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For Better or for Worse

A Break with Norway's Consensual Climate Tradition?

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Despite an extensive body of scholarship devoted to the task, significant disagreement remains about how to pursue low-carbon transitions. As outlined in Chapter 1, a key point of contention is about the merits of aiming for policy stability over time versus (re)politicization and more conflictual modes of challenging the status quo. At the heart of this debate lies different assumptions about the role of political and societal *consensus*, which may be seen either as a way of ensuring stability as policy lock-in and thus protecting climate policy measures against backlash or, alternatively, as a way of maintaining the status quo which therefore needs to be disrupted in order to promote climate action.

To feed into this debate, we focus on a country that is often seen as marked by a consensual political culture, and where climate policy development demonstrates key facets of both dynamics. Norway has for a long time aspired to be a leader in climate policy development, with a set of relatively stable policies and broad consensus regarding overall ambition (Boasson and Lahn 2017; Farstad 2019). Consensus has been underpinned by cross-party Climate Settlements (*Klimaforlik*) in 2008 and 2012, supported by all parties bar one (the right-wing populist Progress Party). Yet despite broad consensus about relatively ambitious climate goals, Norway has only reduced its domestic greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 4.7 percent between 1990 and 2022 (SSB 2023a). Moreover, in 2021, attempts to establish a new cross-party Climate Settlement similar to those in 2008 and 2012 failed. Does this failure to reach a new cross-party Climate Settlement constitute a break with Norway's consensual climate tradition, and is this good or bad news for climate policy?

In this chapter, we investigate whether and to what extent the consensus characterizing the 2000s and 2010s contributed to climate policy development or stasis, and why. We do this through analyzing two key sectors of Norwegian climate policy, namely petroleum policy and transport policy (more specifically electrical

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vehicles – EVs). Constituting the two highest emitting sectors in Norway, these are critical cases to explore. Moreover, the two cases represent the largest sectors whose emissions are regulated by the European Union (EU) Emissions Trading Scheme (EU-ETS) and Effort Sharing Regulation (ESR) respectively, thus allowing us to assess the extent to which different regulatory systems affect (de/re)politicization. Through synthesizing documentary evidence, we analyze key developments within the two policy areas to explore the dynamic tensions between policy stability and (re)politicization.

The chapter is structured as follows. The first section outlines the key features of Norwegian climate policy, before the second and third sections outline the two cases – petroleum and EV policy respectively. For each sector, we attempt to identify reasons for de/repoliticization and its consequences. The final section discusses the findings and concludes.

11.1 Norwegian Climate Policy: Key Frameworks and Debates

Norway has been highlighted as an example of a corporatist state that actively includes new movements and issues into policy development, thus achieving a high degree of consensus across political divides as well as between state and civil society (Dryzek et al. 2003; cf. Grendstad et al. 2006). This dynamic is clearly identifiable in climate policy development. Norway was among the world's first countries to set a unilateral climate mitigation target – to stabilize emissions at 1989 levels by the year 2000 (Hovden and Lindseth 2004). A carbon tax was introduced in 1991 and an ETS in 2005 (which was incorporated into the EU-ETS in 2008). In 2007, the red–green coalition government under Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg released a White Paper outlining a voluntary upgrade of Norway's original Kyoto Protocol target by 10 percent. The strategy also committed to an unconditional reduction of GHG emissions by 30 percent below 1990 levels within 2020, and carbon neutrality by 2050. After what has been characterized as a climate policy "bidding war," where the government also agreed to several major climate policy initiatives from the opposition, these ambitious goals were supported by all parties in the Norwegian parliament except the right-wing populist Progress Party (Hermansen 2015). The cross-party Climate Settlement reached in 2008 was reiterated and strengthened in 2012, following a similar logic of party competition in the negotiations. In the run-up to the Paris Agreement in 2015, Norway set itself the more stringent target of at least 40 percent emissions reductions by 2030 compared to 1990 levels, with the aim of being carbon-neutral by 2050. Norway ratified the Paris Agreement on June 21, 2016, and in 2022 adopted a revised target of a 55 percent reduction compared to 1990 levels by 2030. Climate policy is also underpinned by a Climate Act introduced in 2018.

