This is the sixth in a series of posts. The first post is here. The second post is here. The third post is here. The fourth post is here. The fifth post is here.

The political dynamics of decarbonization that I've sketched out are very specific to time, space, and economic sector. The policy approaches that may work to advance decarbonization in the electricity sector will not be identical to the ones that may work to advance decarbonization in the transportation sector, or the agricultural sector. Moreover, policy that is feasible in one country may not be appropriate in another. The fossil fuel industry was historically weak in Denmark, such that building a powerful wind industry did not face strong domestic opposition – the same political dynamic is not true in the United States, and accordingly one cannot just copy and paste the policy approaches taken in Denmark and expect them to succeed politically in the United States. Likewise, time will matter as well. Countries that are early adopters of decarbonization may face different challenges from late adopters – who may be able to take advantage of the reduced costs from innovation in carbon-free energy technologies.

Thus, we should not expect a one-sized fits all approach across countries, sectors, or time periods. And that means that even in one country, policymakers may have to initiate decarbonization cycles at different times across different sectors. Electricity is one of the easier sectors to decarbonize, because of greater technology availability of low or no-carbon substitutes such as solar, wind, hydropower, and nuclear. Different political, technological, and economic challenges await decarbonizing other sectors, such as transportation, industry, or housing. Sometimes there can be linkages that are helpful, what scholars have called "coalition cascades" – the development of batteries to store renewable energy has been helpful in both accelerating decarbonization in transportation as well as in the electricity sector. But not always.

Transferring decarbonization across jurisdictions can be easier – as when jurisdictions share a commonly managed electricity grid that can be decarbonized – or harder. Again, the specifics will depend on the technology, politics, and economics. Reducing the cost and increasing the ease of adopting carbon-free energy sources will of course advance diffusion across states and countries. But sometimes new transitions must be started from scratch in new countries given their own political, economic, and technological context.