

Parties, Policy Styles and the Politics of Climate Change
Do Parties or Party Systems Matter?

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Comments welcome

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Introduction:

This paper has two points of departure: One is a casual observation, the other a lingering question. The observation is that among established liberal democracies, the countries most strongly embracing Kyoto norms on reduction of greenhouse gases are Northern European multiparty systems with cooperative relations among parties, while laggards include Canada, the United States, which has refused to sign at all, and until recently, Australia. All are adversarial democracies and either two party systems or party systems with no more than three or four national parties ('few' party systems). The lingering question is whether parties or party systems affect policy outcomes in this or other policy areas, and if so, in what ways and to what extent?

These are broad questions. Connections between the number or kind of parties which populate a party system or relationships among them and policy outcomes are anything but certain. Although some might hope that political parties drive public policies, the public policy literature looks elsewhere. Likely culprits include interest groups, the bureaucracy, policy networks, epistemic communities, and think-tanks. Parties take a back seat, if they are considered at all. This is not surprising: Parties set agendas and endorse policies, but they rarely formulate them in any detail. That is the job of ministers and civil servants (and more typically the latter than the former), sometimes (but not always) working with organized interests and outside experts. Moreover, not all parties are policy-oriented. Even if they were, other factors often take precedence.

The literature on environmental policy contains few references to political parties. If parties are mentioned, it is typically either in passing – e.g. lending support to different kinds of policy – or in quantitative analyses such as Jahn (1998) or Scruggs (2003). In the latter, factors such as the strength left-libertarian and Social Democratic parties are factored into regression equations explaining higher or lower performance in emissions reductions or waste management. Parties are one of several variables investigated.

That parties are anything but central is not surprising. Their lack of centrality reflects not only the factors mentioned above, but the policy area itself. Even if we do not fully accept Lowi's (1964) supposition that policies or policy areas generate their own politics, environmental policy is different from policy areas, such as social welfare and the management of the economy, where parties have been front and centre. Despite earlier concerns about conservation, environmental issues did not become salient until the early 1970s. Particularly in Western Europe, party systems were already entrenched and pre-programmed to give greater attention core issues which spurred party formation. That did not mean that other questions did not get attention, but rather that their proponents had to work to get them onto political agendas. In the case of environmental policies, advocacy groups and environmental non-governmental organizations provided channels which were more open and accessible. In addition, environmental policy is an area which interests a broad range of actors. Concerned citizens often have pet projects which they would like to advance. Scientists have a good deal to say as well. So too do producer groups, if only because they may end up paying the costs of new

policies.

Parties, then, are only one of several actors likely to be involved. Even so, it is difficult to imagine that parties or party systems do not matter. Parties specialists and political scientists argue that they do. Schattschneider's dictum, "modern democracy is unthinkable except in terms of parties," (1942, p. 1) is repeated often enough that it has the character of a mantra. Parties recruit candidates for public office and determine the composition of cabinets. Doing so, they link citizens and government and provide levers through which citizens can try to remove governments. Providing voters with choices, parties try to set public agendas. Forming cabinets, they shape priorities. Nor does their role end once elections are over. Parties link legislatures and executives. In doing so, they not only help to avoid collective action problems, but provide governments with support for their programs.

Saying that parties matter for liberal democracy is not the same as saying that they matter in a given policy area. Parties do not always implement their programs (Epstein, 1967), nor do they necessarily provide firm support for government designs. Nor is the partisan content or partisan control of government as strong or far-reaching as it sometimes appears (Katz, 1990; Wildenmann, 1986). If we argue that parties matter, then we have to ask what they matter for.

This paper examines the degree to which parties matter for environmental policy. In addition to the observation with which we began, our starting points are Jahn (1998) and Scruggs (2003). According to Jahn (1998), performance on emissions reductions is related to the strength of Social Democratic parties, but unusually, not to the presence of Social Democrats in government. Scruggs (2003) found that better performance on emissions reductions and water and waste management influenced by the strength of Green and/or left-libertarian parties and lower electoral thresholds. Scruggs argues that multipartyism matters because it provides opportunities for the latter to assert their priorities. However, he does not explore multipartyism in any detail.

Jahn (1998) and Scruggs (2003) also find that societal corporatism and the use of consultative processes for the formulation of environmental policy are important correlates of better performance. Jahn considers one measure for corporatism, while Scruggs investigates Lehbruch's concept of concertation, Lijphart and Crepaz' measure of corporatism and Siaroff's index of economic integration. All are highly inter-related. Their finding that corporatism matters is intriguing, both in its own right, and because corporatism and consultative processes rarely occur without some involvement of political parties. In the case of socio-economic bargaining, parties are often closely involved, providing support. In addition, they have to agree to share political space with others, in effect giving up power which they might exercise (Crouch, 1986). This is an additional reason to consider what difference parties make.

Parties and party systems can influence environmental policy in different ways. One of the most obvious, is to act as champion for certain policies, bringing them forward, and insisting not only that they be placed on political agendas, but also that they be passed and implemented.