Yet, despite a high level of consensus regarding relatively ambitious targets, Norway has only reduced its domestic GHG emissions by 4.7 percent between 1990 and 2022 (SSB 2023a). This is largely due to a booming petroleum sector and the fact that Norwegian electricity supply is essentially already decarbonized due to the prominence of hydropower. The country's emissions are therefore primarily related to petroleum, industry, transport, and agriculture, where emissions in many cases are costlier and technologically more difficult to abate, or require deeper structural changes to the economy. Norwegian climate policy has therefore been dominated by a logic of cost-efficiency, which has privileged international carbon trading over domestic emissions reductions as a means of achieving targets (Hermansen and Sundqvist 2022). The two major parties, Labour and Conservative, have historically functioned as veto players for setting stricter domestic mitigation targets, while smaller parties, such as the Christian Democrat, Liberal, and Socialist Left parties have traditionally argued for more ambitious domestic climate mitigation. Conflict over whether to meet climate commitments "at home" through domestic emissions reductions or "abroad" through international carbon trading has thus been a recurring topic in Norwegian climate policy (Hovden and Lindseth 2004), but agreement between Labour and the Conservatives ensured that the government largely relied on carbon trading to meet its commitments under the Kyoto Protocol (Hermansen and Sundqvist 2022). A high level of stability across shifting governments regarding overall policy ambitions (relatively ambitious international commitments) and the main policy instruments (carbon tax and trading) has thus coexisted with a relatively politicized debate marked by party competition on competing approaches to climate policy, which cut across the traditional left–right axis of Norwegian politics. This dynamic has had important implications for the link between climate and petroleum policy, as will be elaborated on in the next section.

In addition to already being part of the EU-ETS, in 2019 Norway chose to join the EU's ESR for 2030 (which covers emissions from sectors such as road transport, agriculture, buildings, and waste) and the Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) Regulation. The ESR sets an overall emissions reduction target for the ESR sectors in Norway but also includes the option to buy emission allocations from EU countries. The decision to join the ESR was supported by a majority in parliament. Some (e.g. Christensen 2018) argue that the decision to join the ESR is in line with the Norwegian tradition of keeping options open for emissions cuts abroad. Others (Farstad et al. 2022; Gulbrandsen and Hermansen 2022) suggest that the ESR decision "locks in" the need to cut emissions domestically through binding annual emission budgets.

The pressure to reduce domestic emissions has increased over time. In fact, the debate about *whether* to cut domestically has now largely been depoliticized as a consequence of adopting the ESR. However, with binding annual emissions

budgets and an intensified pressure to cut emissions domestically by 2030, the ESR has also served to politicize climate policy, specifically about *how* Norway should reduce emissions. As Norway has already picked most of the "low hanging fruit" in terms of mitigation, governments are faced with increasingly difficult, costly, and controversial options for cutting GHGs.

Setting out how to reduce emissions in the ESR sectors, Prime Minister Erna Solberg's conservative coalition government published a climate White Paper in January 2021. However, despite initial statements that the government desired a new cross-party Climate Settlement on the plan similar to those in 2008 and 2012, it failed to establish one. This failure caused uproar and was labeled a "climate crash" (Nationen 2021). The government downplayed the lack of a new Climate Settlement, with Prime Minister Solberg arguing that there was no longer a need for such agreements. Whereas previous cross-party Climate Settlements had been vague deals about overall ambitions, the current plan was about concrete implementation, she argued. However, it is likely that the failure to establish a new settlement sprung from the fact that domestic climate policies were serving to bring existing lines of conflict and political cleavages to the fore. It also didn't help that a general election was coming up, with opposition parties keen to differentiate themselves from the government (Farstad and Aasen 2022).

The emphasis on domestic cuts continued under the minority coalition government consisting of the Labour and Centre parties elected in 2021. Their government declaration signaled they would meet the 2030 target solely through domestic action, which marks a sharp contrast to the previously dominant strategy of pursuing cuts through carbon trading. This turning point was brought about not only by Norway joining the ESR but also in response to meager domestic results historically and the 2021 election being hailed as a "climate election," thus ramping up party competition on the issue (Farstad and Aasen 2022).

Overall, we have therefore seen how Norway has developed relatively ambitious and stable climate policies and cross-party consensus over time, although this has become increasingly strained and politicized as the emphasis shifts to trickier domestic action. Are we witnessing a break with Norway's consensual climate tradition, and is this change for the better or for the worse? To answer these questions, we now turn to a more in-depth examination of the debates and developments within two key sectors, namely petroleum and EV policy.

