

IN SEARCH OF CLIMATE POLITICS

In what ways is climate change political? This book addresses this key – but oddly neglected – question. It argues that in order to answer it we need to understand politics in a three-fold way: as a site of authoritative, public decision-making; as a question of power; and as a conflictual phenomenon. Recurring themes centre on de- and repoliticization, and a tension between attempts to simplify climate change to a single problem and its intrinsic complexity. These dynamics are driven by processes of capital accumulation and their associated subjectivities. The book explores these arguments through an analysis of a specific city – Ottawa – which acts as a microcosm of these broader processes. It provides detailed analyses of conflicts over urban planning, transport, and attempts by city government and other institutions to address climate change. The book will be valuable for students and researchers looking at the politics of climate change.

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Contributors

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Preface

This book has a slightly odd format that needs a bit of explanation. It is the result of a project within a grant funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, on the ‘Cultural Politics of Climate Change’. Within that, one project was to focus on the city of Ottawa. What I decided to do was to map initiatives across the city and then instead of solely hiring graduate students to carry out work as research assistants (although there was some of this), to fund them to do their own work under my supervision on some aspects that we had identified in the mapping process. I had always made explicit to them that, alongside their own pieces of work for their master’s program, I would then assemble and develop the various pieces into a book. I was exceptionally lucky to get such a good, enthusiastic group of students.

This book is, among other things, the result of that collaboration. So while the book as a whole is my own project, and the key arguments developed through it are mine, much of the material has been the output of their initial pieces, which I have then reworked. So most of the chapters here have myself plus a co-author, who did, with one exception, do their master’s thesis or major research paper on that subject. The extent of re-writing has varied of course for each one (not really because of the quality of the student’s original work but more so because of the work needed for the book’s narrative), and this is slightly reflected in the author order for each chapter.

Another effect of this is that while several of the chapters rely on interview material, among other sources, there is no standard practice across the book regarding questions of anonymity and attribution. The simplest rule of thumb for reading these is that where the interviewee is named, I carried out the interview, and where it is anonymous, it was carried out by my co-author on that chapter for their master’s degree research.

Acknowledgements

When asked what I do for a living (I am very chatty on trains and in queues), I end up joking that I am very lucky as I am never going to be out of a job – I teach politics and I work on climate change. Neither is going away anytime soon. But neither is my dependency on many other people (or anyone else's such dependency of course) who have made a venture like this possible. Thank you to all.

I need first of all to thank my co-authors for their willingness, even enthusiasm, for this way of working on a project. Kofi Agyapong Adomako, Louis Machabée, Merissa Mueller, Xavier P-Laberge, and Bora Plumptre have all been excellent to work with throughout and I hope they have learned as much about academic research and the publishing process as I have about new ways of putting a book project together.

I had a number of other students working with me as research assistants. Xavier P-Laberge (again), René Richard, Benoit Metlej, Josée Provençal, and Benson Westerterp all did excellent work digging up documents for various chapters, and helping me build the database to map climate initiatives across the city, in particular.

Beyond these, the research was funded by a grant entitled 'Cultural Politics of Climate Change', from the Social Science and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) of Canada. Thank you to the SSHRC for that funding. That grant involved a number of other colleagues that I consulted at various points for this research and have been part of broader conversations about its theoretical discussion. Thanks to Harriet Bulkeley, Simon Dalby, Darren Fleet, Shane Gunster, Matthew Hoffmann, Bob Neubauer, Paul Saurette, and Johannes Strippel. On the Ottawa material, thank you in particular to Caroline Andrew, for various chats over lunch giving me context on Ottawa city politics. While he spent a short time with me as a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Ottawa, Dave Gordon gave very good insights into aspects of city networking and carbon accounting that

inform Chapter 4 in particular. Beyond the grant, I have had excellent feedback on presentations of various parts of the book, both empirical chapters and the overall arguments, at the University of East Anglia, Lancaster University, conferences of the Association of American Geographers, the Royal Geographical Society / Institute of British Geographers, Earth Systems Governance, Transition Towns groups in Buxton and Holmfirth, the environment and politics group at Manchester hosted by Tomas Fredriksen, and in particular the participants in a workshop at Manchester hosted and funded by the Sustainable Consumption Institute. That workshop in particular helped me see the wood for the trees and finish the project. Thanks to Joe Blakey, Harriet Bulkeley, Neil Carter, Mike Hodson, Marc Hudson, Sherilyn Macgregor, Andy McMeekin, Magdalene Rodekirchen, Paul Tobin, and Joanna Wilson for helping me see what needed to be done to kick it into shape.