This is a role which we might expect Green and/or left-libertarian parties to assume. A second is for one or more parties to act as an agent or receptor, taking up environmental issues not because they are central for the party, but rather because it to the party's advantage to do so. In this case, parties act as receptors, taking up issues because they resonate with segments of the public whose support the party would like to win. The receptor role can be filled by one or more parties acting either pro-actively, trying to broaden their support, or defensively, struggling to ensure that it is not narrowed. A third way in which parties might influence environmental policies is more passive – creating or maintaining conditions which allow others to develop and implement policies. This could occur because parties allow space of other actors – e.g. policy networks – to develop policies or because they foster or do not interfere with policy styles which facilitate them.

The three modes – champion, receptor, and facilitative – encompass a broad range of activities and emphases. In the first and second, parties are front and centre, acting either as proponent in the champion role or as agent or intermediary, in the uptake mode. In the third, the focus is not parties but party systems. However, party systems are not absent from either the first or the second. In the first, party systems provide or fail to provide opportunities which champions require. In the second, it is party competition and competitive dynamics of party systems which provide the impetus for parties to take up issues, while in the third, it is the party system rather than individual parties which foster favourable conditions. All three provide us with opportunities to explore the impact of parties and party systems. Below, we explore what difference parties and party systems might make. Scruggs (2003) suggests that left-libertarian parties can act as champions: their strength makes a difference. Jahn (1998) suggests that Social Democratic parties could act in uptake mode. Scruggs (2003) also indicates that multiparty competition can provide conditions for parties to assert their priorities. We go further, considering whether multiparty competition fosters the consultative policy processes which are associated with better environmental performance and by exploring whether two party or multiparty competition encourages parties to take up environmental issues and move them forward. We do so by exploring relationships between the number of parties and environmental performance, and by comparing two very different cases, Canada and the Netherlands.

Multiparty competition and environmental performance

The starting point for our analysis is Scrugg's investigation of the correlate of stronger or weaker environmental measures. Scruggs (2003) combines multiple measures of emissions reduction (sulfur oxides and nitrogen oxides) and waste and water management into a single indicator of environmental performance for seventeen OECD countries. These are then correlated with other indicators. His cases are industrial democracies for which he could find extended data. Although his analysis is cross-sectional, he considers changes in performance from 1970-1995. As noted earlier, several of his findings are of interest. A correlation for the strength of green and left-libertarian parties, broadly construed, suggests that such parties do indeed fulfill the champion roles. In addition, strong relationships between environmental performance and two other indicators, societal corporatism and a consultative environmental policy style, suggest that party systems could play a facilitating role, either providing or allowing the political space

for producer groups and policy networks to operate. Scruggs also argues that multiparty competition plays a role, providing opportunities for smaller parties to insist on their priorities. However, he does not investigate the impact of multipartyism as fully as he might. Assessing the impact of political institutions, Scruggs, incorporates measures from Lijphart (1984: 1989). These include a measure of effective electoral thresholds and an index of multipartyism; however the latter is unspecified.¹ The first can serve as a surrogate for multipartyism, but it is a measure of institutions rather than the degree of multipartyism. We rectify this by including data on the effective number of parliamentary parties (ENPP) from 1971-1996. This is drawn from appendix A of Lijphart (1999). Data from Scruggs and Lijphart are presented in table 1, below.

Table 1 Environmental performance, policy, style, and effective number of political parties

Country	Environmental Performance	%vote Left Libertarian Parties 1975-95	Siaroff Index of Economic Integration	ENPP 1971-96	Corporatism in Environmental Policy making
West Germany	538	4.2%	4.1	2.84	strong/v strong
Sweden	489	20.8%	4.6	3.52	very strong
Netherlands	482	5.3%	4.0	4.68	very strong
Denmark	466	9.1%	4.2	5.11	very strong
Austria	441	3.2%	4.6	2.72	very strong
Finland	433	2.7%	4.1	5.17	very strong
Switzerland	427	4.9%	4.1	5.57	n.a
Japan	414	0	3.5	4.07	strong
France	388	1.9%	2.1	3.54	weak
Norway	373	7.1%	4.6	3.64	very strong
UK	346	0.2%	2.0	2.2	weak
Belgium	324	5.2%	3.9	5.49	n.a
United States	291	0	0.9	2.41	very weak
Canada	268	0.2%	1.7	2.35	very weak
Italy	259	3.0%	2.5	5.22	weak
Spain	105	0.8%	1.9	2.76	very weak
Ireland	101	0.3%	2.4	2.76	n.a

Sources: Data in columns 1-4 are from Scruggs (2003), pp.46, 104, 134, and 155. Data on ENPP are from Lijphart (1999), Appendix A, p. 312. Data on corporatism in environmental policy making are from Scruggs (2003), Appendix II, pp. 219-28.

The data in table 1 are striking. These are considerable differences in environmental performance. Also apparent, from visual inspection, are relationships between performance and

¹The note in Scruggs (2003) table 6.1 p. 166 indicates that the index of multipartyism was recalculated from Lijphart (1999). However, Scruggs does not explain what was recalculated.

