DEEPENING ENERGY POLICY INTEGRATION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION: COULD POLITICIZATION OF CLIMATE CHANGE BE THE KEY?

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Abstract

Climate change has gained a lot of attention among the European Union (EU) public in the last years, with scientists as well as climate strikers stressing the need for action. However, the effects of that phenomenon around the issue of climate change among the public on the EU energy policy remain under-researched. In order to establish the link between the two, the thesis applies the neofunctionalist EU integration framework, which claims that politicization of an issue leads to further policy integration of that topic. Previous research has noted that politicization of climate change has been underway in individual countries, however, the current thesis establishes, based on opinion polls and European Parliament election results, that this process has also occurred in the EU as all three criteria of politicization (increase in the salience, polarization of opinion and mobilization of public opinion) have increased over the last few years. Regarding energy policy, the thesis demonstrates that the deepening of energy policy integration has increased significantly, especially in the form of bottom-up pressure, thereby 'bringing politics' into energy policy. Based on the neofunctionalist conceptual frame, the thesis concludes that the increased politicization of climate change among the public has fueled energy policy integration in the EU, becoming the main driver behind it and replacing thus the earlier driver of the Energy Union – energy security. More broadly, the thesis sets an example of a way in which public perceptions are capable of shaping or even driving policy issue integration in the EU.

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If living abroad in several different countries has taught me one thing, it is that happiness is only real when you have people to share it with. Thereby, I thank my friends both at CEU and elsewhere, as well as the few very exceptional people in my life, for their support, love and shared conversations.

Last but not least, I would like to thank my parents for raising me to be curious about international affairs and the world around me since an early age. I would not be here without them.

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Introduction

In the last decades, the European Union (EU) has positioned itself on the international arena as a frontrunner in many environmental issues, among those also climate change. The EU has adopted environmental regulations and laws that have opined to be "among the world's strictest and most ambitious."[1] As a recent development, the new president of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, listed the European Green Deal and a goal for the EU to become carbon neutral by 2050 as her top priority, coining the Green Deal as "Europe's man on the Moon moment".[2] Climate change has also gained a lot of attention during the last couple of years, with young climate strikers (such as the Fridays for Future movement) as well as scientists around the world drawing more attention to the issue and pointing to the unquestionable need for immediate action.[3]

Climate change, as numerous other environmental issues, is a global challenge not recognizing any borders. Therefore, tackling it will require more than individual country-level measures – regional and global cooperation is needed. This, naturally, has also been realised by European leaders as the cooperation in the field of climate policy in the EU is not novel: the first major cooperation efforts in that field started already in the 1990s, mainly in relation to the lead-up to the Kyoto Protocol (concluded in 1997). Following the course of negotiations for the Kyoto Protocol, the EU moved from mainly symbolic rhetoric on climate change to an actual internal

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[1] R. Daniel Kelemen and David Vogel, "Trading Places: The Role of the United States and the European Union in International Environmental Politics," *Comparative Political Studies* 43, no. 4 (2010): 432, https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414009355265.
[2] Greg Lory and Meabh McMahon, "Green Deal 'man on the Moon Moment' for Europe," euronews, December 11, 2019, https://www.euronews.com/2019/12/11/green-deal-man-on-the-moon-moment-for-europe.
[3] Andrew Freedman, "More than 11,000 Scientists from around the World Declare a 'Climate Emergency,'" *The Washington Post*, November 5, 2019, https://www.washingtonpost.com/science/2019/11/05/more-than-scientists-around-world-declare-climate-emergency/.

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burden sharing agreement among its fifteen member states, agreeing on far more advanced carbon emissions reduction targets than other industrialised nations.[4] In 2009 with the Lisbon Treaty, climate change was added to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) as an issue area of shared competence.[5]

Whereas almost no member state complains about the principle of having to fight climate change, countries are still reluctant to cede their sovereignty on other energy policy topics such as liberalization and integration of energy markets, or ensuring a European-level response for the security of energy supplies.[6] As far as climate change is concerned, competence is shared. However, Article 194 of TFEU outlining EU's competences regarding energy policy specifies that while certain cooperation measures are in place, these do not "affect a Member State's right to determine the conditions for exploiting its energy resources, its choice between different energy sources and the general structure of its energy supply"[7]. Yet, despite the historical desire of Member States to retain certain energy policy competences on the national level, in the last years, steps have been taken towards more integration of national energy policies on the European level.[8]

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[4] Sebastian Oberthür and Claire Dupont, "The Council, the European Council and International Climate Policy: From Symbolic Leadership to Leadership by Example," in *The European Union as a Leader in International Climate Change Politics*, ed. Rüdiger K W Wurzel and James Connelly (Routledge, 2011), 76–77.

[5] Article 191. "Consolidated Version of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union," EUR-Lex: Access to European Union law, 2009, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:12012E/TXT&from=EN.

[6] David Buchan, *Energy and Climate Change: Europe at the Cross Roads* (Oxford University Press, 2009), 1–2.

[7] Article 194. "Consolidated Version of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union."

[8] One example might be the Energy Union, which has been called the "most significant policy idea" aiming to reshape European energy policy. Kacper Szulecki et al., "Shaping the 'Energy Union'': Between National Positions and Governance Innovation in EU Energy and Climate Policy,'" *Climate Policy* 16, no. 5 (2016): 1, https://doi.org/10.1080/14693062.2015.1135100.

Another, a more recent example is the proposal of the European Commission currently underway to make the EU's target of net zero greenhouse gas emissions by the year 2050 legally binding for EU member states, including measures to track the process. "Making the EU Climate-Neutral by 2050," Text, European Commission, March 4, 2020, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_335.

The main drivers behind this integration, however, have not remained the same over time. The immediate aftermath of the Lisbon treaty saw the Third Energy Package enter into force in September 2009, which pressured the countries to liberalize their energy markets and aimed to improve the functioning of the EU internal energy market.[9] The next major milestone in the development of European energy policy, the Energy Union, was initially driven by security of supply concerns in the aftermath on the crisis in Ukraine.[10] The ambitious climate action and energy decarbonization plans of the current Commission, however, would lead one to think that nowadays the energy policy in the EU is firmly led by sustainability and climate change concerns.

The aim of this thesis is precisely to establish what has been the driver of energy policy integration in the EU roughly in the period from 2013 up to now[11], and to examine whether the increasing salience of climate change issues has had an impact on energy policy integration.

This is an emerging area of research; which, due to its novelty, still remains relatively under-researched in the existing academic literature. The current thesis aims to fill this gap; it establishes, on the basis of neofunctionalist EU integration theory, how the growing salience of climate change has had an impact on EU energy policy integration. In order to do so, the neofunctionalist understanding of the link between politicization (of an issue) and policy integration will be employed, which argues that an increase in the former can lead to the deepening of the latter.

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[9]European Commission, "Third Energy Package," accessed May 21, 2020, https://ec.europa.eu/energy/topics/markets-and-consumers/market-legislation/third-energy-package_en.

[10] Szulecki et al., "Shaping the 'Energy Union'','" 5.

[11] A more detailed explanation regarding the timeframe of the research can be found in Section 2.3. It can be just noted here that the timeframe covers roughly the Juncker and von der Leyen Commissions, with a small lead-up to the former.

Finally, the research aims to shed a new light on European climate and energy policy integration processes during the past years. Based on the aims stated above, the research question I seek to answer is the following:

How does the politicization of climate change influence energy policy integration in the EU? Is it conducive to more integration in the field of energy policy or does it hinder integration?

This thesis will argue that increasing public concern about climate change fuels integration in the field of energy in the European Union, a trend that has been established and intensified during the time period looked at (2013 – 2020). While the biggest advancement in energy cooperation in the middle of the last decade, the Energy Union, was initially mainly driven by energy security and market regulation concerns, now these have been replaced by climate change as clearly the main driver of integration in the field of energy policy.

The thesis is structured as follows: after the current introductory chapter, in *Chapter one*, related literature on the linkages between EU climate and energy policy, as well as on the public perception of climate change and its impact on shaping the course of energy policy integration will be examined. This will be followed by the introduction of the neofunctionalist linkage between politicization and integration as the central conceptual framework, as well as the research design in *Chapter two*. This allows criteria to be established on the basis of which I will later on analyze the data and literature available. The criteria for politicization have three components (growing salience, polarization in the opinion, mobilization of public opinion) which all have to be fulfilled in order to conclude that politicization is occurring. Regarding the definition of integration, the current research focuses mainly on positive integration as a way to assess the coordination of energy policies on the EU level. *Chapter three* deals with the

increasing salience of climate change issues among the EU public, concluding that over the period looked at, the politicization of climate change has clearly occurred. In order to do so, public opinion polls, academic literature, as well as European Parliament election results have been analyzed. *Chapter four* pays attention to the recent developments in the energy policy area in the EU to analyze whether integration has deepened or accelerated. The *Conclusion* uses the findings from chapters three and four to make, based on the neofunctionalist conceptual framework, the main argument of the thesis that integration in the field of energy has shifted from concerns about internal market functioning and energy security to primarily concerns about climate change, fuelled by politicization of the topic. This is followed by a brief analysis of the political and theoretical implications of the findings, highlighting the increased potential for taking the public perception of climate change into account when analyzing policy integration in the EU. Finally, opportunities for further research have been pointed out.

1. Literature review

As noted in the Introduction, the impact of climate change politicization and growing salience among the public remain an under-researched topic due to its novelty. While there exists a solid foundation of literature on the evolution of energy policy in Europe, as well as the linkage and convergence between climate and energy policy in the historical context, the increasing attention to climate change issues in the last few years has seldom been taken into account when analyzing energy policy.

There exists a double gap in the literature about these topics: while in the US and on individual country level (especially in English-speaking countries), growing salience and polarization of climate change issues are relatively well-covered, these accounts often lack the broader, regional perspective. Therefore, a thorough systemic approach for understanding this phenomenon among the public and its implications on policy development (in political science terms, not by haphazard media accounts) is lacking. Moreover, while energy and climate policy in the EU have often been analyzed from the angle of regulatory approaches and their implementation[12], the topic of politicization of issues pertinent to EU governance and its impact on energy and climate policy is still in early stages.

1.1 Evolution of energy policy, climate issues as a driver of energy policy in the EU

As said at the beginning of the chapter, the (historical) evolution of energy policy and its integration in the EU have been studied quite extensively – after all, the first rudimentary step in European integration, the European Coal and Steel Community was precisely taken to regulate cooperation in the field of energy and natural resources. European integration started off as an

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[12] Frank Wendler, "The European Parliament as an Arena and Agent in the Politics of Climate Change: Comparing the External and Internal Dimension," *Politics and Governance* 7, no. 3 (2019): 328, https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.v7i3.2156.

economic project and the same holds for the energy policy sphere: whereas in the 1970s and 1980s, oil dominated the energy policy concerns in Europe, by 1990s this had shifted to energy market issues, such as pushing towards an internal energy market. The gradual linking of energy policy and policies aimed at mitigating climate change started (albeit slowly at first) in the 1990s and proliferated in the 2000s[13], by the end of which the first climate and energy package with binding targets[14] was agreed upon.

The linking and rapprochement of energy and climate policies has been covered by several authors, leading to a widespread consensus that the sustainability concerns surrounding energy use (referring to climate change) can be seen as a significant influence on EU energy policy and a major driver in its evolvement[15], with climate change being "a key element in leading the EU to debate its energy policy at a more practical level[16]", as put by Solorio Sandoval and his colleagues in 2012. Researchers examining the aforementioned linkage and seeking to explain EU's ability to agree on (sustainably) ambitious bloc-wide energy policies from a political science point of view have, however, mainly conceded on commenting how these trends have been hard to explain by a single explanatory factor[17], or (solely) by any classical theoretical framework frequently used to characterize decision-making in the EU, such

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[13] Maya Jegen, "Energy Policy in the European Union: The Power and Limits of Discourse," *Les Cahiers Europeens de Sciences Po*, no. 02 (2014): 4,6-7.

