

# More than Markets: A Comparative Study of Nine Conservative Parties on Climate Change

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*Cross-national comparisons of proposed policies of individual parties are an underdeveloped part of the literature on environmental politics in general and climate politics in particular. Although conservative parties are portrayed as skeptical toward adopting climate measures or even supposed to ignore climate change, this study of nine conservative electoral manifestoes nevertheless finds that most of them support climate measures, even in the form of state interventions in the market economy. Market measures are not as dominating as could be expected, but a clear finding is that available fossil reserves seem to have an influence on conservative climate politics. The U.S. Republican Party is an anomaly in denying anthropogenic climate change. Conservative parties as such are not in opposition to climate policies, but the pro-business position is evident in that conservative parties do not challenge coal or petroleum in countries with large reserves of these resources.*

**Keywords:** Environmental Policy, Cross-National Studies, Comparative Policy, Climate Change, Conservative Parties, Conservative Ideology, Party Politics, Party Manifestoes, Neoliberalism, Market Economy, Pro-Business, Coal, Petroleum, Fossil Fuels.

## **Related Articles:**

Rugeley, Cynthia R., and John David Gerlach. 2012. "Understanding Environmental Public Opinion by Dimension: How Heuristic Processing Mitigates High Information Costs on Complex Issues." *Politics & Policy* 40 (3): 444-470. <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1747-1346.2012.00352.x/abstract>

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Acknowledgements: The author would like to thank the anonymous reviewers and especially Editor Emma Norman, for their feedback and guidance, as well as the supervisor, Professor Kristin Strømsnes, and Anja Naper for translating from Spanish.

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**Related Media:**

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*La comparación transnacional de las políticas propuestas por partidos individuales es un área poco desarrollada en la literatura en política ambiental, específicamente el campo de la política del cambio climático. Aunque se percibe a los partidos conservadores como escépticos en la adopción de medidas contra el cambio climático, este estudio de nueve manifiestos electorales encuentra que la mayoría de ellos apoya medidas para combatir el cambio climático, incluyendo intervenciones del estado en la economía de mercado. Como es de esperarse las intervenciones de mercado no son comúnmente favorecidas, sin embargo se encuentra una clara influencia de los niveles de reservas de combustibles fósiles en la postura conservadora sobre la política del cambio climático. El Partido Republicano de los Estados Unidos representa una anomalía al negar el cambio climático antropogénico. Los partidos conservadores por sí solos no se oponen a las políticas para combatir el cambio climático, pero si es evidente una posición en pro de la empresa privada ya que los partidos conservadores no desafían el uso de los combustibles fósiles en países con grandes reservas de éstos combustibles.*

Climate change has emerged as the most prominent contemporary environmental issue with massive consequences, ecologically and economically, as well as politically. All political parties have to react to the issue of climate change, and their reactions are likely to reflect their ideological background. In the literature, conservative ideology is often portrayed as a hindrance against adopting environmental measures (Carter 2007; Dunlap, Xiao, and McCright 2001; Fielding *et al.* 2012; Gray 1993; Ware 1996), while another expectation is that the parties link climate change to their existing core issues (Giddens 2009), and hence conservative parties, if adopting climate measures, would favor market-based solutions in line with free market environmentalism. In addition, the pro-business position of conservative parties makes it relevant to see their climate policies in light of the country's reserves of fossil resources, assuming that vast reserves would make the conservatives more skeptical toward climate measures.

The literature on environmental politics and climate change has, so far, lacked a substantial cross-national comparison of the proposed measures of individual political parties within the same party family. Studies have counted the mentioning of environmental issues in electoral manifestoes, both within a single country (Carter 2006) and cross-nationally (Carter 2013); linked countries' environmental performances to the political parties in parliament and government (Jahn 1998); or investigated attitudes toward climate change among politicians of different parties within the same country (Dunlap, Xiao, and McCright 2001; Fielding *et al.* 2012). Less attention has been devoted to the concrete measures proposed in the electoral manifestoes and the commonalities on proposed climate policies within the same party families cross-nationally have not been specifically investigated, and hence this study is a starting point highlighting the similarities in the family of conservative parties' approach to the issue of climate change.

In this article, the manifestoes of nine conservative parties are investigated to address two questions. First, to what extent do conservative parties treat climate change as a serious issue? And second, is it possible to find a common conservative approach to the issue of climate change based on the measures proposed in the manifestoes? The study starts by summarizing the literature before turning to expectations for conservative climate policies. Especially, there is an expectation that conservative parties under the influence of neoliberalism will emphasize market-based solutions to the issue of climate change, and be skeptical to state interventions.