Siaroff's measure of economic integration (the most recent of the three inter-correlated measures of corporatism which Scruggs presents), environmental policy style, and the effective number of political parties. Table 2 presents the same data, but averaged for countries above or below the median on Scugg's combined measure of economic performance. The median score on the combined or summed measure ranged from a high of 538 for the Federal Republic of Germany (primarily the former West Germany) to a low of 101 for Ireland. The median score was 380. The average left-liberal vote for the nine countries above the median was 5.8%, the average for the countries below the median, 2.1%. The average score on Siaroff's indicator of economic integration for countries above the median was 3.9, for countries below the median, 2.1. More telling, the only country exhibiting strong corporatism and a high index of economic integration, was Norway, whose environmental performance of 373 was just below the median, and the only countries not exhibiting high scores on Siaroff's index, were Japan and France, the two cases just above the median.

Table 2 Mean left-libertarian vote, index of economic intergration and effective number parliamentary parties for countries with above and below median economic performance

	Mean Environmental Performance	Mean % of the vote won by left- libertarian parties 1975-95	Siaroff Index of Economic Integration	ENPP 1971-96
Above median	453.1	5.8	3.9	4.14
Below median	258.4	2.1	2.5	3.35

Sources: see table 1

Data on the effective number of parliamentary parties are equally striking. As table 1 indicates environmental performance and effective number of political parties are inter-related. Countries with a higher effective number of parliamentary parties score better on the combined environmental performance indicator, while countries with lower ENPP score lower. The only outliers are Belgium which has the highest average ENPP but a performance score of 324 and Italy, with an ENPP of 5.22 and a performance score of 259. Our summary indicators tell a similar story: the average ENPP for the nine countries above the median was 4.14, the average for the eight below the median, 3.35.

Scruggs (2003) also investigated the style of environmental policy-making for fourteen of the seventeen countries for which he could find suitable case studies (Belgium, Ireland, and Switzerland are omitted). Short descriptions of each country are reported in his Appendix II. At issue was the use of consultative or corporatist arrangements in environmental policy making. The fourteen countries were coded according to the degree of environmental corporatism as very strong, strong, weak or very weak. Six countries, Austria, Denmark, Finland, The Netherlands, Norway, and Sweden, were deemed to be very strong on environmental corporatism. One, West Germany, was coded to strong to very strong, and only one, Japan, was coded as strong, while

three countries (France, Italy, and the United Kingdom) were designated as weak or very weak (Canada, the United States and Spain). Table 3 presents data for the fourteen countries, ranked according to the degrees of environmental corporatism, while table 4 presents summary data for the countries rated very strong or strong, combined and countries which are weak or very weak. The average vote for left-liberal parties for countries with strong or very strong environmental corporatism was 6.2%, but only 1% for countries weak environmental corporatism. Similarly, countries with strong or very strong environmental corporatism had an average ENPP of 3.98, those with weak or very weak environmental corporatism, an average of ENPP of 3.08. Separating the weak and very weak categories accentuates the difference. There were also clear differences on environmental performance.

Table 3 Environmental Performance, Left-Libertarian Vote, Economic Integration and ENPP by degree of corporatism in environmental policy-making

Country	Corporatism in environmental policy-making	Environmental Performance	Average % Siaroff index of vote for left-libertarian parties 1975-95	economic integration	ENPP 1971-96
Austria	very strong	441	3.2	4.6	2.72
Denmark	very strong	466	9.1	4.2	5.11
Finland	very strong	433	2.7	4.1	5.17
Japan	strong	414	0.0	3.5	4.07
Netherlands	very strong	482	5.3	4.0	4.68
Norway	very strong	373	7.1	4.6	3.64
Sweden	very strong	489	20.8	4.6	3.52
W Germany	strong/v strong	538	4.2	4.1	2.84
France	weak	388	1.9	2.1	3.54
Italy	weak	259	3.0	2.5	5.22
United Kingdom	weak	346	0.2	2.0	2.2
Canada	very weak	268	0.2	1.7	2.35
Spain	very weak	105	0.8	1.9	2.76
United States	very weak	291	0.0	0.9	2.41
Belgium	not ranked	324	5.2	3.9	5.49
Ireland	not ranked	101	0.3	2.4	2.76
Switzerland	not ranked	427	4.9	4.1	5.57

Sources: see table 1

The data reinforce Scruggs' assertion the multipartyism makes a difference, but otherwise present his findings on the impact of left-libertarian party strength, corporatism and economic integration, and environmental corporatism in different formats. Less clear is why these factors matter. Only in Sweden (20.8%) do the parties classified as green or left-libertarian (Left party, Centre, and others) average more than 9.1% of the vote. Left-libertarian parties may have sufficient strength to place environmental issues on the agenda, but the support and intervention of other parties is needed to put policies in place. Better performance could reflect the ability of

parties to place issues on the agenda in coalition bargaining, as Scruggs, suggests, but other processes could be underway: one or more parties picking up environmental issues either to win additional support or, alternatively, to avoid losing to competitors on their flanks. Jahn's (1998) finding that environmental performance is related to Social Democratic party strength but not Social Democratic presence in government suggests that such processes could be at work.

