

**The Effects of Climate Legislation in the United States and Denmark on Communities
Living in Poverty**

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On my honor as a University Student, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid on this assignment as defined by the Honor Guidelines for Thesis-Related Assignments

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STS Research Paper

Introduction

By 2050, climate change reportedly has the potential to increase the number of people at risk of hunger up to 20% (How climate change affects people living in poverty, 1). While everyone in the world is affected by climate change, the most vulnerable are people living in poverty and minority populations. At the rate the growth of greenhouse emissions is going, there will be a global warming of about 1.5 degrees Celsius by 2050, leading to extreme weather conditions and degradation of food systems (IPPC, 1). These environmental effects due to climate change will first disproportionately impact underserved communities that are least capable of preparing for and recovering from events like flooding, heat waves, and other environmental impacts (Garfinkel, 1). Regardless of how much individuals limit their carbon footprint in their everyday lives, it is up to the government to implement policies ensuring bold, ambitious climate action is taken. Cutting man-made greenhouse gas emissions and phasing out fossil fuels can not happen without policies that force these companies that are major contributors to enabling climate change to make changes and limit their emissions.

Denmark and the United States have taken contrasting approaches to combating climate change regarding their policies. Denmark was ranked as the country with the greatest climate protection based on the 2022 Climate Change Performance Index (Jaganmohan, 1). Alternatively, the United States is rated very low for the GHG Emissions, Renewable Energy, and Energy Use categories, with a medium for Climate Policy according to this year's CCPI (CCPI, 1).

Research Questions and Methods

Research Question: How do the differences in climate change policies in the United States compared to Denmark affect poor underserved populations and minorities?

To begin to answer the proposed research question, policy documentation from both countries, statistics of poverty rate and living conditions for the lower class, and also amount of emissions reductions achieved post implementation of different climate change policies are being used to assess the efficacy of the policies as well as the effects they have on poor communities. Climate change policy documentation will show the differences in the urgency and approach between the two countries. Policy analysis is being utilized, specifically being organized geographically by country. The sources on the policies themselves will help support which countries' policies were created to integrate with society and which policies did not consider the integration of the two. To determine how effective each policy in both the U.S. and Denmark is, sources that include climate change indicators, such as emission rates and the Climate Change Performance Index will be used. Statistical analyses are being used to analyze the policies in both countries to show the success or shortcoming the policy had in reducing climate change effects. Using sources with statistics of poverty rate and living conditions for the lower class before and after implementation of policies will be used to prove that climate change policies affect poor, underserved populations and in what way.

Supportive Background Information

The policies put in place by countries' leaders have the potential to either mitigate the effects of climate change or allow the climate to continue to increase at an alarming rate. Denmark is a great example of a country mitigating the effects of climate change through ambitious and intense policies. The country aspires to become one of the most climate-friendly countries in the world. While Denmark is ranked the number one country in the Environmental

Performance Index (EPI), the United States sits at number fifteen with a very low rating for GHG Emissions, Renewable Energy, and Energy Use categories (EPI, 2).

In 2020 Denmark passed a substantive Climate Change Act (CCA), which defines legally binding targets and has laid down a solid foundation for continued and ambitious climate actions. In June of 2021, its Parliament overwhelmingly passed a new climate law that aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 70 percent below 1990 levels by 2030, with net zero emissions targeted for 2050 (Batini, 1). Denmark's CCA is one of the most ambitious CCA's a country has passed since it requires efforts made from not only the Danish Government and Parliament, but also by the Danish society with active roles for individuals, municipalities, trade unions, civil society and the business community (Climate Programme 2020, 6).

The United States, however, is an example of a country with climate policies that are failing to mitigate the environmental effects. This country faces obstacles in creating aggressive climate change legislation, such as, the economics of reducing greenhouse gas emissions, climate-change denial, and the politics of mitigation policies. The Inflation Reduction Act, which was passed in August 2022, which includes \$364.75 billion in clean energy and climate investments (Bell, 1). The Inflation Reduction Act aims to create good-paying union jobs that will help reduce emissions across every sector of the economy. The massive budget package to fight climate change also includes other funds like a \$40 billion fund that will be used toward environmental justice (The United States Government, 1). A major difference between Denmark's and the US's policies on climate change is the level of involvement of citizens themselves and the lower-level government sector. Public opinion is an influential factor on what policies the government can pass, and a lack of support for more climate change policies or lack of belief in climate change would explain the shortcomings of the policies of the United States

around climate change. However, a majority of Americans continue to say they see the effects of climate change in their own communities and strongly believe that the federal government falls short in its efforts to reduce impacts from climate change (Nadeem, 3).