### **Conservative Parties and the Climate**

Conservatives are accused for being, in general, critical of environmentalism (Carter 2007, 67; Feygina, Jost, and Goldsmith 2009, 332; Fielding *et al.* 2012; Gray 1993, 123). Conservative parties have also been influenced by neoliberalism, "an ideology which legitimates individual competition and questions collective structures" (Amable 2011, 7), and an ideology that highlights "core elements of conservatism, such as the primacy of individual freedom, private property rights, laissez-faire government, and promotion of free enterprise" (McCright and Dunlap 2000, 504). Studying politicization of the environment in the United Kingdom, Carter (2006, 761-2) argues that "the neoliberal ideology of the contemporary Conservative Party would sit uncomfortably alongside any strong environmental protection program that would inevitably contain proposals for both new regulations and eco-taxes."

Aversions against governmental intervention and ties to business and industry interests have created differences between environmentalists and the conservative right, as businesses attempt to avoid costly environmental reforms (Grendstad *et al.* 2006, 65). The Republican Party, representing conservatives in the United States, are given a threefold argument for being less prone to

support environmental measures, and the argument could be extended to conservative parties beyond the American context:

(1) a more pro-business orientation; (2) a greater opposition to the extension of governmental activities and regulations; and (3) a less innovative and more cautious posture concerning attempts to ameliorate societal problems. (Dunlap and Gale 1974, 675)

Heath and Gifford (2006, 48) give a noteworthy empirical example in the finding that “effects of support for free-market ideology and environmental apathy were investigated to identify some bases for not believing in global climate change.” The goals of less state intervention and conservation of the *status quo* are thought to act together as hindrances against an ambitious environmental policy in general and climate policy in particular. This is so to the extent that conservatives might reject the whole need for a climate policy, as in the systematic undermining of environmental science, “questioning whether human activities drive climate change while also arguing that any action to curb it will lead to dire economic consequences” (Nisbet 2009, 18). Consequently, there seems to be a cleavage between conservation of ecology and conservation of the economy, where the economy will be prioritized. The importance of conservative think tanks in questioning climate science, is also highlighted by Beder (2001), as well as Jacques, Dunlap, and Freeman (2008, 352), who point to a fear of environmentalism being in opposition to social and economic progress.

When acknowledging anthropogenic climate change as a problem, conservative parties would be expected to choose market-based measures. Free market environmentalism (Anderson and Leal 2001) and the “growing influence of neoliberal approaches to environmental governance” (Bailey and Maresh 2009, 445) could be in line with a modern conservative response to climate change. Giddens (2009, 49-50) notes that as a result of the “bandwagon effect,” climate change could be utilized as an argument for parties’ established policies. Beder (2001, 131) argues that market instruments inhibit an acceptance of “the conservative definition of the problem,” namely “a failure of the market to attach a price to environmental goods and services.” Still, not all conservatives agree on free markets as a solution to environmental problems. “Even conservative thinkers who support free enterprise and free trade find themselves uncomfortable with the idea of letting unfettered markets determine how and when natural resources are used” (Anderson and Leal 2001, 1). Market solutions contain ways of making markets environmentally friendly, beyond simply via letting the markets decide, while still being an alternative to government regulation. For instance, free market environmentalism may be manifested by “instituting a legal system of rights which can be modified by transactions on the market” (Coase 1960, 17). Market solutions stand in opposition to taxation and regulation. And so “[t]he correction of market failure could be achieved without recourse to the use of external cost-internalizing taxes,” argue Ellerman,

Convery, and de Perthuis (2010, 13), while Stephan and Paterson (2012, 547) view carbon markets “in light of the rapidly increasing power of financial actors to shape policy in their interests.”

Anderson and Leal (2001, 4) claim that rightist free market environmentalism “emphasizes the positive incentives associated with prices, profits, and entrepreneurship,” while a leftist political environmentalism “emphasizes negative incentives associated with regulation and taxes.” Conversely, Nilsson, von Borgstede, and Biel (2004, 267) treat taxes and subsidies as “market driven instruments.” I argue, however, that these measures are interfering with free markets more than they are facilitating, and hence are forms of state intervention in the economy. State interventions should be differentiated from the radical idea of a planned economy to the more moderate approach surrounding the government imposing regulations on privately owned enterprises (McDonald, Mendes, and Kim 2007, 64). Given this, it might be appropriate to view climate politics via a left/right dimension: a continuum that spans government bans or the nationalization of businesses on the far left, through government regulation and taxation, to market-based solutions (like emissions trading schemes) on the right, with resistance against interference with free markets at the far right. I utilize this left/right dimensional framework in the following cross-national investigation concerning the proposed climate measures of nine conservative electoral manifestoes to see how far it assists the identification of key similarities and differences in their approaches to climate change. In doing so, the following analysis aims to shed additional light on how the conservative parties intend to utilize markets in their policies on climate change, identify the extent to which regulations are seen as necessary fettering mechanisms, or ascertain if conservative parties expect the markets to solve much of the issue by themselves. One expectation based on Thomassen’s (1999, 54) arguments is that the left-right dimension—from state-centered to market-centered—will absorb other conflict dimensions, including the relatively new issue of climate change, and hence conservative parties are more likely to prefer a rightist climate policy facilitating free markets and restricting the use of state regulations.

