Foreword: The Politics of Climate Change

By Tibor Hargitai (Chief Assistant Editor)

In 2012, then aspiring presidential candidate (and current President of the United States) Donald Trump tweeted that "The concept of global warming was created by and for the Chinese in order to make U.S. manufacturing non-competitive." Five years later, President Trump pushes for the withdrawal of the US from the Paris Accord. Meanwhile, it is commonplace by now to say that the world has entered the Anthropocene, referring to the way that human activity has permanently changed the Earth's ecosystem and is the most important factor shaping it at the present. Intuitively speaking, the consequences of climate change on global, regional and domestic politics are expected to be profound. But what are the consequences of climate change on state to state, state to non-state, non-state to non-state relations?

In this issue of COJOURN, the authors investigate the implications of climate change and specifically look at climate change politics. The contributions are diverse and cover a number of prominent questions related to the topic, ranging from the questionable emission-efficient impact of natural gas, to the consequences of climate change on migration flows from Africa to Europe, to the role of political committees on climate denial in the US, and to a more technical perspective on the interconnections of the strategic planning tasks of human resource development and climate change. The issue is ordered moving from a more general picture to the specific technical implications of climate change policy in the EU.

András Molnár ponders the question of how much a stronger emphasis on natural gas consumption can contribute to the fulfillment of the Paris Agreement goals? After discussing the consequences of natural gas on carbon emissions, he finds that natural gas is not necessarily the right approach to tackle climate change in the long run, especially since the methane emissions that come with natural gas extraction are much more damaging emissions than carbon dioxide, and urges the political community to act today rather than tomorrow, before the consequences of global warming are out of hand.

The second contribution is by Sebastian Paul, who asks how climate change affects the process of migration from Africa to Europe; what the (possible) consequences of this development are; and how mass refugee movements can be avoided? This paper provides a literature review of the consequences of climate change on (potential) migration flows from Africa, and proposes some interesting solutions to tackling the related problems, such as the renting of territory to provide a safe haven for climate refugees, the creation of new climate-neutral cities, a homogenisation process to prevent ethnic conflicts, and specifically for the EU: a changing mindset to learn to accept that there will inevitably be at least some inflow of (climate) refugees into the EU.

Nino Rusidze's contribution looks at the role of conservative Political Action Committees in fostering opposition to climate-change-related measures (CCRMs) through climate change denial in the United States. The growth of these PACs (political campaigning bodies) has had two important policy implications: Firstly, to influence public opinion and shape the general understanding of the issue, and secondly, to safeguard the support for policymakers against CCRMs. The bipartisan support in 2008, recognising the need to tackle climate change, had eroded by 2014, with significant donations from PACs to (Republican) Congressional and Presidential election campaigning in order to offset the climate agenda in the US. Rusidze concludes that "large-scale involvement, in order to push the corporate agenda, has an impact on the political decision-making process, and has transformed the position of the US on climate change."

The last contribution is by Tamás Köpeczi-Bócz, who asks the following practical question: What may be the interconnections of the strategic planning tasks of human resource development and climate change in the EU? By comparing the EU's climate change policy and the European Social Fund, the author finds that there has been a divergence in the implementation of the two policy areas, but that there is a need for streamlining related policies in order to increase the EU's efficiency and adaptability to the future, under the Europe 2020 Strategy.

This issue highlights the multidimensional consequences of climate change on policy and politics. All four authors have shed light on different sets of problems, and have contributed to the broad range of academic literature on the politics of climate change.

We hope that our readers will enjoy and find value in these contributions. To an equal extent we hope that this thematic journal issue can help raise attention to the effects of climate change, and the implications it has on policy, politics and the public good.