

# **The EU's disappointing leadership on climate, or should we be less judgemental?**

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In the 2000s climate change has steadily risen on the EU's political agenda and along with this development, scholarly work on EU climate policy and its role in the international climate negotiations mushroomed (Van Schaik and Egenhofer, 2005; Groenleer and Van Schaik, 2007; Harris, 2007; Oberthür and Roche Kelly, 2008; Vogler, 2009; Oberthür and Pallemarts, 2010; Wurzel and Connelly, 2011). More recently, political attention for the subject is waning, but scholars are still studying EU climate policy and its role in the international negotiations. Particularly the Copenhagen Summit of 2009 has provided a watershed as it did not lead to the outcome desired by the EU. This illustrates the limits of the EU's alleged leadership role, its (normative) foreign policy aspirations and international influence in the new multipolar world order (Van Schaik and Schunz, forthcoming). Policy analysts have started to analyse what the EU could do to improve its performance in the future (e.g. Spencer et al., 2010; Geden and Kremer, 2010; Curtin, 2000). This would be a key necessity not only for the EU's international credibility, but also to save the climate, as those analysing the field seem convinced of the environmental and humanitarian need for a stringent climate policy and belief in the EU's positive contribution to achieving this.

This article will investigate the literature on the EU's activities in the international climate change regime, its normative foundations, its findings, and will allude to missing knowledge gaps. It will discuss to what extent the EU's role on international climate change policy is a case study, whose findings can be extended to other fields and EU foreign policy more broadly. It will firstly describe what is studied with regard to the EU's role in international climate policy distinguishing between periods and subjects. Then it will go on to describe the dominant theoretical approaches used to analyse the EU's role in the international

climate regime. Subsequently it will discuss implicit assumptions and research gaps. A short conclusion will summarise main findings, their generalisability to other areas of EU external action, and possible avenues for future research.

### **The object of study: periods**

Scholars studying the EU's international role on climate change often distinguish between various periods (e.g. Wurzel en Connelly, 2011). Here we make a distinction in 4 periods. Research to the events taking place during these periods has resulted in different findings with regard to the EU's role in the international regime.

A first phase concerns the negotiations of the UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol (late 1980s until 1997). Research covering this period looks at the climate negotiations as one of the environmental negotiations, often compared to for instance the negotiations on ozone depleting substances (the so-called Montreal Protocol) (Oberthür and Ott, 1999; Gupta and Grubb, 2000). The EU would be one of the key players, but not always able to speak with a single voice with quarrels between the various EU actors being reported frequently. For example, the Commission was denied the authority over external representation for the UNFCCC negotiations (Oberthür, 2009; Oberthür and Ott, 1999). The EU would have been successful in pushing for the Kyoto target, but less so with regard to its design, where the US left a considerable mark with its ideas on emissions trading and international offset projects through which emission reductions could be achieved (the so-called flexible mechanisms) (Oberthür and Roche Kelly, 2008; Van Schaik and Schunz, forthcoming). Internally, the EU was hopelessly divided over the adoption of a carbon tax, which eventually never saw the light of day (Skjærseth, 1994).

A second period that runs from 1997 to 2005 concerns the negotiations of the withdrawal of the US from the Kyoto Protocol, the negotiations of the Marrakech Accords that settle its implementation details, and the "saving" of the Kyoto Protocol leading to its entry into force in 2005. In-depth studies cover the content of the EU's position in the international climate negotiations, how it decides upon its position and organises its external representation (e.g. Grubb and Yamin, 2001; Dessai et al., 2003; Vogler and Bretherton, 2006; Groenleer and Van Schaik, 2007; Lacasta et al., 2007). Considerable attention is paid to the EU's role as a protagonist to the US, as well to the relationship between its international position and EU domestic climate policies that gradually developed in this time, notably the

EU's emissions trading scheme for CO<sub>2</sub> emissions of large industrial sites. Links were established between this scheme and credits obtained through the implementation of emission reduction projects abroad as governed under the Kyoto Protocol (Flåm, 2009).<sup>1</sup>

A third period concerns 2005-2009, when climate change stood sky high on the EU's political agenda. In this period the EU openly linked its climate policy to energy security considerations, developed a fully-fledged climate and renewable energy policy, and invested considerable diplomatic cloud in achieving a post-Kyoto agreement at the Copenhagen Summit. With regard to this period, scholars have focused on the EU's alleged leadership, climate change as a political subject of the European integration project, and the link between (EU) domestic and international policy, as well as the link with other policy fields, including development cooperation, trade and security (Oberthür and Roche Kelly, 2008; Parker and Karlsson, 2010; Wurzel and Connelly, 2011).