Table 4 Environmental Performance, Left-libertarian vote, economic integration and ENNP by degree of corporatism in environmental policy-making

Degree of corporatism in environmental policy-making	Environmental Performance	Average % Left- libertarian vote 1975-95	Sairoff econ integr	ENPP 1971-96
strong or very strong	454.5	6.9	4.23	4.13
weak	331.0	1.7	2.20	3.65
very weak	221.3	0.3	1.50	2.51

Source: see table 1

There are similar difficulties with the measures for corporatism/economic integration and environmental corporatism. Scrugg's assertion that such arrangements help to allocate costs and avoid free-rider problems builds on previous research, but it would be useful to know more about the processes at work. It is possible that the use of corporatist and integrative mechanisms in the determination of social welfare and economic policies spills over into other policy areas. However, we need to know how deep and how extensive such arrangements are. Are we talking about national policy styles which are general to all or many policy areas or, following Lowi (1964), policy styles which are specific to different kinds of policy or unique to individual areas?

In the next section, we consider Canada and the Netherlands. Canada has an adversarial party system with relatively few national parties, the Netherlands a multiparty system with more parties in its parliament. Both provide us with opportunities to explore relationships between parties and party systems, policy style, and environmental policy. Although an examination of two different cases can never be definitive, treating the two in broader context helps us to understand the processes which may be at work.

A tale of two countries:

The Netherlands and Canada have taken different approaches to environmental policy. The environment has been an important concern in the Netherlands since the 1970s. Successive governments have adopted and implemented indicative plans striving to reduce and cope with different facets of the environment. Formulated under one cabinet, National Environmental Policy Plans (NEPP) often end up implemented by another, sometimes of different political composition. Among EU member-states, the Netherlands, with Denmark and Germany, is part of

a troika of leading states, who have insisted on higher environmental standards and secured the adoption of stronger measures (Sbragia, 1996; Bailey, 2003; Grant *et al.*, 2000). The Netherlands played a leading role in formulating European Union positions for the Kyoto negotiations (Kanie, 2003). Although disagreements on eliminating subsidies for commuters led to the demise of the cabinet which proposed the first NEPP in 1989, environmental issues have not been a source of contention among political parties. Priorities differ but all agree that environmental issues must be tackled. (Lieverink, 1997)

Canada is different. There is considerable disagreement about how and when to address environment problems. The Government of Canada signed the Kyoto protocol and promised that Canada would reduce CO₂ emissions by 6% from 1990 levels by 2010. However, there is scant agreement on how this is to be done. Successive governments have failed to take steps to reduce emissions and there is disagreement about whether Kyoto commitment can be met in the time indicated or, for that matter, at all. CO₂ emissions have increased steadily and are likely to be at least 30% higher than 1990 levels in 2010. Disagreement is evident in two crucial arenas: federal-provincial relations and the party system. The ten provinces and three territories have been unable to agree on the reductions of emissions. A significant stumbling block is that one province, Alberta, is not only a major producer of oil, but also derives revenue from the energy-intensive extraction of oil from tar sands in the northern part of the province. Governing since 2006, the Conservative Party of Canada maintained that Kyoto targets could need not be met without damaging the economy; instead it proposed meeting intensity targets which would allow emissions to increase. More recently, the Conservatives have indicated that emissions cannot be reduced immediately, as Canada promised, but rather in the years leading up to 2050. Other national parties disagree. (Simpson, Jaccard and Rivers, 2007)

The Netherlands

Physically is small and densely populated, the Netherlands is an energy producer and a major agricultural exporter, relying heavily on fertilizers which drain into ground water. Environmental issues have been salient since the Club of Rome report (Meadows, *et al.* 1972) appeared. In the 1970s, most parties took up environmental concerns and included them in their manifestos. They continue to do so today. *Duurzaamheid* – sustainability – has become a watchword. Ironically, the Dutch did not have a green party until 1989, when four smaller parties banded together to form Green Left (GL). Green Left support has ranged from 3-7% of the national vote; the party has yet to serve in a cabinet.

Dutch environmental policies have moved from command and control policies focused on cleaning up ground water to more comprehensive policies relying heavily on consultative processes, voluntary agreements, and market mechanisms. The shift occurred in the 1980s, under a Christian Democratic-Liberal cabinet. Pieter Wimsemius, Minister of Housing, Spatial Planning and Environment (VROM) from 1982-1986, argued that industry was more likely to come on side if they were involved in the design of programs. The first National Environment Policy Plan was issued in 1989; the fourth, with targets through 2010 appeared in 2001. Environmental programs span a broad range of issues, including cleaning up ground water and

waterways, energy conservation and use, air quality, moving toward a more sustainable agriculture, and personal health and safety. Reflecting the small size of the Netherlands, problems are typically approached on both internationally and on a European level. With Germany and Denmark, the Netherlands has played a leading role in encouraging the European Union to enact more environmentally proactive policies (Sbragia, 1996; Liefferink and Andersen; 2005). In view of the small physical size of the country, problems such as air or water quality must be addressed on a European scale. Equally important is a reluctance to impose competitive disadvantages on Dutch producers. Securing European-level regulation, even if not as strong as national regulations, imposes equivalent costs on competitors in other European countries. (Hanf and van Gronden, 1998; Bailey, 2003; Aarts, 2002;).