[14] The 2020 package set the three major targets: 1) 20% cut in greenhouse gas emissions (as compared to the 1990 level), 2) 20% of EU energy coming from renewable energy sources, 3) 20% improvement in energy efficiency. European Commission, "2020 Climate & Energy Package," Text, Climate Action - European Commission, accessed April 12, 2020, https://ec.europa.eu/clima/policies/strategies/2020_en.

[15] Buchan, *New York*, e.g 2-3; Chad Damro, Iain Hardie, and Donald MacKenzie, "The EU and Climate Change Policy: Law, Politics and Prominence at Different Levels," *Journal of Contemporary European Research* 4, no. 3 (2008): 179–92; Israel Solorio, "Bridging the Gap between Environmental Policy Integration and the EU's Energy Policy: Mapping out the 'Green Europeanisation' of Energy Governance," *Journal of Contemporary European Research* 7, no. 3 (2011): 396–415.

[16] Israel Solorio Sandoval et al., "Introduction: The Re-Evolution of Energy Policy in Europe," in *European Energy Policy: An Environmental Approach*, 2012, 4.

[17] Claire Dupont, "Climate Policy Integration into EU Energy Policy: Progress and Prospects" (Vrije University Brussels, 2013), 21, https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315751665.

as liberal intergovernmentalism, neo-institutionalism or multi-level governance.[18] This is an area where the current research seeks to contribute.

The shortcomings of leading EU integration and policymaking theories in providing an explanation to the EU's at times very climate-ambitious policies have led Skjærseth and his colleagues to look for alternatives. They employ negotiation theory on issue- and policy-linkage in order to explain how, despite the unanimity requirement in EU energy policy decision-making (meaning all member states have to agree on a common, unified position), EU's climate policy and thereby often also energy policy reflect the position of the most ambitious members within the bloc, not the least ambitious, as common logic derived from negotiation theory would predict.[19] During the last decade, the explanations for that have often traced back to the normative or value-based arguments, namely that EU often takes norm-based actions when it comes to climate policy. However, interests surrounding the actions can act in both ways – being complementary with, as well as hindering normative aspirations, as remarked by Van Schaik and Schunz.[20]

The former case – interests being complementary with normative aspirations – works in two ways: normative aspiration in terms of fighting climate change and aiming for sustainability could also serve in the interest of policymakers. Oberthür and Dupont remark that EU policymakers have realized that climate policy can be seen as a way of gaining support among the public, having "the potential to enhance their legitimacy and reinvigorate European

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[18] Szulecki et al., "Shaping the 'Energy Union'',"" 3–4; Jon Birger Skjærseth et al., *Linking EU Climate and Energy Policies: Decision-Making, Implementation and Reform* (Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2016), chaps. 1–2.

[19] Skjærseth et al., *Linking EU Climate and Energy Policies: Decision-Making, Implementation and Reform*, chap. 1.

[20] Louise Van Schaik and Simon Schunz, "Explaining EU Activism and Impact in Global Climate Politics: Is the Union a Norm- or Interest-Driven Actor?: EU Activism and Impact in Global Climate Politics," *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 50, no. 1 (2012): 182–83, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-5965.2011.02214.x.

integration in general."[21] By presenting itself as environmentally conscious, the European Commission could gain popularity as climate policy and sustainable energy policy have historically had substantial support among the European public, as also summarized by Skovgaard.[22]

1.2 Growing attention to climate change and the processes of deepening energy policy integration

The European Commission gaining support and popularity among the European public, naturally, also has implications on the feasibility of realizing its political goals, one of those being deeper integration of policies at the EU level – and energy policy is not different in this regard. This dimension to the European Union climate and energy policy integration matrix, has been remarked by several authors in the past, as illustrated in the previous paragraph. However, recently, few academic contributions have been added on the topic that would take into account the explosive attention climate change has gathered during the last years both in Europe as well as globally.

Naturally, while there is a growing consensus among the European public that climate change is a detrimental issue and climate change deniers have been losing credibility around the world, at the same time, it has become an object of increasing polarization (albeit probably less in the EU than in the United States).[23] Simultaneously, climate change issues have also grown a lot in salience in the EU during the past years, if one were to judge by the media coverage.

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[21] Oberthür and Dupont, "The Council, the European Council and International Climate Policy: From Symbolic Leadership to Leadership by Example," 87.

[22] Jakob Skovgaard, "The Limits of Entrapment: The Negotiations on EU Reduction Targets, 2007-11," *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 51, no. 6 (2013): 1143, https://doi.org/10.1111/jcms.12069.

[23] Sedona Chinn, P. Sol Hart, and Stuart Soroka, "Politicization and Polarization in Climate Change News Content, 1985-2017," *Science Communication* 42, no. 1 (2020): 112–29, https://doi.org/10.1177/1075547019900290; Beth Gardiner, "For Europe's Far-Right Parties, Climate Is a New Battleground," Yale E360 (Yale Environment 360), October 29, 2019, https://e360.yale.edu/features/for-europes-far-right-parties-climate-is-a-new-battleground.

Trying to understand this increase in attention to climate change issues from the academic point of view allows to speak of the politicization of climate change in the EU, a topic which will be explored further in Chapter 2.2 in order to establish whether the politicization of climate change can be seen as increasing (and thereby also having an impact on policy integration).

Regarding the politicization of climate change and how it impacts energy policy, few contributions exist that would be relevant in the context of the current research. Bromley-Trujillo and Poe examine the influence of perceived salience of climate change and environmental issues on climate policy adoption in the US states. They note that in states where the perceived salience is higher, politicians are also more likely to adopt relevant policies for tackling climate change.[24] Even though this finding gives some confidence of the linkage between public politicization and action on energy policy, it should be noted that the due to different political system and nature of the US and the EU, the authors still do not explain the precise process that this thesis attempts to do. Furthermore, the authors are not dealing with the phenomenon of politicization per se, looking merely at the salience component surrounding climate change.

The explanations behind energy policy integration in the EU – regarding both the issues as well as actors leading the integration process – have not remained the same over the beginning of EU energy policy. Whereas the 1990s and to an extent also the 2000s could be characterized as the period of integration being primarily driven by pushing towards converging energy markets[25], by the end of 2000s the impact of climate change had remarkably strengthened, as illustrated by Buchan.[26] Yet, in the first part of 2010s and during the initial establishment of the

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[24] Rebecca Bromley-Trujillo, John Poe, "The importance of salience: public opinion and state policy action on climate change", *Journal of Public Policy,* 1-25 (2018), doi:10.1017/S0143814X18000375

[25] Jegen, "Energy Policy in the European Union: The Power and Limits of Discourse," 6–7.

[26] Buchan, *New York*.

Energy Union, which has often been linked to geopolitical events and concerns, the idea of energy security being an integration driver gained ground. When the then Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk proposed the Energy Union in March 2014, the initial idea of the project was very much dominated by energy security concerns, specifically security of supply in the European gas sector – a clear reference to the then acute Ukraine crisis and the fear of Russian retaliation by sanctions through the energy sphere.[27] This means that during the history of energy policy integration in the EU, all three classical dimensions – market issues, energy security and sustainability (climate change) have all been the main drivers of policy integration at different times.

Recent coverage of the energy policy integration, however, has increasingly put a lot of attention on the main actor(s) driving these processes to better understand authority distribution. Such contributions have been made by Bocquillon & Maltby[28], who characterized EU energy policy as "embedded intergovernmentalism" (referring to a hybrid form of governance). Herranz-Surrallésa et al[29] also note a high level of contestation regarding governance of that area.

Analysing the topic of authority in EU energy policy, however, has at times come at the expense of neglecting to take into account topics and overall trends in the world which might affect the integration process. One recent attempt at covering public opinion attitudes towards EU energy policy by Tosun and Mišić found a very high level of public support for EU-level energy policy, especially in the field of renewable energy, despite the member states still being

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[27] Szulecki et al., "Shaping the 'Energy Union'',"" 5.

[28] Pierre Bocquillon and Tomas Maltby, "EU Energy Policy Integration as Embedded Intergovernmentalism: The Case of Energy Union Governance," *Journal of European Integration* 42, no. 1 (2020): 39–57, https://doi.org/10.1080/07036337.2019.1708339.

[29] Anna Herranz-Surrallés, Israel Solorio, and Jenny Fairbrass, "Renegotiating Authority in the Energy Union: A Framework for Analysis," *Journal of European Integration* 42, no. 1 (2020): 1–17, https://doi.org/10.1080/07036337.2019.1708343.

reluctant to cede any of their energy sovereignty and national competences.[30] While the authors also stress the theoretical potential the climate conscious public could play in influencing the energy policy governance and integration in the EU, they make few attempts to assess whether this process is already underway.

This offers an opportunity for the current thesis to contribute to the existing literature – both in terms of the affect of public salience and politicization of climate change as well as with regards to what extent can climate change concerns be seen as drivers of integration in energy policy nowadays.

1.3 Literature review conclusion

The aim of the current chapter was to highlight the topics such as explaining the influence of climate change on energy policy development in the EU and the potential of public perceptions of the issue to influence energy policy, which still remain under-researched.

In order to do so, first, I reviewed the debate on how energy and climate policy are linked. Stemming from the normative aspect of sustainability and climate protection, climate change has been posed as a way of gaining support among the public. The second part of the literature focused on the growing attention to climate change issues among the public, noting the lack of regional-level data on that, and then moved on to review the main debates around the issues and actors shaping energy policy governance. This highlighted a gap in the literature concerning the potential of the public, as well as of climate change issues more generally in shaping the course of energy policy integration.

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[30] Jale Tosun and Mile Mišić, "Conferring Authority in the European Union: Citizens' Policy Priorities for the European Energy Union," *Journal of European Integration* 42, no. 1 (2020): 19–38, https://doi.org/10.1080/07036337.2019.1708338.

2. Conceptual frame and research design

The current chapter aims to explain the overall conceptual frame, the research design and methodology. Besides that, the scope and limitations of research will be introduced at length.

The chapter will unfold as follows. Section 2.1 gives an overview of major EU integration theories regarding politicization, allowing to situate my research and conceptual frame among those. Section 2.2 introduces the research design, setting the criteria for carrying out my analysis in the later chapters regarding both politicization and integration. Section 2.3 unveils the chosen timeframe for the research (2013–2020) as well as makes note of potential shortcomings and limitations of the chosen research approach.

2.1 Conceptual frame

In the current research, the climate change politicization and its impact on the EU (energy policy) integration will be examined with the help of theoretical framework linking together politicization and regional integration.

Regarding the impact of politicization on European integration more specifically, three main trends of scholarship can be distinguished among European integration theories. First of these, neofunctionalism (of the 1950s and 1960s), represented by for instance Ernst Haas[31] and Philippe Schmitter[32] contended politicization to lead to further authority transfer from the nation state level to the supranational level. The assumption was that politicization would lead to a "widening of the audience or clientele interested and active in integration," whose recognition of

[31] Ernst Haas, *The Uniting of Europe : Political, Social, and Economic Forces,1950-1957* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1958). See for example p. 11-19.
[32] Philippe C. Schmitter, "Three Neo-Functional Hypotheses About International Integration," *International Organization* 23, no. 1 (1969): 161–66, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818300025601.

changing expectations and new mutual objectives might then hypothetically lead them to shift

their loyalty towards a new center, this time regional one instead of the national one.[33]

However, the postfuctionalist theory outlined by Hooghe and Marks in their seminal

article from 2009 argues that the political climate in the EU has changed from a so-called

"permissive consensus" in the public to a "constraining dissensus"; arguably, the principal

reason behind that is politicization; acting as a constraint on regional integration.[34] Philippe

Schmitter, the initial neofunctionalist from the early decades of European integration,

commenting on Hooghe and Marks' theory, has conceded that the post-functionalist framework

can in some ways be seen as complementary to the neofunctionalist one. Yet, in his eyes public

opinion and politicization in that regard are "impotent – most of all, at the level of Europe as a

whole" in shifting the course of European politics.[35] Instead, the larger European political (party)

system needs to be observed as well.[36]

A third perspective on the interrelation between politicization and EU integration

emerged following the Euro crisis, led by Schimmelfennig, who remarked that the triple effect of

the financial crisis, debt crisis and finally the Eurozone crisis led to a politicization of EU to the

extent never seen before because of the easily visible effect of EU policy-making on the

everyday welfare on people. In spite of that (if one were to follow the postfunctionalist

argument) and the popularity of the EU having plunged during the Eurozone crisis, it still did not

act as a constraint on further (technocratic) integration measures being introduced. This led

Schimmelfennig to contend that politicization does not have much of a constraining effect when

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[33] Schmitter, 166.

