Questions of “change” or “transformation” are longstanding preoccupations of both political science and climate change scholarship. Yet, the two fields largely occupy independent epistemological, normative, and ontological spaces that have led to misunderstandings, mutual criticisms, and a lack of serious engagement on these questions. In this talk, I will address understandings of change and transformation relevant to both fields and suggest a productive epistemological shift for analyzing and normatively engaging with change in the face of uncertainty. I then propose a more policy relevant and forward-looking scholarship that moves from explaining change to identifying causal logics and dynamic processes that can reinforce or undermine change. To illustrate these arguments in action, I examine politicization of target setting in the Paris Agreement that produced major change, the transformative potential – and risk of “false change” – of “net zero” policies, and implications of the argument for securitization theory and anticipatory and just governance of existential global threats.

About Steven Bernstein

Moreover, Steven Bernstein is Co-Director of the Environmental Governance Lab at University of Toronto. He holds an Honorary Doctorate from the University of Copenhagen.

His research spans the areas of global governance and institutions, global environmental politics, IPE, and policy studies. His current research projects investigate transformative policies and initiatives to achieve decarbonization, coherence and incoherence in global sustainability governance, and change at the intersection of International Relations and Global Environmental Politics theory and research.

Guest Lecture Details

Date: Tuesday, 28 November 2023
Time: 16.00-17.00 (CET)
Reception at 17.00 (CET)

Location:
CSS Auditorium 35.01.44
Øster Farimagsgade 5, København K

You are cordially invited to a reception hosted by the Department of Political Science following the lecture.

The lecture is open for all, but we kindly ask you to register prior to the event. Please visit: https://politicalscience.ku.dk/