The climate change policies these two countries pass not only have an effect on the environment, but also impact poor and underrepresented communities. Climate change disproportionately affects those who suffer from socioeconomic inequalities, including a lot of people of color. When the government fails to combat climate change effectively, the ones that suffer the most are those most vulnerable. Most people living close to hazardous waste are people of color and poor communities, making them vulnerable to dying from environmental causes from climate change and pollution (Patnaik, 2). More than one million African Americans live within a half mile from natural gas facilities, putting them at a greater risk of cancer and other health effects than most rich, white communities. An analysis of Denmark's and the USA's climate change policies will advance the comprehension of how these policies affect poor underserved populations and minorities.

STS Framework

Technological momentum is a theory developed by Thomas P. Hughes about the relationship between technology and society over time. Technological momentum combines Technological Determinism, which states that society is shaped by technology, with Social Determinism, which states that technology is shaped by society. Hughes states that in the infancy of a technology, society controls the technology heavily, but as said technology grows, it gains momentum that allows the technology to influence society (Hughes, 101).

Critiques of technological momentum argue that it is similar to technological determinism since the theory revolves around technology. Technological determinism has been perceived as oversimplified claims on how technology and society interact (Adler, 1). However, Hughes argues that society and technology influence each other equally. Hughes's theory will be used to understand how climate change policies are used as technology, and how these policies as a technology have the power to influence technology.

Technological momentum has been used to explain the evolution of wind energy technology in Denmark compared to the United States. Many researchers and scholars promoted a linear model of technological developments that views government-funded programs as the ideal means of developing new technologies, but wind energy technology in Denmark represents an exception to this linear approach. Denmark pursued a bottom-up, decentralized research strategy that was more flexible and involved transparency, which resulted in the creation of more advanced and cost-effective wind turbines than that of the United States. Wind energy was readily accepted in Denmark, yet faces challenges in the United States. Thomas P. Hughes explained the concept of technological momentum to hypothesize that the technical performance of a given technology and its compatibility with the existing social and political environment determine whether it is embraced or rejected. Technologies need to be successfully built, but also successfully built for integration into society. Technological momentum can explain how Denmark's approach worked more effectively and was readily accepted by the public because the wind energy technology was created for integration into society through transparency and flexibility (Sovacool and Sawin).

Technology momentum will be used to understand why Denmark's climate change policies are more effective than the United States's. The technology in this case is the climate

change policy itself. The policies of both countries will be analyzed to see if they were created to solely mitigate climate change effects or if they were created for the integration into society with the goal to fight climate change.

Results and Discussion

Denmark's climate policies have been found to be aggressive in fighting the effects climate change policy has on the world. The country has one of the most ambitious and radical climate change acts to have ever been passed by a country. Meanwhile, the United States has invested money into climate change policies meant to drastically cut pollution and diminish other effects from climate change, but is not nearly as progressive as Denmark's policies. The United States also struggles to have policies passed due to the divide between the Republican and Democratic parties. The effectiveness of the policies in both countries is measured by the Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI). The CCPI ranks Denmark as number 4 and the United States at number 52 out of 59 countries on the list. The driving force behind the effectiveness of Denmark's climate change policies is that these policies were made for the integration into society and easily accepted while in the United States, they were not. Unfortunately, climate change disproportionately affects poor communities and legislation plays an important role in the issue of poor communities suffering. Denmark is found to have a much lower poverty rate and wealth inequality than the U.S, and with the combination of these lower rates and less environmental effects present because of Denmark's progressive policies, communities in poverty are less affected here than in America. More radical and accepted climate change policies lead to less environmental effects and better living conditions of people living in poverty.

Denmark Climate Change Policies

Denmark's latest climate change policy is The Climate Act which sets a target to reduce Denmark's emissions by 70 percent in 2030 compared to 1990 and climate neutrality by 2050. This Climate Act sets a five-year target, ten years in advance (LSE, 1). The Act is said to be one of the most ambitious and radical climate change acts to be passed specifically due to the requirement of efforts from the Danish Government and Parliament as well as efforts from the citizens of Denmark. However, the country's attempts to mitigate the effects of climate change started well before this Act was established notably with the adoption of the Danish Strategy for Adaptation to a Changing Climate in 2008 (IEA, 2). The Danish Strategy for Adaptation to a Changing Climate identifies 11 key sectors' vulnerabilities to climate change and outlines possible measures to increase climate resilience. An example of what this entails proposed actions for the energy sector adaptation and resilience. The impacts of higher wind speeds on electricity production and distribution grids have been analyzed. Denmark's adaptation strategy led to the 2012 Action Plan for a Climate-Proof Denmark that presents 64 new initiatives for five general areas: improving the climate adaptation framework; expanding consultation and developing a new knowledge base; strengthening collaboration and co-ordination; advancing the green transition; and adapting to climate change at the international level (Klimatilpasning, 12). Overall, Denmark has put in great efforts to research possible solutions to environmental problems and dedicated a considerable amount of money to these solutions and research. Not only is Denmark prioritizing the country itself, but the country has also dedicated \$13 million to assist vulnerable countries that have suffered "loss and damage" from climate change, making them the first country from a wealthy member state to have pledged compensation for the consequences of emissions in developing countries (Kaplan, 3).

The United States's Climate Change Policies

In regards to the United States's climate change policies, the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 includes \$364.75 billion in clean energy and climate investments (Ayyagari, 4). President Biden passed this Act to work towards the goal of cutting climate pollution in half from 2005 levels by 2030 (Glavinskas, 2). This act aims to create good-paying union jobs that are dedicated to reducing emissions across every sector of the economy. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law also aimed to create jobs to cut emissions. This Law provides \$1.5 billion over the next five years to advance environmental justice, spur economic revitalization and create jobs by cleaning up contaminated, polluted, or hazardous properties (The United States Government, 2). Between recent attempts from the current President of the United States along with significant action on climate change individual states have taken, the U.S. is still facing barriers to achieving US climate goals.

When comparing the United States's climate change policies to Denmark's, the greatest difference resides in the level of involvement of citizens themselves and the lower-level government sector. State-level climate change policy in the U.S. has shown great promise in the context of federal obstruction or inaction. However, there are significant obstacles to passing strong and effective state-level climate policies rather than symbolic policies that set goals without any mandates or penalties for failure to follow them. Democratic control of state governments facilitates climate policy adoption, but Republican leadership acts as a veto for climate legislation (Basseches, 3). This process leads to climate policy effectiveness being driven through who is elected in State and Federal Government and public opinion. Public opinion is an influential factor on what policies the government can pass, and a lack of support for more climate change policies or lack of belief in climate change would explain the shortcomings of the policies of the United States around climate change. However, a majority of Americans continue

to say they see the effects of climate change in their own communities and strongly believe that the federal government falls short in its efforts to reduce impacts from climate change (Tyson, 3). Despite the public opinion of the majority, the Republican party that vetoes climate legislation also has adhered to an ideology of fiscal conservatism, which will pull voters even if they are concerned about climate change (Nadeem, 1).

Effectiveness of Climate Legislation

Utilizing climate change indicators and performance reviews, the effectiveness of both Denmark's and the United States's climate legislation can be compared. The Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI) is an instrument used to enable transparency in national and international climate politics. It uses a standardized framework to compare the performance of countries through GHG Emissions, Renewable Energy, Energy Use, and Climate Policy. The CCPI of 2023 shows that the United States is ranked 52 out of 59 countries while Denmark is ranked as number 4. Denmark received high ratings in the GHG Emissions, Renewable Energy, and Climate Policy categories. The United States received a very low level in the GHG Emissions, Renewable Energy and Energy Use categories.

These rankings prove that the climate change policies of the United States are one of the least effective among the 59 countries within the CCPI. CCPI country experts criticize the lack of mandatory character within the legislation and the speed of implementation. The main shortcoming found was the U.S failing to halt domestic fossil fuel extraction. Meanwhile at ranking number 4, Denmark is described as a progressive player in climate policy and commended for their effects as well as effectiveness of their legislation (CCPI, 1).

Technological Momentum: Why are Denmark's climate change policies more effective than the United States?

The idea that Denmark's climate change policies are more effective than the United States has been established. However, the reasoning behind this idea is not only that Denmark's legislation is more radical and strict, but also because of the way that the policies are successfully built for integration into society. Technological momentum, the theory developed by Thomas P. Hughes can be used to explain the relationship between climate change policies, society, and the effectiveness of said policies. For a technology to be successful and adapted into society, it needs to be successfully built and built specifically for integration into society. Denmark's approach to climate change worked more effectively and was readily accepted by the public because the policies were created for integration into society.

One of the most important reasons that the public of Denmark accepted the climate change policies is because of the homogenous nature of the country. The policies or technology when applying technological momentum were created for the integration into society easily because Denmark is a small country with a population that is 89.6 percent composed of ethnically Danish people (Nationalists, 1).

For climate change policies to be accepted by society, society first needs to believe climate change poses a great risk to the survival of the human race and earth. Society will not want to adapt a policy that they believe to not be solving any problem. 79% of Danish people think that climate change and its consequences are the biggest challenge for humanity in the 21st century (EIB, 2). This is higher than any other EU country, and over 60% of Danes are in favor of stricter government measures that impose changes on people's behavior. Starting with just these statistics on public opinion, the proposed policies are built for the integration into society

as they follow the beliefs of most of the population. Another way Denmark's policies are made for integration into society is the policies involve citizens themselves. There are active roles for individuals, municipalities, trade unions, civil society and the business community that protect the environment and work towards the goals of the Climate Change Act. The people of Denmark previously voiced their concerns for the environment and many stated that they wanted to contribute personally after witnessing impacts in their everyday lives. Remarkably, 73% in Denmark stated they would welcome a tax on products and services that contribute most to global warming. 83% of citizens also advocate for replacing short-distance flights by fast, low-polluting trains in collaboration with neighboring countries (EIB, 2). The country was ready to not only accept and follow climate policies and laws, but also help directly with the initiative.

Although a significant percentage of Americans believe that climate change is real and something should be done about it, their climate change policies are not made for successful integration into society. Americans want "aggressive" action to combat climate change, but only a third would support an extra tax of \$100 a year to help (Volcovici, 1). Citizens do not want to invest any of their own money and time into fighting the problem of climate change, but both are needed to be effective. The United States cannot pass radical climate policies without funding and support from all levels. This divide prevents effective legislation from being implemented in a timely manner in both the federal and state levels. These policies are not made for the society within the United States and therefore are not easily accepted nor successful.

Some of the factors that play a role in successful policy implementation include policy design, stakeholders and their involvement, institution and context, and the implementation strategy (Tezera, 3). Policy design is the way in which a policy is discussed and framed as well as the policy issue with the solution it provides. One of the strengths Denmark's climate change

policies have is that the documentation provides sufficient information about the issue at hand as well as the solution. Denmark's policy design is cohesive and attacks multiple issues climate change poses to the world in the same document with corresponding solutions. As for the stakeholders and their involvement, besides the natural ecosystems themselves, the stakeholders include cities and coasts, primary industries and communities. In Copenhagen, Denmark has shifted to more sustainable transportation, heating in their homes, and what they do with their trash. Citizens themselves are responsible for making these changes to reach the city's goal to be net carbon neutral by 2025 (Sengupta, 1). In the United States, there is no national law that mandates recycling, but states and local governments often introduce their own recycling requirements. With no national law, this leads to having a significant percentage of cities and states with poor recycling such as Mississippi, Ohio, and Alabama. New York City leads by example in regards to recycling regulations as all commercial business and commercial tenants are required by law to recycle (Sanitation, 1). The institutional setting comprises the formal and informal social constraints that regulate the implementation process in a given system which relates back to the public opinion of climate change.

To achieve successful implementation of climate change policy, the legislation needs to be created for the integration into society. Denmark's climate change legislation promotes active engagement of the stakeholders, specifically the citizens as well as clear documentation of the problem climate change poses and the solution. The United States lacks the involvement of the stakeholders of climate change legislation as well as cohesive legislation that clearly states what needs to be done to mitigate the effects of climate change and why.

Effects of Climate Change has on Poor Populations

The United States and Denmark's climate change policies not only affect the environment, but also impact poor and underrepresented communities. Climate change disproportionately affects those who suffer from socioeconomic inequalities, including a lot of people of color. To begin to look at the effects climate legislation has on poor populations, the amount of people affected by poverty is analyzed in both countries.

