

Experts and controverses: a political view

François Gemenne – 28 October 2010

Scientists in the policy process

- ▶ Increasingly present
- ▶ Especially in fields where knowledge is technical
- ▶ **Are they neutral?**
 - ▶ **Initial assumptions that they are, but:**
 - ▶ **Epistemic communities (Haas and Keohane)**
 - ▶ **Advocacy coalitions (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith)**



Science and expertise

- ▶ Is it the same thing?
- ▶ Science for policy, rather than just the sake of it
- ▶ Are experts different than scientists?
 - ▶ From a practical point of view, they're usually the same persons
 - ▶ Are they neutral?
 - ▶ Should they be?



At the core of the controversy: The IPCC

- ▶ *Key role in the policy-making:*
Establish a common scientific basis for the negotiation
- ▶ An intergovernmental organisation, in which governments play an important role
- ▶ Can you be policy-relevant and yet policy-neutral?



IPCC and neutrality

- ▶ A balanced composition:
 - ▶ Junior and senior researchers
 - ▶ Women and men
 - ▶ Researchers from developing and developed countries

Assumption that a collective neutrality emerges from the addition of individual subjectivities



A political history

- ▶ A long road towards consensus.
- ▶ Villach workshops and other meetings kickstarted the process.
- ▶ A whistleblower role
- ▶ A key episode: the succession of Dr R. Watson



Dr. Robert Watson, the highly respected leader of the Inter-Governmental

Panel on Climate Change, was blackballed in a memo to the White House from the nation's largest oil company. The memo had its effect last Friday, when Dr. Watson lost his bid for re-election after the administration threw its weight behind the "let's drag our feet" candidate, Dr. Rajendra Pachauri of New Delhi, who is known for his virulent anti-American statements.

Why is this happening?

Because the largest polluters know their only hope for escaping restrictions lies in promoting confusion about global warming.

Just as Enron needed auditors who wouldn't blow the whistle when the company lied about the magnitude of its future liabilities, the administration needs scientific reviews that won't sound the alarm on the destruction of the earth's climate balance.

- ▶ Al Gore in the NY Times, April 21, 2002.



▶ **U.S. to Back Scientist From India To Replace Global Warming Expert**


▶ *Auto manufacturers and oil companies have long seen Dr. Watson as a foe, and their lobbyists have said that Dr. Pachauri, who has worked with industry in the past, was clearly preferable.*

▶ - A. Revkin, NY Times, April 3rd, 2002

▶ *Dr. Pachauri heads the Tata Energy Research Institute in New Delhi; Tata is one of India's largest industrial groups.*

▶ NY Times, April 20, 2002

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- ▶ *Mr. Gore's derogatory statements about me reflect deep disappointment at my election as chairman of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, with 76 votes for me against 49 for his protégé, Dr. Robert T. Watson.*
 - ▶ R.K. Pachauri, NY Times, May 1st, 2002
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And yet, 5 years later....

A policy actor?

- ▶ The reports prepare policy decisions: UNFCCC 1992, Kyoto 1997, etc.
- ▶ Political interference from governments
- ▶ Organ of UNFCCC
- ▶ Recommends policy options



A policy actor responding like a scientific body

- ▶ Attacked as a policy actor
- ▶ Subjected to political pressure

- ▶ Is it possible to respond as a scientific body?