Instruments employed in the Netherlands include older command and control techniques and more recent recourse to a voluntary agreements and contracts, along with market mechanisms. Reflecting the liberalization of the Dutch economy in the 1980s and 1990s, there is considerable emphasis on user-pay policies, with costs transferred to end-users. These in turn are backed up the framework of state regulation (Liefferink and van der Zouwen, 2004). Some analysts argue that the Dutch have moved over to a green polder model (Schreuder, 2001; Kanie, 2003). This is partially correct. Processes used are broadly consultative, but much of the consultation takes place not at the national but rather at the sectoral level. Although the Dutch rely heavily on negotiated covenants, the “shadow of hierarchy” (Visser and Hemerijck, 1997) is present. There is a reluctance to impose high costs on producers. Instead, solutions are sought which allow costs can be passed on to end-users, allowing market mechanisms to produce desired results. This has been more successful in some areas than in others: A combination of market mechanisms and moral suasion have facilitated reductions in energy use but neither increased fuel costs nor crowded roadways have reduced automobile use. (Aarts, 2002; van Kooten, 2003;)

Although a proposal to increase costs of operating motor vehicles was a factor in the demise of the second Lubbers cabinet (the government under which the first National Environment Plan was prepared), environmental policy has not been an issue on which political parties have divided. Instead, all parties agree that the environment must be brought under control. However, environment is rarely a top priority, but rather one presented as a part of a broader fabric of inter-related concerns. Two smaller parties, Democrats 66 and Green Left assign somewhat great priority to environmental policies. However, this has rarely translated into electoral advantage. D66 has been known as a more progressive liberal party closely identified with its original demands for electoral reform, until recently willing to ally with Social Democrats. Green Left, described by Lucardie (1999) as a ‘light green’ party to distinguish it from a less successful green competitor, is known for its left of centre positions on a variety of issues. One reason for its limited electoral success (it has never had more than 7% of the popular vote and 10 of the 150 seats in the Second Chamber) is that other parties have been sufficiently green to prevent it from capitalizing on environmental issues.

Agreement on the need to address environmental problems shifts the interplay from the party system to policy networks. Although not entirely satisfied with government policies

environmental groups and NGOs are willing to work with the government and with industry through advisory boards and other consultative mechanisms. Producers have been willing to enter into agreements to reduce energy use and the release of pollutants into the environment, provide that they can pass costs on to end-users. This turns what might be highly charged public disputes into technical discussions among expert communities. Changes in coalitions do not result in changes in environmental policies. A striking example of this is that many of the policy documents of on the website of the Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning, and Environment date from the previous centre-right government (the present cabinet is centre-left). The latest National Environmental Policy Plan took form under a cabinet which left office in 2002.

Canada

The Canadian case differs from the Dutch. Differences reflect not only institutional structures, but also the ways in which parties handle the issue. Managing the environment is a source of contention not only among the provinces and the federal government, but also among parties. Both make climate change a highly charged issue on which agreement is elusive.

The architecture of Canadian confederation explains why environment and climate change is contentious. Canada is the second largest country in the world. Its unity is fragile not only because of linguistic differences and Quebec nationalism, but also because of centre-periphery tensions and differences in provincial economies. Historically, this has pitted provinces to the east and to the west against central Canada – Ontario and Quebec. Economic marginality, past and present, reinforces differences. Eastern provinces have seen earlier industries and, more recently, their fisheries decline. Western agricultural provinces resented the domination of the centre. Economic changes have reversed historic patterns, but resource-rich Alberta is now a have- province because of the rents it derives from oil, Alberta resents control and taxation imposed by Ottawa. The Trudeau government's National Energy Policy, put in place in the early 1980s, is remembered as a source of bankruptcies and economic disruption. In addition, Ontario's position as a have-province is threatened by the decline of older industries and an exchange rate bolstered by oil exports. Proposals to alter equalization formulas invariably arouse opposition.

Environment is neither a federal nor provincial responsibility, but rather a shared jurisdiction. Enforcing clean air standards or bringing about substantial changes in energy use requires cooperation; powers of both levels come into play. In addition, provinces own natural resources under the ground and enjoy the right to extract rents from them. Alberta rejects both emissions reductions and opposes a nation-wide cap and trade system. This reflects not only the production and export of oil, but also how oil is extracted. Pumping from conventional wells continues, but Alberta extracts an increasing share of its oil from tar sands in the north. This is expensive and energy intensive: Water must be pumped in to extract the oil. Substantial reserves and demand for oil mean that extraction and emissions will increase substantially. Canada accounts for 2% of the world's CO₂ emissions. Increased extraction means that emissions will increase rather than decrease. Extraction from tar sands has resulted in a boom which drives

Alberta's economy. It also drives a wedge into a fragile federation. The government of Alberta rejects climate control measures or emissions standards which would put that boom in danger.