### **Research Design and Data**

Nine conservative party manifestoes, presented in Table 1, are investigated.

#### **Choice of Parties**

There are several reasons for the choice of parties, as well as electoral manifestos to be used as data sources on conservative climate policies. Challenges confront any grouping of parties in families across borders, but common strategies in the existing literature involve basing the selection on membership in transnational federations, party name, origin and sociology, policy, and/or

**Table 1. Conservative Parties and Manifestoes Included in the Study**

Party Name	Country	Manifesto Adopted	Pages of Manifesto
Conservative Party	United Kingdom	2010	131
Høyre	Norway	2013	108
Moderaterna	Sweden	2007	45
Partido Popular	Spain	2011	214
Republican Party	United States	2012	62
Conservative Party	Canada	2011	67
National Party	New Zealand	2014	284
Christlich Demokratische Union	Germany	2007	67
Liberal Party	Australia	2013	52

ideology (see Mair and Mudde 1998). This analysis makes ample use of most of these criteria.

One reason underpinning the selection concerns transnational federation membership. All the parties in the study are full members of the International Democrat Union (IDU 2015), an organization labeled “conservative” by, among others, Mair and Mudde (1998, 217) and Scott (1999, 148), as well as “neo-liberal” by Mudge (2008, 716). In addition, with the exception of the Spanish and Swedish parties, all European parties are members of the Alliance of European Conservatives and Reformists, while the four selected parties from the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand are all regional partners of the conservative alliance (AECR 2015). The Spanish and Swedish parties are members of another center-right alliance, the European People’s Party, which is originally Christian Democratic, but “increasingly conservative” (Ladrech 2002, 399), while the German party is member of the Alliance of European Conservatives and Reformists as well as the European People’s Party (EPP 2015).

Regarding name, although all parties selected clearly hold a right or center-right ideology, only two of the selected parties contain the term “conservative” in the party name: the Conservative Party of the United Kingdom and the Conservative Party of Canada; the Norwegian Høyre (literally “right”) itself uses the name Conservative Party in English (Høyre 2013).

On the origin and policy selection criteria, all the included parties in this study are the dominant center-right party in their respective party systems. It is important to bear in mind that Christian democratic or other center-right parties in countries without a prominent conservative party may occupy much of the same space in the political landscape as a conservative party. “Conservatives,” according to Ware (1996, 32), “have involved themselves in other parties of the center and the right, forcing them to keep many of their policy positions within bounds acceptable to Conservatives.” The Liberal Party of Australia, the National Party of New Zealand, the Republican Party of the

United States, and the CDU of Germany are all expected to play a similar political role as explicitly conservative parties.

Another, more practically oriented, criterion for the party selection is the need for an available electoral manifesto comparable to the others. It would, for example, have been interesting to include the South Korean Saenuri Party in the study, as the party is a full member of the IDU (2015), but the only available manifesto is too short for sufficiently detailed analysis, consisting of ten principal pledges rather than a full political program (Saenuri Party 2015).

Conservative parties operate in different environments with regard to party systems and political cultures, as well as popular opinions on the issue of climate change (Kvaløy, Finseraas, and Listhaug 2012). As such, the conservative electoral manifestoes might be influenced by the acts and manifestoes of their main opponents on climate change, the strength of the environmental movement, and the political opportunity structure, including the electoral system, as well as if the parties have been in government while adopting the manifesto. It is tempting to include national contexts, as well as analyses of each individual conservative party, but in the present study this is done only briefly as my main comparative goal is to explore the extent of commonalities between conservative parties despite their differing historical backgrounds and national contexts. Since it is expected that opposition parties will have greater incentives to strengthen environmental policies (Carter 2006), it is worth noting that the conservative parties of Sweden, Canada, Germany, and New Zealand were in government while adopting the manifestoes. Further, acknowledging the importance of the business sector and that a country's approach to climate politics is influenced by available natural resources (Fisher 2006), Table 2 presents data on the fossil reserves in the countries included in the study. The expectation is that conservative parties in countries with vast fossil reserves will be less prone to adopt radical climate policies, making the Swedish party the least challenged by national interests, with the U.S. party at the other extreme.

**Table 2. Fossil Reserves**

Country	Oil Reserves	Gas Reserves	Coal Reserves
United Kingdom	3.1	8.7	228
Norway	7.5	73.8	—
Sweden	—	—	—
Spain	—	—	530
United States	35.0	300.0	237,295
Canada	173.9	70.0	6,582
New Zealand	—	—	571
Germany	—	2.0	40,699
Australia	3.9	132.8	76,400

*Notes:* Oil reserves: Thousand million barrels at end of 2012 (BP 2013, 6).

Gas reserves: Trillion cubic feet at end of 2012 (BP 2013, 20).

Coal reserves: Million tons at end of 2012 (BP 2013, 30).