11.2 Oil and Gas: Politicizing and Depoliticizing with Mixed Effects

Oil and gas extraction is Norway's most significant economic sector, at times accounting for half the country's export revenue. It is also the country's largest source of GHG emissions. It is therefore not surprising that the future of the oil

industry has been one of the most contentious topics in climate policy discussions in recent years, and a dominant topic in the general election campaigns of 2017 and 2021 (Farstad and Aasen 2022). Seen in a longer perspective, however, this intense politicization is a rather recent phenomenon, as oil and gas extraction was generally not framed as a climate policy issue during the 1990s and 2000s (Bang and Lahn 2019). Environmental concerns over oil extraction tended to focus on the risk of oil spills and consequences for fisheries. Moreover, rather than focusing on the *production* of oil and gas for export, the 1990s and early 2000s saw intense debates about whether to increase the domestic *use* of natural gas through the construction of gas-fired power plants. In the remainder of this section, we first analyze the debates about gas power, which brought carbon capture and storage (CCS) technology to prominence. We then move on to the more recent politicization of the question of future oil and gas production.

11.2.1 Gas-Fired Power Plants and CCS

In 1995, the company Naturkraft applied for permits to construct three gas-fired power plants. The Labour and Conservative parties supported granting the permits, arguing that increasing emissions could be offset by buying emission credits from other countries. They were strongly opposed by smaller center and left parties, as well as environmental nongovernmental organizations (ENGOs), who argued that Norway should reduce emissions domestically and not introduce fossil fueled power to an effectively fully renewable energy system. The issue thus became a symbol of the party-political competition between the rival policy approaches of cutting emissions "at home" or "abroad," which came to dominate Norwegian political life well into the 2000s (Tjernshaugen 2011).

From a relatively early stage, the coalition opposing gas power plants demanded that CCS be a prerequisite for granting any permits. Members of this coalition had different motivations for supporting CCS: While some were enthusiastic about the technology, others saw requirements for an expensive and undeveloped technology as strategic leverage for obstructing permits (Tjernshaugen and Langhelle 2009). In 2000, the conflict came to a head when the centrist minority government under Prime Minister Kjell Magne Bondevik (Christian Democrats) refused to grant the permits. The parliamentary majority overruled the government, prompting the prime minister's resignation (Tjernshaugen 2011).

The new Labour government, headed by Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg, immediately permitted the gas-fired power plants without requirements for CCS. Labour remained in power for only a year, however, and subsequent governments have all consisted of coalitions of parties supporting and opposing gas power. They have relied on different versions of a compromise in which existing permits are upheld

but with a strong commitment to funding and encouraging CCS technology. When Bondevik returned as prime minister in a coalition with the Conservatives in 2001, the government increased R&D funding for CCS and established a state-owned innovation company to coordinate efforts (Boasson and Lahn 2017). Stoltenberg then made a comeback as prime minister in 2005, as leader of a red–green coalition between Labour, the Socialist Left, and Centre parties. His government allowed Statoil to construct a new gas-fired power plant at the Mongstad refinery, based on an agreement that the state and Statoil work jointly toward full-scale CCS within a few years after the power plant was built. The agreement, a compromise between the pro-gas Labour party and the anti-gas Socialist Left, was later branded by Stoltenberg as a major technology-development commitment akin to "Norway's moon landing" (Boasson 2015: 95).

Thus, the idea that CCS should be actively promoted won broad political support, albeit for different reasons: While the parties opposing gas power saw CCS requirements as a way of postponing new use of gas and preventing an increase in Norwegian emissions, the Labour and Conservative parties emphasized industrial and technological development. CCS thus came to function as a "political glue" that kept coalition partners with different climate policy views together (Tjernshaugen and Langhelle 2009) – or in other words, as a way of depoliticizing the controversial gas issue.

In the late 2000s, the appetite for gas-fired power waned. Only one of Naturkraft's power plants had been constructed, and it was later decommissioned due to high gas prices. The Mongstad power plant has also been slated for decommissioning, and the government has subsequently abandoned plans for full-scale CCS at existing power plants. A strong commitment to developing CCS technology remains, but the debate has shifted from bridging differences on the contentious gas issue toward a focus on technological and industrial development (Boasson 2015: 84). In 2020, the government launched the "Longship" project, which aims to establish infrastructure for transporting carbon from CCS projects to storage sites in the North Sea (Gassnova 2022). The government now focuses on CCS connected to industrial sites such as cement production and waste incineration, as well as potential "blue hydrogen" and direct air capture projects.