[34] Liesbet Hooghe and Gary Marks, "A Postfunctionalist Theory of European Integration: From Permissive Consensus to Constraining Dissensus," *British Journal of Political Science* 39, no. 1 (January 2009): 1–23, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123408000409.

[35] Philippe C. Schmitter, "On the Way to a Post-Functionalist Theory of European Integration," *British Journal of Political Science* 39, no. 1 (2009): 211, 214, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123408000483.

[36] Schmitter, "On the Way to a Post-Functionalist Theory of European Integration."

it comes to authority transfer and EU integration. The author attributes this to isolating crisis management from politicization. The latter is achieved by three main means: euro-compatible coalition formation, avoiding referendums and issue delegation to supranational technocratic organizations.[37] That corresponds to the ideas of Schmitter from 2009, who claims that even though the emergence of public opinion as an important factor in European integration is an important trend, this should not be seen as a threat to European integration process; instead, it might even pose an opportunity.[38]

It is up to debate whether the three phenomena outlined by Schimmelfennig are beneficial for the long-term future of the EU or whether these would contribute to the democracy deficit the EU is often blamed to be guilty of. Regardless of that, that does not diminish the fact that also according Schimmelfennig, in the integration process in the EU has largely followed the neofunctionalist framework since the time of the crisis.[39]

Based on the above outlined main strands of the scholarship on the relationship between politicization and integration, in my research, I will apply the neofunctionalist framework, assuming that politicization of an issue would also lead to further integration on the EU level. Therefore, the theoretical framework outlined above provides the required conceptualization how politicization of climate change and by extension energy policy issues could lead to the further energy policy integration among EU member states, who, after all, have very varying energy profiles. A more precise understanding of how I will assess the link between politicization and integration is given in subsection 2.2.3, dealing with establishing a chain between the two.

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[37] Frank Schimmelfennig, "European Integration in the Euro Crisis: The Limits of Postfunctionalism," *Journal of European Integration* 36, no. 3 (2014): 321–27, 331–35, https://doi.org/10.1080/07036337.2014.886399.
[38] Schmitter, "On the Way to a Post-Functionalist Theory of European Integration," 215.
[39] Schimmelfennig, "European Integration in the Euro Crisis," 335–36.

However, as even Hooghe and Marks admit ten years after coming out with their theory[40] of postfunctionalism, one might not always be able to engage solely with one grand integration theory[41]; instead, these theories should be taken as "flexible bodies of thought that resist decisive falsification," [42] meaning that these theories should not be treated as mutually exclusive. Instead, each theory might have something to offer in terms of an explanation for the regional integration process in the EU. Therefore, while my research will by and large apply the neofunctionalist integration logic, the thesis also borrows from more contemporary ideas, such as the one put forward by Schimmelfennig, and thus does not constrain itself with solely the early interpretation of neofunctionalism.

2.2 Research design and methodology

In order to analyze the available data, methodology needs to be clarified. More precisely, the criteria for analyzing the two empirical components of research 1) politicization of climate change in the EU and 2) developments in EU energy policy integration, will be outlined, which is necessary to assess their progress. First, a short overview of the definition of politicization will be given, followed by precise criteria according to which I will perform my analysis in Chapter 3. Second, the same will be done with regards to integration. The section will end with some general remarks clarifying how I seek to determine the existence of a link between politicization and integration of an issue area.

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[40] Hooghe and Marks, "A Postfunctionalist Theory of European Integration."

[41] It should be noted that under the three grand integration theories, Hooghe and Marks refer to neofunctionalism, intergovernmentalism and postfunctionalism. In my coverage of the theoretical framework, I have not covered intergovernmentalism because this deals the least with the impact of politicization on regional integration.

[42] Liesbet Hooghe and Gary Marks, "Grand Theories of European Integration in the Twenty-First Century," *Journal of European Public Policy* 26, no. 8 (2019): 1113, https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2019.1569711.

2.2.1 Definition and framework of politicization

Regarding the definition and precise understanding of politicization, the widely cited and acknowledged framework of de Wilde will be applied. In terms of politicization in the EU, de Wilde differentiates between various kinds of politicization: politicization of EU institutions, of EU decision-making processes and finally, of specific issue areas. The current thesis deals with the latter – politicization of an issue. In the words of de Wilde, this can be defined as "an increase in salience and diversity of opinions on specific societal topics. If issues become more contested and there is an increasing public demand on public policy, these issues are then considered to be 'politicized'".[43]

The focus on the public demand on taking political action is an important component – it is not enough to merely look at the heightened importance of a topic in the society to conclude that it has become politicized. Instead, several studies dealing with politicization count at least three major components to politicization, which can by and large be understood as the following: 1) growing salience (an issue is considered increasingly important for the interests or values of societal actors); 2) polarization of opinion (opinions diverge in terms of what should be done) and 3) mobilization of public opinion. The latter components could be divided also further, into the behavioral and socialization components, the first of which means that societal actors put more resources into contesting the issue, and the second that more actors in the society become more attentive in the issue area in the EU.[44] As it is very hard to analyze or compare the size of

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[43] Pieter De Wilde, "No Polity for Old Politics? A Framework for Analyzing the Politicization of European Integration," *Journal of European Integration* 33, no. 5 (2011): 560–61, https://doi.org/10.1080/07036337.2010.546849.

[44] Jonathan Zeitlin, Francesco Nicoli, and Brigid Laffan, "Introduction: The European Union beyond the Polycrisis? Integration and Politicization in an Age of Shifting Cleavages," *Journal of European Public Policy* 26, no. 7 (2019): 964, https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2019.1619803; Pieter de Wilde, Anna Leupold, and Henning Schmidtke, "Introduction: The Differentiated Politicisation of European Governance," *West European Politics* 39, no. 1 (2016): 4, https://doi.org/10.1080/01402382.2015.1081505.

resources societal actors spend of contesting or influencing an issue, thereby in my analysis I will follow the more classical, three component definition of politicization.

In terms of assessing all the three components, it first needs to be established where the main political settings where politicization occurs are located. De Wilde and his colleagues list three main arenas for that: parliaments, public spheres and public opinion.[45] Out of those, the latter is arguably the most crucial one and also the one covered the most in the current thesis.

In order to assess the three components of politicization of issues, which have been outlined above, I will carry out the following evaluations:

1) <u>Growing salience/importance</u>:

This component will be assessed among the public using data from publicly available Eurobarometer opinion polls about the concerns or importance regarding climate change.

→ An issue will be considered more salient, if the following is true: in the opinion polls, a larger proportion of people questioned describe climate change as a issue of salience, concern or worry

2) <u>Polarization in the opinion</u>:

Because polarization of climate change is a already a huge topic in itself that would require extensive polling or mass media analysis, for the sake of observing the length constraints of the current research, for assessing the polarization of climate change in the EU, secondary sources have been used.

→ An issue will be considered more polarized if the literature analyzed supports that claim.

3) <u>Mobilization of public opinion</u>:

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[45] de Wilde, Leupold, and Schmidtke, "Introduction," 7.

Mobilization of public opinion can be measured and assessed in various ways, however, most academic studies focusing on politicization of issues in the EU focus on the manifestation of those issues in the media, as well as parliamentary debates and street protests.[46]

However, it is very hard to establish causal linkages between increased parliamentary debates in the national context of various European countries on a specific policy issue and their impact on that issue integration in the EU. The same holds true for proving the impact of street protests and their impact on integration processes.

Therefore, the current thesis focuses on another aspect of mobilization of public opinion – voting in the elections, thereby the influencing the composition of one EU institution – the European Parliament (EP). Authors such as Franklin and Wlezien suggest that politicization of different issues may also be observed by an increase in electoral importance and having an influence on the public's voting behaviour: when citizens take into account the importance of an issue area in elections and account for candidate or party preferences in terms of that issue. In order to assess that, in the current research, two most recent EP election results of 2014 and 2019 will be compared in terms of the share of so-called climate friendly Members of the European Parliament (MEPs). In addition, when assessing the link between salience of climate change issues for the public and how much that might have affected the voting behavior of the EU populations, post-election Eurobarometer data and specifically question(s) about the major issues that had an impact on the voting decision will be looked at.

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[46] De Wilde, "No Polity for Old Politics?," 562–63.

→ An increase in the mobilization of public opinion will be considered true if between the two elections results compared, the 2019 election will be characterized by a bigger number of climate-friendly MEPs, as well as based on polling data it is possible to conclude that in 2019 election, climate change played a bigger role in the voters' decision.

2.2.2 Definition of integration

In order to understand the evolution and to assess the quality of integration, the classical definition of negative and positive integration, coined already in the 1960s in order to provide an explanation for the European integration processes, needs to be explained. Pinder, as well as Scharpf later on use the phrase 'negative integration' to refer to economic integration, which is achieved by removing national barriers and discriminatory practices, which would eventually lead to something akin to a common market. Positive integration, on the other hand, refers to the construction of "coordinated and common policies" with the aim to strive for more welfare and economic objectives, which is achieved by harmonization of national regulations of countries participating in the integration process.[47]

Due to the widespread understanding of climate change being an issue which can only be resolved by countries and regions coming together with *coordinated* action in order to tackle it, the focus of the current chapter will also be on positive integration of climate change and energy policy. In other words, primarily the coordination and harmonization of policies in the field of energy and climate in the EU will be evaluated.

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[47] John Pinder, "Positive Integration and Negative Integration: Some Problems of Economic Union in the EEC," *The World Today* 24, no. 3 (1968): 90; Fritz Scharpf, "Negative and Positive Integration in the Political Economy of European Welfare States," in *The Future of European Welfare*, ed. M. Rhodes and Y. Mény (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1998), 158.

→ In my understanding of the development of integration processes in the field of energy in Europe, integration can be seen as deepening if the coordination, harmonization and/or oversight of policies can be assessed to have increased over the considered period.

In some instances, this goes further than merely looking at the legal status of some policies or regulations: whereas the legal status of a policy refers to the top-down pressure that could be used to enforce it, it neglects the role of bottom-up pressure, which has increasingly been used[48] in the energy policy integration domain in the EU. Therefore, attention will also be paid to the role peer pressure and transparency could play in pushing for more ambitious climate policies or furthering integration.

2.2.3 Establishing the link between politicization and integration

For establishing a link between the politicization of climate change and energy policy integration based on the theoretical framework introduced in Chapter 2.1, at first both empirical components need to be looked at separately. If based on the analysis it can be concluded that politicization of climate change has increased in the EU and if energy policy integration has deepened during the chosen timeframe (which will be explained in Chapter 2.3), a linkage between the two can be established, stating that politicization has contributed to furthering integration based on logic of the neofunctionalist framework.