The parties have certain differences in their established policies and how they approach free markets and environmental protection in general. Data from the Comparative Manifesto Project (Volkens *et al.* 2014) (see Table 3) sums up how often the parties state support for, among other variables, a free market economy and environmental protection in their electoral manifestoes. According to these data, the Norwegian party is clearly most concerned with free markets, followed by the U.S. Republican Party, while the Swedish party is most devoted to environmental protection. The U.K. and Canadian parties are seemingly the least interested in free markets, while the New Zealand party does not promote any environmental protection. Here, it has to be noted that the most recent manifesto in the Comparative Data Project is not necessarily the same as the manifesto included in this study, but Table 3 still indicates some of what to expect from the different parties. While the Comparative Data Project treats environmental politics in a quantitative manner, the current study is qualitatively oriented, aiming at deeper clarity on the concrete political measures. Beyond climate skepticism, the question is not primarily “for or against” climate measures as such, but what kinds of measures are supported, and to grasp that aspect, a qualitative approach is preferable.

### The Investigation of Party Manifestoes

The electoral manifestoes were chosen as the focus of this research because they represent a collective will of the parties, and are stable documents meant to endure for several years. “If one wants to study party policy, and not the policies advocated by internal factions or individuals inside the party, one has to study the manifesto, platform or election program,” argues Ian Budge (2001, 211). Even though the processes behind the adoption of manifestoes might vary from party to party, and these processes have received scant attention

**Table 3. Manifesto Data**

Party	Country	Free Market Economy (1)		Environmental Protection (1)	
		Frequency	Share	Frequency	Share
Conservative Party	United Kingdom	7	0.6	58	5.2
Høyre	Norway	179	11.0	80	4.9
Moderaterna	Sweden	31	1.6	193	10.2
Partido Popular	Spain	33	1.7	43	2.2
Republican Party	United States	98	5.9	7	0.4
Conservative Party	Canada	6	0.6	50	5.4
National Party	New Zealand	5	4.2	0	0.0
CDU	Germany	51	2.0	125	4.9
Liberal Party	Australia	6	1.0	12	2.0

*Notes:* (1) Favorable mentions of the free market and free market capitalism as an economic model. (2) General policies in favor of protecting the environment, fighting climate change, and other “green” policies.

within political science (Dolezal *et al.* 2012), there are clear indications highlighting the importance of the final manifestoes. Based on an investigation of parties in 25 countries, including all the nine countries in this study, Walgrave and Nuytemans (2009, 191) conclude that the electoral manifestoes matter for budgeting and legislation, and hence are relevant study objects. The platforms of the U.S. parties are also found to be influential and “a signal of a unified party brand and the product of intraparty compromise” (Simas and Evans 2011, 834). In addition, and in spite of contextual factors influencing the manifesto process, conservative parties are found to “stick to their programs and hardly change them at all” (Walgrave and Nuytemans 2009, 201).

Analysis of the electoral manifestoes was geared toward searching for, and identifying, what kinds of measures on climate change, if any, are proposed. To be considered a climate measure the party should itself link the proposal directly to the issue of climate change and greenhouse gas emissions, either by mentioning the measure in the same paragraph as concerns for the climate, or by including the measure in a section or chapter devoted to climate politics. The following example is illustrative: the Norwegian Conservative Party supports less waste production and more recycling (Høyre 2013, 59), measures that certainly have the potential of reducing greenhouse gas emissions (Eneh and Oluigbo 2012), but as the measure is presented without any explicit linkage to climate change, it is not counted in this study as a climate measure. The important rationale behind this is to identify how the parties themselves define what they consider a climate measure, which in itself is instructive. In this case, the vagueness of the measure (less waste production) is not a valid reason for excluding it, as this analysis includes measures spanning from vague and general to specific and detailed.

The data include the most recent electoral manifestoes downloaded from the parties’ own websites. Six manifestoes are originally in English (CDU 2008; CP-C 2011; CP-UK 2010; Liberal Party 2013; National Party 2014c; Republican Party 2012), one manifesto is only available in Swedish (Moderaterna 2007) so quotations have been translated to English by the author of this article, one is translated to English by the party itself (Høyre 2013), and one is available in Spanish (PP 2011) and has been translated into English. The manifestos differ in how encompassing they are, from the 45-page manifesto of the Swedish party to the 284-page New Zealand manifesto, but all still represent the best expressions of the parties’ intentions.

### **Empirical Analysis**

The electoral manifestoes are investigated to answer two questions: Do conservative parties express trust in the concept of anthropogenic climate change cross-nationally, and when they recognize a need for reduced greenhouse gas emissions, will they propose measures in line with free market environmentalism? The climate measures of each manifesto are categorized within the framework of

the left/right dimension highlighted earlier, from planned economy and regulations to market solutions and unfettered free markets. The results are interpreted in light of available fossil reserves in the respective countries.

