Stability and climate policy?

Harnessing insights from the literature on path dependency, policy feedback, and transition pathways to help accelerate the low-carbon transition

Daniel Rosenbloom, James Meadowcroft, and Benjamin Cashore

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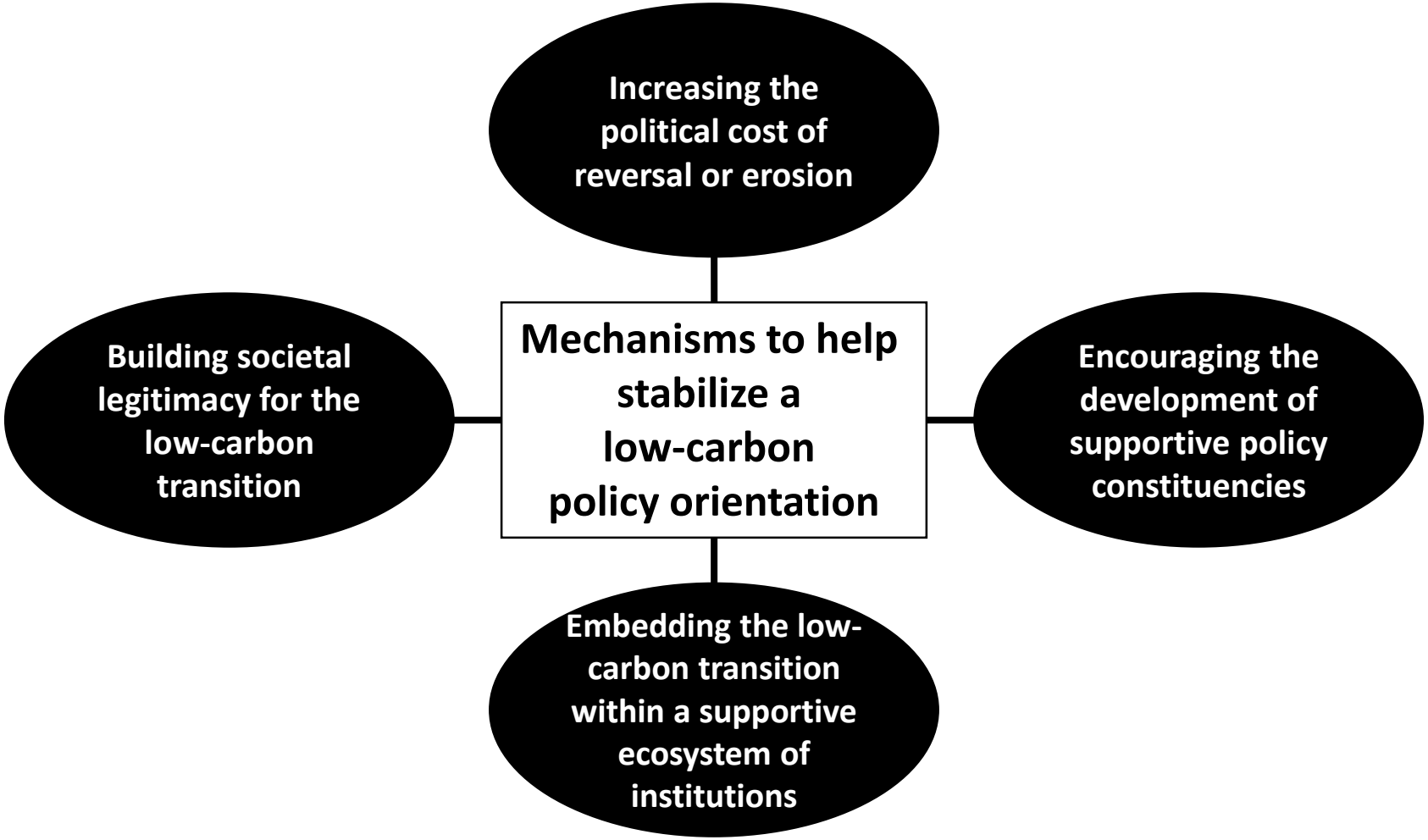
A more modest goal

