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Carbon Pricing Is Not a Fix for Climate Change

The problem: developing countries can't afford to go along

By Scott Tinker on August 16, 2019



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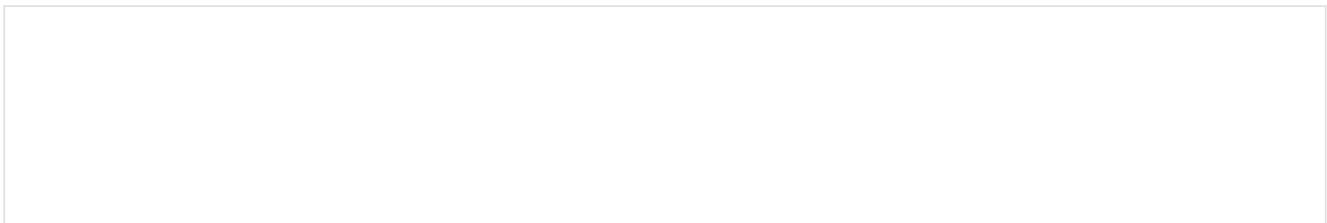
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elsewhere, then the one atmosphere suffers.

Some form of carbon pricing—a carbon tax, carbon trading, carbon credits—is favored by many politicians, NGOs, academics and even some in industry. But the reality is that a price on carbon will not be adopted by developing and emerging economies because it makes their energy more expensive, and they are too busy trying to build their economies and lift themselves from poverty.

In the developed world, carbon pricing increases the cost of manufacturing and products, which in turn drives manufacturing to developing nations where it is more affordable because of lower labor costs and less stringent environmental regulations and emissions standards. Global emissions rise in the one atmosphere. Put another way, the good intentions of carbon pricing have an unintended negative impact on climate change. This is not hypothetical. It is happening.



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If carbon pricing won't work, what will? Energy science tells us how to actually

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not. They require vastly expanded mining, manufacturing, deployment and landfill disposal, amounting to major environmental effects on the land.

Biomass and biofuels qualify as "renewable and carbon neutral" in Europe. There may be reasons to burn fuels made from crops to power vehicles or to make electricity, but those reasons are independent of the CO₂ emissions that come from growing, fertilizing, harvesting, converting, transporting and combusting biomass. That cycle is not a carbon-neutral process.

Electrification of transportation may make sense for short travel, reduced noise and lowered air emissions locally. But given the reality of the current global electricity mix needed to charge the batteries (coal and natural gas dominate), and the size of the challenge—of the 1.3 billion vehicles on Earth, fewer than 5 million are electric—electrification cannot happen fast enough to matter. Not to mention the environmental effects from mining, manufacturing and eventually disposing of batteries.

So what options does energy science suggest will have a major impact on climate change? Natural gas and nuclear fission replacing coal for power generation in major developing nations such as India, China and Vietnam would have a major impact. Carbon capture, utilization and storage, direct carbon capture from the atmosphere and perhaps nature-based solutions such as increasing the size of

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Improved energy efficiency across all energy-demand sectors would allow for continued economic growth while lowering emissions. The energy solutions mix will vary geopolitically as a function of resource base, existing infrastructure, political and economic reality, and public perception.

These scientifically sound and economically underpinned energy solutions present a problem. Many are not favored by people who are the most concerned about climate change. Thus, politicians seeking climate votes continue to passionately promote programs and policies that won't actually address climate change.

But we have a remarkable opportunity. The right can acknowledge the need to tackle climate change. The left can acknowledge the energy science needed to accomplish real global emissions reductions into the one atmosphere. And developing and emerging nations can continue to climb out of energy poverty.



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