### **The United States: Republican Party**

The manifesto of the Republican Party (2012, 40) criticizes the Democratic Obama administration for taking climate change too seriously by treating it as a “severe threat” and mentioning it too frequently in the National Security Strategy. The Republican Party is highly critical against new legislation aimed at reducing emissions relevant to climate change:

We also call on Congress to take quick action to prohibit the EPA from moving forward with new greenhouse gas regulations that will harm the nation’s economy and threaten millions of jobs over the next quarter century. (Republican Party 2012, 19)

Following the critical approach to climate politics, the party does not promote new measures. Quite the contrary, the party opposes emissions trading in the form of cap and trade legislation (Republican Party 2012, 16) without referring explicitly to climate change. The party seems to treat climate change as a nonissue, and hence skirts the need for any measures, either based on state or market initiatives. This appears to be consistent with the U.S. national context as a country with large reserves of coal.

### **Sweden: Moderaterna**

“Researchers and academics might discuss the details, but there is a near-consensus that humanity affects the environment. It is acknowledged that man can do something concerning the problems, but it takes serious effort to achieve the results,” claims Moderaterna (2007, 7 [my translation]). The party stresses the necessity of international cooperation and binding treaties to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, with the European Union and emissions trading as essentials.

The world’s ability to tackle climate change is determined by whether the world’s countries are able to enter into mutually binding agreements for tough emission reductions. Many of the basic measures must be decided at the European level. Trading with emissions permits remains the main weapon against greenhouse gases. Swedish companies are to make cost-effective carbon reductions in countries outside Europe and be credited with the investments in their national commitments. (Moderaterna 2007, 7 [my translation])

Other relevant measures are research and development of nuclear energy and alternative energy sources (Moderaterna 2007, 6), and export of zero

emission energy (7). The party appears to support market-based measures, and promotes no new regulations beyond the international cooperation facilitating carbon trading.

### **Canada: The Conservative Party**

“Unlike the previous Liberal government—which signed grand international accords but took no action—our Government has a climate change plan, and it is working,” claims the Conservative Party of Canada (CP-C 2011, 40). The manifesto lists environmental measures put forward by the government, including several measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and then states: “We will build on these major accomplishments to conserve and protect our environment” (41).

One point to highlight here is that the manifesto presents both past and future measures on climate change. The past measures are regulations on electricity production, research and development on clean energy (including carbon capture and storage), and international cooperation and agreements including support for adaptation in developing countries. Another worth emphasizing is that the party proposes new measures: from energy efficiency in homes to more research and development of clean energy, to replace fossil fuel with renewable energy, including a major hydroelectric project (CP-C 2011, 40-1). Therefore, the Canadian reserves of oil, gas, and coal do not hinder the party from proposing a transition away from fossil fuels.

Some regulations are deemed necessary, but on the whole more emphasis is placed on developing new technologies than on forcing market actors to utilize them. Still, the party proposes regulation rather than market measures and carbon trading.

### **United Kingdom: Conservative Party**

The British Conservative Party emphasizes that “the low carbon economy also provides exciting opportunities for British businesses” and will be “creating jobs and new businesses across the country” (CP-UK 2010, 31). A stated goal is to “increase our share of global markets for low carbon technologies,” and the Labor Party is accused for having “said the right things on climate change, but these have proved little more than warm words” (31). The party outlines a vision for a low carbon economy with electric cars, high-speed trains, renewable energy, and green jobs (89). Markets are certainly a part of the solution, according to the British party:

Instead of using rules and regulations to impose a centralised worldview, we will go with the grain of human nature, creating new incentives and market signals which reward people for doing the right thing. Instead of pulling bureaucratic levers from above telling people what they can't do, we will provide people with the information they need to make more responsible choices. (CP-UK 2010, 89)

To combat climate change, the U.K. party proposes to establish a Green Investment Bank and a floor price on carbon to stimulate low carbon energy production, and increase the proportion of tax revenues from eco-taxes (CP-UK 2010, 31). The party supports an ambitious international agreement on reduced emissions and the funding of adaptation and mitigation regulation in the form of a standard on emissions from energy production. It also supports new nuclear power plants, carbon capture and storage from coal plants, several incentives for wind power and district heating, and government support for energy efficiency measures in homes (91-3). It is worth underlining the links between the intention of cleaner energy from coal and the national context of British coal reserves. Better railways are also promoted to “encourage people to switch to lower carbon public transport” (23), and the adaptation to climate change includes not only international measures, but domestic propositions for “new green spaces and wildlife corridors” (96), as well as flood defense (98).

The British Conservative Party thus speaks against regulations, while at the same time proposing new regulations. Notably, the manifesto does not include concrete market measures on climate change, but markets are clearly considered to be part of the solution. This can be interpreted as a support for a “markets as they are” approach, and indicates that the party sees no acute need for the extension of markets.

### **Norway: Høyre**

According to Høyre (2013, 59), “climate change will probably be the greatest single challenge facing the global community in the next few decades,” and the party promotes preventive action even in the face of uncertainties concerning the full impact of climatic changes. Høyre thus claims that the party wants “Norway to take responsibility for the lives and livelihoods of future generations.”