A fourth phase is ongoing since 2009. After the –from an EU perspective– disappointing outcome of the Copenhagen Summit it is the question whether and how to continue with the international climate negotiations.<sup>2</sup> Policy analysts and academics have asked what can be learned from what happened with regard to the EU's role in the climate negotiations and how to (re)build a regime from the Copenhagen ashes (Egenhofer and Georgiev, 2009; Dimitrov, 2010; Spence et al., 2010; Van Schaik, 2010b, Van Schaik and Schunz, forthcoming; Oberthür, forthcoming). Even though it has been argued that multilateral negotiations are unlikely to lead to agreement over emission reductions any time in the near future (Levi, 2009), the EU did not yet abandon the UNFCCC process.

### **The object of study: subjects**

In relation to the EU's positioning in the international climate change negotiations, literature tends to focus on: i) the content of EU climate change policy; ii) climate politics; and/or iii) the policy-making process through which the position is shaped.

### *The relationship between EU climate policy and its international position*

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<sup>1</sup> These projects can be implemented under the so-called Clean Development Mechanism where it concerns developing countries, and Joint Implementation, where it concerns countries that before the 1990s were under Soviet influence and as a result are qualified as 'economies in transition' under the Kyoto Protocol.

<sup>2</sup> See for a general overview of the climate negotiations Bierman et al. (2010).

According to many observers the EU's credibility in international climate negotiations is strongly attached to the emission reduction policies it implements at home (Kelemen, 2010; Schreurs and Tiberghien, 2007; Oberthür and Roche Kelly, 2008; Parker and Karlsson, 2010). If the EU is able to demonstrate the possibility of reducing emissions without damaging economic growth, others may follow. The way the 27 EU states have designed their climate change policy and have decided to share the emission reduction effort, could moreover be seen as a microcosm for what could be achieved internationally (cf. Jordan et al, 2010: xvi). To the contrary, if the EU would not undertake domestic action it could become subject to considerable criticism from others when demanding emission reductions.

Scholars have analysed the EU's climate policies in-depth (Egenhofer et al., 2011; Jordan et al, 2010; Oberthür and Pallemarts, 2010; Van Schaik and Van Hecke, 2008; Damro et al., 2008). They have pointed to the clear links that exist between the EU's domestic policies and the international regime, such as the link between the EU emissions trading scheme and the flexible mechanisms of the Kyoto Protocol<sup>3</sup>, and the conditional target of the EU for the international post-2012 negotiations. According to this target, the EU will reduce its emissions by 20% in 2020 compared to 1990 levels, but it will increase this reduction to 30% when other industrialised countries take up a comparable target and emerging economies take up a meaningful emission reduction commitment.

The EU's climate policy contains a 'lock-in' effect. Once the EU had announced that it would implement its Kyoto target unilaterally if needed, and once it had its emissions trading scheme and other policies in place, this in itself provided a drive for convincing other major emitters in the world to follow its course (Hovi et. al., 2003). If they would not follow, this would put EU industry at a competitive disadvantage. The competitiveness concern played an important role during the negotiations on the climate and energy package that was proposed in 2007 and agreed upon at the end of 2008, and consisted of the policy measures needed to reach the 20% reduction target in 2020 (Van Schaik and Van Hecke, 2008). The package was adopted, but the EU kept options open to impose trade measures in the future (or to threaten with them in the negotiations), and sectors vulnerable to international competition were exempted from having to buy their 'rights' (credits) to emit (Egenhofer et al., 2011; Oberthür and Pallemarts, 2010). An extension took place of the amount of credits that could be

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<sup>3</sup> These are the mechanisms referred to in the footnote above through which emission reductions can be achieved by implementing projects in third countries.

obtained by implementing emission reductions abroad through the Clean Development Mechanism, one of the Kyoto Protocol's flexible mechanisms (Flåm, 2009; Wettestad, 2009). Indeed, the link between EU legislation and international negotiations is perhaps nowhere as close as in the field of climate policy.

### *Climate politics*

Throughout the 1990s and the 2000s climate change became more important politically, both with regard to the EU's aspirations as a foreign policy actor and with regard to satisfying domestic electorates. The issue was of high importance for EU citizens (Van Schaik, 2010a), and the increased attention devoted to it would be linked to the rise of green party's throughout European countries since the 1990s. Saving Kyoto, despite US opposition was widely presented as an EU foreign politics victory (Vogler, 2009; Schreurs and Tiberghien, 2007; Groenleer and Van Schaik, 2007). The EU and its member states were rather successful in placing climate change on the agenda of the UN Security Council, G8 and other international fora (Oberthür and Roche Kelly, 2008).

Climate change also fitted nicely within the EU's agenda for effective multilateralism and sustainable development (Geden and Kremer, 2010; Van Schaik and Schunz, forthcoming). Agreeing on legally binding emission reduction targets at the international level rests on the assumption that supranational inter-state cooperation is possible, as within the EU (Curtin, 2010; Scheipers and Sicurelli, 2007). After the no-votes to the European Constitution in referenda in France and the Netherlands, the EU moreover started to refer to climate change as one of the issues where the EU was able to implement effective policies and to play its part internationally (Geden and Kremer, 2010). As a result, the EU's climate policy, particularly in the period 2005-2009, became strongly affiliated with the EU's self-image and identity.

### *It's the process, stupid!*

Scholars went to great depth in studying the EU's decision-making provisions and the division of tasks and responsibilities between the various EU actors involved (Delreux, 2006; Lacasta et al., 2007; Costa, 2009; Van Schaik, 2010a). A puzzle has been how the current intergovernmental set-up in which the Council decides by consensus on the EU's position for the international negotiations, and is represented in the negotiations by the EU Presidency or a lead negotiator working under its remit, influences the EU's actorness and effectiveness in the

negotiations (cf. Van Schaik and Egenhofer, 2005; Groenleer and Van Schaik, 2007; Delreux, 2009; Oberthür, forthcoming). According to Groenleer and Van Schaik (2007), all EU member states being able to block the EU's position for the international climate negotiations surprisingly has not prevented it from adopting relatively ambitious positions. An explanation would be agreement over overarching preferences, something which was cemented due to socialisation processes of those being involved and a common opposition to the US opposition to the international climate regime in particular.

Van Schaik (2010b), Costa (2009) and Birkel (2009) point to the considerable degree of "Europeanisation" of those involved in the negotiations on behalf of the EU member states. They are socialised into EU practices and consider it unthinkable to break ranks with the European partners. Participants of the Working Party on International Environmental Issues, where the EU position for international climate negotiations (WPIEI) is discussed, and the Environment Ministers approving these positions in the Council, are able to operate relatively autonomously from non-environmental interests. This is reinforced by the majority of participants of the WPIEI not being based in Brussels at the Permanent Representations from their Member State, but from the national Environment Ministries. The permanent body of "EU ambassadors" of the EU Member States, Coreper, is hardly involved either, which reinforces the partial focus on climate change.

The strong focus on climate change as a politically important stand-alone issue has been reinforced by the EU institutions, who consider it a topic which created chances to acquire more power, as happened with other environmental issues (Costa, 2009:140). Both the Commission and the European Parliament have been very active on climate change, with a new Directorate-General (DG Clima) and temporary parliamentary committee established specifically for climate change. To reinforce the diplomatic outreach of the EU's climate position the so-called green diplomacy network was used, a network composed of diplomats working on environmental issues coordinated by the Directorate-General for External Relations of the European Commission, and later on by the European External Action Service.

A specific feature that has drawn scholarly attention is the use of lead negotiators and issue leaders at the operational level of the negotiations (Oberthür and Roche Kelly, 2008; Van Schaik, 2010a). As the workload for rotating Presidencies turned out to be rather heavy

concerning international climate change and to ensure greater continuity, senior officials from other EU member states or the European Commission were asked since the mid 2000s to negotiate, under the auspices of the Presidency, on behalf of the EU. The external representation of the EU in the climate negotiations has thus been divided between representatives from various member states and the European Commission. This has reinforced the sense of ownership over the course of these negotiations among EU actors, but requires a little more coordination between what is achieved in the negotiations on sub-items.