- Recognizing the need for both policy stability and flexibility
- Stabilize the overarching ***directionality*** or ***orientation*** of climate policy as a transition towards a low-carbon economy
- Make the ***low-carbon course of development durable***, signalling continuous movement in this direction
- Avoiding course reversal or erosion

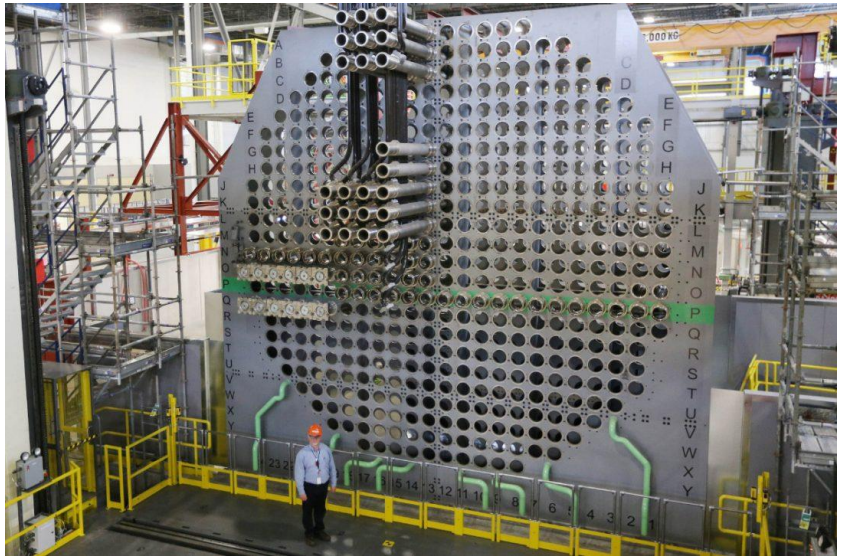

Increasing the political cost of reversal or erosion
Building societal legitimacy for the low-carbon transition
Mechanisms to help stabilize a low-carbon policy orientation
Encouraging the development of supportive policy constituencies
Embedding the low-carbon transition within a supportive ecosystem of institutions

Procurement & Infrastructure spending

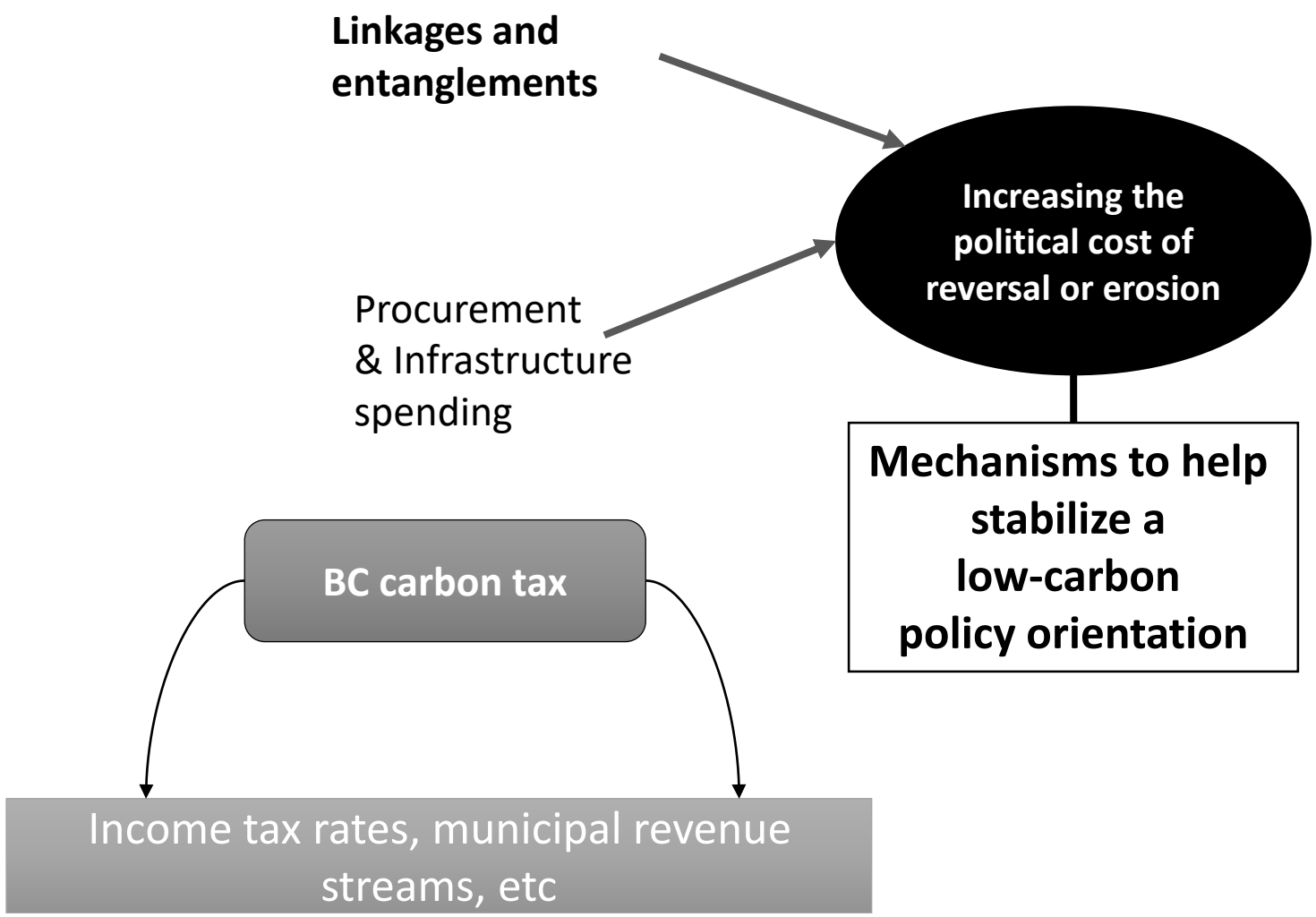
Increasing the political cost of reversal or erosion