The electoral manifesto of Høyre includes many measures on the issue of climate change. First, there are a plethora of international measures stating that the party will work for an international climate treaty, and reduce emissions through the European Union emissions trading system (Høyre 2013, 59). Second, several research and technology measures are mentioned, from research on climate change to the development of renewable energy such as geothermal energy, energy efficiency, and the fossil-based technology of carbon capture and storage, as well as grants to the Environmental Technology Fund (60, par. 2). Forests are also intended to be utilized in carbon storage (60, par. 3). The third set of measures involves tax policies. Reduced road tax for cars with lesser emissions is proposed, as is utilizing environmental taxes and duties to make polluters pay and stimulate green consumer habits, plus increasing the excise duty on mineral oil (60, par. 5). The fourth set relates to facilitating low emission transport, from bicycle lanes to large-scale public transport projects, with environmental requirements to procurements (60, pars. 6-8). The fifth set

involves regulations directly, from fuel-efficiency requirements via mandatory zero-emission vehicles in public sector to a ban on crude oil for heating (60). Høyre is among those conservative parties most prone to supporting state regulations, taxations, and interventions into the market economy, while also emphasizing carbon trading. The support for carbon capture and storage is likely linked to Norway's reserves of oil and gas.

### **Spain: Partido Popular**

“We consider energy efficiency to be a remedy in the fight against climate change, taking into account that it is also a key to economic recovery, energy security and job creation” (PP 2011, 131). The party promotes a sustainable, low carbon economy with arguments for not only “new sources of employment” but also to “improve the quality of life for Spaniards” (132).

The Spanish conservatives emphasize sustainable and efficient transport, energy efficiency, forests as carbon sinks, and a global agreement on the issue (PP 2011, 132-3). Carbon markets are mentioned, but only in a descriptive way:

We are the country in the European Union which recedes the most from the fulfillment of the Kyoto Protocol, as well as the country that has to purchase most tons of CO<sub>2</sub> in the market of emissions. The steps towards energy saving and efficiency has been improved, but with scarce results, and nothing has yet been done to actuate forest policies and its effect as carbon sink. (PP 2011, 131)

Emission trading is viewed as a measure Spain is forced to take part in due to lack of working measures to reduce emissions. The party does present quite vague measures not easily categorized within a left/right dimension, and does not challenge the coal industry in a country with significant coal reserves.

### **Germany: Christlich Demokratische Union**

In the section entitled “Creation under threat,” CDU (2008, 13) points out that “climate change threatens the very foundations of our existence and the chances of development of the next generations.” The party promotes energy research and new innovative energy technologies, which also include “clean coal” and research on nuclear fusion (49). In addition, “maintaining the existing scientific, technological, and security competencies in Germany” is important for the party's support for nuclear power to counteract climate change (48). The party also highlights technology transfer to poorer countries (47), as well as opportunities for job creation (46). The main pillars are energy saving, energy efficiency, and renewal energy (47).

CDU (2008, 47) propose worldwide carbon pricing as a specific measure. The party also supports use of environmental levies, and argues that “levies should be raised on long-term consumption of resources or environmental encumbrance rather than taxes” (47). Markets also have an important role in

the CDU climate policy: “Through ecologically efficient framework conditions and market economic instruments we want to increase the climate sustainability of the air, ship and railway traffic (49). CDU (2008, 47) stresses the importance of an international agreement committing industrialized countries to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Last, the party also points to the necessity of climate adaptation, from high tide and coastal protection to strategies for land use under the new climate (47).

Preferring market solutions places CDU on the right of the left/right dimension, while raised levies point to the left. Most of the proposed measures are nevertheless not necessarily leftist or rightist. The support for “clean coal” can be understood in light of vast German coal reserves.

### **Australia: Liberal Party**

Climate change is only directly mentioned once in the Liberal Party manifesto for the Coalition with the National Party, but an intention of reducing carbon emissions is stated several times. “We will take direct action to reduce carbon emissions inside Australia, not overseas,” was claimed among the “top policy priorities” (Liberal Party 2013, 5). Another top priority is to abolish the carbon tax, a pledge that is repeated in nine out of 21 chapters, while “carbon tax” is mentioned 29 times, always in a negative way:

The world’s biggest carbon tax damages the Australian economy, drives up prices unnecessarily, hits the cost-of-living of families, hurts small businesses and makes all Australian businesses less competitive in both domestic and international markets. (Liberal Party 2013, 18)

The preferred plan for reducing emissions includes “an Emissions Reduction Fund of \$3 billion to allocate money in response to emission reduction tenders to projects designed to reduce carbon emissions” and support for “projects such as the exploration of soil carbon technologies and abatement, putting carbon back in soils” (Liberal Party 2013, 45). To keep jobs in Australia, all money would go to domestic projects, “not foreign carbon credits” (45). Carbon trading is directly criticized: “We will reduce emissions inside Australia, not by paying billions of dollars to foreign carbon traders” (18).