I am also grateful to Ecology Ottawa who have been extremely generous with time over the years and allowed me to see some of the process from the inside of their campaigns and organizing. Thanks in particular to Graham Saul, Trevor Haché, and Robb Barnes. Thank you more broadly also to the various interviewees for the chapters who provided their time and reflections on the various issues at stake. Thank you specifically to Kai Millard for digging out a report from February 1992 and working out how to read it into a modern version of WordPerfect!

A version of Chapter 5 was previously published as Matthew Paterson and Merissa Mueller (2018) Cultural Conflicts and Decarbonization Pathways: Urban Intensification Politics as a Site of Contestation in Ottawa, In Andrés Luque-Ayala, Harriet Bulkeley, and Simon Marvin, eds., *Rethinking Urban Transitions: Politics in the Low Carbon City*. London: Routledge, 203–23. Thank you to the editors and to Routledge for permission to reproduce the chapter here. Thank you also to those who gave permissions to reproduce a number of figures in the book.

At Cambridge University Press, thanks to Matt Lloyd for his enthusiasm about the project overall, Sarah Lambert for her efficient processing of the manuscript, Liz Steel for her admirable copyediting, and the reviewers for both enthusiasm and good critical insight as to what I needed to do to the book.

I have always worked to music but have gotten out of the habit of recording this properly in the acknowledgements. I now find I have three sorts of days in music–work terms. A normal work day focused on writing or teaching is an Underworld day; if I need a bit more of a gentle lift then it is a Cocteau Twins day; while a stress day that needs to calmly work through things when way behind is a King Tubby, dub reggae day. Thankfully this project has not needed many of the latter. All three I find put me in a frame of mind where I can concentrate for much longer than otherwise I would be capable of. Thank you to their varying sorts of brilliance.

Thanks to Jo for sharing my life for what is approaching thirty years now. I am

very skeptical of the apparent tradition of male academics thanking their partners for ‘suffering’ them while they finish a book. No one we share our lives with ought to ‘suffer’ for the writing of a book: if they do, your priorities are all wrong. I am pretty sure Jo has not made any sacrifices for this book, or any of my others. She will of course tell her many followers on Twitter if I am deluding myself.

This book is for Anice (both of them) and Freya. Anice, my mum, died in 2014, while Anice, my niece, was born in 2015. She and Freya (my daughter) will experience the full gamut of what climate politics has to throw at them. I think they’ll throw a lot back at it too.

Acronyms

| | |
|--------|---|
| AQCCMP | Air Quality and Climate Change Management Plan |
| CaGBC | Canada Green Building Council |
| CCP | Cities for Climate Protection |
| CDP | Community Design Plan |
| CSOC | Community Services and Operations Committee |
| FCM | Federation of Canadian Municipalities |
| FIT | feed-in-tariff |
| FSS | Faculty of Social Sciences (University of Ottawa) |
| GEGEA | Green Energy and Green Economy Act (Ontario) |
| GHG | greenhouse gas |
| GMF | Green Municipal Fund |
| GND | Green New Deal |
| ICLEI | International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives |
| IESO | Independent Electricity System Operator (Ontario) |
| LEED | Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design |
| NCENN | National Capital Environmental Nonprofit Network |
| NCC | National Capital Commission |
| NGO | Non-Government Organization |
| OMB | Ontario Municipal Board |
| OREC | Ottawa Renewable Energy Cooperative |
| OSEG | Ontario Sports and Entertainment Group |
| PCP | Partners for Climate Protection program |
| RE | renewable energy |
| RMOC | Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton |
| TMP | Transportation Master Plan |
| UNFCCC | United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change |
| UofO | University of Ottawa |
| XR | Extinction Rebellion |

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