Mechanisms to help stabilize a low-carbon policy orientation

Site C Dam near Fort St. John in BC -- $1.5 billion expected in cost overruns but $2 billion already spent



Nuclear reactor renewal in Ontario -- $12.8 billion on Darlington, extending operation to 2050s



BC's carbon tax reduces income taxes but also provides disbursements to municipalities committed to decarbonization (Levin et al, 2012)

Quebec and Ontario have linked their cap-and-trade systems with California through the Western Climate Initiative

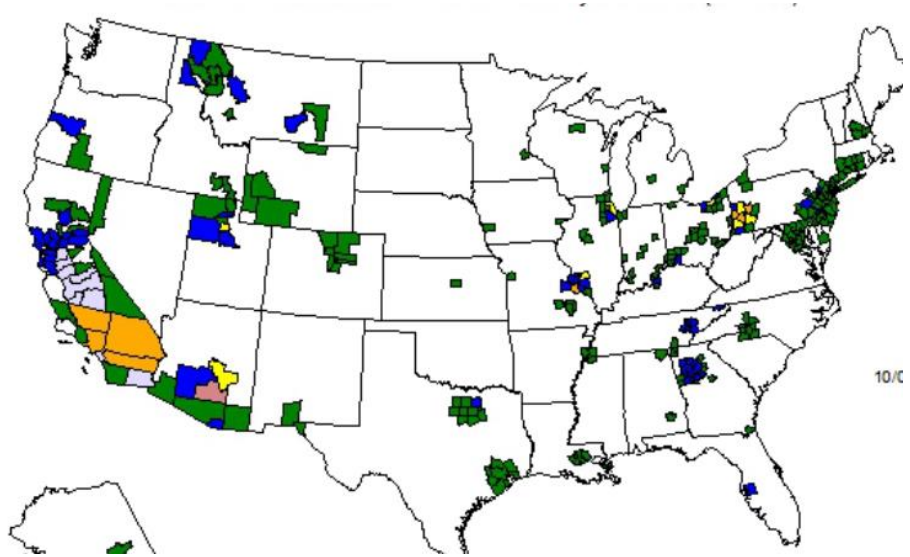
Linkages and entanglements

Automatic triggers and penalties

Procurement & Infrastructure spending

Increasing the political cost of reversal or erosion

Mechanisms to help stabilize a low-carbon policy orientation



EPA non-attainment status for air pollutants highlights problematic states and cities

