

Topic: Innovation and political influence responses to the EU vehicular emission regulations

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To meet 2050 climate targets, a transition to cleaner cars is crucial. Many countries therefore support the diffusion of cleaner cars; particularly the more radically innovative zero emission vehicles such as electric and hydrogen cars. Some countries however, believe no national support for cleaner cars is necessary or even effective because of the European fleet average emission regulations for cars and soon, also trucks. The Netherlands ministry of Finance for example, recently stated that its sales and lease incentives for cleaner cars is “a wasted of money”; arguing that the “waterbed effect” of the EU regulations prevents CO₂ reductions at the national level because it allows the sales of more polluting vehicles in other countries (NRC, 2016). This summer, the Dutch government has therefore voted to stop most policy support for cleaner cars (except for zero emission vehicles) and to rely instead on EU emission regulations (Rijksoverheid, 2016).

However, critical analyses on these EU regulations from a combined innovation and political influence perspective are needed to assess the effectiveness of these regulations. Technical analyses from TNO and others have concluded that cars produce 30% more emission under real life circumstances than under test procedures (TNO et al., 2012); an effect that was exacerbated by last year’s Volkswagen diesel car debacle (nu, 2015). Such analyses have become even more relevant with the recent cartel discovery of truck manufacturers, that have been fined a record high financial penalty of 2,9 billion euros for making agreements about prices and about withholding clean car innovations from the market (EC, 2016).

Relevant research (sub)questions include: Who are the powerful players in formulating these emission regulations?; How and to what effect does the automotive lobby influence these regulations?; How has Angela Merkel been able to block EU emission regulations three times?; Do the EU emission regulations drive incremental or radical innovation?; How strong is this waterbed effect?; What can we learn from the regulations from car that can be applied to the new regulations for trucks? A theoretical framework and analytical approach that is useful for addressing these questions can be found in Wesseling et al. (2015).

References

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