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Introduction to the Special Issue:

Carbon Politics in Canada and Europe[1]

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Signs that the climate is undergoing rapid changes as a result of increasing greenhouse gases are all around us. Average annual global temperatures records are on an upward trajectory with 2020 tying with 2016 as the hottest years on record. Already global average temperatures are 1.2 degrees Centigrade warmer than they were at the end of the 19th century (National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Association 2021). Extreme weather events, including scorching summer temperatures, devastating forest fires and droughts, super hurricanes, and floods are expected to become increasingly common and severe as a result of climate change (National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Association 2021). At the heart of the problem of climate change is our addiction to, and dependence on, fossil fuels. Fossil fuels, of course, helped build our modern economies, but they are now recognized as being the primary source of the greenhouse gases that are warming the planet.

In November 2016, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change entered into force. The Paris Agreement calls on nations to develop nationally determined contributions that indicate how they plan to mitigate their greenhouse gas emissions. In the aggregate, these nationally determined contributions are meant to keep global average temperatures from increasing beyond two degrees Centigrade, and to strive to keep them within 1.5 degrees Centigrade above pre-industrial levels. Every five years, climate change trends are to be evaluated and nationally determined contributions reconsidered in light of the latest scientific evidence. The next major global negotiations on climate change are scheduled for November 2021 in Glasgow. While the economic shut-down tied to the COVID-19 pandemic led to a temporary dip in global greenhouse gas emissions (McSweeney and Tandon 2020), climate change trends are worrisome. For this reason, it is important to consider what major climate contributors are doing to address their fossil fuel emissions, and to examine their climate change policies.

This special issue focuses attention on the European Union (EU), several of its Member States, Canada, and the United Kingdom. (For earlier comparative work addressing these cases see Schreurs, Selin, and VanDeveer 2009; Harrison and Sundstrom 2010;

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Mehling 2011; Sprinz et al. 2018). There is good reason to focus on these cases. The EU accounts for roughly 7.5 percent of global carbon dioxide emissions, of which Germany (the EU's largest economy) contributes one fourth (1.85 percent); Canada accounts for about 1.5 percent of global emissions (World Resources Institute 2020). While the EU and Canada are substantially smaller emitters than either China or the United States (US), their greenhouse gas emission levels still far exceed levels consistent with achieving a climate neutral future.

There are, however, signs that a more-climate sensitive politics is emerging in Canada, the EU, and individual European states. A particularly interesting dimension of the Canadian-European comparison relates to their multi-level governance structures and how these influence energy and climate policy-making processes and outputs. These, on the one hand, provide avenues for policy experimentation at different levels of government but, on the other hand, can complicate policy-making due to the need for constant negotiation and compromise.

Political Systems, Politics, and Policy-Making

Scholars in comparative politics and federalism studies have pointed out that the EU and Canada represent particular types of federations that share essential features (Fossum 2007; Hueglin 2013). Their decentralized allocation of power is determined by a constitution in the case of Canada, and by treaties in the case of the EU. Territorial relations rest on a kind of contract, the particular social basis of their multinational societies, and on the need for a continuous search for agreements.

Canada and the EU were created by a 'coming-together' of, respectively, a group of provinces and states. Today, Canada is a federation of ten provinces and three territories and numerous Indigenous nations, while the EU is a supranational structure comprised of 27 Member States (having recently lost the United Kingdom as a member). Both the diversity of the founding members and the growing diversity resulting from enlargements help to explain the challenges facing these federations, which therefore rightly are characterized as multinational "holding-together" federations (Stepan 1999). The cultural diversity overlaps with significant economic and social diversity.