Denmark has a remarkably low poverty rate of around 0.30 percent, which is one of the lowest poverty rates in the world (Alexander, 1). According to the OECD, which analyzes income inequality measured by the GINI coefficient, states that Denmark is among the countries with the lowest income inequality (Income and gender equality, 1). Meanwhile, the official poverty rate in the United States in 2021 was 11.6 percent with 37.9 million people in poverty (Creamer, 4). The wealth inequality in America is higher than almost any other developed country and continues to rise. Federal Reserve data indicates that as of 2021, the top 1% of households in the United States held 32.3% of the country's wealth, while the bottom 50% held 2.6% (Mitchell, 2). Overall, Denmark has been able to lower the percentage of people living in poverty lower than the U.S has.

These poorer communities are the ones that are most affected by climate change. Research collected shows that poor populations are much more affected by climate change. Impoverished people are more likely to live in densely packed areas and close to industrial sites, so air pollution disproportionately affects them (OECD, 22). Most people living close to hazardous waste are people of color and poor communities, making them vulnerable to dying from environmental causes from climate change and pollution (Patnaik, 2). More than one million African Americans live within a half mile from natural gas facilities, putting them at a greater risk of cancer and other health effects than most rich, white communities. Not only are

poorer populations being affected more by the environmental effects of climate change, but also the economical ones. With the increase in floods and droughts due to climate change, it is harder to produce food. This results in the price of food increasing and access becoming more limiting, increasing the risk of hunger (How climate change affects people living in poverty, 2).

The analysis of Denmark and the United States's climate change policies as well as the statistics of poverty and wealth inequality shows both that climate change policies affect the living conditions of those under the poverty line and that Denmark's radical and effective policies mitigate the effect climate change has on poor communities. Poorer populations are less affected by climate change in Denmark because there are less climate change effects and because there are less people living in poverty. There are less climate change effects in Denmark because of how involved all levels of government and all of society is in the efforts to mitigate climate change. The climate change policies in the United States indirectly affect the country's poorer populations because of how ineffective the policies actually are and how the policies are not built for integration into society. These setbacks lead to effects like greater emissions and natural disasters and the population living in the areas the most affected are minorities and people living in poverty. The more radical and easily integrated into society the climate change policies are, the less environmental effects there will be. The less environmental effects there are, the better the living conditions of people living in poverty there will be.

Limitations

An important disclaimer on the research on policy comparison is that Denmark is characterized as majority homogeneous while the United States is heterogeneous. With homogeneous societal culture, the legal and economic system will reflect the dominant way of thinking and change slowly. Denmark easily accepted the policies because of the overwhelming

consensus on what should be done. With a heterogeneous country, there are numerous population groups that have specific and distinct values and understandings. This slows down both the process of getting legislation approved and the process of society accepting the changes (Enz, 8).

Another important consideration when analyzing the differences in policies between the United States and Denmark is the differences in government. The system of governance in Denmark is a parliamentary democracy while in the United States, it is a federal democratic republic. The Parliament in Denmark is called the Folketing, and it has a multi-party structure (Government and Politics). Elections take place at least every four years, but a prime minister can call an election at any time, and the prime minister will choose a moment that will be advantageous to his or her party. The United States has an indivisible union of 50 sovereign States, and it is a democracy because people govern themselves through elections with free and secret ballots (Our American Government).

To continue the research on how climate legislation affects poor communities in Denmark and the United States and work through the limitations, there needs to be more countries involved in the comparison. There needs to be done research on multiple homogeneous and heterogeneous countries that are successfully and unsuccessfully mitigating the effects climate change has on the environment. Outside factors including size of the country, government structure, and cultural aspects need to be considered.

Conclusion

Climate change drastically affects the living conditions of impoverished communities, and the legislation put in place by each country's government is playing a vital role. In order to protect those most vulnerable to the environmental and economical effects of climate change,

there needs to be progressive legislation put in place. Denmark exemplifies how strict climate policies can slow down the environmental effects and in turn, safeguard those living in poverty. The United States, however, exemplifies how the lack of strict climate policies leads to worsened conditions for those living in poverty. Other countries need to follow Denmark's lead and improve their legislation to not only save future generations from a deteriorating world, but also mitigate the disproportionate effects it has on poorer, vulnerable communities.

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