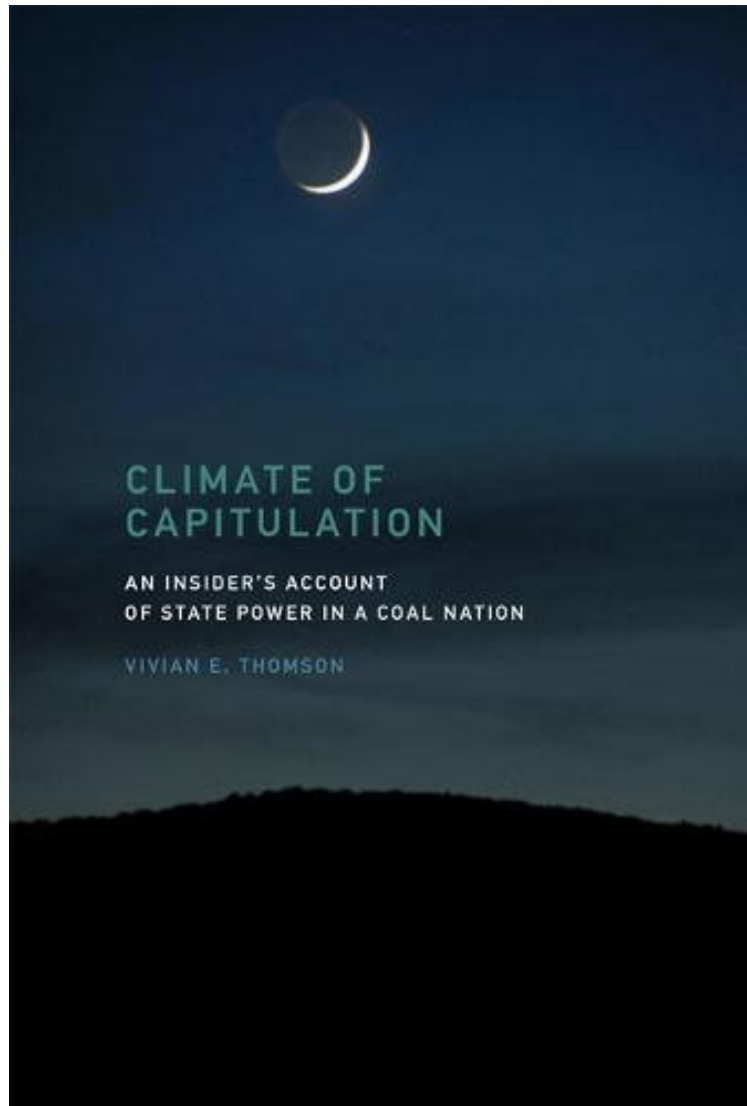


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## Climate of Capitulation: An Insider's Account of State Power in a Coal Nation (MIT Press)

*Vivian E. Thomson*

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**Vivian E. Thomson : Climate of Capitulation: An Insider's Account of State Power in a Coal Nation (MIT Press)** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Climate of Capitulation: An Insider's Account of State Power in a Coal Nation (MIT Press):

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. An important glimpse of sometimes-hidden environmental politics in Virginia, of use to readers everywhere. By Seth G. Heald When University of Virginia environmental science

professor Vivian E. Thomson researched and wrote this thoughtful account of environmental battles during her years on Virginia's Air Pollution Control Board (2002 to 2010), she could not have known how fortuitously timed her book's eventual publication would be. But with Donald Trump's election, and his administration's efforts to dismantle federal climate and environmental protections, the states have a more important role to play than ever before as the U.S. tries to address the climate crisis. Adding to *Climate of Capitulation's* uncanny timeliness is Virginia Governor Terry McAuliffe's May 2017 executive directive requiring Virginia's Department of Environmental Quality to submit proposed regulations to limit climate-disrupting carbon-dioxide emissions from electric-power plants. With DEQ likely to be in the spotlight for the rest of 2017 and beyond, *Climate of Capitulation* is must reading for Virginians concerned about climate change and carbon reduction, as well as for readers in other states interested in a look inside environmental politics at the state level. Thomson notes that the part-time nature of Virginia's legislature, combined with a chronically underfunded DEQ, deprives the state's legislative and executive branches of the technical expertise needed to enforce complex air-pollution laws. As a result, Thomson argues, government officials end up relying for technical expertise on the large corporations that are regulated by those laws. The corporations, of course, are more than happy to oblige, and the result is predictable. Perhaps the most provocative and insightful aspect of Thomson's analysis is her description of what she calls the third face of power. The concept comes from the New York University sociologist Steven Lukes's three dimensions of power, in his influential 1974 book "Power: A Radical View." The third, almost invisible dimension of power is the ability, in Thomson's words, to shape people's perceptions over time without conscious knowledge. She finds this third dimension of power in Virginia's traditionalistic political culture, which devalues public participation and civil servants and protects the status quo and favors business interests over citizens. This culture is encapsulated in an expression heard often in Richmond: the Virginia Way, although Thomson doesn't use that term. The Virginia Way too often involves maintaining the status quo, especially when that serves to favor large polluters. Thomson says strongly, sustained leadership is needed to avoid capitulating to such a powerful, inertia-favoring force. I wish Thomson had devoted more space to fleshing out this dimensions-of-power concept as applied to Virginia, for it seems key to understanding the commonwealth's slow pace in deploying clean energy and addressing climate change. This has broader ramifications for dealing with climate change everywhere, as inertia is not our friend in dealing with the climate crisis. Vivian Thomson has done a great service in describing the sometimes-hidden influences that hinder enforcement of our environmental laws and slow efforts to address climate change.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. In a state like Virginia with a part-time legislature that has limited time ... By Mary Meticulously researched and persuasively argued, *Climate of Capitulation* is essential reading for anyone interested in the push and pull of how environmental policy is shaped at the state level. It is also a page turner. One of the things the book does particularly well is demonstrate how regulated communities shape the way that policy-makers interpret complicated scientific findings. In a state like Virginia with a part-time legislature that has limited time or resources to pursue independent research, state officials often have to trust the recommendations of industry. Thomson vividly brings to life the tools of power that regulated industries use to protect their bottom line, and the ways that citizens can respond to industry's political clout. It takes someone with expertise in both the science and the policy to present these issues in a straightforward manner, and Thomson's background as well as her time on the Virginia Air Board makes her the perfect guide to these issues. That she can do this in a manner that is engaging and accessible to the non-expert (in this case humanities-oriented) reader is testament to the book's power. (Full disclosure: the author is a colleague.)