In summary, CCS has been used to both politicize and depoliticize the gas debate, with mixed effects. The politicization of gas-fired power plants in the 1990s likely prevented the construction of several power plants and placed climate policy at the top of the Norwegian political agenda. It also helped establish CCS as a priority within climate policy and led to increased funding for technology development. However, when CCS was primarily used as "political glue," it may have been less effective in terms of technological development, as several plans for full-scale CCS were later abandoned. In contrast, the more recent focus on industrial

emissions and infrastructure for carbon transport and storage – a result of the gas power issue fading from the agenda and thus a depoliticization of the technology – could see a bigger long-term payoff in terms of developing CCS technology and new infrastructure for carbon storage.

At the same time, the politicization of gas and CCS may have had important spillover effects to other areas of climate and energy policy. When the Bondevik government resigned over the gas issue and the permits for gas power plants were granted in 2000, parliament also adopted a new objective of reducing energy demand and set up a state enterprise, ENOVA, to support energy efficiency in buildings. As Boasson (2015: 137) notes, this happened in a highly depoliticized manner, giving experts and administrators much leeway to develop policies. However, it clearly happened in a context of demand for "uncontroversial" climate policies that could bolster the government's green credentials following a polarizing fight over gas. This context likely created room for new initiatives in energy efficiency, cross-political support for new renewable energy production, and an increasing demand for ambitious climate policy in other areas.

11.2.2 Contesting the Future of Oil and Gas Production

While the domestic use of gas was highly politicized in the early 2000s, oil and gas extraction for export was less central to climate policy debates. This was partly a consequence of the international climate regime, which placed responsibility on the use rather than the production of fossil fuels (Bang and Lahn 2019). It was also partly made possible by Norway's embrace of carbon trading as a means of fulfilling its international commitments. Since the early 1990s, it had been clear that the emissions from oil and gas extraction would grow significantly in the coming decades, which would make it difficult for Norway to combine ambitious climate commitments with continued oil production. As a result, the Norwegian government became an active supporter of carbon trading in the negotiations leading up to the Kyoto Protocol, and subsequently relied on carbon credits to offset increasing emissions from its growing oil industry. This helped depoliticize oil and gas extraction as a climate policy issue, although there were still controversies regarding expanded oil exploration in the 2000s related to local environmental risks and negative effects on fisheries (Bang and Lahn 2019).

Since the 2013 parliamentary election, however, there has been a marked shift in the debate about oil production, with an increasing politicization of the future of the oil industry. The shift is closely linked to international developments. The formal adoption of a global temperature target provided a common yardstick for global climate action, which has been further translated into a budget for total allowable carbon emissions, and used by a range of actors to call for a halt to new

oil and gas developments (Paterson 2021). In Norway, ENGOs shifted their focus from contesting oil exploration in specific environmentally sensitive areas toward demands for a full stop in exploration and a planned phaseout of Norwegian oil production (Bang and Lahn 2019). These demands were taken up by the smaller green parties in parliament – in particular the Green Party, which won its first parliamentary seat in the 2013 election by campaigning to end oil production (Farstad 2014). It also became a key demand in the large-scale school strikes organized across Norway in 2018–2019, and a heated issue during the 2021 general election (Farstad and Aasen 2022).

The response to the new challenges against further oil and gas extraction has been twofold. First, the larger parties have argued that any winding down of oil production will have to be market-led. The Labour and the Conservative parties have explicitly argued that climate change should be addressed on the demand-side rather than the supply-side, and that as long as there is a demand for fossil fuels, Norway should use its opportunities to meet that demand (Bang and Lahn 2019). Second, the oil industry has argued that Norway should aim to maintain or increase its share of global oil and gas markets because it is a more responsible, reliable, and democratic fossil fuel supplier with lower production-related emissions compared to Russia and OPEC. This line of argument has gained particular prominence following the 2022 energy crisis and cuts in Russian gas supplies to Europe.

However, the recent and intense politicization of oil production has so far led to few policy changes. A notable exception is a new commitment to assess the lifecycle emissions from oil production when approving new oil fields for development. In practice, however, such changes are unlikely to have much impact on the volume of Norwegian oil and gas extraction. In fact, policies for active exploration have been upheld, and oil production is likely to continue at high levels, fueled in part by COVID-19 support packages and increasing European demand for gas in light of the war in Ukraine.

