







order to better understand particular motivations and situations. Such research can improve the transparency of communications among the societies, which hopefully will build trust and lead toward improved cooperation toward solutions. At the same time, the project has a scientific mission. In creating global climate change, humanity is imposing a vast, unprecedented experiment upon itself. From a purely detached, “disinterested,” scientific viewpoint, the curious question is, at what point of increasing pain from climate change-driven disasters, if ever, will this species decide to remove the causes of the pain, as best it can after the infection has gone so far? The situation represents a perfect quasi-experimental design for social scientific research. Societies of different background factors are responding at differential rates of expediency to take preventative measures against a common threat. The Compon project utilizes this situation as a research opportunity.

### **Project Orientation**

- 18 In 2007, the Compon project was launched to contribute to this practical political goal as well as clarify the underlying social principles that drive societies’ different responses to the mitigation problem.<sup>[1]</sup> The project acronym Compon stands for Comparing Climate Change Policy Networks and as the title indicates, it uses an objective scientific approach to measure the types of coverage in the native-language newspapers of different societies. The results are reported below while a second phase of the project, not reported here, uses a survey to study how different organizations in the society evaluate and act on the mitigation issue. The Compon project members made great efforts to develop and use objective research instruments at the highest standards of social science research. These methods include a common method for selecting and analyzing the content of newspaper articles. From three major newspapers in each society, using computerized databases, researchers selected articles that contained substantive discussion around the two key words, climate change and global warming. The content of these articles was then coded according to indicators used by all the research teams.
- 19 The Compon project includes standard teams in 19 societies (or cases). Seventeen of these follow the regular protocol, while two (Indonesia, Vietnam) focus on the issue of REDD+ (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation). In rough geographic clustering, the seventeen regular cases are now largely completed (in the media analysis phase include the United States, Canada, Mexico, Brazil, Japan, South Korea, China, Taiwan, New Zealand, India, Sweden, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Germany, Greece, Switzerland and Portugal). Because our study includes Taiwan, for generic reference we use the term “society” or “case” instead of nation. In Asia, the regular teams consist of the cases of Japan, South Korea, China, India and Taiwan.
- 20 The societies in the Compon study differ hugely among themselves in geography, size, cultural qualities and social institutions as well as their emissions trajectories, mitigation policies and performance. For the purposes of the present scientific study, however, each society represents an equivalent case as in a case of response to climate change. This approach is typical of comparative studies (Ragin 1987; Tilly 1984). The Compon project then extracts aligned comparable data from all the cases to ensure the most rigorous comparison. The present essay uses one type of project data, newspaper discourse about climate change. In this analytical and data perspective, the societies studied in the project constitute equivalent comparative cases.
- 21 Demonstrating the high scientific standards of the project and the teams, a number of the teams have received grants from their national science foundations to carry out the study. These include the teams of Japan, South Korea, China and Taiwan as well as others around the world. In addition, the central coordinating office of the whole Compon project, located at the University of Minnesota (USA) received initial funding for the whole project in 2008 from the US National Science Foundation. This initial grant provided funding for the central office as well as the cases of the United States, India, China, and start up grants to Japan, Germany and the United Kingdom.
- 22 The findings reported in this essay come from the first research phase of the Compon project and concern the content analysis of newspaper data from the Asian societies. Despite the growth of Internet communications, newspapers remain the most prevalent common source of information. The way that newspapers cover and interpret an issue reveals much about what the society and government are doing, or are likely to do, about the issue. Newspapers convey government decisions about major issues and can also represent debates about policy issues in the government and the public. Beyond the discussion of technical points about specific government policies, newspapers also reveal much more about how an issue is being understood and interpreted by the government and society. These public understandings and interpretations provide strong indicators about the reasons lying behind and motivating the government policies and societal ways of responding to an issue. Comparing the newspaper coverage and content around climate change and mitigation in China, India, Japan, South Korea and Taiwan reveals distinct trajectories of intensity as well as the understanding and approaches to the problems.