Over time, the federal party system has moved from a two party system, through 1918, to a three party system (or for some, a two and a half party system), through the 1980s, and more recently to a 4-5 party system.² Carty, Cross, and Young (2000) argue that Canada has moved through a series of 'party systems.' The first, involved competition between Liberals and the Conservatives. This was blown apart by differences over military conscription during World War I and the rise of regional difference. In the second party system, regionally-based protest parties, including a progressive party and a socialist party, the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF), the predecessor of the New Democratic Party (NDP) appeared, but Liberals were the dominant party. Despite occasional Progressive Conservative victories, Liberal dominance continued in the third party system. Progressive Conservatives won the 1984 election. Hoping to forge a durable majority, Prime Minister Brian Mulroney added support from 'soft' nationalists in Quebec to PC strongholds in the west. His coalition broke down in 1988. Unhappy with the centrist orientation of the party, some western conservatives bolted and established the Reform Party. A second crack appeared the Meech Lake accord was rejected. Intended to bring Quebec into the constitution (the *Parti Quebecois* refused to ratify the 1982 Canada Constitution Act), the Meech Lake Accord would have granted special status and some additional powers to Quebec. 'Soft' separatists enlisted by Mulroney left and formed a separatist party, the *Bloc Quebecois* (BQ), led by Mulroney's Minister of the Environment and Quebec lieutenant, Lucien Bouchard. In 1988, Reform succeeded in winning only one seat. However, in 1993, the Progressive Conservatives were reduced to two seats in the House of Commons. Reform won 52 seats, the *Bloc Quebecois*, 54 – enough to become the official opposition. Splits in Progressive Conservative ranks enabled the Liberals to return to power. The Liberals won a parliamentary majority – 177 seats – with 41% of the vote and only one seat west of Ontario. Before, popular and parliamentary majorities were won with the support of Quebec. The strength of the *Bloc* made the former difficult if not impossible. Although Canada continued to have parties operating in national politics, it ceased to have at least one national party capable of winning support in all parts of the country. (Carty, Cross, and Young, 2000)

A fourth party system took shape in 2001. The Canadian Alliance (previously Reform) merged with the Progressive Conservatives to form the Conservative Party of Canada (CPC) under Stephen Harper. In 2004, the Conservatives were unable to prevent a weakened Liberal Party from forming a minority government. In 2006, the Conservatives won more seats than the Liberals. The new system consists of two larger parties, the Conservative Party of Canada and the Liberals, aspiring to parliamentary majorities, a third party, the New Democratic Party, hoping to edge out the Liberals, and a fourth party, the *Bloc Quebecois*, based only in Quebec,

²Canada is unusual in that federal and provincial party systems are disconnected: Parties competing in provincial politics are often different from parties competing in federal politics. Even where they are nominally the same, federal and provincial organizations are separate and are often at odds with each other (Carty and Wolinetz, 2006).

with no aspirations to national power. Waiting in the wings is the Green Party, which has yet to win a seat.

Despite persistent multipartyism, relations among parties are adversarial. The Canadian House of Commons mimics the physical arrangements of the British House of Commons, albeit on a larger scale. Its rules, procedures and operating norms are similar to Westminster. There is a sharp divide between government and opposition, and cooperation between parties is rare and short-lived. When the single member system fails to manufacture majorities, as it did in the 2004 and 2006 federal elections, parties opt for minority governments rather than coalitions. In power, minority governments behave as if they had parliamentary majorities. This is facilitated by rules and procedures which limit the opportunities which opposition parties can use to bring down the government. Debate in parliament serves not only to expose weaknesses, but also to position parties for the next election, which can come at any time.

In addition to adversarial style and federal-provincial relations, the politics of climate change reflects Canada's position in the international system. Canada is a middle power which aspires to show leadership in international affairs. However, its interests and positions are inextricably linked to the United States. Canada has tried to lead on climate change both by promising to reduce emissions and, while Bill Clinton was in office, keeping pace with American promises. However, commitments made in the international arena have to be approved in parliament and negotiated through the intergovernmental arena. The first would be easy if there were parliamentary majorities (tightly whipped caucuses rarely dissent); the second would be difficult at the best of times.

Typically this leads to over-bidding and over-promising in international arenas, with few tangible policies put in place to achieve proposed targets. Simpson, Jaccard and Rivers (2007) maintain that the pattern began in 1988. Canada hosted the 1988 World Conference on the Changing Atmosphere. Anxious to underscore its seriousness, Canada committed itself to a 20% reduction in emissions by 2005. Afterward, the Progressive Conservative government put forward a Green Plan. Although ambitious, it contained few tangible measures to achieve these objectives. The principal vehicles were better product labeling, improved building codes and efficiency standard, tree-planting, public education and research. There was no attempt to tackle major sources of emissions, and the plan contained no economic measures. Approved by a House of Commons committee, the plan was rejected by the provinces. In the aftermath, the goal was reduced to stabilizing emissions at 1990 levels. (Simpson, *et al.*, pp.46-49)