Linkages and entanglements

Automatic triggers and penalties

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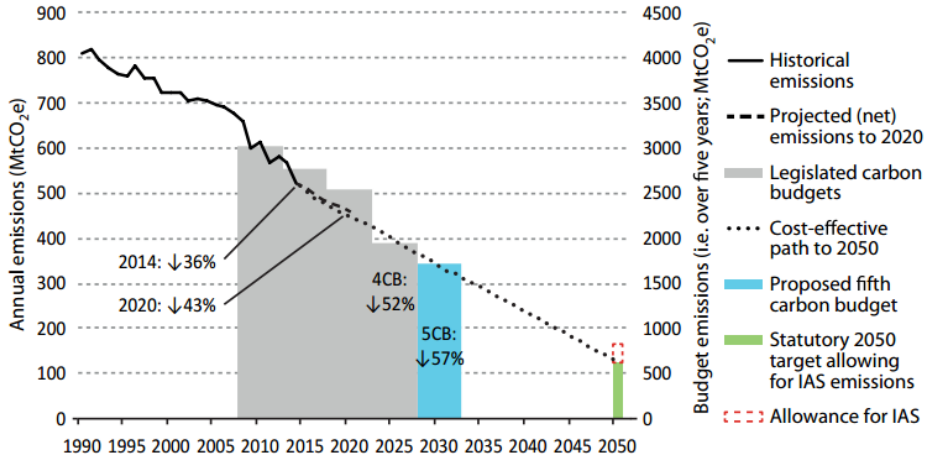
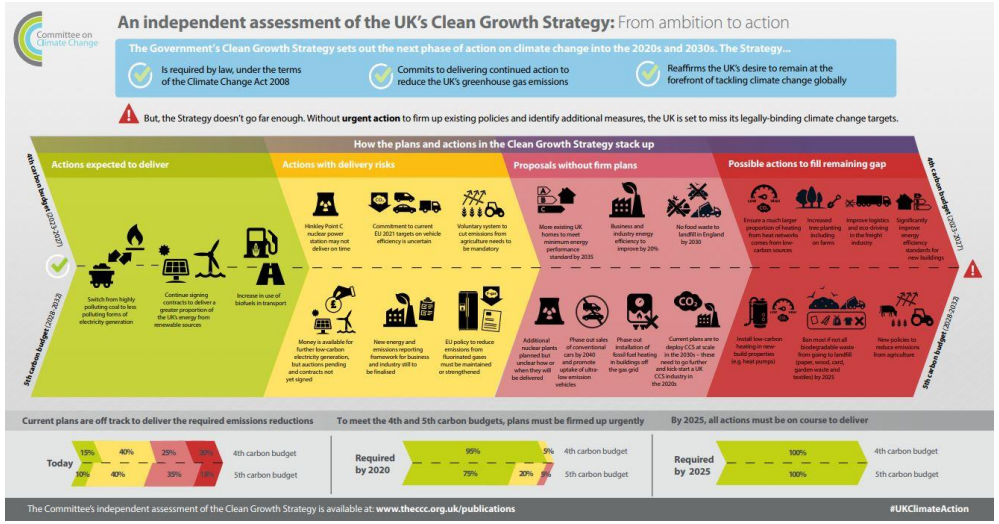
Procurement & Infrastructure spending

Increased transparency

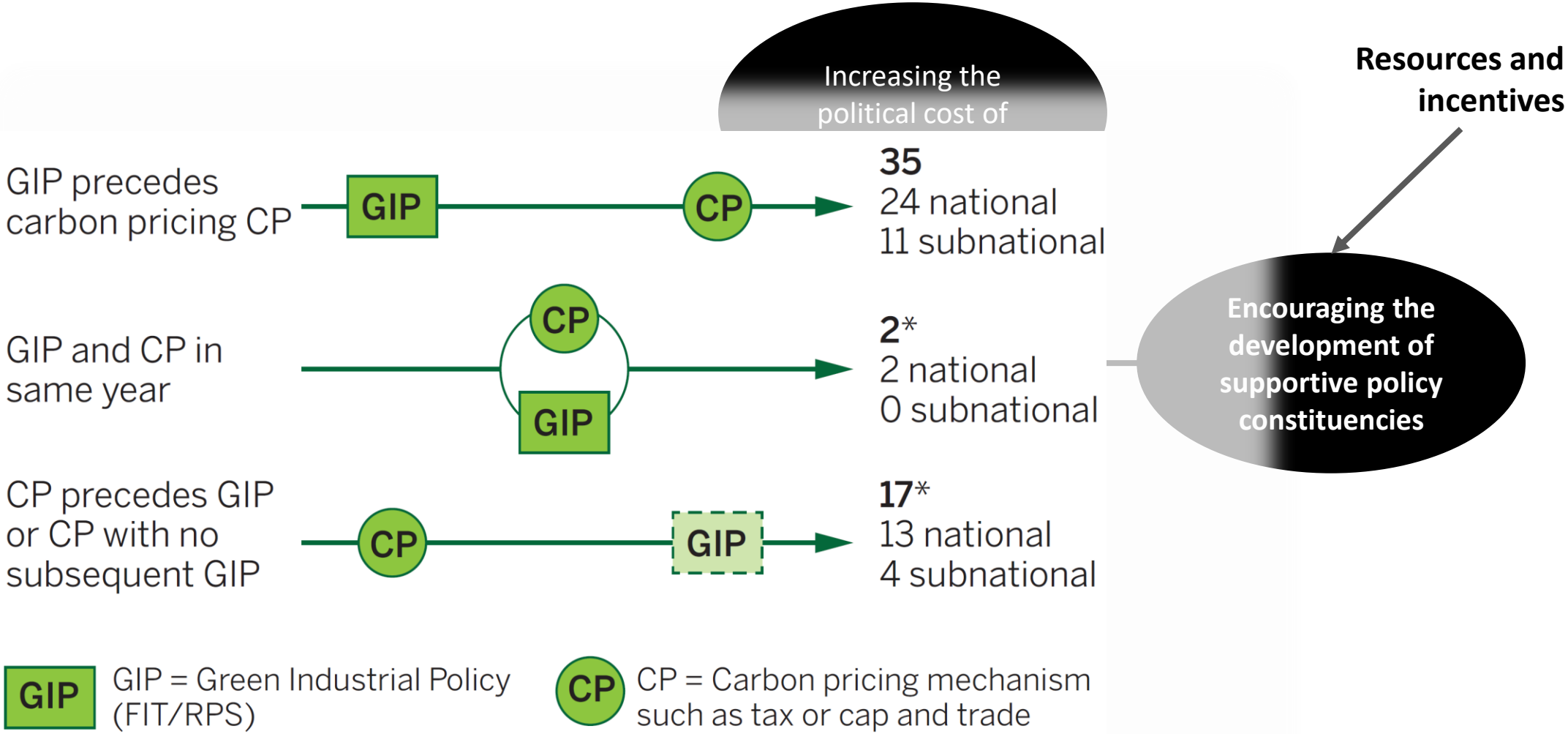
Mechanisms to help stabilize a low-carbon policy orientation

Figure 1: The recommended fifth carbon budget would continue emissions reduction on the path to the UK's 2050 target





Additional monitoring and assessment (UK Climate Change Committee or pathways approaches)