2.3 Timeframe and limitations to the scope of research

In terms of the timeframe of research, primarily the period between 2013 and 2020 (up to now) will be looked at. Naturally, in some instances, a longer view will be provided, in order to give the necessary context for understanding or simply by providing a starting point. 2013 was a relatively eventless year in European climate and energy politics: in some way it could be argued

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[48] Bocquillon and Maltby, "EU Energy Policy Integration as Embedded Intergovernmentalism," 52.

that integration regarding the 2020 energy and climate package was finalised in 2012, when the Energy Efficiency Directive was adopted[49], yet the discussion and debates surrounding the energy and climate targets for the next period up to 2030 had not fully taken off yet. Furthermore, 2013 as the year preceding the European Parliament elections and the change of the European Commission leadership allows to take the full impact of mentality on climate change issues into account when looking at the major changes of 2014. In 2014 the European Parliament elections, the election of Jean-Claude Juncker as the Commission president for the period 2014– 2019 as well as the unveiling of the first plan for the Energy Union by Donald Tusk took place, all having a major influence on energy policy development.

Thus, looking primarily at the period 2013 up to now allows to have a short lead-up to the analysis of the Juncker Commission policy, as well as provide some indication of the current von der Leyen Commission in terms of its climate and energy policy.

Finally, the current research approach is not entirely without shortcomings. To reiterate, the chosen research approach is mainly two-fold: first, looking at general trends regarding the salience and perception of climate change among the European public. Secondly, the integration of energy policy, or in other words, the cooperation of EU member states on energy policy issues in the form of commonly agreed upon positions/policies will be evaluated.

Obviously, the selection to focus on the public leaves an important aspect of energy policy aside – the national of energy policies of various member states and the individual, at times contradicting stances of those countries regarding a unified European energy policy. I fully acknowledge this shortcoming, especially because the role of the European Council in integration has grown in the post-Maastricht era in comparison to the European Commission.

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[49] "Directive 2012/27/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 on Energy Efficiency," Pub. L. No. 32012L0027, OJ L 315 (2012), http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2012/27/oj/eng.

However, as remarked by Thaler, in the field of energy policy, the European Commission has strategically opted for "close interinstitutional coordination with the European Council".[50] In terms of the current research, this helps to ensure a relatively accurate indication of reality without distorting the picture much.

The second shortcoming of the current research is the focus on analyzing politicization among the public, neglecting therefore the analysis of politicization among EU policymakers (which could be done by conducting interviews with the relevant officials and/or discourse analysis of official documents for instance by the relevant European Commission units). This has been left aside in this research due to the scope of the research. However, it could be an interesting avenue for research in the future.

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[50] Philipp Thaler, "The European Commission and the European Council: Coordinated Agenda Setting in European Energy Policy," *Journal of European Integration* 38, no. 5 (2016): 571–72, https://doi.org/10.1080/07036337.2016.1178252.

3. Politicization of climate change in the EU

The current chapter analyzes politicization of climate change in the EU according to the framework of politicization introduced at length in sub-section 2.2.1 encompassing three components of politicization: growing salience (importance), polarization in the opinion and mobilization of public opinion. Politicization can be seen as increasing if all of the three components are increasing simultaneously.

Following that, each of the three components will be analyzed in detail in the sections 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3. At the very end of each section, a final evaluation about fulfilling the criteria for that component of politicization will be given. The chapter is ended by a short conclusion.

3.1 Component I – Growing salience/importance

In order to compare the importance of climate change in the eyes of the EU public, the results of special Eurobarometer surveys on climate change will be compared over time, paying attention to the concern and importance respondents attribute to climate change. Answers to three questions, all of those regarding public's perception of climate change, have been examined.[51] Under each question, the results from the last five surveys (published[52] in October 2011[53], March 2014[54], November 2015[55], September 2017[56] and April 2019[57]) will be looked at.

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[51] Overall, the Eurobarometer's special reports on climate change contain four sections: 1) European perceptions of climate change, 2) Taking action to tackle climate change, 3) Attitudes towards fighting climate change and transition to clean energies, 4) Looking to the future. (The earlier reports from October 2011 and March 2014 contain only sections 1, 2 and 4, with the section about attitudes towards fighting climate change and transition to clean energies missing.

Whereas sections 2-4 naturally contain interesting insights into the views of the European public into tackling climate change, none of the questions focus on specifically on integration of EU policies. Instead, the focus of the questions is on individual-level action and actions of respective member states, which are not directly relevant for the current research.

[52] Fieldwork was carried out in June 2011, November-December 2013, May-June 2015, March 2017 and April 2019 respectively.

[53] Eurobarometer, "Special Eurobarometer 372 Report: Climate Change (EB75.4)" (Brussels, Belgium: European Commission, October 2011), https://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/archives/ebs/ebs_372_en.pdf.

[54] Eurobarometer, "Special Eurobarometer 409 Report: Climate Change (EB80.2)" (Brussels, Belgium: European Commission, March 2014), https://ec.europa.eu/clima/sites/clima/files/support/docs/report_2014_en.pdf.

While that raises the question why data from 2011 (not falling strictly under the timeframe of the research, 2013-2020) is included at all, this allows to set some kind of background against which to evaluate the changes in the public perception of importance of climate change issues. More specifically, the evolution of responses to following questions will be compared:
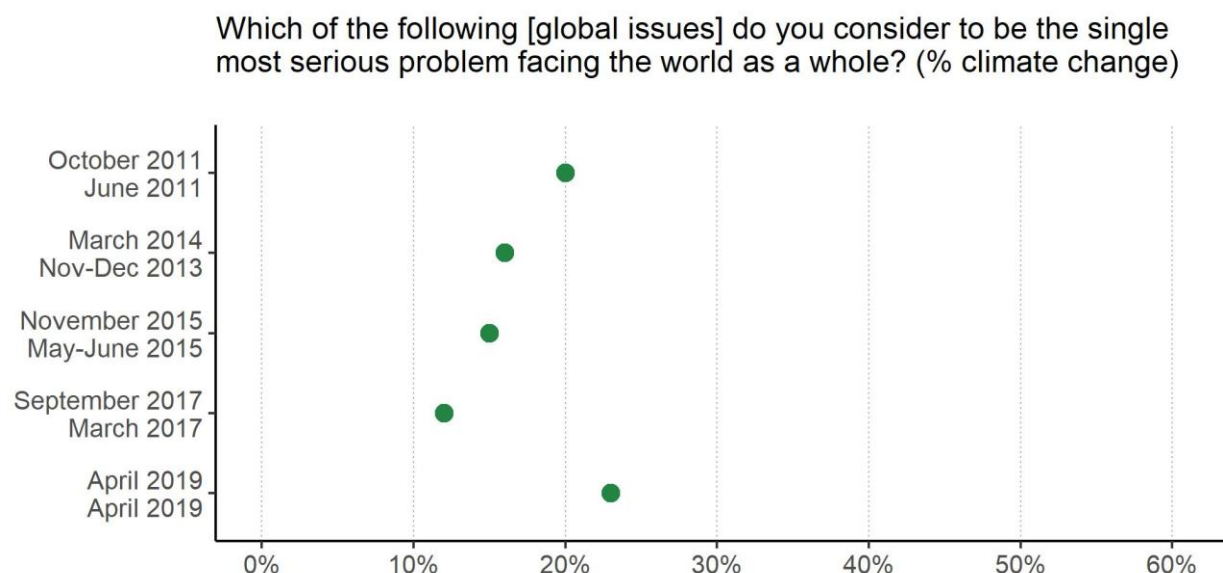

Figure 1. Hereinafter - Source: respective Eurobarometer polls. The average % for the EU28 has been given. Even though large differences between countries exist, for the sake of length of the research, these have not been analyzed here. Furthermore, hereinafter in each pair of dates given on the figures, the top date refers to the month of publication of the Eurobarometer report and the bottom to the month when fieldwork was carried out.

Based on the answer, we can see that the over the time period examined, the share of people considering climate change *the single* most serious issue has fluctuated quite a lot: from 20% in 2011, it dropped to a low of 12% among people questioned in March 2017, and then rose

[55] Eurobarometer, "Special Eurobarometer 435 Report: Climate Change (EB83.4)" (Brussels, Belgium: European Commission, November 2015), https://ec.europa.eu/clima/sites/clima/files/support/docs/report_2015_en.pdf.

[56] Eurobarometer, "Special Eurobarometer 459 Report: Climate Change (EB87.1)" (Brussels, Belgium: European Commission, September 2017), https://ec.europa.eu/clima/sites/clima/files/support/docs/report_2017_en.pdf.

[57] Eurobarometer, "Special Eurobarometer 490 Report: Climate Change (EB91.3)" (Brussels, Belgium: European Commission, April 2019), https://ec.europa.eu/clima/sites/clima/files/support/docs/report_2019_en.pdf.

to a historical high of by April 2019, with nearly a fourth of the public considering climate change *the* biggest global challenge.

These big fluctuations can be explained by the specific nature of the question: the importance of the so-called "finite pool of worry" theory has been stressed by climate change researchers, meaning if personal worry about one type of risk increases, people's concern about other risks goes down.[58] That means that great concerns about other acute problems at the time can overshadow concerns about climate change, an effect which has previously been attributed to concern about climate change declining after the economic implications attributed to the financial crisis of 2008 became dominant.[59] Returning now to the Eurobarometer polling data used for this research, it also seems that this theory might be valid for explaining the low share of people mentioning climate change as the most serious issue in 2017: under the same question, 24% people mentioned international terrorism as the most serious issue.[60] That can most likely be seen as a clear aftermath of multiple shocking and widely covered terrorist attacks by the Islamic State in Europe in the preceding period, such as the November 2015 Paris (Bataclan) attacks, or the Brussels bombings, Nice truck attack or the Berlin Christmas market attacks in 2016.

In order to counter that effect, the next question asks about the perceived seriousness of climate change among other global issues, as shown on Figure 2.

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[58] Elke U. Weber, "What Shapes Perceptions of Climate Change?," *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change* 1, no. 3 (2010): 338–39, https://doi.org/10.1002/wcc.41.
[59] Stuart Capstick et al., "International Trends in Public Perceptions of Climate Change over the Past Quarter Century," *WIREs Climate Change* 6, no. 1 (2015): 48, https://doi.org/10.1002/wcc.321.
[60] Eurobarometer, "Special Eurobarometer 459 Report: Climate Change (EB87.1)."

Which of the following [global issues] do you consider to be the single most serious problem facing the world as a whole? Which others do you consider to be serious problems? (Max. 4 answers) (% climate change)
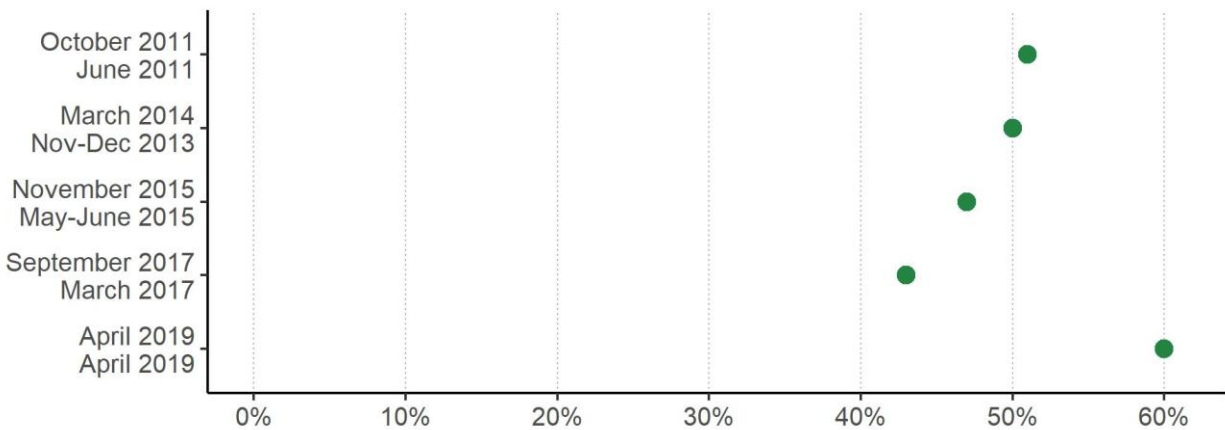
Figure 2.