The system of EU coordination and external representation was not adhered to at the Copenhagen Summit. When the European Heads of State and Government arrived they took the lead in the negotiations on behalf of the EU. They did not respect the Swedish Presidency to represent the EU and omitted to coordinate. The leaders of the big EU member states were certainly not as Europeanised as their Environment Ministers (cf. Van Schaik, 2010b).

### **Approaches used to study the EU's role in the international climate regime**

Usually analyses of the EU in the international climate regime combine descriptive, explanatory and prescriptive elements. They investigate the driving factors behind EU internal and external climate policy, as well as the link between how the EU operates and what it achieves. Less attention is paid to how it is perceived by others (see also below). In addition to academic research, there is a vast amount of policy literature, journalistic articles and opinion editorials on climate change. Here we focus on the work of political scientists and distinguish between four approaches used: leadership, EU actorness, normative power Europe, and EU performance.

#### *Leadership*

Analysing the EU's alleged leadership on international climate policy is perhaps the most commonly used approach to studying EU climate policy that originates from analyses of leadership in international environmental regimes more generally (e.g. Skodvin and Andresen, 2006). Leadership is also used by EU policy makers to describe the EU's role in the climate negotiations. According to Vogler (2009: 470) "the idea that the EU has a unique leadership role in global climate politics is assiduously fostered by the Commission, the Council and leading Member States". "Leadership by example" is the EU's official strategy for the climate negotiations and assumes that to be credible internationally, the EU needs to have a proper domestic climate change policy (Oberthür and Dupont, 2011; Parker and Karlsson,

2010). As the EU would have an ambitious climate policy in place and is prepared to increase its 2020 greenhouse gas reduction target from -20 to -30 per cent, it would be an example for other states and in that way deploy moral leadership.

Scholars usually start from the premise that the EU is, or at least wants to be a leader on international climate policy and then go on to distinguish between various types and styles of leadership. Sometimes they also hint at leadership being a necessity for addressing climate change, as without leadership, the issue would be too difficult to solve (e.g. Schreurs and Tiberghien, 2007:19). Wurzel and Connelly (2011: 12-13) make a distinction between 4 types and 4 styles of leadership (see table X).

**Table X: types and styles of leadership used to study EU external climate policy**

Types of leadership	Styles of leadership
<b>Structural:</b> relates to the actor’s hard power and depends on its material resources	<b>Heroic:</b> relies on long-term objectives, strong policy coordination and the ambitious assertion of political will
<b>Entrepreneurial:</b> relates to diplomatic, negotiating and bargaining skills in facilitating agreements	<b>Hundrum:</b> incremental, short-term and without the ambitious assertion of political will
<b>Cognitive:</b> relates to the (re)definition of interests through ideas	<b>Transformational:</b> leads to history changing events
<b>Symbolic:</b> the posturing of political actors which is not followed up with substantive policy measures action and/or the lack of implementation of the adopted policy measures	<b>Transactional:</b> leads to incremental policy change

Source: Wurzel and Connelly (2011: 13)

Leadership is found to exist, but to varying degrees ranging from modest degrees of leadership in the early 1990s (e.g. Gupta and Grubb, 2000) to high degrees in the 2000s (e.g. Oberthür and Roche Kelly, 2008) to again lower degrees at the end of the 2000s (notably a lack of leadership at the Copenhagen Summit of 2009) and early 2010s (Wurzel and

Connelly, 2011). The EU's leadership in the mid-2000s would have been expressed through a very active participation in international talks on climate change, particularly during the process of negotiating and ratifying the Kyoto Protocol, but also during the struggle for the post-2012 reform of the climate regime (Oberthür and Roche Kelly, 2008; Parker and Karlsson, 2010). It has also stimulated the development of internal climate change policies (Costa, 2008). Indeed, the recent adoption of a comprehensive climate and energy package has lifted the harmonization of climate legislation in the EU to an unprecedented level, underpinning the Union's ambition to "lead by example" (Van Schaik 2010; Oberthür 2009).