Similar patterns emerged before and after Kyoto. Prior to the Kyoto meetings, the provinces and the federal government agreed to stabilize emissions at 1990 levels. However, that agreement was overturned when Prime Minister Chretien decided on a 3% reduction. Chretien was upstaged when the Clinton administration upped the ante and promised a 7% reduction. Chretien increased Canada's commitment to 6%. According to Simpson, *et al.* (2007) no research was done on ways in which this might be achieved. When plans were finally announced, these accounted for only half the necessary reductions, and embodied, as before, a

mixture of subsidies, voluntary measures, exhortation, and stunts – a ‘one ton challenge’ to reduce waste – but no hard measures which might reduce emissions. Subsequently, Canada attempted to include both its forests and exports of clean natural gas to the United States as offsets. The combination of overbidding and under delivery continued in successive Green Plans. (Simpson, *et al.* 2007, pp. 50-59ff.; van Kooten, 2003; see also Rabe, 2007)

Federal parties now take different positions on climate change. In power, Stephen Harper’s Conservatives want to be seen as proactive on environmental issues, without alienating core support in Alberta and the west. As a consequence, they have backed off from Kyoto Protocol commitments made by previous Liberal governments, and proposed other measures as alternatives. These include subsidies to mass transit users, proposals to reduce air pollution without tackling CO₂ emissions, the substituting intensity targets which would see Canada reducing emissions relative to economic growth and, more recently, reducing greenhouse gasses by 45-65%, but only by the year 2050. The Conservatives argue that more immediate reductions would cause irreparable damage to the Canadian economy. In contrast, the three opposition parties favor adhering to Kyoto commitments. Led by former Minister of the Environment, Stephan Dion, Liberals favour massive reductions in emissions. However, their plans assign only 20% of the necessary reductions to industry. Missing in all party positions are tangible measures, such as a cap and trade system which would ensure reductions in emissions. (Simpson, *et al.*, pp. 104-6)

Discussion and analysis

Any comparison between these two disparate cases is distorted by ‘noise.’ The Netherlands is a physically small country embedded in a multilevel system of governance, within which it has been able to press successfully for higher environmental standards. In contrast, Canada is itself a multilevel system of governance, operating in broader international contexts. Its geopolitical position and resource based economy are different from the service-based Dutch economy, which is coincidentally also an energy producer. Even so, important differences in the ways in which parties and party systems operate are evident from the cases we have sketched.

In the Netherlands, multiparty competition facilitates, or at least does not stand in the way of the consultative networks which formulate and implement environmental policy plans. The system of indicative planning used, although not described in detail, builds on longstanding practices of physical and spatial planning and, to a lesser degree, economic planning. Although Lijphart’s (1984; 1989) consensus democracy directs attention from conflicts which do occur, relations among parties are not adversarial. Parties supporting and opposing the cabinet do not sit opposite each other in the Second Chamber, but rather in a semi-circle, reflecting the left-right spectrum. If there is a divide built into the system, it is an historic one between parliament and cabinet. Members of the cabinet do not sit in the parliament, but resign from it before assuming their portfolios. In turn, all parties, including those supporting the governing coalition, reserve the right to question and criticize the government. More important, however, is coalition politics and the fact that parties, whatever their differences, know that they have to work together. Differences are resolved by quiet negotiation. Cabinet formations last weeks, if not months,

during which a coalition accord – effectively the government’s program – is hammered out. Normally the coalition accord is negotiated before portfolios are distributed. Once a government takes office, it serves as a yardstick against which the cabinet’s actions are measured. Although Lijphart’s (1968; 1975) assertion that politics is a business and not a game overstates the case, debate and inter-party relations are business-like. Differences are minimized by recourse to expertise. Problems are studied in detail, not only in the bureaucracy, but in advisory councils and think tanks such as the Scientific Council for Government Policy (WWR). The system can operate in this way because parties and politicians agree to share political space.

The Canadian party system and Canadian politics are different. Party politics is adversarial. Of the ten provinces and three territories, only Nunavut, carved from the Northwest Territories to facilitate aboriginal self-government, operates without parties. Elsewhere, in both federal and provincial politics, the presumption is that governments govern and oppositions oppose. In practice that means that governments and those who lead them decide what policies will be. Cabinet government is supposed to be collegial, but some cabinets operate more collegially than others. In Ottawa, the Prime Minister is not only front and centre, but can decide what government policy will be. Strong central agencies – the Prime Minister’s Office (PMO), the Privy Council Office (PCO, cabinet secretariat) and Treasury Board reinforce prime ministerial control. The pattern was quite centralized under Jean Chretien (Savoie, 1999; Bakvis and Wolinetz, 2005). It has become more so under Stephen Harper. In addition, federal-provincial relations are adversarial. Although a quiet underbelly of cooperation persists in some areas, an arena once characterized as federal-provincial diplomacy (Simeon, 1972) often appears to be anything but that. Canada is the only large federal system without an institutionalized arena in which provinces are represented. Nominally, that is supposed to be the Canadian Senate, but the Senate is a body appointed by the Governor General in Council – the Prime Minister. Over the years, relations between the federal government and the provinces have deteriorated. Nor are the provinces able to reach agreement among themselves.

