations and advance the exploration of concrete initiatives and joint ventures that increase the supply of clean energy while cutting greenhouse gas emissions” (MEF 2013). It consists of the largest emitters and economies in the world, including the EU, the US and the BASIC countries. The forum is strongly connected to the UNFCCC and functions as a preparation and discussion forum for coming come to an agreement at the COPs. To some,

the MEF has a controversial relationship with the UNFCCC (see Leal-Arcas 2011), however, without any mandate or formal decision-making function, it is likely to remain a discussion forum for the UNFCCC rather than an alternative.

Implementation clubs

Next to energy and state clubs, there has been a surge in clubs focusing on implementing specific climate-relevant topics, both within and beyond the current UNFCCC agenda. We call them implementation clubs.

A good example of an implementation club focusing on one specific issue is the Global Bioenergy Partnership (GBEP) that emerged from the G8+5's meeting in Gleneagles in 2005. It has since then received renewed mandates and recognition by subsequent G8 meetings and the 2013 G20 meeting in 2013 (GBEP 2013). It also reports yearly to the G8 summits (GBEP 2013). Its goal is to support "biomass and biofuels deployment, particularly in developing countries where biomass use is prevalent", and refrains from mentioning any links to ongoing UNFCCC work in its charter. Instead of creating indicators for monitoring in line with UNFCCC processes, the GBEP focus their priorities on being compatible with international trade negotiations. Interestingly, the GBEP attempts to coor-

dinate its action with other related PPPs, including REN21, REEEP, IRENA and GMI (GBEP 2013). It is, however, unclear how it will relate to future actions in the UNFCCC's Clean Technology Centre & Networks (CTCN), even if there are synergies that could be envisioned (Boyd, 2012). Finally, global biofuel politics have been described as a case of "non-governance" and the GBPE in its current format is not working as a forum to make any voluntary or binding collective commitments (Bastos-Lima and Gupta, 2013). It is therefore highly unclear what type of influence it could exert on the UNFCCC process. A similar silence with regard to the UNFCCC can be observed in the Carbon Sequestration Leadership Forum (CSLF). While Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) has been a recurring agenda item with the UNFCCC, it doesn't include any direct reference to the UNFCCC in its charter. The recently released 2013 Carbon Sequestration Technology Roadmap, for example, refers to the IEA's temperature reduction scenario (the '2DS') rather than the UNFCCC 2 degree Celsius target (CSLF 2013).

The REDD+ Partnership, on the other hand, address incentivizing reductions in GHG emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, as well as conserving and enhancing forest carbon stocks and sustainably managing forests, all of which have become integral parts of the UNFCCC. . The negotiations on

REDD+ within the climate regime has been going on since 2005 as part of the SBSTA's agenda (Corbera and Schroeder 2011). However, since REDD+ is intrinsically linked to the post-Kyoto discussions which are currently in a stalemate, an agreement is currently not in sight (Reinecke, Pistorius, and Pregernig 2012). The REDD+ Partnership is an attempt to implement something on the UNFCCC agenda. It also states that the creation of the Partnership is a result of a call for coordination by the COP and that eventually will disintegrate: "the Partnership is considered as interim as it will be expected to be replaced by, or folded into, a UNFCCC mechanism including REDD+ once established and agreed upon by the Parties", indicating that it fills a governance gap in the current regime (REDD+ Partnership 2013).

Similar to the REDD+ Partnership, the Global Methane Initiative (GMI) also addresses a specific issue in the climate regime. Devoted to work "in concert" with the UNFCCC, it focuses on methane, a potent GHG part of the Kyoto basket of GHG gases. It is lead by the US and hosted by the US-EPA. Countries can take part in the steering committee and chair the sub-committees. While it labels itself as a PPP, it is heavily driven by states. The GMI includes the majority of the world's methane emitters and aligns itself explicitly with the action taken under the UNFCCC.

Besides the clubs that focus on governance niches within the overall climate regime, such as biofuels and REDD+, there are a number of implementation clubs that focus on more broad topics, such as low-carbon development strategies, green growth and monitoring, verification and reporting.

The Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI) calls itself “the world’s first international organization focused exclusive on green growth” (GGGI 2012). The CGGI is a treaty based organization, which in a sense makes it more formal than most other clubs reviewed in this report. On the other hand, it does not focus on climate change, does not include any of the major GHG emitters and fails to make any linkages to the UNFCCC process. In fact, the set-up of the organization held its signing ceremony at the Rio +20 in Rio de Janeiro 2012, and adheres more to the UN’s sustainable development work and the MDGs than GHG emissions targets. It is doubtful whether GGGI should even be considered a climate club.