### *EU as a global actor*

Another and somehow related approach to study the EU's role in the international climate regime is to analyse whether it operates as an international actor. As Vogler (2011:21) rightly points out the leadership paradigm inherently assumes the EU's ability to act and hence its international actorness. However, since the EU is not a sovereign state, its actorness is not a given and could be considered a pre-condition for exercising leadership. Looking at actorness, thus addresses the question to what extent the EU has "state-like" features when it takes part in the international climate change negotiations as conducted within the UNFCCC. In these negotiations it takes part as a Regional Economic Integration Organisation (REIO), which entitles the EU to similar rights as State Parties (cf. Damro et al., 2008; Oberthür, 2009).

According to the EU treaties, climate change, as mentioned in the environment chapter is a subject of shared competence between the EU and the Member States (cf, article 191 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union). This implies there is a role for both the Commission and Council Presidency where it concerns the EU's external representation on climate change (cf. Van Schaik, 2010a; Damro, 2006). Research on international actorness takes the EU's legal status and rules into account, but typically also analyses the EU's ability to decide upon a common position, to speak through a single voice and to be recognised internationally (cf Groenleer and Van Schaik, 2007; Bretherton and Vogler, 2006; Jupille and Caporaso, 1998). Since, international actorness is typically found, climate change has frequently been referred to as a case that testifies for the ability of the EU to operate as an international actor, in contrast to cases where it did not display international actorness, such as the war in Iraq, the recognition of Kosovo and military intervention in Libya.

Groenleer and Van Schaik (2007) have concluded that despite a rather intergovernmental set up of the decision making on the EU's international climate position, the EU has stood remarkably united in the period 2001-2006 and deployed a considerable degree of actorness. Building on Jupille and Caporaso (1998), they have used 4 dimensions of actorness: cohesion, authority, autonomy and recognition. For analytical purposes they have applied a rational-choice and sociological institutionalist approach to these dimensions (cf. table X). They conclude that initial cohesion over preferences is a precondition for international actorness to emerge, but that social interaction is essential to sustain the consensus. Common opposition to the unilateral withdrawal of the US from the Kyoto Protocol has helped to keep the EU united, a conclusion also drawn by others (e.g. Vogler and Bretherton, 2006; Schreurs and Tiberghien, 2007).

Table X - The EU's international actorness: a framework for analysis

	Rational-choice institutionalism	Sociological institutionalism
Cohesion	Officially agreed upon common positions resulting from similar initial preferences, side payment or a voting rule that made it possible to outvote an opposing minority	Shared norms and values leading to both procedural and substantive agreement among EU Member States
Authority	Legal authority to represent the EU delegated to one EU actor, as stipulated in formal provisions	Authority based on acceptance by EU Member States that their position is represented by a single EU actor
Autonomy	Actor representing EU can act relatively independently from the Member States	Main decision-makers on the EU position and the EU's representative consider themselves European actors
Recognition	EU's representative is officially recognised as such and the EU is party to an international agreement or member of an international organisation	Interaction by third states and non-state actors with EU instead of, or in addition to, individual Member States

Source: Groenleer and Van Schaik (2007: 976)

Vogler (2011) uses four characteristics of actorness: autonomy, volition, negotiating capability and the ability to deploy policy instruments. These characteristics focus on the EU's ability to decide upon and defend credibly an external policy line. In comparison to the model used by Groenleer and Van Schaik (2007), Vogler devotes more attention to the EU's ability to use negotiating and material resources, such as development aid. Since this has also to do with political choices and climate change belonging to the remit of the EU environment Council, this model takes a broader notion of actorness than 'just' analysing to what extent the EU operates as a state-like entity in the negotiations.