Relations among parties often appear more adversarial than in other Westminster democracies. One reason for this is the changes which have taken place in the party system. Canada has ended up with a multiparty system operating on the norms and procedures of a two party system. However, neither parties nor politicians have adjusted to that reality. The two larger parties still aspire to a parliamentary majorities. At present only the Conservatives have any prospect of obtaining such a majority, but that doesn’t mean that the other parties do not want to block it if they can. According to well-established theories, such as Downs (1957), this should lead parties to adopt each other’s positions and converge in the centre of the political spectrum. However, that assumes that there is a middle majority. Canada may well have one, but that does not prevent parties from adopting other strategies, including promising considerably more than they can actually deliver. Parties also win votes mimicking positions on some issues, while differentiating themselves on others, or by arguing they can achieve the same goal – reducing emissions, grappling with environmental issues – by different means. This in fact is what Canadian parties do. The Conservatives hope to win support not only in Alberta, but also in more environmentally conscious provinces like Quebec and Ontario.

Examining the Dutch case, we considered not only the direct impact of the party system, but also possible links between the party system and the use of consultative processes, which bring organized interests, environmental groups, think tanks and others on board. We argued that there was a fit between the party system, sharing of political space, inclusive processes (Scrugg's environmental corporatism), and a policy style which relies heavily on expertise. Canada has its own epistemic communities and networks, but they do not connect into the party system. Federal environmental policy has built on expertise and a succession of plans and institutions, including the National Roundtable on the Environment and the Economy, mandated to report annually on targets and whether they are being met by government policies. Even so, these are not as interconnected as in the Netherlands. To borrow a phrase, they are not 'joined up' in the same way. Although these may be useful, they don't fit the way in which policies are made. Roundtables can be an excellent vehicle for mobilizing expertise, but without links into parties and policy-makers willing to use their expertise, they are more likely to serve as smokescreens, marshaling expertise which may not be used and points of view which may not be taken into account.

Much of what we have said suggests that neither the Netherlands nor Canada are typical of other countries. That is not entirely so. The Netherlands was only one of several countries combining multiparty politics with economic integration (societal corporatism or concertation), and environmental policy processes which include organized interests, non-governmental organizations, think-tanks activists and others. Nor is Canada the only country in with two or relatively few parties and adversarial relations. The United States, Britain and Australia also fit that mode. In each, environmental policy has at least for a time, ended up as a political football. It is not clear that the United States could have met the 7% emissions reductions targets proposed by the Clinton administration, but the Clinton-Gore targets were abandoned by the Bush administration. In the United Kingdom, the Thatcher governments were initially suspicious of environmental and moved only belatedly in that direction. In contrast, New Labour has taken the issue more seriously. In Australia, the National Party cabinet led by John Howard eschewed Kyoto. The recently elected Labour government has indicated that it will come on board. This suggests that countries with two or few party systems approach the problems differently from countries with multiparty politics.

Conclusion:

Earlier, we indicated that parties and party systems could matter in different ways. One was in the opportunities that provided for parties which wanted to champion climate change or emissions reductions. The second put parties in receptor mode. At issue was not the ability of parties to champion issues or policies, but rather the circumstances and extent to which they took up positions advocated by segments of the electorate. Although we have not emphasized the point, the multiparty systems we have considered seem to be at least as adept as two party systems in taking up environmental issues. The third, and in some respects the most complex, was the degree to which party systems facilitated different policy styles or modes of policy-making. Exploring these questions, we have examined data from Scruggs (2003) and Lijphart (1999), and briefly compared two very different cases, the Netherlands and Canada. Both

analyses suggest that parties and party competition can make a difference. With Lijphart (1999) we can argue that multiparty competition can operate at least as well, if not better than two or few party competition. Two party competition provides opportunities for parties to act decisively, allowing parties unfettered opportunities to put in place and implement policies which they have championed. However, it can also allow parties opportunities to act irresponsibly, promising more than they can deliver. In contrast, when multiparty competition takes place among parties which are policy-oriented, it can provide opportunities for parties to insist on actions through the formation and maintenance of governing coalitions.

We have also explored ways in which less, rather than more, adversarial politics can facilitate decision-making processes which involve expertise and include advocacy groups, and affected interests. Party systems, we have speculated, do this not through deliberate design, but as Crouch (1986) suggested, allowing multiple actors to share public space. Adversarial party systems do this differently, and perhaps not as successfully. Policy change is a complex process. Peter Hall (1993) distinguishes among first, second, and third order change. The first involves little more than fine-tuning instruments, the second re-calibrating them, the third major shifts in assumptions and thinking. Paradigm shifts, Hall argues, require more than changes in thinking. Somehow power must be put behind ideas. In a liberal democracy, that is a job which parties, individually and collectively should either do, or at least be involved in. There is no set way in which this occurs. If we consider the changes which put post-World War II welfare states in place, these took place in different institutional settings and in two party and as well as multiparty settings. Whether parties anywhere are up to the task is debatable. Even so, it is difficult to imagine that some parties and party systems are not better suited for these tasks than others. I am not sure that I can include the Canadian parties among them.

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