Canada and the EU are also quite similar in terms of the allocation of powers in the policy fields of climate change and energy. The setting of greenhouse gas emission targets within international climate negotiations is addressed by the federal government in Ottawa and EU institutions in Brussels and Strasbourg (with participation of Member State governments in the Council), while the responsibilities for energy, infrastructure, and regional economy are more decentralized. In both cases, a coherent policy designed to mitigate climate change and to transform the energy system to a more sustainable basis requires coordination and agreements between the various levels of government. However, the institutional conditions for policy coordination differ between Canada and the EU. The relations between levels of government, which are particularly relevant in complex policy areas like climate change and energy policy, reveal considerable divergences. Provincial governments in Canada emphasize their autonomy, although they and the federal government voluntarily have negotiated important intergovernmental agreements. The EU depends on the consent of at least a majority of Member State governments to pass binding regulations and, in practice, governments regularly aim for unanimous decisions.

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In terms of the patterns of democratic government, significant divergences exist as well. In Canada, which is heavily influenced by the Westminster model, majoritarian democracies emerged at the federal and provincial levels, although with a party system that increases the probability of minority governments in Ottawa. In the EU, power sharing between intergovernmental institutions (European Council and Council of the EU, which represent national governments) and supranational institutions (European Parliament and European Commission, which represent the common European interest) follows the model of a consensus democracy where negotiations that lead to compromise and to outcomes acceptable to all, or at least most, parties are considered crucial. In contrast to Canada, the EU is characterized by a wide variety of parliamentary and semi-parliamentary governments in its Member States.

Coordination of policy-making is essential in energy and climate policy, yet this can be difficult because of the significant differences that may exist in territorial interests due to differences in available energy sources, industrial structures, and political-cultural orientations. These differences make the comparisons explored in this special issue of such interest. The comparison of the distinct modes of multilevel policy-making in Canada and the EU can help explain, on the one hand, why Canada and the EU have adopted climate neutrality targets and introduced plans for reducing dependence on fossil fuels but, on the other hand, have shown different propensities for dealing with emissions stemming from carbon-intensive sectors. The comparison also allows an exploration of how different actors' interests influence the shape of respective carbon policies as well as the challenges and opportunities involved in policy implementation. Lessons can also be drawn for practical politics, demonstrating the importance of transatlantic dialogue. There are many areas where stronger cooperation and improved coordination could open new possibilities for bilateral and multilateral approaches to climate mitigation and adaptation at the federal and supranational levels as well as at the Member State, provincial, and even urban levels of government.

Given the complexities of multi-level governance in energy and climate policy, a comparison of all aspects of Canadian and European climate and energy politics and policies is beyond the scope of a single special journal issue. For this reason, this issue focuses primarily on the larger Member States of the EU plus the United Kingdom and provinces of Canada. Among the EU Member States, Germany is the largest economy and is often considered to be a leader in some, but not all, aspects of energy and climate policymaking (Fischer 2017). Its influence is both direct, in terms of the policies and programs it sets nationally, as well as indirect, through its salient role in EU policy-making, where at times it pushes forward and at other times puts the brakes on more ambitious EU climate and energy targets, directives, and regulations. The UK, although no longer an EU Member State, remains a major trading partner of both Canada and the EU, and continues to align its climate policies with the EU. For different reasons, most southern and eastern European countries in the EU are less advanced in their energy transitions (for example, in terms of their installation of renewable energy) or the ambition-level of their climate policies, although there are exceptions. Regional differences are also present in Canada, where Alberta, British Columbia, Ontario, Saskatchewan, and Québec can be viewed as key players influencing energy policy and thus also climate policy. In Canada, there is a large divergence between very fossil fuel dependent provinces such as Alberta and Saskatchewan and provinces that already have a largely carbon-free electricity grid and that are spearheading a transition into a cleaner economy (e.g., Québec and Manitoba).

