

EDITORIAL

Vorbemerkung

Wie vielen unserer Leserinnen und Lesern wahrscheinlich bekannt ist, beschloss der Vorstand und Beirat der GKS in Übereinstimmung mit den Herausgebenden, die ZKS in unregelmäßigen Abständen für Gastherausgeberschaften – insbesondere aus dem Nachwuchsbereich – und für Themenhefte zu öffnen. Dieser Beschluss wird mit dem vorliegenden Heft erstmals in die Tat umgesetzt. Was Sie in Händen halten, ist ein Themenheft zu Umweltangelegenheiten und Umweltpolitik in Kanada, das von den Gastherausgebenden Frauke Brammer, Simon J. Kiss und Tim D. Kremser konzipiert und gestaltet wurde. Alle weiteren Informationen zum Heft, dessen Aufsatzteil ausschließlich in englischer Sprache – mit Zusammenfassungen in allen drei Verkehrssprachen der GKS – verfasst ist, finden Sie im Gasteditorial. Die Herausgebenden der ZKS danken dem Gastherausgebertrio und allen weiteren Beteiligten für ihr großes Engagement sowie für ihre pünktliche und gewissenhafte Arbeit.

Für die Herausgebenden: Martin Thunert

In one of the more famous scholarly examinations of environmental politics, Downs (1972) hypothesized that the rise of environmental concerns in the United States followed an “issue-attention cycle” and that the interest in environmental concerns in the early 1970s would slowly decline.¹ Apart from the much older conservation and wildlife preservation movement, Canada has gone through roughly three cycles of contemporary environmentalism. First, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, there was a spike in interest in the problems of air and water pollution by toxic chemicals (especially pesticides) and radiation. This concern was sidelined in the 1970s and 1980s by concerns over inflation, unemployment, the budgetary deficit and constitutional reform. There was another spike in concern about the environment in the context of debates about acid rain and the condition of the ozone layer in the late 1980s, but this interest dissipated again, overshadowed by concerns over the Meech Lake and Charlottetown Accords, and high levels of unemployment in the 1990 recession. In the current debates about

1 Anthony Downs, 1972, “Up and down with ecology: The issue attention cycle”, *Public Interest*, 28.1, 38–50.

climate change and questions of sustainability, Canadians find themselves in the tail-end of a third cycle of concern for environmental issues. For the first time ever, a federal election (2008) was fought with the political parties dividing first and foremost over an environmental policy, namely, a shift in taxation from income to carbon emissions.² While the importance of ecological issues declined somewhat in the 2011 federal election, that year also saw a watershed moment in this domain as the Green Party of Canada saw its first Member of Parliament (Elizabeth May) elected in British Columbia.

There are some good reasons to think that environmental concerns are going to remain central to Canadian political life for the foreseeable future. First and foremost, the Canadian economy is currently returning to a greater dependence on primary resource extraction than it has in the recent past. While this is primarily effected in western Canada, with its abundant oil and gas reserves, new natural resource projects are also in the planning in the east. In Quebec, the provincial government has launched its *Plan Nord*, a grand attempt to increase resource extraction. Meanwhile, the government of Ontario is laying the groundwork for the approval of significant projects in the so-called "ring of fire", a region in Northern Ontario known for its abundance of minerals. In 2000, the mining sector was 27 per cent as large as the manufacturing sector in the Canadian economy, by 2010 it was 35 per cent.³ The importance that the federal government is placing on both the Keystone pipeline to the United States and the Gateway pipeline to the Pacific Ocean reflects its desire to generate growth in Canada via resource extraction. In the 2012 budget, the environmental assessment process was streamlined to facilitate the approval of resource extraction projects. But all of these developments will attract opposition from First Nations, environmental groups and local residents. Moreover, these trends are occurring in a context where the global issue of climate change will continue to vex global policy-makers. All of this virtually guarantees that environmental politics will remain central to Canadian federal and provincial politics for the foreseeable future.

It is with this context in mind that we present this special issue on Canadian environmental politics. The essays within are a selection of updated papers from an international conference organized by Frauke Brammer, Simon J. Kiss and Tim David Kremser at the John F. Kennedy Institute for North American Studies at the Freie Universität Berlin in 2009. The breadth of the subject matter in this special edition is directly linked to the complex nature of environmental politics, which cannot be as neatly circumscribed as other fields of intellectual inquiry because the field broaches on questions that are fundamental to the democratic constitution of contemporary modern industrialized societies. Ecological problems are

2 Public opinion data that document these cycles can be found in Kathryn Harrison, 1996, *Passing the Buck: Federalism and Canadian Environmental Policy*, Vancouver: UBC Press.

