Editorial

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In this issue, we feature an unusual reviews exchange. We have two related books on the rise of renewables, one from Varun Sivaram on solar power and another on renewables more broadly from Michel Aklin and Johannes Urpelainen. Sivaram and Urpelainen review each other's books and then Dustin Mulvaney and Josh Busby review both books. The author's then respond to the sets of reviews. With renewables poised to take off, this debate is important.

Sivaram speaks to the lift off of solar and the potential pitfalls of technological lock-in from the perspective of a scholar who has worked on solar technologies in the lab as well as for firms and governments. Aklin and Urpelainen as political scientists provide an account of the rise of renewables, mostly in Europe and the United States, and whether and how advocates for renewables were able to overcome political obstacles along the way and create durable coalitions to survive pushback from incumbent energy interests. In different ways, these books speak to the potential limits to the expansion of solar and renewables more broadly.

In Sivaram's account, the early success of solar to carve out a niche in the electricity space may be self-limiting as policies designed to create coalitions that benefit from solar might lock-in solar technologies that foreclose what Sivaram regards as necessary improvements in

technological efficiency. Solar, as Sivaram warns, is subject to a declining value proposition: in the absence of battery storage, more solar becomes less valuable as utilities still need sources of energy for when the sun isn't shining.

As Mulvaney notes in his review, for Aklin and Urpelainen, lock-in is a good thing, in that it suggest that renewables technologies have enough market maturity and politically powerful constituencies that their market survival is no longer in doubt. The question for both is how far can renewables technologies expand and help countries reduce emissions from greenhouse gases and mitigate climate change. Though Sivaram is more keen on improved solar technologies like perovskites, both books agree that battery storage technologies are an important technology frontier that could ease scale-up.

This issue features another exchange on another important book: Sarah Stroup and Wendy Wong's *Authority Trap*. This impressive book is reviewed by Clifford Bob, Mette Eilstrup-Sangiovanni, and Jennifer Hadden. The authors also respond. Stroup and Wong make the provocative claim in their book that non-governmental organizations face a conundrum. Some are more influential than others, operationalized in the degree of attention different groups receive. Continued influence and deference to these leading NGOs is only achieved if they moderate

their goals, leading to at best what they term “vanilla victories.”

They examine a range of NGOs in different sectors, carrying out both statistical and ethnographic research with case studies on the Arms Trade Treaty, the Financial Transaction Tax, the Sustainability Consortium, the UN Global Compact, The INGO Accountability Charter, and the World Social Forum.

The reviewers praise the book’s ambition but also raise a number of concerns. Bob, in his review of the book, worries that the way authority is operationalized as attention is actually some steps removed from the underlying concept. Eilstrup-Sangiovanni similarly worries that NGOs do not necessarily seek to maximize their visibility to multiple audiences. Some may be less visible in the press but influential through other behind the scenes processes or for more select audiences. Hadden for her part raises interesting questions about the origins of authority and how it changes over time.

In this autumn issue we also feature two longer reviews articles.

First, Franz Baumann, visiting scholar at New York University and a career UN-diplomat, offers us an incisive look into the challenge of ‘global heating’. Global Heating is the flipside of the phenomenal economic and demographic development of the past half century. Ever more people are enjoying, or pursuing, ever more comfortable and mobile life styles, the cumulative effect is to push the Earth beyond its carrying capacity. Recognizing these dangers, the 2015 Paris Agreement was a major achievement – but

not good enough, because chances are slim that it will be realized and, even if it were, it would not suffice. Baumann offers readers an in-depth exploration of the issue and as well as illuminating the perils of continued inaction.

Lastly, Dr. Josh Krasna provides us with a behind the scenes look inside the national security architecture of Israel. Krasna studies the structure and processes of the Israeli national security constellation, and common themes raised including the weakness of Israel’s Government and Security Cabinet in national security affairs; the quasi-presidential role of prime ministers in these issues and their preference for less formalized decision-making processes, based on sub-cabinet groups and personal staff; the preeminence of the military (including its often moderating influence) in staff and planning processes, and the parallel weakness of civilian bodies; and the disputable effects of the newish National Security Staff, meant to ameliorate the problems of the system.

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