### *Normative Power Europe*

According to Vogler (2009: 470) "the negotiation of climate policy provides a particularly stern test for a theory of EU foreign policy-making that claims to demonstrate that institutional factors and normative entrapment can over-ride or modify hard bargaining based upon national economic interests." Scheipers and Sicurelli (2007) highlight the importance of international climate policy for the EU's own identity. The EU would have managed to assert the precautionary principle in environmental policy as being universal in reach and validity (see also Baker, 2006). Its non-military, diplomatic and multilateral measures to address climate change would be superior to other approaches and illustrated its strong commitment to international law. Van Schaik and Schunz (forthcoming) also point to climate change as case study for the EU's adherence to normative values and principles, such as the precautionary principle, sustainable development and effective multilateralism. At the same time they point to security, energy and economic interests that sustain the EU's international climate agenda. According to them it is moreover questionable whether the EU's normative approach has yielded much success. In particular the Copenhagen Summit testified the limits to the EU's normative *power*. Since others negotiate to a much larger degree on the basis of national interests the EU was badly understood throughout the negotiations.

### *EU's performance/ influence*

It is extremely difficult to measure the EU's influence in the climate negotiations as one has to define when and how influence can be observed. The leadership paradigm assumes the EU has influence without analysing and specifying this aspect. The actorness paradigm points to the EU's presence and ability to operate as a unified entity in the negotiations, but does not focus at the results of these negotiations. The normative power Europe paradigm looks at how

the EU likes to see itself in the negotiations, and on which principles it bases its position, without little attention to how realistic this position is within the negotiating context and whether its principles are shared by others. These examples point to why it is relevant to focus on the EU's actual performance and influence in the international climate regime. The more since this performance is considered an illustration for the EU's ability to have an effective foreign policy. After "the EU saving the Kyoto Protocol" has been heralded for many years as one of the few EU foreign policy victories, the EU's disappointing performance at the Copenhagen Summit has been used to illustrate the EU's inability to influence international negotiations (cf. Van Schaik, 2010b).

Even though to date only few analyses of the EU's performance in the international climate regime exist some conclusions can be drawn for the period until the Bali Summit in 2007. With regard to the negotiations of the Kyoto Protocol the EU was successful in pushing for binding emission reduction targets, but had limited influence on its design (Damro et al., 2008; Oberthür, forthcoming; Van Schaik and Schunz, forthcoming). This is certainly the case for the US invented flexible mechanisms through which parties can reach their targets by implementing projects abroad and by purchasing surplus credits from others who overshoot their target. The EU also has been relatively successful in enabling the entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol despite US withdrawal (Groenleer and Van Schaik, 2007; Schreurs and Tiberghien, 2007; Oberthür and Roche Kelly, 2008). This came at a cost with regard to how emission reductions were measured, something which was favourable to Canada, Japan and Russia. The EU eventually convinced these countries to ratify the Kyoto Protocol. To Russia it allegedly made concessions with regard to its WTO membership bid (Damro, 2006; Douma, 2006; Parker and Karlsson, 2010).

To date only few scholars have studied the EU's performance and influence since 2007. At the Bali Summit the EU seemed more effective as the US finally agreed on the opening of negotiations on a new climate agreement that would succeed the Kyoto Protocol which expires in 2012. The reason would be its agreement to bankroll clean technology in developing countries (Parker and Karlsson, 2010). However the Copenhagen Summit in which this agreement was due to be sealed became a disillusionment (Oberthür, forthcoming; Van Schaik and Schunz, forthcoming). The Accord that was agreed is certainly no legally binding treaty with reduction targets as the EU aimed at, and it was only "taken note of" by the conference raising doubts about its legal status. At the most recent Climate Summit in

Cancun, some progress was made with regard to forest protection measures and the architecture for climate funding, but it is still far from certain whether the next Summit, that will take place in Durban in December 2011, will lead to the type of agreement the EU aims at. It is more likely that the post-Kyoto climate negotiations will continue to drag on like the Doha Round in the WTO.

The question is what conditions influence the EU's effectiveness in the climate negotiations. Here a close relationship exists with the literature on international actorhood in which –often implicitly- the assumption is being made that the EU's effectiveness will increase once it displays a higher degree of actorhood. According to Geden and Kremer (2010) EU representatives need a more flexible mandate, something which could be obtained by using the new provisions of the Lisbon Treaty that would open up the potential of reducing shared competence. According to Van Schaik (2010a) this is not certain, as the provisions can be interpreted in various ways. A more flexible mandate could in the climate negotiations indeed be helpful, as the EU's reformist position does not allow it to play a “hands-tight” strategy in any case (Van Schaik, 2010b). Stating that your hands are tight due to internal political circumstances, such as a parliamentary resolution or resistance from member states, might help to argue the inflexibility of your position when willing to block progress in negotiations. On climate, the EU certainly does not want to block progress and therefore it is no use to argue that its position cannot be changed.