The aim of sponsoring instead of taxing businesses could be interpreted as a rightist approach to climate politics, while the rejection of carbon trading is not in line with “free market environmentalism.” The criticism of carbon trading could although place the party further to the right, as it is skeptical to interventions, even in the form of market-based measures. With vast reserves of coal in Australia, the party does not mention coal related to climate change, while at the same time not promoting coal. Coal is a nonissue.

### **New Zealand: National Party**

“National takes climate change seriously and we are committed to making sure New Zealand does its fair share,” according to the electoral manifesto for 2014 (National Party 2014a, 9). At the same time, the party warns that the rivaling coalition of Labor and the Greens would “drive an extreme climate change agenda dictated by the Green Party” and that their opponents’ emissions trading scheme would “add costs to households and put the brakes on the economy” (13).

The National Party put much emphasis on the costs of mitigation and that New Zealand only contributes with 0.15 percent of the global greenhouse gas emissions:

New Zealand faces unique challenges in reducing emissions. About three-quarters of electricity is already from renewable energy, we have a growing and dispersed population, and around half of our emissions are from agriculture. Our opportunities to reduce emissions are more expensive than in other developed countries. (National Party 2014a, 9)

Even though emission trading is criticized, and the National Party wants to extend a transitional phase for electricity, industries, and transport, while keeping agriculture out (National Party 2014a, 11), the party sees emission trading as a “long-term tool” with an expectation of increased impact (9).

The proposed policies on climate change include funding of research on adaptation and technology, especially for agriculture, more renewable energy, international agreements, support for adaptation in vulnerable Pacific islands, and investing in planting of trees. “The removal of carbon by forests plays an important role in helping New Zealand meet its long-term climate change commitments” (National Party 2014a, 12). Another concrete measure is support for energy efficiency in businesses and households, estimated to “save around 30,000 tons of carbon emissions per year” (National Party 2014b, 4). As in Australia, coal is not mentioned in the manifesto sections related to climate change.

The National Party devotes a lot of space to criticizing climate measures of the Labor Party and the Green Party, while presenting less conflict-driven solutions on primarily research and technology. The approach to market solutions is quite vague, as the costs of carbon trading makes the National Party slow down implementation of the emissions trading scheme. The New Zealand conservative party does little to relate climate change to its established core issues, and the climate policy is not easy to place on a left/right dimension.

### **Discussion**

Conservatives have been accused for downplaying the importance of climate change, but only the Republican Party in the United States has chosen this approach in its electoral manifesto, while the rest of the parties acknowledge climate change as a problem. Denial of climate science is, however, not a

“conservative approach,” but an approach utilized by one conservative party, and the focus can therefore move to what kind of measures are promoted, and the extent of market trust or need for state interventions.

The emphasis on market measures and carbon trading is not as dominating as could be expected. Only the conservative parties of Norway and Sweden highlight emissions trading as a positive measure, the British and German parties mention markets in a very positive way, but without proposing new market measures, and the Spanish party restricts itself to mentioning emissions trading in a neutral way. The Canadian party does not mention market measures or carbon trading, while the parties of both the United States and Australia are clearly opposed to carbon trading. The New Zealand party is more vague, and shows some skepticism toward carbon trading in the short term, while at the same time recognizing a long-term importance.

Aversions against state intervention and regulations are often portrayed as a hindrance to a conservative climate policy, but this is not necessarily the case with the electoral manifestoes on climate change. According to Carter (2006, 761-2) the neoliberal ideology of the U.K. party could be difficult to combine with “new regulations and eco-taxes,” but the party supports imposing a new standard on energy production as well as introducing increased eco-taxes. Some state regulations are also backed by the Canadian, Norwegian, and German parties. Still, regulations are not a characteristic part of the conservative climate policy, even though some smaller regulations might be supported. The U.S. Republican Party is the only party that directly distances itself from mitigation policies as such, but is clearly an exception. The study confirms the notion of Anderson and Leal (2001) that supporters of free market capitalism might still be skeptical of “unfettered markets” as an environmental solution.

Rejection of eco-taxes is explicit only in the electoral manifesto of the Australian party. On the opposite, the U.K., German, and Norwegian parties highlight taxes and duties as climate measures. It is also relevant that none of the parties use the climate sections to promote increased overall level of taxation, but rather support a balance where pollution will be taxed more and other activities less. The simple state/market-based left/right dimension might be too simplistic to explain conservative climate policies.

A popular approach among the conservative parties is to promote research and technological solutions. The conservative parties of Norway, Sweden, Germany, Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and Canada all promote technological solutions. The U.K. party supports “development of a new generation of offshore wind power” as well as nuclear power stations, but also believes carbon capture and storage will make coal “into a low carbon fuel of the future” (CP-UK 2010, 92). The Norwegian and Canadian parties promote carbon capture and storage, the Swedish party supports “secure nuclear power” (Moderaterna 2007, 16), and the German party supports “clean coal” as well as nuclear power. This trust in new technologies might be interpreted as a way of achieving reduced emissions without societal changes, which would be

in line with conservative ideology, and the intention of conserving economic structures. With the example of carbon capture and storage, even structures based on fossil fuels will be conserved while conserving the climate. In countries heavily dependent on fossil resources, conservatives might prefer technological transformations of fossils over alternative fuels, and the same goes for countries dependent on nuclear power, such as Sweden and Germany. To relate the question of technology to the state/market dimension, it is worth noting that the conservative parties seem more open toward introducing new technologies and letting market forces implement them than to enforce the use of new technologies by state interventions.