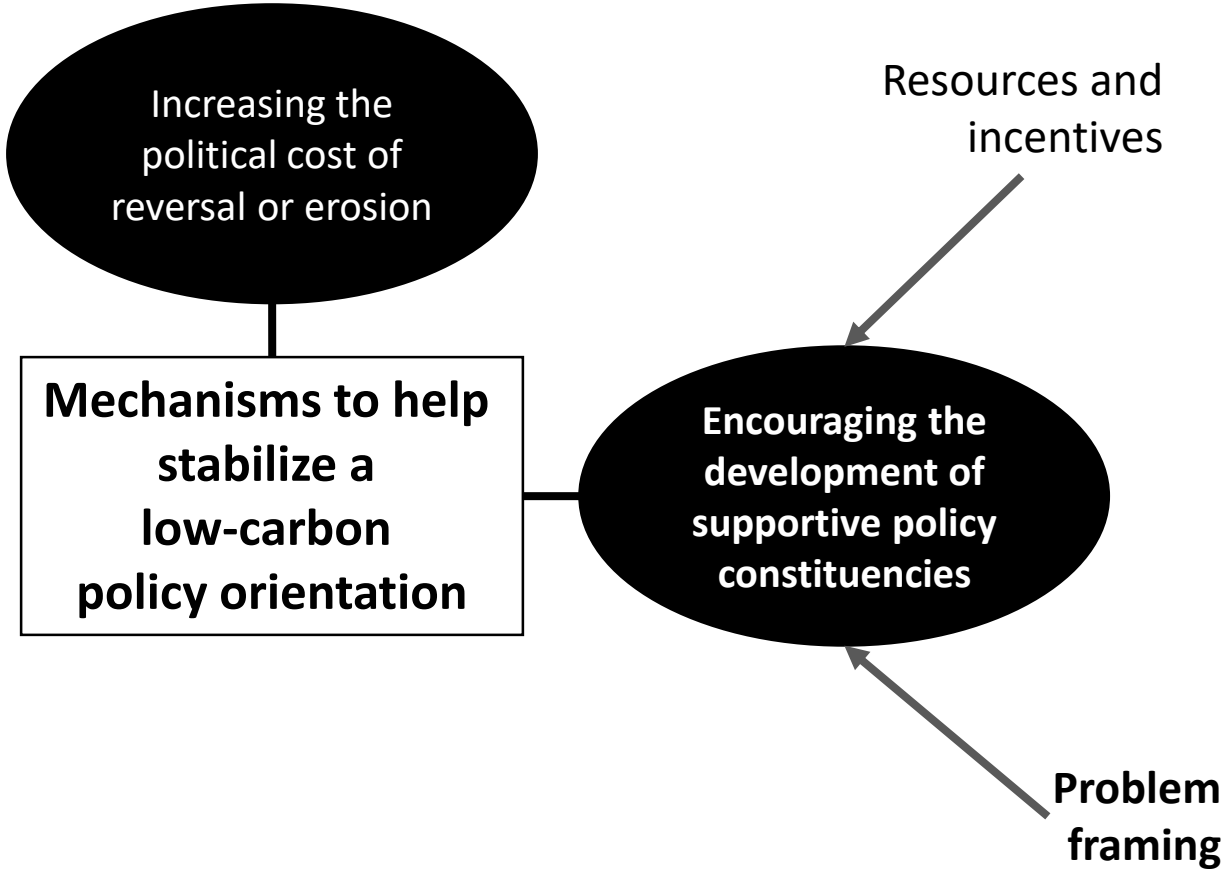
Source: Meckling et al., 2015

Support for cleantech industries, research funding, greater access to policymaking process

- Activate supportive interests:

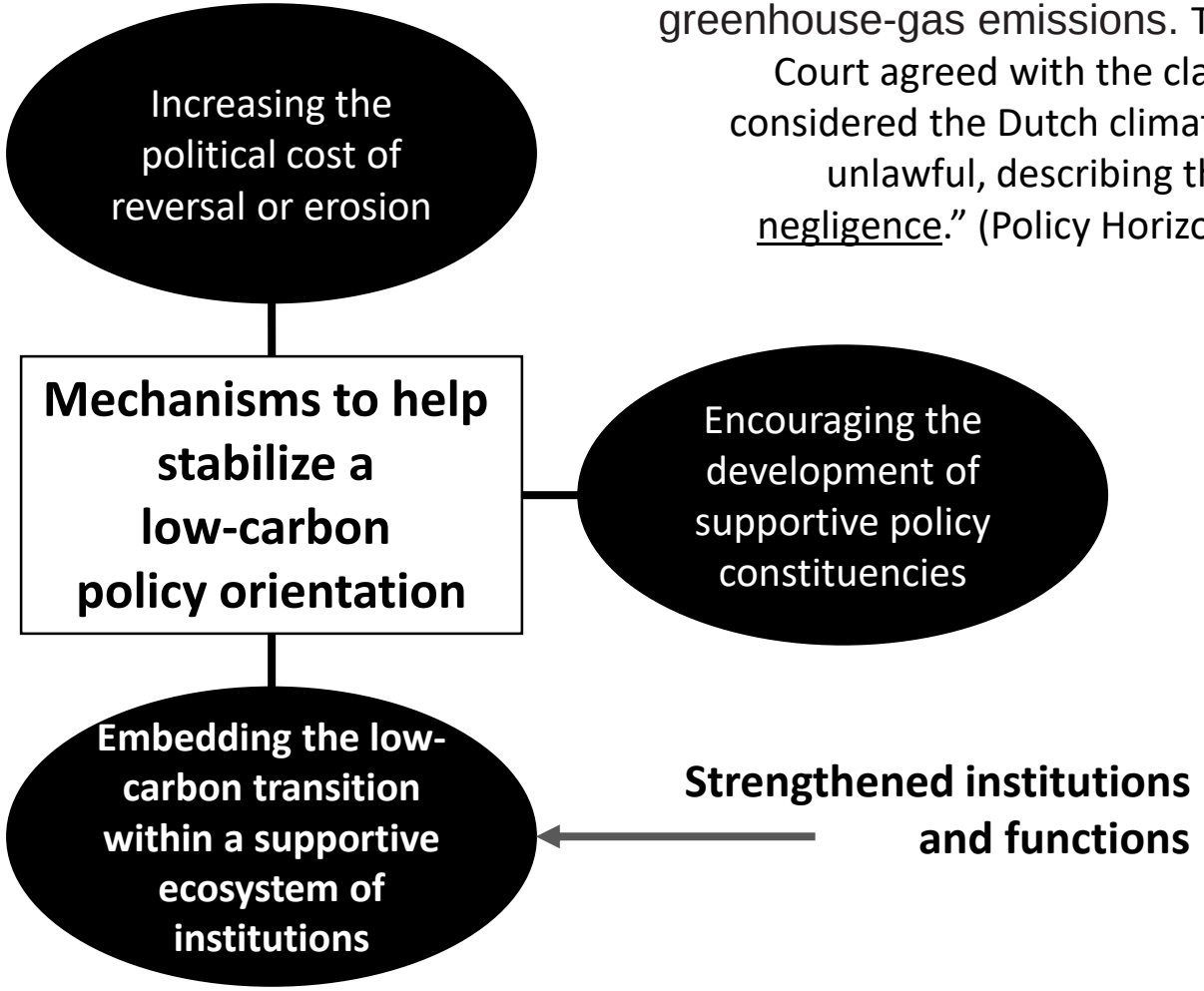
  - **Ontario coal phase-out** framed as environment-health issue, creating space for local health advocates

  - **German Energiewende** framed in terms of climate, regional economic development, social justice, activating local communities in energy provision



- Many ways to do this:
  - Adopt a carbon budgeting process (new functions, obligations, and capacities in relation to planning, monitoring and reporting, communication, etc)
  - Some functions housed in arm's length bodies (e.g., a Canadian Climate Change Committee or a 'central bank' for carbon)
  - Creating a larger role for litigation and judicial review (environmental bill of rights e.g., Blue Dot campaign)
  - Funding for one or more climate action research institutes
- A social complement to material sunk costs

"Dutch sustainability foundation called Urgenda and some 900 citizens have filed a lawsuit against their government for not taking sufficient measures to limit greenhouse-gas emissions. The Hague District Court agreed with the class action suit and considered the Dutch climate change policies unlawful, describing them as hazardous negligence." (Policy Horizons Canada, 2017)