The Low Emission Development Strategies Global Partnership (LEDS GP) provides an example of an organization with more relevance to the UNFCCC. The partnership takes a “meta”-perspective on low-carbon development and aims at “advancing low emissions development through ongoing coordination, information exchange and cooperation among

programs that support LEDS and country institutions that are developing LEDS” (LEDS GP 2013). It is relatively new and gives a very prominent role to non-state actors in the pursuit of developing plans to support low-carbon development, such as National Appropriate Mitigation Actions, or NAMAs. It recognizes the plethora of global and regional energy partnerships and club-like arrangements. For instance, in a discussion paper prepared for the World Bank, the CLEAN Network identifies over 50 networks and knowledge platforms that support low-emission and climate compatible planning (Coordinated Low Emissions Assistance Network (CLEAN) 2011).

A more focused action plan can be observed from the International Partnership on Mitigation and MRV (M-MRV), which was set up in 2010 to support practical exchange in designing, setting up, and implementing LEDS, NAMAs and MRV systems. The partnership adheres strongly to the UNFCCC— for instance, it holds its meetings back-to-back with the UNFCCC COPs. It also explicitly states its goal to support countries in the Kyoto Protocol’s second commitment period, decided upon in Doha at the COP18. The M-MRV should be seen as a vehicle for implementing decisions taken at the UNFCCC by engaging in capacity building and knowledge exchange on big-picture issues, such as LEDS and MRV systems. It also feeds

the UNFCCC process with information on best-practices and input the NAMA registry.

Finally, besides implementation clubs that focus on specific or broad issues within the UNFCCC framework, some have found governance gaps and built bridges to other climate relevant multilateral agreements. The Climate and Clean Air Coalition (CCAC) is a rather newly established coalition focusing on a governance gap in the global climate governance architecture, namely short-lived climate pollutants (SLCPs) including black-carbon, methane and many hydroflourocarbons (HFCs). Members of the CCAC thereby bridge GHG mitigation action under the UNFCCC (Methane) and the Montreal Protocol (HFCs), while responding to the increased understanding of black carbon as a climate forcer. It takes a sectoral perspective on mitigation efforts and in 2012 launched five initiatives where rapid action was deemed necessary. Moreover, the coalition introduced cross-cutting efforts including financing and national planning action to address SLCPs more strategically. CCAC is a cross-treaty partnership with the objective of complementing and supporting, not replacing, ongoing multilateral efforts, in particular the UNFCCC. In the case of the CCAC, the implementation clubs could mitigate fragmentation by addressing GHGs that are currently part of two regimes.

Commonalities and differences among clubs

The following section elaborates on some of the commonalities and differences found among the clubs.

First, the energy clubs all share important characteristics in promoting technological change in order to reduce carbon emissions. Their set-up is often comparable and include a few sectors with a participating country in the lead and surrounded by non-state actors. The congruity of both goals and technological focus among clubs is striking, and some would argue that this may indicate a high degree of fragmentation, causing overlaps and gaps in the governance architecture (Van de Graaf 2013). These gaps and overlaps, which boil down to a lack of coordination between clubs, consequently, could be viewed as originating from states' self-interest rather than a global-needs analysis.

The links between the UNFCCC and the energy clubs also vary considerably. Whereas the CTI and Energy+ make explicit links to the UNFCCC process, the others are less open about their aim to contribute to the multilateral process. Nevertheless, there is no evidence that currently functioning energy clubs should pose any treat to the UNFCCC norms or effectiveness.

Second, state clubs, including G8, G20 and the MEF, are unique in character due to their exclusivity and representation of states. While climate change has emerged on their agendas, their main aim is to hammer out deals that later could be brought to the UNFCCC. The G20 has also found a climate governance niche, namely on reducing energy subsidies. Nevertheless, there is to our knowledge no indication that these clubs would have the ambition, mandate, or capacity to take over core tasks from the UNFCCC. It should also be noted that a key difference between the G8 and G20 and the MEF is that the two previous clubs can direct their attention elsewhere, while climate change and enabling agreement within the UNFCCC is the MEF's *raison-d'être*. The state clubs also hold a top position in the hierarchy, since they are able to set-up and provide a mandate to the energy or implementation clubs, such as in the case of the GBEP.