Under this question, the longer term trends also show that the number of people questioned who see climate change as one of the most serious problems has increased a lot since 2011; the increase has been more than 10 percentage points in 11 member states out of 28.[61]

Broadly speaking, seriousness attributed to climate change among other global issues follows a similar pattern with the preceding question, with modest declines up to 2017 over the period observed and then a skyrocketed concern observed in 2019 as compared to the last poll. The huge increase in importance between in 2017 and 2019 could be explained by several factors. Among those are the release of the so-called doomsday United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (UNIPCC) report from 2018 which claimed that the world has twelve years left in older to take necessary steps against climate change, before the global warming will result in making the planet unlivable[62], the 2018 heat and drought wave in

[61] Eurobarometer, "Special Eurobarometer 490 Report: Climate Change (EB91.3)," 22.
[62] "Summary for Policymakers of IPCC Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C" (Incheon, Republic of Korea: Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, October 8, 2018), https://www.ipcc.ch/2018/10/08/summary-for-policymakers-of-ipcc-special-report-on-global-warming-of-1-5c-approved-by-governments/.

Europe or the school strikes for the climate started by Greta Thunberg in the same year. All of those could have clearly raised the salience of climate change issues in the eyes of the public.

The next question asks people to assess the seriousness of climate change on its own, without putting it in relation to other global issues:
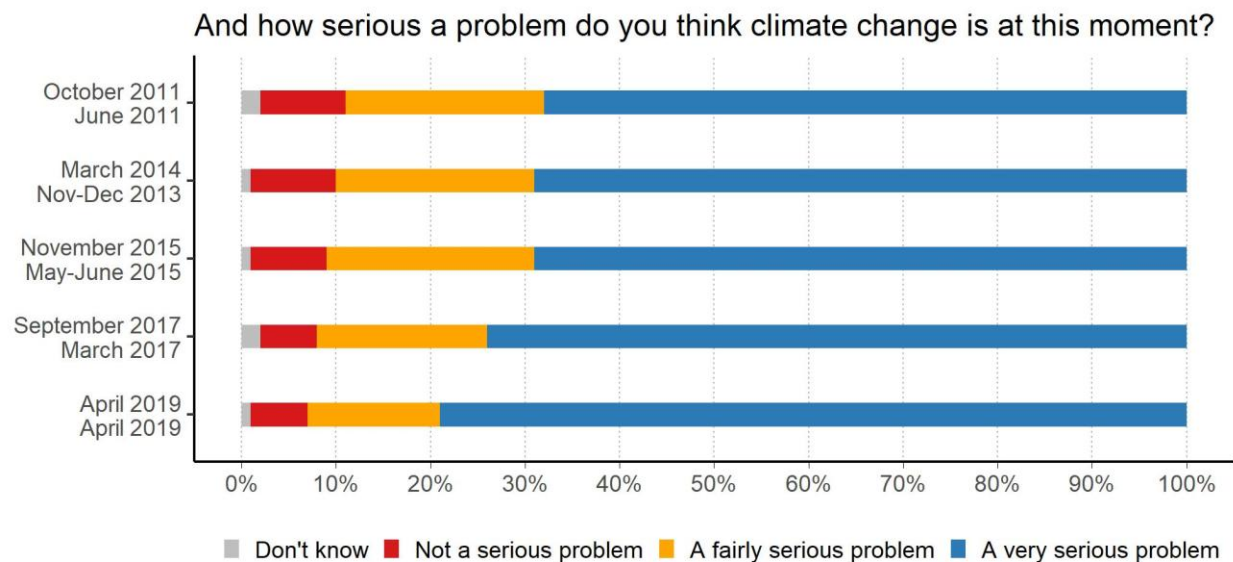

Figure 3.

Especially with regards to the answer to question 3, the longer term changes since 2011 can be seen as remarkable: the share of people viewing climate change as a very serious problem (ranking it 7–10 on a scale from 1 to 10) has grown steadily over the years, not dropping even during the times when answers to questions 1 or 2 showed attention going over to other issues besides climate change. Such steady increase in the perceived seriousness of climate change among the public shows the reliability of the fact that the EU population increasingly perceives climate change as a more salient issue.

→ Based on that data, it is possible to say that the first component of politicization (growing salience/importance) is proved to be fulfilled.

3.2 Component II – Polarization of opinion

Polarization of opinions regarding climate change has been extensively studied in many parts of the world; however, most studies on political views on climate change so far have focused on individual countries (especially the United States, Canada, Australia and the UK) and neglected the broader, regional view.[63] Research on polarization of climate change across a wider range of European countries is still a relatively novel area of research, even though the polarizing of climate change issues is frequently mentioned in the media, especially in relation with the rise of the so-called right-wing populist parties.[64]

Yet, an emerging body of research has also focused on compiling more academic data surrounding the opinions and their polarization in Europe. McCright and his colleagues, who researched how political ideology impacts people's views about the climate change in the EU found a clear ideological divide on the issue manifested in 15 Western European countries, with citizens on the left much more prone to believe in the existence of anthropogenic climate change as well as see it as a serious issue that needs to be addressed. In contrast, such robust ideological divide in the 11 Eastern European (former Communist) countries is non-existent, which can be attributed to a different meaning of political left-right identification as well as the fact that historically, climate change and the environment have been less salient issues in the former Communist countries than in Western Europe.[65]

However, based on that argument, it can be deduced that as the salience of climate change increases in the society, it might also have an encouraging effect on polarization. Taking

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[63] Aaron M. McCright, Riley E. Dunlap, and Sandra T. Marquart-Pyatt, "Political Ideology and Views about Climate Change in the European Union," *Environmental Politics* 25, no. 2 (2016): 338–58, https://doi.org/10.1080/09644016.2015.1090371.

[64] Rachel Waldholz, "'Green Wave' vs Right-Wing Populism: Europe Faces Climate Policy Polarisation," Clean Energy Wire, June 5, 2019, https://www.cleanenergywire.org/news/green-wave-vs-right-wing-populism-europe-faces-climate-policy-polarisation; Gardiner, "For Europe's Far-Right Parties, Climate Is a New Battleground."

[65] McCright, Dunlap, and Marquart-Pyatt, "Political Ideology and Views about Climate Change in the European Union," 344–50.

into account that according to the latest special Eurobarometer report on Climate Change from 2019, since the time that the article by McCright et al. came out, the share of the public who think of climate change as a "very serious problem" has risen in nearly all of the former Communist countries[66], it is likely that were the study conducted now, the polarization might also be more visible in the Eastern European countries as well. This is supported by instances of climate science becoming increasingly controversial or at times even likened to cultural wars: for instance the Polish Foreign Minister claiming that "cyclists and vegetarians" have nothing to do with traditional Polish values[67], or the deputy leader of the Czech eurosceptic Freedom and Direct Democracy (SPD) party claiming that "Under the pretext of combating climate change, unprecedented economic atrocities are taking place".[68]

The polarization of climate change along the political left-right affiliation has also been confirmed by research later: a NatCen Social Research paper[69] on the topic examining polarization of climate change in 18 European[70] countries found that whereas the variations in the concern levels about climate change were not very significant across age, income or education (although small variations do exist), when it comes to left/right affiliation, there occurs a "clear divide in views", with people self-identifying as on the left much more likely to express

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[66] Eurobarometer, "Special Eurobarometer 490 Report: Climate Change (EB91.3)," 25.
[67] Gregor Gowans, "Foreign Minister In 'Cyclists & Vegetarians' Slur," *Wrocław Uncut* (blog), January 4, 2016, https://wroclawuncut.com/2016/01/04/foreign-minister-in-cyclists-vegetarians-slur/.
[68] Stella Schaller and Alexander Carius, "Convenient Truths: Mapping Climate Agendas of Right-Wing Populist Parties in Europe" (Berlin: adelphi, 2019), 79, https://www.adelphi.de/en/system/files/mediathek/bilder/Convenient%20Truths%20-%20Mapping%20climate%20agendas%20of%20right-wing%20populist%20parties%20in%20Europe%20-%20adelphi.pdf.
[69] Leo Barasi, Roger Harding, and Allison Dunatchik, "Climate Concern and Pessimism: Examining Public Attitudes Across Europe" (London: NatCen Social Research that Works for Society, 2017), http://natcen.ac.uk/media/1513272/ESS-Climate-Change-report-FINAL.pdf?_ga=2.101605121.1676091272.1520953899-1545071485.1507638986.
[70] Most of those EU members, however, the research also included non-EU members such as Switzerland, Israel, Iceland, Norway and the Russian Federation.

concern about climate change than those on the right[71], which confirms the findings of McCright et al.

The political polarization over climate change has also argued to be a point of concern, with right-wing parties in the EU regularly labeling it to be a "liberal-elitist concept" and thereby sometimes opposing international cooperation efforts to fight it.[72] All this points to the fact that climate change can indeed be seen as a divisive topic in the EU, fueled by the trend that climate change is increasingly rather perceived as a political, rather scientific topic.[73]

→ Therefore, I can conclude based on the findings of the literature that it is prudent to talk about increasing polarization regarding climate change topics in the EU, which means that the second component of politicization (polarization in the opinion) can be seen as fulfilled.

3.3 Component III – Mobilization of public opinion

The third component of politicization, mobilization of public opinion and public resonance in the society about an issue is strongly linked to the other two components: the more salient an issue will be considered by someone and the stronger opinion one holds about it, there more likely is one to also take action, i.e. mobilize on a topic.

The current research looks at voting in the European Parliament (EP) elections as an indicator of mobilizing public opinion on climate change. That has been chosen as an indicator of mobilization of public opinion for two main reasons: first, voting in the EP elections is one of the most tangible ways that EU citizens can have an impact on and a say in the EU policy-making process (even though it needs to be kept in mind that EP is not a legislative body and

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[71] Barasi, Harding, and Dunatchik, "Climate Concern and Pessimism: Examining Public Attitudes Across Europe," 4, 8, 10–11.
[72] Schaller and Carius, "Convenient Truths: Mapping Climate Agendas of Right-Wing Populist Parties in Europe," 42.
[73] Capstick et al., "International Trends in Public Perceptions of Climate Change over the Past Quarter Century," 54.

does not make policy per se, which makes its power and influence limited). Secondly, unlike looking at other indicators such as national parliamentary debates or the coverage of climate change topics in the media across the EU member states that would require in-depth coverage of all different national contexts, voting in the EP election is well-documented by the nature of elections. In addition to that, Eurobarometer conducts comprehensive post-election surveys in all member states, which help to understand which issues people take into account while casting their votes. This helps to quantify the extent of mobilization of public opinion on the topic. The results of the last two elections, held in May 2014 and May 2019, and the respective post-election surveys for both of those have been looked at.

In order to evaluate the voting results of the elections, it is necessary to have some way to group the elected MEPs according to their views on climate change issues to see how big was the share of "climate-friendly" politicians chosen to the parliament.[74] Most articles in the media talking about the "green wave" that took Europe after the European Parliament elections in 2019 focused solely on one political group in the EP: the Greens/European Free Alliance (Greens/EFA), which is arguably the most well-known among EP political groups for their climate-friendly political stance.[75]

When comparing the number of seats of the Greens/EFA after the 2014 and 2019 elections, the green wave is indeed apparent: in 2014, the Greens/EFA got 50[76] seats in the

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[74] In the research, MEPs elected to the European Parliament as opposed to the number of votes cast for candidates in the respective countries will be evaluated, thereby for example disregarding the votes cast for candidates who did not meet the threshold or did not end up being elected. The reasoning behind that is that the MEPs actually elected are the ones with the potential to influence and shape the EU's actual climate and enetrgy policy.

[75] Laura Hughes, Victor Mallet, and Tobias Buck, "European Green Wave Pushes Environment to Top of Political Agenda," *Financial Times*, May 31, 2019, https://www.ft.com/content/fc0cc9e2-82c8-11e9-9935-ad75bb96c849; Luke Hurst, "Green Wave: Has Climate Change Impacted the European Elections?," *Euronews*, May 27, 2019, https://www.euronews.com/2019/05/26/green-wave-has-climate-change-impacted-the-european-elections.