The question of how effective the EU is in the negotiations is also related to the content of the EU's position and its negotiating strategy. Curtin (2010) criticises the EU for putting all its cards on the table at the Copenhagen negotiations. Other parties knew exactly what the EU was offering, and estimated that it would sign any climate deal agreed upon, making it a redundant partner in the negotiations. The EU wanted others to take up an emission reduction target, but lacked bargaining chips, such as (conditionality on) additional funds and trade measures. Its offer to increase its own emission reduction effort by 2020 from 20 to 30 percent was not a bargaining chip either as it did not impress others. According to Van Schaik and Schunz (forthcoming) the EU negotiating primarily on the basis of normative objectives, whereas others negotiate on the basis of national interests, undermined its influence in the negotiations as well.

### **Commonalities and research gaps**

Similar to other research on the EU's international policies, scholars tend to pay significant attention to how the international position is decided upon and external representation is taken care of. In other words, the institutional approach is used by a majority of scholars. Some go to great detail, e.g. Delreux (2009) concentrates at the relationship between the EU's lead negotiator (agent) and the decision-makers in the Council (principals) through a principal-agent perspective in which he focused on the extent of discretion of the agent. Others look at the relationship between the EU's institutional set-up with the EU's actorness or effectiveness more in general (e.g. Van Schaik, 2010a; Oberthür and Dupont, 2011), and yet others also include other factors, such as domestic climate policies and politics, in their analysis of EU international climate policy (e.g. Oberthür and Roche Kelly, 2008; Schreurs and Tiberghien, 2007).

The question comes to mind which aspects of EU international climate policy are neglected and which implicit assumptions are made in the literature. Here a few of these are alluded to: i) the EU's position in relation to its negotiating environment; ii) the influence of non state actors, (natural) disasters, economic developments and trends on EU and international climate policy; and iii) the assumption of the EU's activism on climate change being beneficial to the world. These aspects will be discussed below and all point to a disconnect between the EU's international wish list and the context in which this list is to be achieved. It is for instance not clear whether climate being a subject of high politics actually leads to decisions on larger emission cuts. Within the EU, the high degree of politicisation seems to have catalysed legislative activity, but at the international level, it seems to have highlighted interests jeopardising agreement on an emission reduction strategy beyond 2012.

### *The negotiating environment*

Until recently, scholars paid relatively little attention to the negotiating context in which the EU operates. At the Copenhagen Summit, the EU did not sufficiently adjust itself to a new multipolar environment. In terms of emission reduction objectives and the legal form these should take the EU had an outlier position, which marginalised its bargaining power (Van Schaik and Schunz, forthcoming). Oberthür (forthcoming) points to the fact that the EU and US in the early 1990s were still responsible for about 60% of global greenhouse gas emissions, whereas this percentage had decreased to about 32% in 2005 with China and other emerging economies rapidly expanding their share. According to him "this shift in the

tectonics of international climate policy clearly manifested itself in the Copenhagen process". The EU's powers had thus decreased and its position seemed out of tune with the position of other states. Other states might nevertheless have been interested in what the EU had to bring to the negotiations, but not interested in a global agreement (Hale, 2011). In this respect uncertainty over the possible use of trade measures, unwillingness to discuss intellectual property rights in the context of climate change and the eleventh hour decision on aid reduced the EU's attractiveness as a negotiating partner (Van Schaik, 2010b).

Costa (2008) argues that the relationship between EU and international climate policy can also be reversed. According to him the international regime has impacted on the EU's decision-making process on positions for international negotiations and on the European integration process as such. Also Delreux (2009) looks at the effects of the negotiating environment, in his case on how this affects the autonomy of the EU's lead negotiator enjoys to decide upon the negotiating position and strategy in a range of international environmental negotiations. According to him the international compellingness does not provide explanatory power to understand the particular degree of discretion. Other aspects related to EU internal processes, such as preference distributions and information asymmetries between the member states and the lead negotiator, need to be taken into account as well. Future studies could more systematically analyse the interplay between the EU's international position on climate change and the international context in which it operates.