3 Statistics Canada, Table 379-0027, 1981-2011, <http://www5.statcan.gc.ca/cansim/pick-choisir?lang=eng&p2=33&id=3790027>, 24 April 2012.

measured in decades, if not centuries, but our democracies work on four-year electoral cycles. Environmental concerns raise the spectre of universal problems on a continental, if not global scale, but our national political party systems are structured on ideological or regional divisions. Many claim that it is the elitism inscribed in contemporary bureaucratic society that is the source of ecological damage.⁴ And yet, environmental problems and solutions are often highly technical in nature with citizens searching for the scientific expertise necessary to address them. Thus, although these essays are strongly rooted in political science, together, they have a multidisciplinary character, which we hope the readership of the *Zeitschrift für Kanada-Studien* will find insightful.

The opening essay by *Doug Brown* introduces the central questions of federal and provincial responsibilities in Canadian environmental politics. He demonstrates how the competitive nature and the minimal coordinating institutions at the heart of Canadian federalism have, to date, hindered national efforts at reducing greenhouse gas emissions. We present this essay first, because of the observation that Canada's federal structure is so important to its politics and its identity. *Simon Kiss* then examines the attitudes that Canadians hold towards environmental questions and whether there are substantial differences by social class and how these differences interact with the party system. There are in fact differences, although these only manifest themselves when issues become politicized and salient on the daily agenda. These class differences, however, are most pronounced for the parties on the centre-left, and less divided in the Conservative universe. This configuration partly explains the Conservative zeal to press forward with resource-extraction projects; its base is united, while that of its elected opponents is divided.

The articles by *Kathryn Harrison* and *Petra Dolata* focus on two specific aspects of continental multilevel environmental governance. Harrison analyzes a little-known phenomenon in North American politics; her essay argues that while national and international attempts to address climate change repeatedly stall, state and provincial level efforts often proceed apace across the Canada-U.S. border. She identifies a 'California' effect of climate change innovation emanating outward from California to other US states and Canadian provinces. By contrast, Washington has stalled Canadian climate change policy, preventing the necessary national leadership from emerging. Then, by shifting the focus to circumpolar politics, Petra Dolata outlines the different ways in which environmental problems relate to security policy. She finds that, while environmental challenges resulting from climate change do shape Canadian security policy, they do so only in the sense that they are conceived of as potential threats to Canadian sovereignty. Hence, environmental problems in the arctic are addressed by certain processes

4 Goodin, 1992, *Green Political Theory*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

and by certain bodies (e.g. the executive) to certain ends (e.g. the security of the state).

The final two essays – rooted in concepts in political theory and environmental studies – examine the multifaceted conceptualizations of culture, nature and humanity in relation with the politics of suburban expansion. *Delacey Tedesco's* contribution addresses the way in which urban and suburban development in the city of Kelowna, B.C. involves delicate negotiations about what constitutes the ideal of the sustainable city. The author argues that the construction of tensions between the urban and the rural (or culture and nature) is best characterized as an *aporia*, something that is struggled over and derives its existence from its irreconcilable ambiguity – a fact that has deep repercussions for the functioning of a city as a political community. *Elaine Ferrier* and *Brendon Larson* address the politics of suburban expansion in the Greater Toronto Area. The two authors examine the concept of “biodiversity” in the debate over development on the Oak Ridges Moraine surrounding northeastern Toronto. They show how the movements involved settled on the concept of “biodiversity” not for its scientific import, but because it resonates with Canadians and their images of and preferences for a pristine nature “out there”.

We have selected essays that touch on the local, the provincial, the national and the international levels of politics. Hopefully, the net contribution of these essays is to provide Canadianists in the German-speaking world a glimpse into some of the most important forces that drive the suite of environmental problems in Canada. Environmental issues may decline in salience somewhat from the levels seen in the 2008 federal election, but for reasons outlined above, they will not disappear completely. The findings presented in this volume should provide scholars and students of Canadian politics the concepts and the substance to follow and engage with the forthcoming political and intellectual debates.

Frauke Brammer

Simon J. Kiss

Tim D. Kremser