[76] 52 in the outgoing parliament (as of April 2019).

Parliament, in 2019 this grew to 74 (67 following Brexit[77]), which indeed can be seen as a remarkable advancement. However, I argue that focusing merely on the Greens/EFA grouping within the EP does not give a good enough indication of the election results because in several EU member states, no MEPs belonging to the Greens/EFA political group got elected at all.

Therefore, another classification for dividing EU political groups on their stance on climate change will be used. Wendler has mapped the decision-making processes on climate change of all eight EP party groups as well as the non-affiliated members in the 2014−2019 EP composition by analyzing nearly 3800 votes cast in the plenary on climate change, and based on that conceded that the decision-making of the EU on climate policy issues is "broadly supported by four party groups (European People's Party [EPP], Socialists & Democrats [S&D], Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe [ALDE] and Greens)".[78] In addition to that, the European United Left/Nordic Green Left (GUE/NGL) political group is known to be very climate-conscious, however, has in the past rejected EP's climate policy proposals on the grounds that these are not ambitious enough[79], meaning that it might have scored lower on Wendler's scorecard, which is based on cast votes. However, on ideological grounds, I have also decided to include the GUE/NGL group in the analysis.

All in all, that means that based on literature, five political groups that have expressed climate-friendly action in the EP have been identified: Greens/EFA, EPP, S&D, ALDE (renamed

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[77]After Brexit, the number of MEPs was reduced from 751 to 705.
European Parliament, "Parliament's Seven Political Groups | News | European Parliament," accessed May 7, 2020, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/headlines/eu-affairs/20190612STO54311/parliament-s-seven-political-groups.
[78] Wendler, "The European Parliament as an Arena and Agent in the Politics of Climate Change," 331–32.
[79] One recent example might be the following: "A Climate Anticlimax: Left Won't Back Parliament's Weak Green Deal Text," GUE/NGL, accessed May 10, 2020, https://www.guengl.eu/a-climate-anticlimax-left-wont-back-parliaments-weak-green-deal-text/.

Renew Europe in June 2019[80]) and GUE/NGL. Now, I will compare the share of MEPs

belonging to those 5 groups following the elections in 2014 and 2019, as shown on Figure 4.[81]

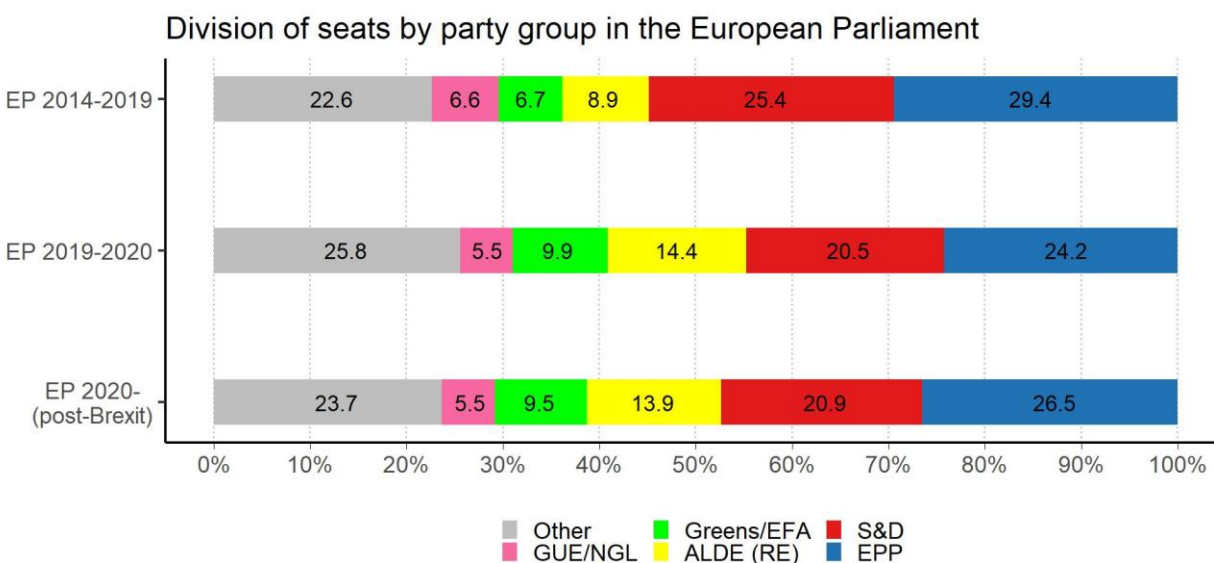Division of seats by party group in the European Parliament

Figure 4.

Based on this data, it can be conceded that simply talking of a "green wave" in Europe

following the EP elections in 2019 is not entirely correct. Whereas the share of the Greens/EFA

political group has indeed made significant gains in the 2019 election, the shrinking share in the

2019 election of big *relatively* climate-friendly political groups such as EPP and S&D evens out

the results in the sense that a small decline in the number of seats held by member of the five

more climate-friendly political groups is visible (around 3% following the election, or around 1%

after the reshuffling of the EP following Brexit).

[80] "ALDE Group Becomes Renew Europe," *ALDE Party*, June 18, 2019, https://www.aldeparty.eu/news/alde-group-becomes-renew-europe.

[81] European Parliament, "2014 Constitutive Session | European Parliament," https://europarl.europa.eu/election-results-2019/en/ (http://www.europarl.europa.eu/portal/en), accessed May 7, 2020, https://europarl.europa.eu/election-results-2019/en/european-results/2014-2019/constitutive-session/; European Parliament, "2019 Election Results | European Parliament," https://europarl.europa.eu/election-results-2019/en/ (http://www.europarl.europa.eu/portal/en), accessed May 7, 2020, https://europarl.europa.eu/election-results-2019/en/european-results/2019-2024/.

It has to be noted, however, that the political groups were evaluated by Wendler on their voting behavior on climate policy issues in the 2014–2019 legislative period. Yet, political groups do not stay stagnant over time and might adopt new stances and behavior in the 2019–2024 legislative period. With the raising salience of climate change issues among the public in Europe as established earlier in Chapter 3.1, it seems prudent to assume that this tendency would also be reflected in the stance of political groups in the EP and their respective EP campaign promises. Thereby, based solely on the election results of 2014 and 2019 it is hard to conclude with full confidence whether the mobilization of public opinion on climate change was much more visible in the 2019 EP elections than in the 2014 elections.

However, arguably the most remarkable development to note when comparing the elections of 2014 and 2019 are the top issues that had an influence on the voting decision of the citizens, based on the Eurobarometer post-elections polls conducted respectively in May-June 2014[82] and June 2019[83]:
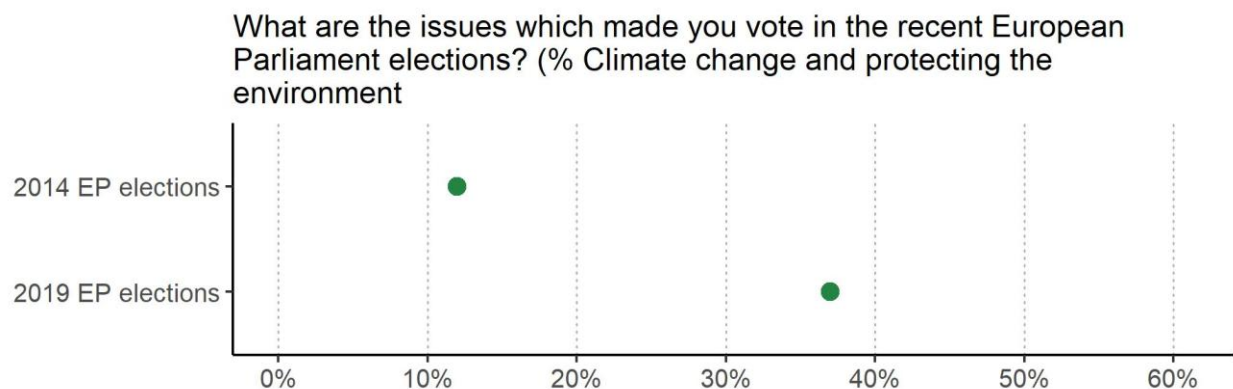

Figure 5.

[82] Eurobarometer, "2014 Post-Election Survey: European Elections 2014 - Analytical Overview" (Brussels, Belgium: European Commission, October 2014), https://europarl.europa.eu/at-your-service/files/be-heard/eurobarometer/2014/post-election-survey-2014/analytical-synthesis/en-analytical-synthesis-post-election-survey-2014.pdf.

[83] Eurobarometer and Kantar, "The 2019 European Elections: First Results of the European Parliament Post-Electoral Survey" (Brussels, Belgium, 2019), https://www.europarl.europa.eu/at-your-service/files/be-heard/eurobarometer/2019/election2019/EB915_SP_EUROBAROMETER_POSTEE19_FIRSTRESULTS_EN.pdf.

Based on that data, an astonishing three-fold increase in the importance of climate change and protecting the environment as an issue that people considered important while voting in the EP elections has taken place over the period of 2014 to 2019. Furthermore, in 2019 climate change was the most mentioned issue in 8 EU countries (in Finland it was at the same level as promoting human rights and democracy).[84]

→   Therefore, it seems reasonable to conclude that over the period under examination, there has been a definite increase in the mobilization of public opinion on a EU level: climate change as a reason to vote in the EP election has skyrocketed from 12% to 37% and the share of Greens/EFA in the EP has also increased. Whereas the actual impact on climate protection of the latest EP election remains yet to be seen due to the slight decline of (relatively) climate-friendly MEPs, it is still possible to talk about an increase in mobilization of public opinion[85], which means that the third component of politicization can be seen as fulfilled.

3.4 Chapter conclusion

The aim of Chapter 3 was to establish politicization of climate change issues in the EU which was done in a three-phase model based on the politicization framework of De Wilde.[86] Based on the data and literature analyzed, it can indeed be concluded that the politicization has intensified in the last years. First, it was established based on Eurobarometer polling data that climate change is increasingly being perceived as a more salient issue among the public. Second, research on polarization of climate change issues was looked at, which allows to point to an increasing polarization in the opinion in the EU. Third, comparing the EP election results of

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[84] Eurobarometer and Kantar, 18. (2019)

[85] Here is important to take into consideration the intention of people voting in the EP elections versus the actual implications of voting one way or the other, which might not align with the intention and hope of the individual casting a vote.

[86] De Wilde, "No Polity for Old Politics?"

2014 and 2019 established also the increase in the mobilization of public opinion in terms of climate change.

4. Deepening energy policy integration in the EU

In the current chapter, an overview of the evolution of energy policy integration in the EU will be given, paying specific attention to the evolution of the aspects of energy policy that are closely related to climate policy. Developments of energy policy integration will be analyzed according to the criteria and definition set out in Section 2.2.2, which understood integration to be deepening if the coordination, harmonization and/or oversight of national energy policies on the EU level are increasing.

In terms of the scope of the analysis, an overview of major energy policy developments in the EU roughly covering the period 2013–2020 (up to now) will be provided: after talking about the 2020 climate and energy package to provide necessary context, the major relevant policies of the Juncker Commission and (as much as feasible) the von der Leyen Commission are presented. At each building block of energy policy regulation, specific attention will be paid to the level of integration and coordination from the EU level in order to evaluate the evolution of integration in the field of energy. The chapter concludes with short remarks recapping the trends.