11.3 A Generous EV Scheme Becomes Increasingly Effective, Expensive, and Politicized

The case of Norwegian EV policy has important parallels to the development of CCS policy, as it breaks with the prevalent discourse of cost-efficient cuts abroad. Moreover, part of the justification the political majority has provided for continuing exploration for new oil has been that climate policy should focus on managing the *demand* for fossil fuels, not the *production* (e.g. Helgesen 2016). Norway's ambitious EV policies can be seen as an example of consistency in this regard: While Norway will continue to produce oil to meet existing demand, the government's EV policy is designed to undercut the demand for its main export.

Norwegian EV policy has its roots in the early 1990s (Ryghaug and Skjølsvold 2019). A coalition of policy entrepreneurs comprising the ENGO Bellona, the pop group A-ha, and EV enthusiasts performed a number of public stunts, including civil disobedience (e.g. driving through toll roads without paying), which garnered public attention (Asphjell et al. 2013). Combined with prospects of developing an EV industry carried forward by technical entrepreneurs in the small EV company PIVCO (later Think), the interest organization NORSTART (later the Norwegian EV Association) and ENGOs, EVs were gradually given a number of advantages, such as no vehicle registration tax on purchasing new cars (and from 2001 no VAT), no annual vehicle license fee, free public parking, no fees on toll roads, and permission to drive in bus lanes (Ryghaug and Skjølsvold 2019).

Several of these policies, such as free public parking and passing through toll roads, had their origin at the local level, more specifically the municipality of Oslo (Ryghaug and Skjølsvold 2019). Over time, these advantages and subsidies became durable and stable policies at the national level, also because EV owners, although few initially, organized in the Norwegian EV Association, which has grown into a large and powerful organization campaigning to maintain advantages in order to phase in more EVs. Norway failed to develop a domestic EV industry, but when mainstream automakers such as Citroën, Mitsubishi, and Nissan started offering larger and safer EVs with a decent range, EVs became more widespread, particularly for commuters in suburbs (Figenbaum et al. 2015). However, it was not until Tesla (and later the large incumbent actors in the automotive industry) started to offer family cars with longer ranges that the diffusion of EVs really picked up. New policy initiatives, such as the cross-party Climate Settlements, National Transport Plans, and large-scale urban contractual agreements (Tønnesen et al. 2019) also contributed to facilitate EV diffusion. The result of these advantages, combined with green and cheap electricity, is that Norway has the highest number of EVs per capita in the world, making up 21 percent of the car fleet in 2022. The same year, 79 percent of new cars sold were EVs (SSB 2023b).

Most EV advantages have been backed by bipartisan support, as transport is a large emitting sector and there is increasing recognition about the need to cut emissions. A high level of car taxation in general, partly because Norway has no domestic car industry, has also allowed for powerful incentives through tax exemptions. However, the EV scheme is costly due to losses in tax income for the state, amounting to NOK 30 billion per year. Consequently, the EV subsidy scheme has been increasingly politicized, for example in the general election of 2021. Particularly leftist parties argued that "luxury subsidies" for expensive EVs (that also largely benefit people living in and around cities rather than rural areas) should be limited by, for example, introducing a fiscal ceiling. Consequently, in 2023 the Labour–Centre party coalition government reintroduced VAT on EVs for

the part of the purchase that exceeds NOK 500,000. The smaller "climate parties," such as the Green, Socialist Left, and Liberal parties, disagreed with this move, arguing that it would slow the diffusion of EVs.

Thus, the initial success and subsequent politicization of EV policy can be explained by policy entrepreneurs, business prospects, and the absence of strong vested interests that eventually get overshadowed by discussions of social equality. Moreover, although Norway failed to develop a domestic EV production industry, the electrification of the transport sector has had a spillover effect on the shipping industry, where Norway tries to position itself in green shipping (Koasidis et al. 2020).

11.4 Discussion and Conclusions

There has been a constant and dialectic tension between de/repoliticization within petroleum and EV policy. The case of Norway thus provides important nuance to the debate about policy stability versus (re)politicization. It shows that a large degree of consensus on addressing climate change and stability around overall ambitions in terms of international commitments may coexist with intensely politicized debates regarding means, and that policy stability in some areas can go hand in hand with party-political competition over competing policy approaches in others.

On the one hand, depoliticization strategies in the case of EVs have ensured stability as policy lock-in, which has served to increase climate policy ambition. Likewise, the later depoliticization of the gas issue has allowed CCS technology to develop more rapidly, with an increasing focus on emission sources other than fossil fuels. On the other hand, the oil debate reveals depoliticizing strategies by the major political parties and vested interests, which have had the effect of ensuring stability in the sense of maintaining status quo for the oil and gas industry and making domestic emissions reductions more difficult.