Third, the implementation clubs fill a necessary and interesting spot in the climate regime complex. In the cases of GBEP, CCAC, GMI and REDD+, they clearly take up climate-relevant governance tasks that the UNFCCC are either not discussing or not continuing to discuss. As such, they fill an important hole in the architecture by gathering countries around a specific topic, alleviate the UNFCCC agenda from an overburdening number of agenda items, and take action

where multilateral negotiations are at a stand-still. The implementation clubs dealing with LEDS, NAMAs and MRV, such as LEDS GP and M-MRV, are responding to more recent development in the UNFCCC where voluntary action has become more important with the introduction of the NAMAs in Copenhagen and a NAMA registry in Cancun. Moreover, the designation of “climate clubs” may not be appropriate for some clubs. In the case of GGGI, there are few links to the UNFCCC and instead the focus is placed on sustainable development. This might be a sampling issue. Finally, some clubs have found governance gaps and acts as linkages between different institutions. The CCAC is a prime example where black carbon is addressed and strong links are made between the UNFCCC and the Montreal Protocol.

Clubs’ compatibility with the UNFCCC

In their study on fragmentation in global governance architecture, Biermann and colleagues argued that the climate architecture shows signs of conflictive, cooperative and synergistic fragmentation, but is overall cooperative. We are inclined to adhere to Biermann and colleagues’ conclusions, with some nuances,

however. The clubs used for this study appear to be remarkably in line with the UNFCCC's core norms and would rather implement issues than create conflicts, or even show signs of 'strategic inconsistency'. A central difference among the clubs is how explicit they are in linking to the UNFCCC. Some use governance gaps or ongoing unsolved issues in the current architecture as an excuse to start a club, such as the CCAC and REDD+ Partnership. Others, such as Energy+ and M-MRV, see their output as directly feeding into the UNFCCC process. In the most extreme cases, the clubs do not explicitly mention the UNFCCC in their communications or as target for their actions, yet their goals are clearly helping the UNFCCC's cause, which is the case with REEEP and the CSLF. In no case did we find evidence that a club is in direct conflict with the UNFCCC. We therefore conclude that there is a synergistic and cooperative relationship between the clubs and the UNFCCC. It is synergistic because the UNFCCC remains the core institution around which energy, state and implementation clubs are aiming to shape, negotiate and implement the current climate change governance architecture. It is cooperative because institutions and decision-making procedures on some topics are loosely integrated, and the relationship between norms and principles are not always clearly articulated.

If one perceives the UNFCCC as a framework for action rather than an implementing body where every detail should be hammered out, then clubs have a central role in implementing policy. Clubs are generally started to support the UNFCCC rather than challenge it, and there is at this point no climate club with the ambition, profile, mandate or membership that could plausibly take over the UNFCCC's role. On the other hand, within the ecosystem of clubs, there appears to be considerable overlap and fragmentation. Among the energy clubs, for example, the goals of REEEP, REN21, ENERGY+ and CEM are strikingly similar and in many cases they have the same members.

Chapter 4

A perilous path or the way forward?

An increase in number and type of climate clubs has created ample opportunity for states to choose a venue for pursuing their interests. Some argue that this is a threat to the global climate governance architecture where overlaps, redundancies and strategic inconsistency can lead to sub-optimal outcomes. The clubs reviewed in this report, however, show little sign of conflict with the architecture's cornerstone, the UNFCCC. Hence, while the debate whether clubs and other climate initiative are conducive to the overall climate regime is characterized by a dichotomous relationship between those that believe that bottom-up initiatives are good in the absence of real action emerging from the UNFCCC, and those that see clubs as a threat to the top-down, targets-and-table, regime currently in place, we argue for a via media between a top-down and a bottom-up approach. State clubs

have the potential to carve out deals and discuss contentious issues in smaller settings; energy clubs could lower abatement costs, making states more inclined to ambitious climate action, by spreading clean energy technology; and implementation clubs could lower abatement costs, fill governance gaps, and translate UNFCCC words into actions. Moreover, a number of lessons can be drawn.

First, while clubs are not challenging the current climate governance architecture, some are more conducive to the UNFCCC than others. The state clubs, for example, have more clout and ability to push the entire climate regime forward, while some energy clubs barely refer to the UNFCCC, omit large emitters and have overlapping objectives. Conduciveness to the UNFCCC should not be confused with overall effectiveness of the global response to climate change. It is possible that the current climate governance architecture is not fit to address the immense task of curbing GHG emissions to safe levels. In our opinion, however, although some of the clubs, such as CCAC and the G20, try to fill gaps and limit emissions outside the UNFCCC, the current set of clubs do not have the capacity or the institutional power to keep emissions within the necessary levels to avoid a global warming by more than 2 degrees.