Managing conflicts due to territorial disparities in carbon politics is a challenge in federations and the EU's multi-level system. This is the case even though such systems technically provide institutional structures to express territorial diversity, at least more so than in the centralized structures characteristic of unitary states. The effectiveness of policies is influenced by intergovernmental coordination in Canada; in the EU it is influenced by supranational joint decision making, as well as by the variable willingness (or ability) of individual Member States to implement greenhouse gas emission reductions. Energy policy-making has historically been dominated by executive branches and experts in public administration, with parliaments deciding on legislation and fiscal resources. This has raised the question, for all of these jurisdictions, of how executive governance and democracy can be balanced. It also raises important questions about the will of the people, as signaled by elections. Democratic legitimacy in Canadian federalism and in the EU's complex multi-level system has been discussed from many perspectives and in reference to different concepts and theories of democracy (e.g., Hueglin 2013; Fossum 2007; Fossum and Laycock 2021). What is clear is that elections are an important vehicle for holding governments and their policies accountable. This can, however, make addressing long-term problems like climate change particularly challenging, as environmental issues are rarely the main issues on voters' minds during elections. Climate change demands immediate but far-reaching changes in energy provision, energy use, transport structures, and even social behavior. Elections may not, however, effectively communicate an environmental mandate to politicians, at least not with the force needed to spur the far-reaching changes that green transitions require.

The changing energy landscape resulting from climate change policies and the green energy transition is likely to have broad and long-lasting political consequences. The power structures that emerged during a time when carbon-based energy structures dominated are under threat. New actors and interests are emerging, but powerful, vested carbon interests are doing their best to steer developments in ways that will reduce their losses and possibly even bring them new gains.

The comparison of carbon politics in Canada and Europe can advance our knowledge of how territorial, industrial, and value conflicts are managed in multi-level governance structures. It can also shed light on how democratic governments and society are changing as they slowly try to become low carbon, climate neutral economies.

EU-Canada Relations and the International Context

Although Canada pulled out of the Kyoto Accord in late 2011, since Prime Minister Justin Trudeau came to power in 2015, Canada has adopted more progressive climate change policies and joined the EU as a leader in the Paris Climate Meeting of 2015. Both Canada and the EU have pushed for aggressive targets and timelines in international negotiations. The international context in which Canadian and EU climate policies are developing is also changing. With the election of Joseph Biden, climate change is back on the US political agenda. The US is rejoining the Paris Agreement and the Biden administration has made the clean energy revolution and climate justice central goals. Canada, the US, and the EU are thus increasingly moving in line with each other's efforts to reduce carbon emissions and to transition to clean economy models. On Earth Day, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau pledged that Canada

will do more to address climate change, setting a new target to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 40-45 percent of 2005 levels by 2030 (Volcovici and Mason 2021). This came in reaction to a bilateral negotiation in the days leading up to the Biden Administration's climate summit for world leaders which was held on April 22-23, 2021 (Finnegan 2021). This growing convergence will reduce the likelihood of further trade barriers, although some cross-border frictions remain such as President Biden's cancellation of the Keystone XL pipeline permit in early 2021 and his critique of Germany's plans to complete the Nord Stream 2 pipeline.

At the same time, the potential for cooperation between the EU and Canada in pushing an ambitious climate agenda on a bilateral basis is more promising than ever. The EU and Canada are moving in tandem on the question of carbon adjustments in the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) even though they have different approaches (Hübner 2011). The EU is using a centralized emission trading system (the EU ETS) and Canada is relying on a variety of provincial measures with a federal system guided by the Pan Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change as a fallback option for provincial inaction. The potential exists to link the EU ETS with Québec's and California's cap and trade system that also used to include Canada's most populated province of Ontario. The EU and Canada are already collaborating on clean energy innovation and new supply chains and have considerable potential to further advance a circular clean economy.