With regard to the expected pro-business position of conservative parties, it is not surprising to find that availability of fossil reserves seem to have an effect on the proposed climate policies. In countries with vast reserves of oil, gas, or coal, these resources are not challenged by conservative parties, which rather propose technological improvements on the use of the fossils.

The transport sector is a major contributor to greenhouse gas emissions, and three of the conservative parties do link transport and climate. These are the Norwegian party, the U.K. party, and the Spanish party. The Norwegian Høyre (2013, 7) proposes both “technological and behavioral change” arguing that politicians should make it easier for people to live “climate friendly,” exemplified by better opportunities for public transport and cycling (Høyre 2013, 60). The parties do not promote strict state regulations of the transport sector, but conversely, none of them actively propose for example privatization of public transport, at least not in the manifestoes.

Finally, the measures most conservative parties do back are international cooperation, agreements, and treaties. The exceptions are the U.S. and Australian parties. The former rejects the whole need for climate policies, while the latter simply does not mention any international cooperation. The rest of the parties all agree on the need for international measures and treaties. International agreements could be viewed as state regulations “leveled up,” but could likewise be considered as facilitating for international markets, as done most explicitly by the Norwegian and Swedish conservative parties.

The findings regarding the left/right dimension are summarized in Table 4, with four columns of categories spanning from the most leftist (bans and state ownership) to the most rightist (against state interventions). The parties might present measures within some, all, or none of the categories. The results indicate that conservative parties do not necessarily support market measures or show aversions against state interventions, and the parties of Norway, Canada, and the United Kingdom even lean slightly toward the left, with more emphasis on regulation and taxation than market measures. The German party promotes both regulation and markets, while the Swedish party is the most clearly pro-market. Aversions against state interventions are only expressed by the U.S. and Australian parties, while it is hard to place those of New Zealand and Spain on the left/right dimension at all. The U.S. and Australian aversion

**Table 4. Left/Right Climate Measures in the Manifestoes**

Party	Bans/State Ownership	Regulation/ Taxes	Markets/ Trading	Against State Interventions
Høyre—Norway	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Conservative Party—Canada	No	Yes	No	No
Conservative Party—United Kingdom	No	Yes	No	No
CDU—Germany	No	Yes	Yes	No
Moderaterna—Sweden	No	No	Yes	No
Republican Party— United States	No	No	No	Yes
Liberal Party—Australia	No	No	No	Yes
Partido Popular—Spain	No	No	No	No
National Party—New Zealand	No	No	No	No

against interventions could be linked to the power of the coal industry in these two countries.

### Conclusion

This investigation of nine conservative party manifestoes has found that conservative parties share the intention of smaller changes to sustain both climate and societal structures. In much of the literature, there is an expectation of a conservative aversion against environmental measures as such. With regard to climate change, this is only the case with the U.S. Republican Party, and hence not representative of conservative parties as a party family. The expectation that conservative parties influenced by neoliberalism have difficulties backing new eco-taxes and state regulations is not sustained by the study, however. The proposed climate policies of the conservative parties are not as easy to categorize on the state/market dimension as could be expected. The preferred measures include both state regulations and carbon trading, and many measures in between the state and market ends of the dimension. Conservative parties certainly do not propose exclusive rightist measures toward climate change; they also promote some state interventions in the market economy. The traditional left/right dimension has not absorbed climate change to the extent that conservative parties support only those climate measures based on free markets, and some parties oppose carbon trading. The lack of privatization proposals and the inclusion of even prohibitions show that conservative climate policies utilize policy parts from the left as well as the right on the state/market dimension.

An expectation from the literature that receives some support in this study is the notion of a conservative pro-business position followed by natural resources playing a role in shaping climate policies. The conservative parties do

not intend to challenge the fossil industry if the respective countries have vast reserves of fossils.

The study points to a conservative climate policy that does not ignore the issue, but utilizes a broad selection of measures to mitigate climate change. One noteworthy tendency is toward facilitating markets, especially internationally, but conservative climate policies extend much further than market measures. The cross-national data from the nine conservative party manifestoes analyzed in this article provides sufficient initial evidence supporting the existence of a distinctive conservative approach to climate change. However, it is acknowledged that this is a preliminary study into the area of the climate change approaches adopted by conservative parties, and the stated or tacit reasoning behind them. Further comparative research in the area is nevertheless required to ascertain how far the initial similarities and dimensions isolated here are upheld across other party families.

### About the Author

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