Second, since the demise of the APP, this report

cannot find evidence of any club that explicitly conflicts with the UNFCCC, let alone has the potential or ambition to replace it. The most obvious contenders could be the state clubs, however these either treat climate as an ad hoc agenda item or merely attempt to pave the way for successful UNFCCC negotiations. The G8 and G20 are simply too susceptible to agenda changes due to current event and topics to engage in climate change in the long-term, which is crucial to addressing the problem.

Third, some of the UNFCCC's norms are malleable, and we detect a shift in narrative since the Copenhagen Accord. For example, the Cancun Agreement moves away from the Kyoto track and its non-binding commitments and confusion surrounding which base years to use. . Some states even defined targets in terms of CO₂ intensity while others used a business-as-usual scenario instead of GHG caps. The question of whether or not clubs symbolize a new direction in global climate policy is in our view highly relevant.

Fourth, from an academic perspective, there is a clear need for further research into the relationship between clubs and the UNFCCC on the one hand, and the climate governance architecture and other governance architectures on the other. Literature is full of sweeping statements on the pros and cons of the pro-

liferation of new governance arrangements and the emergence of fragmentation, yet few studies actually map and investigate the relationship and effects of fragmentation in the entire global climate governance architecture. In particular, a common definition of terminology is needed. We used a definition and sample of clubs which has passed peer-review and was published in a renowned journal. Still, one could argue that there is a clear difference in type, ambition and capacity between state, energy and implementation clubs. Some clubs, such as REEEP and LEDS Global Partnership, are also Public Private Partnerships (PPP) and should perhaps be taken out of any comparative analysis of clubs. Others, such as GGGI, are not suitable for the »climate club« designation.

Finally, looking ahead towards the UNFCCC's COP 21 in 2015 and the Road to Paris, a few policy implications can be seen. First, despite the risk of strategic inconsistency and a move towards flexible and voluntary mechanisms in climate governance, this report is rather positive about the current developments. The potentially critical influence of the clubs on the UNFCCC negotiations exists in their ability to hammer out deals between large important players before the COPs. Surely, there is a valid legitimacy concern when smaller groups of countries make decisions that affects the whole world, but for the sake

of curbing GHGs, a deal between the US, EU, Russia and the BASIC-countries would have large effects. It would also likely create many followers among non-club members, as major powers can use their leverage to get non-club members on-board to participate in the UNFCCC negotiations. Major-powers in the G8 or the MEF are also potentially more problematic if they take an obstructionist position during the COPs, i.e. China is more likely to wreak havoc than Guinea-Bissau.

Second, clubs can create, what former chief UNFCCC negotiator for Sweden, Bo Kjellén, calls »enabling conditions«, which high-lights the link between domestic and international policy. Only when national conditions are favorable for an agreement, can an international agreement be met. In particular, implementation and energy clubs can promote lower climate change abatement costs in domestic settings, which should have a positive effect on a states propensity to agree on ambitious climate policy. Besides, if the UNFCCC negotiations continue to yield meager results, ambitious clubs could become instrumental for tackling climate change.

In sum, we have formulated something we call the UNFCCC paradox: It is highly unlikely that a groundbreaking multilateral climate agreement would be adopted outside the auspices of the UNFCCC. At

the same time, a groundbreaking climate agreement agreed under the current format of the UNFCCC is likely to be dependent on initiatives occurring outside its processes.

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The UN-led negotiations on Climate change are to deliver an agreement in Paris in 2015. In parallel to the efforts within the UNFCCC some countries have decided to create or join climate initiatives, so called clubs. The G8, the Climate and Clean Air Coalition (CCAC), and the Major Economies Forum (MEF), are prime examples of these climate clubs.

While some observers put great faith in these clubs, others see a risk that the proliferation of climate clubs should undermine the UNFCCC. This report is an attempt to address this question. The results of this study show that there are few signs of a conflictive relationship between the clubs and the UNFCCC, and that they could play an important role in paving the road to Paris.

While the current set of clubs are not challenging the current climate governance architecture, it should be noted that some clubs are more conducive to the UNFCCC than others.