4.1 Setting the baseline: from the Treaty of Lisbon to 2030 Energy and Climate Package

In order to start assessing the progress of energy policy integration over the research period of the thesis (2013–2020) a baseline needs to be established to showcase at what level integration was before the period of analysis. In 2007, amidst raising concerns about global energy reserves and rising energy prices, as well as slowly growing environmental awareness, the EU leaders endorsed for the first time a combined approach to energy and climate policy. This raised the three components of the so-called energy policy triangle (referring to sustainability, competitiveness and security of supply) to the status of central objectives of EU's

energy policy, which essentially remain that to this day.[87] In 2009 the Treaty of Lisbon entered into force, giving the EU for the first time formal provisions on the right to intervene in energy policy matters, at the same time still retaining a lot of competences relating to energy policy at the national level.[88]

This eventually led to establishing the so-called 20-20-20 (emissions reduction, renewable energy and improvements in energy efficiency) targets for the year 2020, which became enacted in the EU legislation in 2009.[89] The former two got enshrined into binding legal acts with the EU Emissions Trading System (EU ETS) and the Renewables Directive, complemented by the Third Internal Market Energy Package. Binding legislation for energy efficiency however took some years more to agree upon due to the reluctance of the member states and only in 2012 the Energy Efficiency Directive was adopted.[90] All in all, in the case of 2020 Energy and Climate Package, the European Commission was using primarily the top-down pressure of binding targets in order to ensure member states' compliance and to integrate their energy policies.[91]

The top-down approach, however, faced resistance when setting the targets up until 2030 became topical in 2013–2014, owing to two main reasons. First, the EU leadership had lost some of its convincing power due to its failure to set ambitious targets at the global UN climate summit in Copenhagen in 2009. In addition, the rising electricity prices in Europe (partly due to renewable energy support schemes) made several countries reluctant to accept further outside

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[87] Sami Andoura and Jean-Arnold Vinois, "From the European Energy Community to the Energy Union: A Policy Proposal for the Short and the Long Term" (Jacques Delors Institute, January 2015), 25, http://www.institutdelors.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/energyunion-andouravinois-jdi-jan15.pdf.
[88] Bocquillon and Maltby, "EU Energy Policy Integration as Embedded Intergovernmentalism," 40.
[89] The 2020 target set the three major targets: 1) 20% cut in greenhouse gas emissions (as compared to the year 1990 level), 2) 20% of EU energy coming from renewable energy sources, 3) 20% improvement in energy efficiency.
 European Commission, "2020 Climate & Energy Package."
[90] Andoura and Vinois, "From the European Energy Community to the Energy Union: A Policy Proposal for the Short and the Long Term," 27.
[91] Bocquillon and Maltby, "EU Energy Policy Integration as Embedded Intergovernmentalism," 52.

interference regarding their energy mix.[92] For these reasons, the 2030 climate and energy framework targets (40-27-27)[93] finally agreed upon in October 2014 faced a lot of criticism, especially regarding the fact that the renewable energy targets were not binding for countries individually any more, instead giving more flexibility to member states to sate the targets at the national level.[94] (It should be noted that in 2018, the targets for renewable energy and energy efficiency were revised upwards, to 32% and 32.5% respectively.)[95]

At first glance, the inability to agree on binding national targets for 2030 might be seen as a step back in the EU energy policy integration process; yet, as Oberthür has identified, in the case of 2030 targets the top-down control characterizing the 2020 targets had been replaced by a more mixed approach. This is characterized by strengthened procedural obligations that accompany the 2030 targets, which, by increasing transparency, still manage to hold the member states accountable for falling short of the targets.[96] The great transparency for reporting 2030 targets progress, ensuring peer pressure as well as pressure from civil society and environmental organizations, was especially strongly advocated by the European Parliament.[97] This showcases the power of bottom-up pressure in upholding the climate ambition and promoting energy policy coherence even in instances where the legal status of the integration policies has weakened.

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[92] Alexander Bürgin, "National Binding Renewable Energy Targets for 2020, but Not for 2030 Anymore: Why the European Commission Developed from a Supporter to a Brakeman," *Journal of European Public Policy* 22, no. 5 (2015): 698.
[93] Referring to: 1) 40% less greenhouse has emissions as compared to 1990 levels; 2) 27% share of renewable energy; 3) 27% improvement in energy efficiency. European Council / Council of the European Union, "The 2030 Climate and Energy Framework," accessed May 17, 2020, http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/climate-change/2030-climate-and-energy-framework/.
[94] Bürgin, "National Binding Renewable Energy Targets for 2020, but Not for 2030 Anymore."
[95] European Council / Council of the European Union, "The 2030 Climate and Energy Framework."
[96] Sebastian Oberthür, "Hard or Soft Governance? The EU's Climate and Energy Policy Framework for 2030," *Politics and Governance* 7, no. 1 (2019): 22, https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.v7i1.1796.
[97] Bocquillon and Maltby, "EU Energy Policy Integration as Embedded Intergovernmentalism," 49.

4.2 Juncker Commission and the development of the Energy Union

The broader geopolitical trends in Europe, especially the conflict in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine, facilitated the initial idea of arguably the biggest development in the EU energy policy in the last decade – the Energy Union. First advocated by then-Polish prime minister and later on the President of the European Council Donald Tusk in spring 2014 as means for ensuring primarily security of supply in the energy sphere, the idea of the Energy Union got picked up by the incoming President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker, who officially introduced it in 2015 as part of 'ten Commission priorities for 2015–2019'.[98]

The initial scholarly reception of the Energy Union can be characterized as skeptical. The Energy Union encompassed five diverse dimensions: 1) security, solidarity and trust – diversifying Europe's energy sources and ensuring security of supply; 2) fully integrated internal energy market; 3) improving energy efficiency; 4) climate action and decarbonizing the economy; 5) research, innovation and competitiveness.[99] However, as Juncker failed to establish an order of priority among the five dimensions, in the first years after the establishment of the Energy Union concerns prevailed that it would remain simply "a floating signifier, or an empty box in which every stakeholder tries to put whatever is most important to them at the moment".[100]

During the first formative periods of the Energy Union, member states tried to influence its agenda quite strongly, attempting to better align it with respective domestic energy policy visions and priorities, as the economic crisis, as well as different understanding of geopolitics, had driven a wedge between the countries and their understanding of how a unified European

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[98] Karoliina Isoaho, Fanni Moilanen, and Arho Toikka, "A Big Data View of the European Energy Union: Shifting from 'a Floating Signifier' to an Active Driver of Decarbonisation?," *Politics and Governance* 7, no. 1 (2019): 29.
[99] European Commission, "Energy Union," accessed May 18, 2020, https://ec.europa.eu/energy/topics/energy-strategy/energy-union_en.
[100] Szulecki et al., "Shaping the 'Energy Union'," 2.

energy policy should look like.[101] However, over time, the Energy Union took on other aims besides energy security (advocated mainly by Poland and other Eastern European member states), to focus increasingly on decarbonizing the economy as well as market integration, topics mainly advocated by Western European countries.[102]

During the course of its Presidency, the Juncker Commission implemented several changes, both with regards to organizational changes within the administration as well as changes more pertinent to the Energy Union, which seized back some of the control from the member states and the European Council into the hands of the European Commission. When Juncker took office in 2014, he aimed to establish a less technocratic and more political Commission. Among the changes expedited by him was for instance facilitating horizontal thinking, which impacted the energy sector especially by abolishing the post of a separate Climate Commissioner and making both DG Energy and DG Climate Action serve one Commissioner, thereby allowing for more centralized coordination of the issue area. Here, it should be noted that by the end of the Juncker presidency, scholars contended that the European Commision had a more top-down approach than the preceding Barroso commission.[103]

Further integrationist measures in the energy sector gained momentum again in 2016 and 2017, following the 2015 Paris Agreement, after which climate change had arisen as an issue of concern in many member states. In 2016, the European Commission noted that there persists a lack of policy coherence between the energy and climate policy fields and set out to implement a

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[101] Isoaho, Moilanen, and Toikka, "A Big Data View of the European Energy Union," 30; Alexander Bürgin, "The Impact of Juncker's Reorganization of the European Commission on the Internal Policy-Making Process: Evidence from the Energy Union Project," *Public Administration*, 2018, 6.
[102] Isoaho, Moilanen, and Toikka, "A Big Data View of the European Energy Union," 29.
[103] Bürgin, "The Impact of Juncker's Reorganization of the European Commission on the Internal Policy-Making Process," 1–2.

more effective integration of those areas.[104] That, coupled with its desire to show commitment to the Paris Agreement goals, led to two major developments.

First, the Governance Regulation [(EU)2018/1999] formally adopted in 2018 aimed to develop a procedure to more effectively monitor the implementation of the 2030 framework and ensure that member states stay on track of their energy and climate commitments. Borrowing from the Paris Agreement idea of nationally determined contributions (NDCs), the Governance Regulation determined that reporting obligations for all targets were to be consolidated into a single document in each member state: the integrated National Energy and Climate Plan (NECP). The NECPs oblige member states to report their national renewable energy and energy efficiency contributions on a unified template provided by the European Commission (who also reviews the NECPs submitted), which aims to ease both monitoring as well as integration of energy and climate policies. Second, the aftermath of the Paris Agreement (and thereby the heightened attention to climate issues) as well as the pressure from the European Parliament led to the level of ambition shifting upwards, as a result of which the 2030 targets for renewables and energy efficiency were raised to 32% and 32.5% respectively in 2018.[105]

In addition to oversight by monitoring, peer pressure in the form of naming and shaming is increasingly being used to compensate for the lack of legally binding national targets (for 2030) and in order to advocate compliance and ambition. Greater transparency created by the submission procedures of the NECPs allows civil society organizations (both at regional, as well as national levels) have a stronger say in identifying so-called leaders and laggards of climate

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[104] Bocquillon and Maltby, "EU Energy Policy Integration as Embedded Intergovernmentalism," 45.
[105] Bocquillon and Maltby, 46–49; Oscar Fitch-Roy and Jenny Fairbrass, *Negotiating the EU's 2030 Climate and Energy Framework: Agendas, Ideas and European Interest Groups* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2018), 5–7, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-90948-6.

ambition. Creating a form of competition between member states incentivizes them to also monitor progress of other countries – and adjust their own targets accordingly.[106]

This means that by the end of the Juncker Commission, reporting and monitoring mechanisms in the energy sector had undergone a profound integrationist change, signifying both a novel way for the Commission to oversee (and suggest revisions to) national targets, as well as further coordinate the cohesion of energy and climate policies. The increased transparency aspect has contributed to a broader range of actors being able to monitor and rank member states in terms of their climate ambition, at times also creating a competition effect between countries.

4.3 Von der Leyen Commission and the ambitious European Green Deal

While by and large it is still too early to evaluate the deeds of the von der Leyen Commission in office since December 2019, a few words can still be said about their vision regarding energy and climate policy. Upon taking office, von der Leyen released her six political priorities for 2019–2024, among those the European Green Deal, which seeks to make Europe the first climate-neutral continent by 2050 while ensuring a just transition and the competitiveness of the industry. Most remarkably, in her official political guidelines von der Leyen justifies this by referring to the wish of the voters: "The message from Europe's voters – and those too young to vote – is loud and clear: they want real action on climate change and they want Europe to lead the way."[107] In order to make Europe climate neutral, putting the target down into law by introducing the European Climate Law is envisioned, as well as increasing the

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[106] Bocquillon and Maltby, "EU Energy Policy Integration as Embedded Intergovernmentalism," 49–50.
[107] Ursula von der Leyen, "A Union That Strives for More - My Agenda for Europe. Political Guidelines for the Next European Commission 2019-2014," 2019, 5, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/political-guidelines-next-commission_en.pdf.

ambition for 2030 energy targets.[108] While these two actions are still up for debate, the European Council in December 2019 endorsed achieving climate neutrality by 2030. Part of the legislative proposal for a European climate law submitted by the Commission on 4 March 2020 includes also empowering the Commission to determine an emissions directory for the period 2030–2050, as well as carrying out assessments and issuing recommendations on countries' progress towards the objectives set in the energy sector every five years.[109]

Overall, the von der Leyen Commission has in its first steps shown great ambition to fuel energy policy integration even further in the name of climate goals. If the climate law became reality, it could be seen as a definite next step in that regard. As another remarkable development, von der Leyen has also restructured her Commission around three executive vice-presidents (a position which did not exist before). One of those executive vice-presidents, Frans Timmermans, has been put in charge of leading the European Green Deal.[110] This suggests both the Green Deal being a top priority for the Commission, as well as the quite centralized leadership style the current Commission deems necessary to deliver on its ambitious plans.

