

# **Framing Climate Policies: Discourse Analysis of Carbon Pricing Debates in Canada and Australia**

## **Abstract**

The aim of this paper is to analyze and compare the discourses of Stephen Harper and Tony Abbot during federal election campaigns where climate policies played an unusually important role (2008 in Canada and 2013 in Australia). The study builds on a hypothesis, that according to the post-materialist theory and the Environmental Kuznets Curve, such economically advanced, democratic countries as Canada and Australia should be at the vanguard of climate action. However, in reality they are some of the worst performers when it comes to tackling carbon emissions. Both Harper and Abbott publicly promised to put in serious efforts to tackle climate change. However, when the question of setting a national price on carbon came up for discussion during the above-mentioned election campaigns, they both not only opposed it, but even tried to discredit it by framing the whole debate in overwhelmingly negative terms. In order to uncover what kind of frames and other discursive strategies the two politicians used to shape the debate, critical discourse analysis was applied to their public statements on the policy of carbon tax. Results of this analysis show that they used all of the frames that are typically associated with anti-climate action rhetoric and even some non-typical ones that worked specifically for their countries. All of the discursive strategies they used were more conducive to heightened emotional reactions, rather than fact-based conversations, which further polarized the national debates on carbon pricing policies.