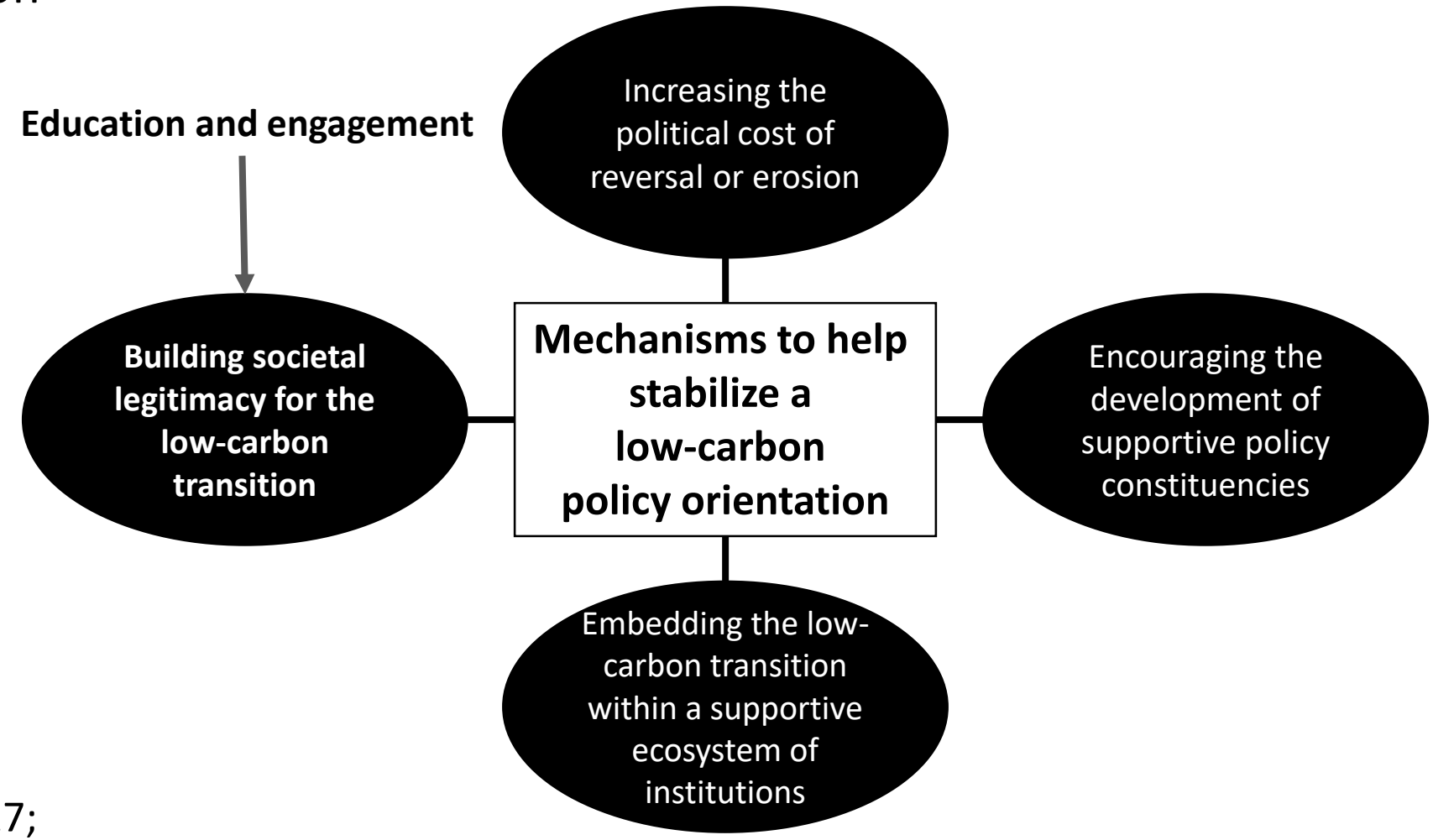


Socially and culturally embedding the low-carbon transition

Education and training

Focusing events (e.g., Generation Energy)

A program of transition experiments (see Rosenbloom & Meadowcroft 2017; Potvin et al 2017)



Concluding remarks

- Self-reinforcing mechanisms are likely to be more effective when deployed together
- Near-term (e.g., procurement) vs more distant effects (e.g., investing in education and training)
- Tensions between stability and adaptability – risks: lock in, policy capture, ever infant industries, etc

Thank you for your attention

Hold the date:

International Sustainability Transitions (IST) conference

June 23-26, 2019

Carleton University

daniel.rosenbloom@carleton.ca