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. The most important book I've read as an Environmental Politics student! By Sydney I read this book as a student studying environmental politics and would highly recommend it to everyone interested in environmental issues and politics in general! This book felt more like a page turner than studying for me. It provided me insight into environmental politics I wouldn't have been able to achieve anywhere else. Professor Thomson recounts her first-hand experience working on the Virginia Air Board and supports her claims with email evidence and data to expose what goes on behind the scenes and what is driving environmental politics: campaign donations, political culture, and legislative professionalism. I loved the three interesting case studies she examines in detail because they provided a great real-world example of how politics are implemented at the base level. Professor Thomson elegantly articulates a wealth of information into a clear coherent story that is easy to follow and read. Definitely a "must read"

How power is wielded in environmental policy making at the state level, and how to redress the ingrained favoritism toward coal and electric utilities. The United States has pledged to the world community a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 26--28 percent below 2005 levels in 2025. Because much of this reduction must come from electric utilities, especially coal-fired power plants, coal states will make or break the U.S. commitment to emissions reduction. In *Climate of Capitulation*, Vivian Thomson offers an insider's account of how power is wielded in environmental policy making at the state level. Thomson, a former member of Virginia's State Air Pollution Control Board, identifies a "climate of capitulation" in state government -- a deeply rooted favoritism toward coal and electric utilities in states' air pollution policies. Thomson narrates three cases involving coal and air pollution from her time on the Air Board. She illuminates the overt and covert power struggles surrounding air pollution limits for a coal-fired

power plant just across the Potomac from Washington, for a controversial new coal-fired electrical generation plant in coal country, and for coal dust pollution from truck traffic in a country hollow. Thomson links Virginia's climate of capitulation with campaign donations that make legislators politically indebted to coal and electric utility interests, a traditionalistic political culture tending to inertia, and a part-time legislature that depended on outside groups for information and bill drafting. Extending her analysis to fifteen other coal-dependent states, Thomson offers policy reforms aimed at mitigating the ingrained biases toward coal and electric utilities in states' air pollution policy making.

Vivian Thomson kicks ash and names names in this no-holds-barred exposé on the coal industry and its efforts to seize control of the environmental policy apparatus. *Climate of Capitulation* is a must-read at a time when entrenched fossil fuel interests have strengthened their hand and pose a heightened threat to efforts to avert dangerous climate change. (Michael Mann, Distinguished Professor of Atmospheric Science, Penn State University; coauthor, with Washington Post cartoonist Tom Toles, of *The Madhouse Effect: How Climate Change Denial Is Threatening Our Planet, Destroying Our Politics, and Driving Us Crazy*) Voluntary commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions under the Climate Convention will only be implemented if they are in the self-interest of the parties involved. It would seem, for now, that national authorities in the United States fail to perceive their strong self-interest in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Therefore, emission reductions in the United States may depend mostly on action at the state and local levels. Vivian Thomson shows, in this book, how these problems are considered at the state level and what can be done to facilitate state-level action. (Jos Goldemberg, former President, University of So Paulo; former Secretary of State for Science and Technology, Brazil; Time magazine "Hero of the Environment")

About the Author Environmental policy expert Vivian E. Thomson is former Professor in the Departments of Environmental Sciences and Politics at the University of Virginia, where she was on the faculty from 1997 to 2017 and where she directed the Environmental Thought and Practice BA Program. She has been an air pollution policymaker at the national and state levels in the USA and she has been Distinguished Fulbright Professor of American Studies in Denmark.

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