4.4 Chapter conclusion

The aim of the chapter was to better understand the development and scope of integration in the energy policy sector in Europe. In order to do that, a definition of integration in the EU was given, contending that mostly positive integration deserves to be looked at in the context of energy and climate policy topics. Following that, the integration patters and major events in the energy policy field were traced. Based on the above analysis, it can be concluded that in the last 7-8 years, integration in the field of energy and climate policy in the EU has clearly deepened.

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[108] von der Leyen, 5–6.
[109] European Parliament - Think Tank, "European Climate Law," accessed May 19, 2020, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=EPRS_BRI(2020)649385.
[110] "Frans Timmermans - Executive Vice-President," European Commission, accessed May 21, 2020, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/commissioners/2019-2024/timmermans_en.

Namely, it has moved from a narrow top-down approach reliant on the binding nature of energy policy targets which characterized the 2020 targets, to further harmonization and monitoring of national energy policies, assessed by the Commission on a regular basis. The increased transparency in the national climate and energy policies in member states also means that bottom-up pressure is being used as a tool to further integration, by relying on a broader range of actors able to monitor progress and compliance, than previously.

Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to examine the integration of EU energy policy and the drivers behind it, asking how has the politicization of climate change among the public impacted energy policy integration. The research question arose from the need to take into account the rising attention to climate change issues among the European public in the recent years and assess whether this has had an impact; a topic that remains relatively under-researched in the current academic literature.

As pointed out in the literature review, EU policymakers are generally aware that climate change could be in theory used for gaining public support for integration, as sustainability and climate policy have historically enjoyed support among the EU public, as remarked by Oberthür & Dupont[111] and Skovgaard.[112] However, these accounts have failed to take into consideration the more recent developments. Tosun and Mišić gauging the attitudes of the public towards EU energy policy take note of a very high level of support towards allocating energy competencies to the EU (instead of retaining those at the member state level) among the public, especially in the case of renewable energy.[113] Yet, they fail to precisely establish whether this support has had an impact on energy policy integration already.

This thesis has made a contribution to filling this gap by claiming, based on analyzing a time period of 2013–2020, that the initial idea of the Energy Union, based mainly on energy security concerns, has now been clearly replaced with sustainability and climate change concerns as the main drivers of energy policy integration in Europe. The reason behind such a change has been the politicization of climate change.

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[111] Oberthür and Dupont, "The Council, the European Council and International Climate Policy: From Symbolic Leadership to Leadership by Example."
[112] Skovgaard, "The Limits of Entrapment."
[113] Tosun and Mišić, "Conferring Authority in the European Union."

The rest of the concluding chapter unfolds as follows. First, the main findings of the thesis are explained at more length, paying attention to specific developments that would further help to ascertain the importance of politicization in the integration process or solidify the confidence of the findings. This is followed by a short discussion about the broader implications of the findings, first looking at political implications and later theoretical implications. At the very end, some ideas for further research have been outlined.

Main findings

The research questions introduced in the introductory chapter were the following: How does the politicization of climate change influence energy policy integration in the EU? Is it conducive to more integration in the field of energy policy or does it hinder it?

After the literature review in Chapter 1, Chapter 2 established the overall conceptual framework for the current thesis, which is based on the neofunctionalist understanding of European integration regarding politicization. As per the explanation given in Section 2.2.3, the neofunctionalist understanding of how politicization can lead to further integration allows to conclude that if climate change politicization has increased and the integration of EU energy policy has deepened, it can be ascertained that the integration was driven by the politicization. In Chapter 3, based on the analyzed data and literature, it was concluded that the politicization of climate change is indeed increasing in the EU. As established in Chapter 4, the top-down compliance mechanism characterizing the 2020 climate and energy package has been replaced by a more multi-faceted approach. Among major changes implemented is the significantly streamlined procedure for monitoring and oversight, in the form required by National Energy and Climate Plans on the templates provided by the European Commission. Furthermore, an increased and unified transparency of national policies means that a broader range of (civil

society) actors are able to participate in naming and shaming, as well as identifying climate ambition frontrunners and laggards, hence further 'bringing politics' into energy policy. This means that the deepening of energy policy integration has increased significantly in the form of bottom-up pressure.

Hence it is now possible to answer both research questions: based on the conceptual neofunctionalist framework, the politicization of climate change has an impact on the energy policy integration by leading to further integration in that issue area. In other words, the main finding is that the politicization of climate change has become the driver behind energy policy integration in the EU during the period looked at (2013–2020).

In the vein of that logic, one would expect that policymakers in Brussels have also realized the potential of politicization of climate change and notably take account of it when seeking to further integration efforts. This conjecture can be observed in several places, probably the most visible example being von der Leyen's political guidelines for the European Commission 2019−2024 (a document which could be compared to election manifestos of countries), where she presented her grand vision of the European Green Deal for the first time. In the document, von der Leyen makes a clear note of the growing salience of climate change issues among the public when she says that the Green Deal and efforts to achieve climate neutrality have been inspired by the "message from Europe's voters" who have shown they "want real action on climate change". Von der Leyen goes on to make a relatively specific reference to the young climate strikers, which have clearly been a source of polarization in the EU during the last year, saying that "I have been inspired by the passion, conviction and energy of the millions of

our young people making their voice heard on our streets and in our hearts. They are standing up for their future and it is our generational duty to deliver for them."[114]

Furthermore, Isoaho and her colleagues, who have investigated the policy priorities of the Energy Union by examining over 5000 policy documents with the assistance of topic modeling analysis and comparing documents published prior to the official launch of the Energy Union in February 2015 with those published after that date, contend that decarbonization and energy efficiency form clearly the biggest building blocks of the Energy Union. Overall, climate action (decarbonization) and energy efficiency are being mentioned much more than the other three dimensions out of the five mentioned by the Commission.[115]

In other words, it can be said that since 2015 (but increasingly in the last couple of years) the European energy policy has a clear decarbonization agenda. A topic prevalent in driving EU energy policy before, i.e. energy security and solidarity, now deserves much less mention, which adds confidence to the findings of the current thesis.

Interestingly enough, as remarked by Isoaho et al., while the security of energy supplies as a separate topic has been mentioned less in the last years, it has increasingly converged with the decarbonization and energy efficiency topics, for instance, serving increasing energy efficiency in the transport sector as an opportunity to reduce the EU's oil dependence.[116] This is an example of further convergence between climate and energy policy fields, a topic that has been alluded to throughout the thesis.

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[114] von der Leyen, "A Union That Strives for More - My Agenda for Europe. Political Guidelines for the Next European Commission 2019-2014," 5.
[115] Isoaho, Moilanen, and Toikka, "A Big Data View of the European Energy Union," 31, 33–37.
[116] Isoaho, Moilanen, and Toikka, 36.

Political implications

While the thesis has illustrated the existence of a link between politicization of climate change issues among the public and energy policy integration, it also deserves to be discussed what that might mean for the energy and climate policy development of the EU more generally.

The overall trend based on the findings is that whereas in the past, the idea of the Energy Union and energy policy integration was driven by security and/or market dimensions, by now these have been replaced primarily with sustainability concerns. Increased (and increasing) politicization and salience of climate change issues among the public mean that emphasizing the sustainability aspect could be a much more efficient way for deepening integration (as well as for gaining support for integration) in the field of energy in the EU than the other two aspects, security and market integration.

There are also some hints about this awareness developing and having an effect. While the above-mentioned example from sub-section 5.1 of von der Leyen referring to public support for climate change action in her political guidelines indicates merely that the EU policy-makers might be aware of the politicization of climate change and are acknowledging to it, there are also indications that the European Commission might be making use of this trend in an entirely more cognizant way. An example of that is the legally less binding nature of the currently applicable 2030 targets (as compared to the 2020 targets) being compensated by transparency, which the Commission hopes would lead to greater peer pressure, both nationally as well as from within the sector, in order to address the ambition or implementation gap in adhering to EU standards and norms. Therefore, the "process is designed '… to bring politics into energy policy'", as remarked by a national representative in Brussels.[117] This notion is confirmed by Herranz-Surrallés et al, who claim that on occasions, the European Commission "opted for politicisation

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[117] Bocquillon and Maltby, "EU Energy Policy Integration as Embedded Intergovernmentalism," 51–52.

as a method to overcome sovereignty-based contestation and garner support for increasing EU authority".[118]

One has to keep in mind that the tacit assumption by the Commission in this instance is that all energy and climate targets can only be revised higher (meaning, for instance, that upon review of its national targets, a member state can decide to increase its renewable energy ambition, but not revise it downwards). From the viewpoint of the European Commission, policy integration and increasing compliance mechanisms are often posed as a way to ensure that. Therefore, the inclusion and awareness of the potential of climate change politicization for furthering climate policy ambition in Brussels is remarkable and something to be kept in mind when analyzing the integration of climate and energy policies in the future.

Theoretical implications

Looking at politicization of an issue area as a driver of policy integration with a specific focus on the public opinion also offers a few broader theoretical implications in terms of researching the EU and its integration.

Ever so often, debates surrounding the alleged democratic deficit in the EU tend to emerge, claiming that the governance of the EU and its integration processes are too technocratic, reflecting the vision of the so-called Brussels bubble instead of taking into account the public perceptions. Therefore, establishing an example of a way in which public perceptions are capable of shaping or even driving the integration of an issue, as this thesis has done with energy policy, sets a powerful example for researching other policy domains which are also considered politically salient, and the potential of the public in altering integration in those domains.

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[118]However, it should be mentioned that the authors also note that precisely the opposite – depoliticization – has been used by the European Commission for overcoming contestation regarding energy market integration. Herranz-Surrallés, Solorio, and Fairbrass, "Renegotiating Authority in the Energy Union," 11–12.

The present research also adds to prominence of the neofunctionalist integration theory which served as my conceptual frame, showing how it can still be relevant and useful for EU integration analysis. As per the words of Schmitter, commenting on the post-functionalist theory of European integration in 2009: "The intrusion of public opinion into the process of European integration is a fact - probably an irreversible one."[119] Thereby, any future endeavors to explain the intricate nature of EU integration and power dynamics may do well to take that into account.

While the research has clearly highlighted the connection between politicization and positive integration (as understood by Pinder[120]) in the field of climate and energy up to now, it cannot be said with full confidence that this process would continue the same way in the future without any setbacks. In order to establish the precise conditions under which integration would continue, further research would be needed.

Overall, my research clearly shows the need for a more multifaceted understanding of EU (energy policy) integration processes: besides discussing the authority sharing (or – at times, conflicts) between the European Commission, the European Parliament and the European Council, the role of the public perception also deserves investigating when dealing with the interconnection of actors shaping integration processes.

Opportunities for further research

Further research is needed in order establish the concrete criteria under which the politicization of an issue area can fuel policy integration in the same topic without any setbacks occurring. This could potentially also help to clarify whether different criteria would be needed for positive and negative integration.

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[119] Schmitter, "On the Way to a Post-Functionalist Theory of European Integration," 215.
[120] Pinder, "Positive Integration and Negative Integration: Some Problems of Economic Union in the EEC."

In terms of investigating which forms of climate change politicization might be most efficient in driving energy policy integration, further research on the topic could benefit from investigating more specific examples of climate change politicization. Naturally, one example for that could be the recent climate activism among the youth and the Fridays for Future movement to assess whether/how much of an impact these have had on energy policy (and thereby tackling climate change) in reality. If the genie is out of the bottle anyhow – as climate change is increasingly seen as a political, rather than a scientific topic – for the sake of the future of the planet, the EU might as well make the best of it.

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