This Special Issue

In his article, "Carbon Democracy in the EU and Canada – Ready for a 'New Green Deal'?", Markus Lederer takes a critical look at EU and Canadian climate policy, noting some progress but arguing that neither jurisdiction is moving fast enough or making deep enough changes to contribute adequately to the global effort to keep rising greenhouse gas emissions within the 1.5 degrees Centigrade ceiling. While he differentiates progress between Canada and the EU, suggesting that the EU is doing somewhat better than Canada, the main obstacle to change, he argues, is their historical development as carbon democracies. The democratic institutions of Canada and the EU have both been powerfully shaped by fossil fuel interests. Successfully transitioning towards cleaner energy structures and adopting Green Deal politics will mean not only deep changes to energy systems, but also the adjustment of industrial structures and changes to the nature of democratic politics. The green transitions will mean that there will be winners and losers, socially, economically, and politically. While a just transition may bring some compensation to affected regions, political struggles are to be expected. Climate policy-making will thus, Lederer argues, need to be deeply transformative and disruptive.

Stephan Schott and Miranda Schreurs, in their article, "Climate Politics and Fossil Fuel Sector Developments in Canada and Germany: Dealing with Fossil Fuel Legacies," examine efforts to become climate neutral in Germany and Canada. Their article discusses recent climate and energy policies and programs, and the progress being made in expanding renewable energy capacity. While both countries have been slow to tackle the elimination of fossil fuel dependency, critical junctures appear to have been reached. Responding to growing domestic and international pressures, including the EU's embrace of the European Green Deal, Germany issued a plan to phase out coal

and adopted a climate protection act. Opposition from impacted regions was addressed with a large compensation plan. Canadian measures include the adoption of the Pan Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change, and on-going coal phase outs at the provincial level. In the west, the oil and gas industry is starting to recognize that changes will be needed in that sector as well. Despite opposition from fossil fuel-dependent provinces, and provinces such as Ontario with Conservative governments, climate measures signal a new era of cleaner technologies, with innovations spearheaded by industry, including in fossil fuel-dependent regions. Thus, Schott and Schreurs conclude that the goal of climate neutrality has secured a place on both countries' political agendas. They outline particular arenas where significant opportunities exist for cooperation between Canada and Germany, as well as between Canada and the EU, in addressing climate change.

In their article, "Transformative Energy Policy in Federations: Canada and Germany Compared," Arthur Benz and Jörg Broschek take another look at Canada and Germany. By focusing on energy transition and policy dynamics under different institutional conditions in federal systems, they analyze whether governments in these countries over the last decades have succeeded in transforming the old 'policy regime' and consolidating a new regime in this field. Benz and Broschek find that policies indeed have significantly changed in both countries. In Canada, policies were initially introduced by some provinces; in Germany, policies were initiated by the federal government. However, the path towards an energy system based on renewable sources still lacks appropriate governance structures in both countries, although this lack is more pronounced in the Canadian system of dual federalism than in Germany's cooperative federalism.

Douglas Macdonald, Asya Bidordinova, and Avet Khachatryan focus attention on lower-tier jurisdictions (Member States in the EU, and provinces and territories in Canada) in their article, "Rising Subnational Greenhouse Gas Emissions: A Challenge to Meeting Federal Climate Policy Goals." They suggest that climate progress has been more difficult for Canada than for the EU because of the particularly large and rising share of emissions in Alberta. The Member State that has shown the highest growth in emissions in the EU (Spain) is responsible for a relatively small share of overall EU emissions. Other states with large shares of emissions in the EU, such as Germany, have experienced emission drops, thus aiding overall EU progress on climate.

Finally, Harold Clarke's and Jon Pammett's article, "Environmental Issues in British and Canadian Elections," is concerned with the mandates voters give to decision makers via elections in parliamentary democracies. They compare the 2019 national elections in the United Kingdom (UK) and Canada, examining the extent to which environmental issues swayed voting decisions. Clarke and Pammett argue that in both Canada and the UK, voters' primary concerns were not related to the environment or climate change. As such, issues relating to energy transformations were only of secondary concern. Voters thus did not send the kind of clear mandate to policy makers on the environment that might be needed to carry out the deep transformative changes being called for in the articles by Lederer and by Schott and Schreurs.

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