The only overtly politicized policy development has been the early debate over gas and CCS, although this had mixed effects. While the debate might have prevented some gas-fired power plants from being developed, and created positive spillover effects for other areas such as energy efficiency in buildings, focusing on CCS connected to gas may not have been the best solution for developing the technology as a whole. Furthermore, the repoliticization of the oil debate has had negligible effects, perhaps underlining the significant power of vested fossil fuel interests. Likewise, the more recent politicization of EVs has served to weaken EV subsidies, with potential impacts on take-up and therefore emissions.

The spillover effects identified in the chapter are interesting, as they show that politicization of one policy area can spill over to another, such as in the case of

CCS and energy efficiency in buildings. Moreover, the CCS example demonstrates that despite the spillover effect resulting from a highly *politicized* debate, the affected policy area developed in a highly *de*politicized manner. Echoing the mixed effects highlighted in the chapter, this depoliticization allowed the area of energy efficiency in buildings to develop in a relatively ambitious manner as it allowed experts and administrators to "get on with the job." We see a similar spillover effect *within* sectors, such as in the case of EVs and green shipping, as well as the depoliticized EU-ETS making the ESR more politicized. We also reveal a multilevel spillover effect, whereby Europeanization and the decision to join the EU-ETS and ESR have affected national politicization, as well as local EV policy in Oslo affecting national-level policymaking. These spillover dynamics are significant and warrant further research in other cases and policy areas.

The variable success of the above de/repoliticization strategies can at least partly be explained by the factors influencing the de/repoliticization. Through our analysis, we have also identified explaining variables for de/repoliticization. On an overall level, *European integration* and Norway joining the ESR have served to both depoliticize and repoliticize climate policy through, on the one hand, "locking in" the need for domestic emissions reductions, while on the other hand creating heated debate about implementation. Likewise, over time, *party competition* has been a frequent explanation for repoliticization of climate policy, in most cases serving to increase ambition (e.g. relating to increasing domestic emissions targets). The exception is the case of the oil debate – whereas party competition has served to put the issue firmly on the political agenda, significant action has been hampered by the strength of *fossil fuel and vested interests*. Conversely, the absence of vested interests helps explain why EV policy has been easier to implement. The role of *entrepreneurs* also looms large in our review, with ENGOs acting as influential policy entrepreneurs in the case of petroleum policy, while the ENGO Bellona, EV enthusiasts, and local politicians were important technical entrepreneurs in the case of EV policy. Lastly, the *international climate regime* has influenced the dynamic tension between depoliticization and repoliticization, with the accounting rules under the Kyoto Protocol serving to depoliticize Norwegian petroleum expansion, while the Paris Agreement with its emphasis on the global carbon budget and domestic contributions has served to repoliticize the issue.

The mixed picture presented here thus reveals that depoliticization and (re)politicization can have both positive and negative effects on climate policy. However, it is important to emphasize that (re)politicization has rarely been about Norway's overarching climate goals or international commitments, with debates instead relating to *how* to achieve these. It is therefore worth noting that although we point to the occasional positive effects of (re)politicization, this is within a context of strong cross-party consensus and policy stability regarding an overall commitment

to tackle climate change and take on relatively ambitious international obligations. (Re)politicization might therefore conceivably have different effects in different contexts, such as where there is more debate about overall targets and responsibility (such as in polarized countries like the United States). We therefore argue that it might be useful to differentiate between different "levels" of politicization – one at an overarching level relating to policy frameworks, goals, and targets, and one relating to implementation of specific policies.

Finally, we have seen how key Norwegian climate policies have developed through a dynamic tension of depoliticization and repoliticization. Through reviewing whether policy developments and debates have been chiefly depoliticizing or repoliticizing strategies and with what effects, we have revealed how – contrary to proponents of agonistic politics – depoliticizing strategies can indeed increase climate policy ambition in certain cases. However – contrary to proponents of policy stability and depoliticization – we have also seen how (re)politicization has served to ramp up ambitions in other cases. As such, we can surmise that not only is Norwegian climate policy less consensual than first assumed but the recent "crumbling of Norway's consensual tradition" might not be such bad news after all. Significantly, however, given the mixed effects revealed throughout, we argue that it is useful to embrace agnosticism in the debate over de/repoliticization, instead exploring this on an empirical and contextual basis.

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