#### *The influence of non state actors, (natural) disasters, economic developments and trends*

Another aspect that seems somewhat understudied is the contribution of developments not directly steered by government policies. Little research is available on how companies, NGOs, religious organisations and labour unions have influenced the EU's position for international climate negotiations. The same is the case for (natural) disasters. Whereas it is likely that hurricanes, tsunami's and droughts influence the attention for climate change by politicians and their willingness to agree on emission reductions, this aspect has hardly generated scholarly attention and has not been studied systematically. The link with economics and in particularly energy systems underpinning economic activity has received much more attention, but could be studied more in-depth and more systematically from a political science perspective as well. How do economic factors, such as possible benefits of having a frontrunner position on renewable energy technologies, influence preferences of EU

and other actors in the international climate negotiations? Finally the effects of the EU's activism on climate change on trends in society and the interaction between the political attention for the subject and consumer trends more in general could be analysed in greater depth. Did political attention to the subject by the EU stimulate innovation into low carbon solutions and/ or did it change consumer behaviour? Did this effect extend beyond its own territory?

### *Climate and EU critical approaches*

The narrative of leadership assumes a positive contribution of the EU's active involvement to international climate policy. Scholars of EU climate policy do not tend to question the EU's aspiration to agree upon an international agreement containing emission reduction commitments. They do not openly doubt climate science provided for by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, neither do they study the decision-making of this body. Since the EU bases its emission reduction objectives on IPCC findings, and since the findings of this body have been contested, this might be an interesting issue to investigate.

In general, scholars are not very critical about what the EU does in the area of climate policy. The Copenhagen Summit, and the EU's engineering of this meeting, might be subject of more research. Aspects of group think may have played a role in the EU's unrealistic positioning for this Summit, as well as an inability to manage expectations (cf. Van Schaik, 2010b). The attention paid to climate change in relation to other environmental and global concerns, such as biodiversity, diseases, etc might have been disproportionate. A bilateral approach may have yielded more effect than the ongoing focus on building a multilateral climate regime (Van Schaik and Schunz, forthcoming).

### **Learning from failure or should we be less judgemental?**

Scholars have informed us that the EU has been very active in the international climate regime in the past two decades. Its degree of influence has varied a great deal, and the way it has organised its decision-making and external representation could be more efficient, but is has not prevented the EU from displaying actorness and leadership in the period 1997-2005. The question is whether these findings can be extended to other fields. Findings with regard to certain aspects, such as the role of the rotating Presidency and EU coordination, are similar to those in other fields.

Other aspects, such as the strong relationship between domestic EU climate change policies and the international position and the limited integration with non-environmental policy debates, could possibly be found in other fields of EU external action as well (e.g. food standards), but not in others (e.g. position on conflicts, human rights). A specific feature is that climate change is a field where significant political attention was devoted to the multilateral negotiations that took place, whereas other multilateral processes, such as trade negotiations attracted much less attention. Because of the attention paid to the Copenhagen Summit, it is justifiable to analyse more in-depth what went wrong in Copenhagen, and how the EU could learn from what happened with a view to improving its performance in other international negotiations. In this respect it may be helpful to distinguish between analysing the EU's position and influence throughout the process and why the EU should act as a leader in the climate negotiations. Too often it is assumed that it should, whereas political scientists may perhaps be more critical about the EU's motivations and interests in these negotiations.

A related issue is that it remains somewhat unclear to what extent the EU's activities in the international climate regime can be classified as the external dimension of EU environmental policy-making or as foreign politics (see also Harris, 2007; Schunz et al., 2009; Vogler, 2009). If judged from an environmental perspective, other objectives might be highlighted than if judged from a (diplomatic) foreign politics perspective. In the latter view reaching an agreement and the EU coming across as proactive, united and well-organised political entity might be more important than the effectiveness of such an agreement in terms of emission reductions. As climate change decision-making within the EU is still largely in the hands of environmental policy-makers it is perhaps unfair to judge the EU's performance in the climate negotiations from a foreign politics perspective, or should we perhaps be less judgemental in any case?

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