

The Political Economy of Coal Policy

Comparative Analyses of Stakeholder Strategies and Resource Industries' Embeddedness in the International Economy



COALSTAKE Project Overview

Overview

The team of Univ. of Basel, Univ. of St.Gallen and Univ. of Toronto is running a research program that analyzes sources of cross-national differences in coal policy-making.

Our focus is on the links among energy stakeholders' resource endowments, practices, and the evolution of discourses around coal energy. The project also addresses issues around local resource-production industries, their positioning in global resource trade, and their employees, because sustainable fossil fuel policies are not possible without addressing these issues.

The project is funded by SNIS (Swiss Network for International Studies) for 2 years (Oct 2019 - Sept 2021). This document provides an overview of our research program.

About Our Research Topic

Why this project?

- Coal accounts for 28% of the global primary energy supply (2017). Coal-fired power generation is the largest source of CO₂ emissions.
- The notion of (technology) *discontinuation policies* has become salient, yet studies are scarce compared to those of *phase-in* (e.g. of renewables) policies.
- Enactment of discontinuation policies (incl. fossil fuel phase-out) is contingent on struggles among stakeholders, yet our empirical understanding of *stakeholder* involvement is scant compared to the wide popularity of *public acceptance* studies.

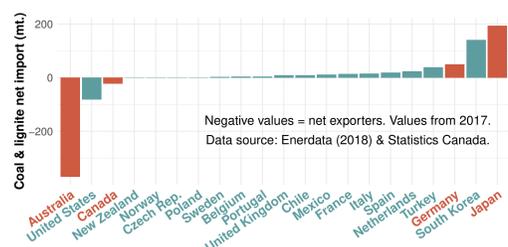
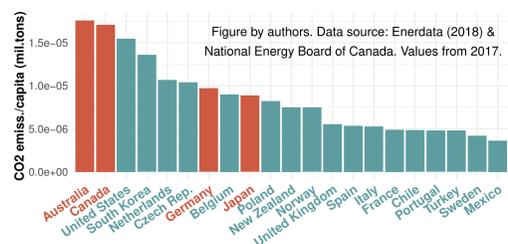
The overarching issues we address

- What are the interests of key energy stakeholders and emerging coalitions concerning coal policies?
- Why are some actors more influential in translating their interests into policy outcomes than others?
- How do domestic availability of resources and macro-economic (e.g. employment) concerns affect coal policy-making of importing vs. exporting countries?

The 4 Cases

Australia | Canada | Germany | Japan

- 4 large emitters with similar political-economic profiles (democracies with stable political institutions; advanced industries; high R&D spending).
- Stark contrast in coal policy developments, local coal reserves, coal trade patterns, "green interests" level.



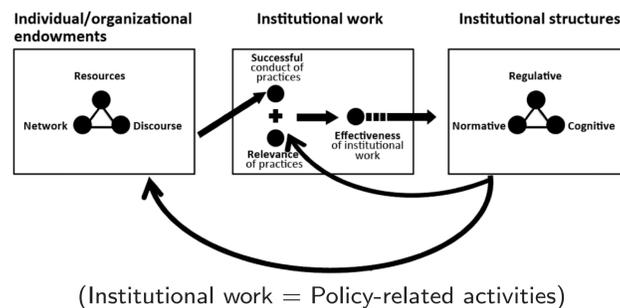
These cases help us reveal:

- Why actors in some cases fail to utilize their agency (Australia), while others manage to foster phase-out despite weaker support base (Canada).
- How actors can destabilize an established coal regime in major producing countries (Canada, Germany) and might fail to do so elsewhere (Australia, Japan).

Conceptual Framework

Our pluri-disciplinary conceptual framework

- Draws on theories of stakeholders' policy-goal attainment (or lobbying) developed in: *Institutional Sociology*, *Political Science*, *Economics*, *Transition Studies*.



Scan here to learn more about our framework!



"A Conceptual Framework for Elucidating How Agency Shapes Destabilization of Socio-Technical Systems" (Duygan, Kachi, Rinscheid 2019)

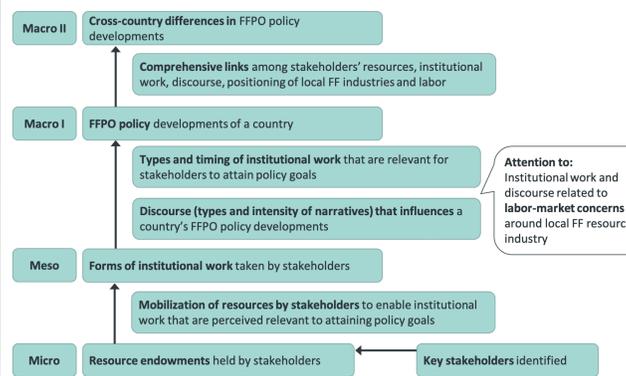
The framework bears the following empirical questions:

- What forms of 'institutional work' do relevant actors carry out in favor of or against coal phase-out?
- What are key actors' resource endowments? How do they relate to varying forms of 'institutional work'?
- What are the commonalities/differences among the cases under investigation concerning the construction of contending storylines around coal issues and the (re-)configuration of actor coalitions over time?

Empirical Approaches

Project flow

- The project proceeds from the micro (individual stakeholder) to the meso (stakeholder practices meant to influence national policy-making), and to the macro (cross-national) level:



A mixed-method approach

- (Micro) data collection relies on surveys that measure actors' resource endowments & networks.
- Semi-structured interviews measure less tangible concepts (e.g., how actors mobilize their resources and enable their policy-related activities) and identify stakeholder practices that are (in their views) relevant to policy-making processes.
- Coding of public documents and media articles reveals actors' discursive abilities and the evolution of contending storylines around coal policies.
- Both quantitative and qualitative methods are used for inferential analyses.
- A quant overview (regressions, social network analysis) of stakeholders' resource distributions and their networks (information and expertise sharing).
- Qualitative case analyses for unraveling the link from actors' resource endowments to their institutional work and to national coal-policy developments.

Funding

Funded by SNIS

- This 2-year research project is funded by SNIS (Swiss Network for International Studies: www.snis.ch) for the period of October 2019 - September 2021.

Supported by Innosuisse

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Project Team

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Project Events

Stay tuned for our workshops involving public events

- Symposium on coal policy
Beginning of 2020
At the University of Basel
- Final workshop
End of 2021
Location TBA

Project team members are from the following institutions:

