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Contentious Politics and Democratic Renewal
in Sustainability Transitions

Case Study Protocol for WP 3 country case studies on 'Causes and consequences of contestation of sustainability transitions'

Deliverable D 3.1



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Introduction

The main objective of Trans4Demo is to investigate the role and evolution of different forms of contentious politics (social movements and bottom-up initiatives, subversion, protests, cultural opposition, populist backlash and 'anti-sustainability' mobilizations, party movements) at the intersection of the climate and democracy crises, with a particular focus on their practices and impact on liberal democracy and efforts to achieve sustainability transitions. This main objective follows the calls for the necessity of new alliances for sustainability transitions, as well as research on contextual conditions required to realize them.

Work Package 3 (WP3) focuses on causes and consequences of contestation and is one of the two core empirical research activities within the Trans4Demo project. The aim is not only to understand and conceptually map the dynamics of contentious politics across Europe, but also their repercussions on democratic structures and the resistance against authoritarian inclinations. The comprehensive conceptual framework developed (WP1, 2) and tested (WP3) in this project underpins new perspectives on populism, tailored for application in diverse policy contexts. The overarching objective of work package 3 is to examine underlying **causes of protests and contestation** around sustainability transitions, and their **consequences** for implementation of transition-related policies and liberal democratic practices through national case studies. Further, WP3 compares results across the national case studies to arrive at **common insights** about the interplay between contestation around sustainability transitions and their **consequences** for sustainability transitions and liberal democratic practices. Empirically, these objectives will be researched through carrying out a number of country case studies which each consist of several instances of contestation.

The two research questions guiding WP3 are:

Q3.1 What are the underlying causes of protest and contestation around sustainability transitions, and their consequences for the implementation of time-sensitive transitions policies and liberal-democratic practices?

Q3.2 What are the drivers and barriers for incorporating bottom-up actors and/or their claims and/or non-conflictual repertoires and formats into the institutionalized (local and national governments, European institutions) democratic order?

As part of the analytic effort in Trans4demo, the country case studies (WP3) will source information for a qualitative comparative analysis (QCA or other method) to develop



models for a better understanding of causes and consequences of contestations related to sustainability transitions.

Research Design: Multiple, embedded case study design

For each country case study, we will identify key areas of contestation and investigate these through in-depth analysis in an embedded case study design (Yin 2003). Since we are interested in contentious politics across a wide range of countries in which the political systems differ, as does the role of populist parties, research in WP3 follows a multiple country case study research design. Following Yin (2003), multiple case study designs can generate robust results. Our selection logic for the multiple case study design is not sampling, but rather replication: analogous to doing several experiments to support a finding, several cases are used to research a set of propositions: cases need to be well selected so that it either (a) predicts similar results (literal replication) or (b) predicts contrasting results but for anticipatable reasons (theoretical replication). Combining both types of cases into a multiple case study design, then allows to either provide compelling support for the initial set of propositions or revise them in line with the results. The key variation in the country case studies which functions as our key selection criteria is the governing status of populist parties (see Table 1). The hypothesis is that the governing status of populist parties influences the causes and consequences of contestation in the context of sustainability transitions. The hypothesis can also be further refined by taking into account different roles of populist parties according to table 1 below.

Table 1: Country Case Studies: Selection Criteria

Populists play(ed) leading role in government/political system	Populists as junior coalition partner or support party	Populists permanently in opposition so far
Poland Italy Israel	Norway Sweden The Netherlands Denmark	Germany

In order to answer our research questions, we chose an embedded multiple case study design where each country studied is considered an overall case, and within each such country case study several instances of contestation will be selected as embedded units of analysis. We have chosen several core criteria for the selection of embedded units of analysis. Please refer to the section “Guidelines for WP3 case study research”



below for further information on selection criteria. The following constitutes an overview of the core criteria:

1. Units of analysis should be **instances of contestation** within the country which potentially lead to **wider repercussions** for liberal democratic practices and the sustainability transition in the country (which is the phenomenon we are interested in).
2. Within each case study, there should be cases of contestation **either for or against** key elements of sustainability transitions.
3. Collectively across all 8 country case studies, the embedded units of analysis should **shed light on three selected arenas of contentious politics**: i) electoral politics, ii) the legal system, and iii) civil movements (see below).
4. The embedded units of analysis are selected to include both urban and rural examples.

With selection criterion 2, WP3 pursues a novel approach in studying the interrelation of populism and sustainability transitions: while much important research has considered mobilizations against mainstream climate policy and sustainability transitions e.g. by populist right-wing parties and groups (Fiorini 2022, Marquardt & Lederer 2022, Lockwood 2018), and others have analyzed progressive mobilizations in favor of sustainability transitions in separate studies (Meyer 2024; Cassegård et al. 2017), in WP 3 we will analyze mobilizations for and against such transitions symmetrically.

Selection criterion 3 also offers novelty by combining in one study three selected **arenas of contentious politics** across all countries. These three sites are: i) electoral politics, ii) the legal system, and iii) civil movements. Electoral politics are sites containing traditional formal democratic channels, such as elections and party politics. By the legal system we refer to sites of formal engagement that complement the traditional democratic channels (e.g. the role of courts in sustainability transitions, including environmental lawsuits; investigations may also tackle ‘chilling effects’ through criminalization of activism or SLAPP lawsuits). Civil movements are specified as sites of informal engagement operating outside the bounds of the formal democratic channels, usually within civil society. Examples of such channels include lawful and unlawful protests and civil disobedience.

In summary, our research design consists of eight case studies (Poland, Italy, Israel, Norway, Sweden, the Netherlands, Denmark and Germany), with two levels of analysis:

- The 8 countries as overall cases where we are interested in specific constellations of their political system, parameters such as institutional structures, trust in institutions, their party system, the governing status of

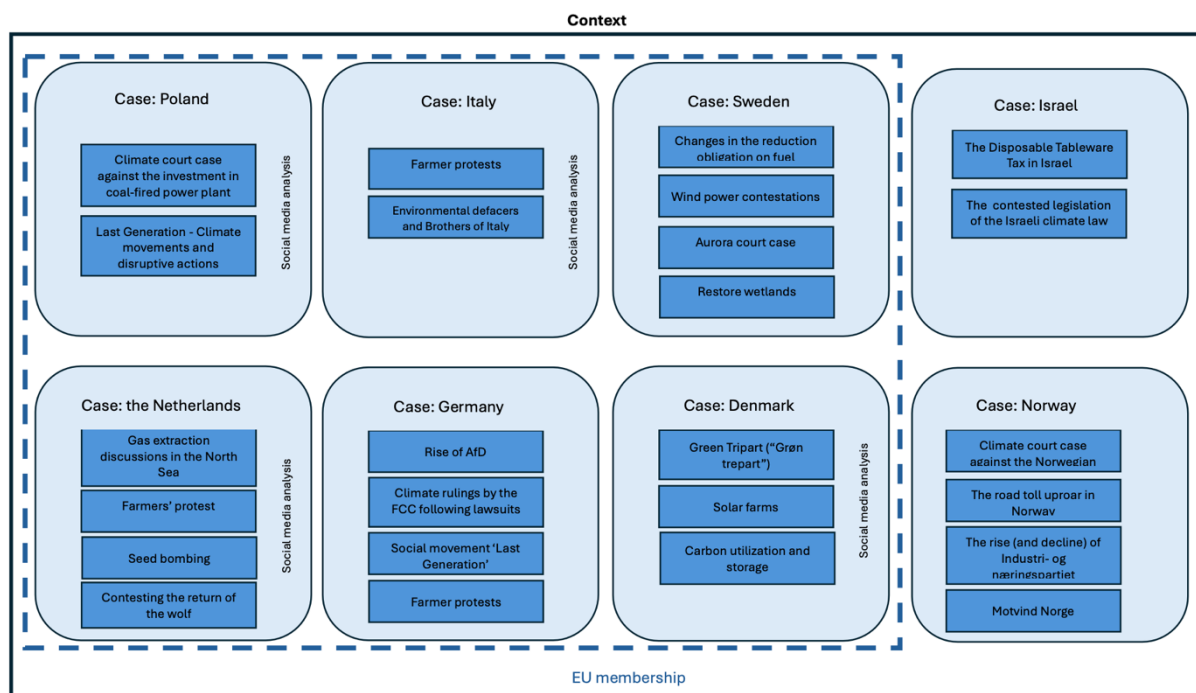


populist parties, and the consequences of contestation on the liberal democratic practices (e.g. trust in institutions, non-voting, etc.) and sustainability transitions as well as related temporalities, including urgency.

- Embedded units of analysis within each case study, which focus on selected instances of contestation (either pro or anti-sustainability transitions) within one of the three arenas of contentious politics (electoral politics, the legal system, and civil movements), where we are interested in the causes of contestation (e.g. perceived recognitional, distributive and/or procedural injustices), and the role of key actors, through exploring different sites of protest. Each embedded case will add detail to the elucidation of different forms of democratic challenge provided by the higher-level analysis.

In addition, there are of course contextual factors such as international political developments (such as signing the Paris accord) or the supranational context (such as EU membership for some case study countries) which may influence causes as well as consequences of contestations (see Figure 1 for an overview of the research design). There may of course also be transnational dynamics across the country case studies or some of their embedded units of analysis (e.g. when a civil society movement in one country inspires similar actions in other countries). This is something the case studies should identify if of relevance in their cases.

Figure 1: Overview of case study design





Conceptual framework guiding the case study work

The case studies conducted as part of WP3 build on the conceptual framework developed in WP 1 and the typology and pilot analyses of WP 2. At the time of publishing this deliverable, these tasks in WP1 and 2 are still ongoing. Further operationalizations of the core concepts will thus be used to inform case study work in WP3 in future updates of the research protocol. The developed conceptual framework and typology will be used to provide a better understanding of potential causes of contestation (such as lack of trust in institutions, perceived injustices, questioning the urgency or the need for transitions) as well as potential consequences of contestation both for liberal democratic practices (e.g. loss of trust in institutions or liberal political parties) as well as the implementation of sustainability transitions (e.g. lack of legitimacy of transition policies, lack of a sense of urgency of transition policies, etc). Ongoing work in WP1 and 2 will also provide further insights from existing literature on relevant factors and processes/mechanisms.

Methodological approaches

Trans4demo is based on a number of methodological approaches, of which several are utilized in WP3. Primarily, WP3 rests on qualitative research techniques, such as studies of discursive framings, and qualitative comparative analysis across the country cases.

Data collection

Data collection for the multiple, embedded case studies is pursued via news media representations (e.g. online databases of local, regional, national newspapers), documentary analysis as well as through in-depth interviews with relevant stakeholders (e.g. politicians, social movement representatives, activists). The case studies will also draw on secondary quantitative data (e.g. election data, surveys of trust in institutions) as far as relevant. As for any case study research, it is important for the analysis to triangulate different kinds of evidence. What kind of data collection is required to sufficiently understand each case (and the embedded units of analysis) is a decision by the national case study teams, provided that all case studies are able to contribute to answering the main two research questions animating WP3. The main logic of the case study work in WP3 is a process tracing approach aimed at explanation.



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Data analysis

Study of discourse and discursive framings

Analysis of discursive framings seeks to understand how populist politics is related to sustainability pressures and processes, with a focus on frames, narrative, and discourse in news and social media. A particular aim is to understand notions of just and unjust transitions and related mobilizations from the inside, where just transitions are understood not only deontologically, but also subjectively, as perceived by those affected. Methodologically, studies of media framing are used to highlight the way in which actors' communicative styles and forms are used to convey, convince and persuade in relation to a case, or in which these forms reflect socially circulating ideas on a topic, but also to identify emerging mobilizations around particular narratives. We aim to understand the interrelationships of social, economic, and technological interests and commitments with other drivers of populist sentiment. Moreover, analysis of discursive framing aims to identify points of intervention via which populist movements and/or their opponents may be supported or challenged. Here we are also interested in the treatment of temporality and urgency, as represented in the media sphere and differently framed by opposing actors.

Social media analysis

It is relevant to study how social media increasingly becomes an arena of contentious politics around sustainability transitions and/or related policies and adopted measures. As social media sites are intermediary spheres, they link institutional and civil society actors but also bring in a range of new actors such as journalists or influencers. We will investigate their roles in: (1) conflict amplification and/or mitigation through social media journalism, and (2) negotiating the selected sustainability transitions policies and/or measures. Thanks to content analysis (both textual and visual) in conjunction with reception analysis via the examination of various forms of social media user comments, Trans4Demo will contribute to the understanding of the dynamics of platform polarization and the radicalization of opinion, thus informing potential efforts for diffusing polarisation and democratic renewal. In order to adequately capture the complex nature of communicative practices in comparative settings multiple rounds of training sessions will be held online and possibly during on-site events as well. Besides, the user engagement metrics (number of likes, shares, comments) will be extracted to test if emotionally loaded social media messages provoke more reactions than those without such elements. Social media analysis will be conducted in Italy, Poland, the Netherlands and Denmark. It is possible for other country cases to also include social media analysis, where applicable (however, see paragraph on “contingency plan” under “baseline criteria for case selection”).



Comparative analysis across case studies in task 3.3

Qualitative comparative analysis

Qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) is used in Trans4Demo to systematically compare multiple cases of contestation related to sustainability transitions across national contexts. It enables the identification of causal patterns by analyzing how different combinations of conditions – such as actor type, political alignment, or policy proximity – are associated with varying forms and intensities of contestation, as well as their democratic and policy outcomes. This method is particularly suited to the project’s medium number of embedded cases and complexity of the phenomena investigated.

Each country case includes several embedded units of analysis, such as specific episodes or arenas of contestation (e.g. legal challenges, protest movements, or electoral mobilizations). These are systematically compared by mapping the presence or absence (or varying degrees) of key conditions in each case alongside the observed outcomes. This structured comparison makes it possible to identify recurring patterns across different contexts, such as which combinations of factors are commonly found in high-impact or intense contestations, and to draw conclusions about the configurations of conditions that contribute to these outcomes. For example, a combination of direct policy impact on affected groups, limited opportunities for participation, and high levels of media visibility may help explain cases of high-intensity contestation, while a different combination (such as inclusive decision-making processes and local policy alignment) may be associated with lower levels of contestation.

Key parameters of WP3 case study research

From the overarching framework of WP3 as per previous sections, the following table to guide the analysis is derived:

Introduction			Key insights	Methodology		Results			Contingency plan	
Case study	Country context	Unit of analysis		Data collection	Data analysis	Major contestations	Key areas of contestation: Arena(s)/realms of contestation, Dimensions of contestation, Actors involved, Lines of conflict, Form of contestation, Domain, Spatio-temporal dimension	Causes and consequences of contestations	Drivers and barriers	

The table highlights the core aspects of each country case study. These aspects will be further developed and explained in the following sections.



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Guidelines for WP3 case study research

In the following sections of the case study protocol, basic common criteria for selecting cases will be outlined, followed by guidelines for conducting analysis of embedded units in each country. These guidelines are intended to also instruct the case study reports to ensure a common format.

The focus of each case study, i.e. for each country, is to identify key areas of contestation and investigate these through in-depth analysis in a nested case structure, to analytically hone in on the causes and consequences of contestation of sustainability transition. This could potentially include analyzing causes of populist triumph (such as perceived recognitional, distributive and/or procedural injustices), the role of key actors, and exploring the different sites to express protest and the effects on liberal-democratic practices and sustainability transitions as well as related temporalities, including urgency.

Another example of an embedded unit of analysis (contestation) is mobilizations by civic groups discontent with the government because of the slow pace of climate policies (e.g. youth's climate justice movements), which use a broad repertoire from demonstrations to different forms of direct actions and civil disobedience.

Baseline criteria for selection of embedded units of analysis (contestations)

The baseline criteria for selecting embedded units of analysis (contestations) in each country constitutes a crucial instrument to ensure some lowest common denominators when designing and analyzing the WP3 case study research. This section of the case study protocol aims to facilitate comparative analysis across the country cases by establishing basic conditions that must be met when selecting the embedded units of analysis.

Number of embedded units of analysis

The embedded units of analysis in each country case must consist of at least two separate contestations – one *for* more progressive, far-reaching sustainability transitions, and one mobilization *against* sustainability transition. This is crucial to deliver on the ambition of Trans4demo to symmetrically study both mobilizations for and against sustainability transitions.



Consider how selected units of analysis (contestations) fit in the overall portfolio

For the analytical purposes of WP3 it is necessary to ensure a balanced mix of cases across the three arenas of contentious politics (electoral politics; legal system; civil movements). Hence, each project partner must carefully consider how their two or more choices of contestations fit into the overall portfolio in WP3. Ideally, the total selection of contestations across the countries will represent a mix of different cases both across the three arenas of contentious politics, and across empirical domains (e.g. energy, transportation, rewilding), while in the total pool of embedded units of analysis there are possibilities of clustering similar cases across country case studies.

Consequences of contestations

Selected cases must conform to WP3's ambition of analyzing the consequences of contestations pro/anti sustainability transitions for implementation of transition-related policies and liberal democratic practices. Hence, embedded units of analysis (contestations) must be selected with this criterion in mind, i.e. the chosen contestation must have had an impact on e.g. national politics or policy, public debate etc. in the country context.

Comparability: ensure viability for qualitative comparative analysis

To arrive at common insights about the interplay between contestation around sustainability transitions and their consequences for sustainability transitions and liberal democratic practices, case selection must be informed by the requirements of qualitative comparative analysis (QCA). This means that each embedded unit of analysis (nested case of contestation) must be comparable along a shared set of key dimensions or conditions, such as the type of actor initiating protests, arena of contestation, policy domains, degree of participation, and impact on sustainability transitions (e.g. policy). These dimensions will form the basis for systematic cross-case comparisons and must be documented across all cases. To support the QCA, researchers must ensure that sufficient empirical data is available for each embedded unit of analysis to allow for assessment of conditions and outcomes across the units. A shared coding guide and template will be developed to support consistency and transparency across the project.

Two important points to note: First, the units of analysis in the QCA are the sites of contestation, not the countries themselves. This ensures a sufficient number of cases and enables the analysis to capture variation both between and within countries. While the focus is on sites of contestation, national-level conditions such as strength of populist parties, green policy agenda, socioeconomic risk, and overall political



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polarization remain analytically important and will be included as explanatory factors. In parallel, the QCA will use case-specific conditions, such as the type of actors involved, timing of the contestation, and the degree of policy proximity.

Second, once the set of conditions to be used in the QCA has been collectively agreed upon, this should not be seen as a limitation on the scope of the empirical investigations. Rather, the agreed list of conditions should be viewed as the minimum common data requirements for the analysis. A list of conditions will be distributed in a separate document before the start of the case study data collection.

Time scale of contestations

Considering the central role of urgency in the theoretical framework of Trans4demo, and the objective of analyzing the effects of contestations on liberal-democratic practices and sustainability transitions, each partner must carefully consider the time scale when selecting embedded units of analysis (contestations). For any instance of contestation to have had a reasonable chance of affecting e.g. policymaking, most likely it would need to be somewhat extended over time, spanning at least a few years. Year 2022 is identified as a critical juncture (due to war, energy crisis etc.), with one phase before and one starting after 2022. The general timeframe is defined as the last 10 years, 2015–2025.

Contingency plan

The final baseline criteria for each project partner in Trans4demo is to consider beforehand possible risks that may appear during case study research in WP3. Contingency planning is important to ensure comparability of cases in case of necessary tweaking of case study setup and design. As an example, there have been recent debates in several countries (e.g. Sweden) in relation to ethical approval. Availability of empirical material could be another example, e.g. when conducting social media analysis. Participants must therefore think carefully about such risks before starting their case study analysis, as well as a minimum form of contingency plan. Are there e.g. alternative methods or empirical material which would mean the case study design could remain and analysis of contestations proceed as intended?



Guidelines for case study reports

To precede the comparative analysis across case studies and the QCA, partners are conducting national case studies. These are to be presented in Case Study Reports which aim to inform the analysis of protests and contestations around sustainability transitions and their consequences for liberal-democratic practices and sustainability transitions studied in WP3. The format of the reports should be consistent across country case studies. We therefore provide below a preliminary suggestion for the structure of the 8 national case study reports (which are to be submitted by M 30 as deliverable 3.2). We anticipate that these reports should not exceed 50 pages.

1. Introduction

a. Country context

Provide a short description of electoral process, parliamentary composition, populist tendencies (part of government etc.), civic mobilization, climate targets etc. in the country. Focus on the timespan needed to position your case study work.

b. Embedded cases/unit of analysis

Provide a short introduction to the empirical embedded cases in focus within your countries.

2. Key insights (0,1 – 1 page)

Provide an overview over the key insights from the case study to answer the two research questions in a few bullet points.

3. Methodology

a. Data collection

Describe the methods of data collection, eg. document analysis, interviews, observations, (social)media analysis, statistics. If interviews, how many, with what actors and why. If observations, where, when, why, if document review, describe type of documents, how they were sampled etc.

b. Data analysis

Describe how the material has been analysed, eg. thematic analysis, discourse analysis etc.

4. Results

Present your results. Explore inductive and deductive themes derived from the analysis. Make sure to respond to the RQs of WP 3:

a. Identify major contestations within the case during the case study period.



b. Description of key areas of contestations

i. Arena(s)/realms of contestation

Describe which realms of contestation – electoral politics, legal system and/or civil movements – the cases encompass. It might be more than one.

ii. Dimensions of contestation

iii. Actors involved

iv. Lines of conflict - For or against sustainability transitions

v. Form of contestation? E.g. demonstration, public debate, etc.

vi. Domain: e.g. climate policy, energy transition, mobility, food, etc

vii. Spatio-temporal dimension

Describe temporal and spatial delimitations, during which years the conflict took place and the setting (national, regional, local, cross-boundary etc.)

c. Explore the underlying causes for selected contestations (embedded units of analysis) and their specific consequences for sustainability transitions and liberal democratic practices.

d. Identify drivers and barriers for incorporating bottom-up actors into institutionalized democratic order across embedded units of analysis.

e. Summarize causes and consequences of contestation on liberal democratic order and sustainability transitions across all embedded units, i.e. at the country level of analysis and in terms of aggregate effect.

Make sure to include both mobilizations and protests of actors striving for and against policy action on sustainability.

5. Summary



Appendix 1. Current case portfolio

Case portfolio as per 28 May 2025. Will be updated as respective research team starts its empirical work.

Norway

Climate court case against the Norwegian state (oil and gas)

- Definition of case incl. case study boundaries
 - o Arena: Legal system
 - o Actors: Greenpeace Nordic and Natur og Ungdom (Young Friends of the Earth Norway), Norwegian state. (for sustainability transitions)
 - o Lines of conflict: Civil society actors took Norwegian state to court arguing that recent approvals of three new oil and gas fields violate Norwegian Constitution, EEA law, and Norway's international human rights commitments. So pro transition.
 - o Time-scale: 2016/2023 – ongoing.
 - o Place/setting: National
- Methodology
 - o Documents (legal documents, secondary documentation of court cases), interviews (ENGOs, ideally also representatives from Ministry of Energy), media analysis using Retriever media database.

The road toll uproar in Norway

- Definition of case incl. case study boundaries
 - o Arena: Civil society and electoral politics
 - o Description: Opposition against climate/environmental policy (road tolls)
 - o Actors: Organised civil movement, protest party. (against sustainability transitions)
 - o Lines of conflict: Public demonstrations/protests, establishment of political party
 - o Time scale: 2019
 - o Place/setting: National climate and transport policy
- Methodology
 - o Documents (secondary data from other studies), interviews (former members of protest movement, political protest party, other politicians, ENGOs), media analysis using Retriever media database.



The rise (and decline) of Industri- og næringspartiet (INP) – a protest party

- Definition of case incl. case study boundaries
 - Arena: Electoral politics
 - Actors: Political protest party (against sustainability transitions)
 - Lines of conflict: Opposition against wind parks, integration with EU electricity markets, protection of oil and gas (against phase-out). So anti transition
 - Time scale: 2020-2025.
 - Place/setting: Local and to some extent national
- Methodology
 - Documents (secondary data from other studies), interviews (former and current members INP, other politicians, ENGOs), media analysis using Retriever media database.

Motvind Norge (Headwind)

- Definition of case incl. case study boundaries
 - Arena: Civil society
 - Actors: Member organisation/advocacy group (against sustainability transitions)
 - Lines of conflict: Opposition against wind parks, protection of nature
 - Time scale: 2019-2025.
 - Place/setting: Norway, often in places with potential or ongoing wind power developments.
- Methodology
 - Documents (secondary data from other studies), interviews (members of Motvind, national and/or local politicians, ENGOs), media analysis using Retriever media database.

The Netherlands

Gas extraction discussions in the North Sea

- Definition of case incl. case study boundaries
 - Arena: Legal system and civil movements
 - Description: Gas extraction discussions in the North Sea near Schiermonnikoog, Borkum, and the Dogger Bank, with particular focus on



protest actions of Greenpeace, local communities' activism, legal proceedings and institutional proceedings. The Schiermonnikoog gas extraction case reflects the Dutch government's prioritisation of (fossil) energy supply over sustainability policy, and that the latter relates to both climate policy, Natura2000 area in the North Sea and the Waddensee's UNESCO World Heritage status.

- Actors: Greenpeace, local communities
- Time scale: 2022-2025
- Lines of conflicts: Social movements and political representatives; pro-transition/against unsustainable plans versus safeguarding energy supply in relation to decrease in Russian gas supply.
- Domain: legal proceedings and institutional proceedings, protest actions
- Methodology
 - Mix of empirical material (case dependent): social media posts on Instagram, news media outlets, and LinkedIn posts might be of interest too. Analysis types we are interested in using or have used: visual-textual analysis, social representations theory (discourse focused), and (critical) discourse analysis.

Farmers' protest

- Definition of case incl. case study boundaries
 - Arena: Civil movement
 - Description: Discussions surrounding nitrogen
 - Lines of conflict: against transition
- Methodology
 - newspaper articles

Seed bombing as slow nonviolence in relation to ecological resilience

- Definition of case incl. case study boundaries
 - Arena: civil movement (?)
 - Description: Everyday activism and how non-human actors can have political agency
 - Actors involved: Environmental activists and non-human actors;
 - Lines of conflict: bottom-up pro transition, ecological focus
- Methodology
 - Visual analysis of social media posts on Instagram



Contesting the return of the wolf

- Definition of case incl. case study boundaries:
 - Arenas: electoral arena and local communities
 - Description: rules of protection of the wolf are renegotiated. Currently, discussions of how to live together with the wolf are ongoing. The case would provide insights into governing nature in the Netherlands and contention on transitions towards sustainability, how ‘the natural and human’ are entangled in this, and how contention has impacts on governance forms and policy decisions. Especially of interest now a shorter procedure for getting a decision on the level of protection of wolves in Europe is agreed upon within the EU parliament.
 - Time scale: 2013 – ongoing.
 - Lines of conflicts: it is oftentimes stated within society that security levels are impacted by the return of the wolf (children and persons enjoying the outdoors are at risk; sheep herds are at risk). Especially farmers are voicing their concerns. Its’ return of connected to rethinking how to live together with the wolf in our society and raises various emotions and reasoning (also in favour of the wolf, i.e. argue how they are contributing towards healthier animals in nature).
- Methodology
 - Newspaper articles, policy documents → Mix of empirical material
 - Frames/discourse/ focus in analysis to uncover how these are performed within repertoires of action and related implications on democracy and transitions.

Denmark

Green Tripart (“Grøn trepart”) - The agreement on a green transition of the agricultural sector in Denmark

- Definition of case incl. case study boundaries
 - Arena: Electoral politics, civil movements
 - Description: To alleviate issues related to water resources, biodiversity and nature) has been reached by the Danish government together with agriculture- and nature organisations – however it is currently criticized



- both by right-wing populist parties, farmers and by some environmental organisations.
- Actors: right-wing populist parties (Danmarksdemokraterne, Dansk Folkeparti), anti-sustainability movement (NOFFF); environmentalist actors (Den Grønne Ungdomsbevægelse). Note: since the local implementation phase is only about to begin, more actors might start to engage in the issue.
- Time-scale: 2023-ongoing
- Methodology:
 - Interviews, content analysis (documents, website, social media profiles), political claim analysis (newspaper articles), field observations, e .g. of local planning processes or public protests (if possible)

Solar farms in Denmark

- Definition of case incl. case study boundaries
 - Arena: Electoral politics and civil movements
 - Description: Denmark is committed to transitioning from fossil fuels to renewable energy due to climate concerns, energy security, and sustainable growth. There are differing views on how this shift should happen, including debates over centralized vs. decentralized systems and ownership models. Furthermore, implementation is facing issues like insufficient investments in power transmission and distribution and public resistance to new energy projects. In recent years, large solar photovoltaic farms have been established in rural landscapes, partly making up for the slow growth in onshore wind, and many more are planned. However, like on- and nearshore wind, solar park initiatives have encountered opposition and criticism from affected communities as well as right-wing parties, due to impacts on landscape and food production, among others. Delays, stricter physical design requirements, and more inclusive planning processes have been some of the results.
 - Actors: Danmarksdemokraterne, local politicians and civil society groups, private developers and interest groups/NGOs
 - Time-scale: 2009-ongoing, but with growing protest in the last couple of years. Tentatively with a focus on the issue in the local elections in autumn 2025.
- Methodology



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- Interviews, content analysis (document, website, social media profiles), political claim analysis (newspaper articles, responses to public consultations), field observations, e.g. of public hearings and meetings (if possible)

Carbon utilization and storage in Denmark

- Definition of case incl. case study boundaries
 - Arena: electoral politics and civil movements
 - Description: Denmark has politically committed to using carbon capture and storage (CCS) to help meet its climate goals. Ørsted is already building CCS facilities at the Asnæs and Avedøre power stations and licenses have been granted at Havnsø, Gassum, and Rødby. Local opposition remains strong, similar to past resistance that halted a similar project near Aalborg. Environmental group NOAH has also opposed CCS for over a decade.
 - Actors: local civil society contestation, local political arena (i.e. municipality councils) and national party politics, private companies
 - Time-scale: (possibly 1996 /2008) 2024 – ongoing
- Methodology
 - Interviews, content analysis (documents, website, social media profiles), political claim analysis (newspaper articles, responses to public consultations), field observations of e.g. public hearings and meetings (if possible)

Sweden

Changes in the reduction obligation on fuel (and connections to e.g. the Fuel Uprising)

- Definition of case incl. case study boundaries
 - Arena: Electoral politics, civil movements
 - Description: The Swedish government, together with its populist support party the Sweden Democrats, lowered the reduction obligation on fuels to decrease (fossil) fuel prices, with the argument that transitions must not harm 'ordinary people'. This opposes EU guidelines, jeopardizing the possibilities to reach climate targets. Political parties utilized channels provided by the civil movement The Fuel Uprising (anti transition) to reach



and advertise to targeted audiences the promise to ‘remain on the side of the people’.

- Lines of conflict: anti transition
- Time scale: 2022 – present
- Place/setting: national
- Methodology
 - Interviews, text analysis of e.g. policy documents and parliamentary debate, text analysis of public debate, social media analysis of protest groups (if possible)

Wind power contestations (e.g. Headwind Sweden)

- Definition of case incl. case study boundaries
 - Arena: electoral politics, civil movements
 - Description: Increasing contestations of wind power development across Sweden, spearheaded by advocacy group Headwind, but also including e.g. Sami groups. The activities of Headwind in particular have clearly impacted national energy policy, providing fertile soil for shifting emphasis from wind power development towards a renewed nuclear power program.
 - Lines of conflict: Protection of nature, local self-determination, justice claims (e.g. sustainability transitions as ‘elite project’, against ‘the people’, lack of respect and consideration for local populations)
 - Actors: political parties, civil organizations (e.g. Headwind, a member organization/advocacy group.)
 - Place /setting: national, local
- Methodology
 - Social media analysis, interviews, parliamentary debate, media analysis

Aurora court case

- Definition of case incl. case study boundaries
 - Arena: Legal system, civil movements
 - Description: Youth civil society group sued the Swedish state in public court for not treating the climate crisis as a crisis.
 - Lines of conflict: for sustainability transition
 - Time scale: 2021 – ongoing
 - Place /setting: national
- Methodology



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- Legal documents, media analysis

Restore wetlands

- Definition of case incl. case study boundaries
 - Arena: Civil movements
 - Description: Civil society group using peaceful methods (media actions and protests) to resist peat mining and advocate for restoring wetlands
 - Lines of conflict: For sustainability transitions
 - Place /setting: national, local
- Methodology
 - Social media analysis, interviews

Germany

Rise of AfD (right wing populist party) in Länder and on federal level

- Definition of case incl. case study boundaries
 - Arena: Electoral politics
 - Lines of conflict: anti transition
 - Actors involved: parliamentary actors
 - Form of contestation: public debate, interventions in parliament, election promise was to remove all wind turbines...
 - Domain: cross-cutting
 - Time-scale of case: ca. 2017-present
 - Place/setting: cross-boundary; more rural than urban
- Methodology
 - Document analysis
 - Interviews

Climate rulings by the Federal Constitutional Court following lawsuits filed by NGOs

- Definition of case incl. case study boundaries
 - Arena: Legal system
 - Lines of conflict: pro transition
 - Actors involved: green NGOs, citizens, Federal Constitutional Court judges, federal government,...
 - Form of contestation: lawsuit



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- Domain: climate policy
- Time-scale of case: ca. 2018-present (new lawsuit is pending)
- Place/setting: national
- Methodology
 - Document analysis
 - Interviews

Social movement 'Last Generation'

- Definition of case incl. case study boundaries
 - Arena: Civil movement
 - Description: (climate activists gluing themselves to streets); at its peak, the movement sparked a highly polarized public debate and incidents of violence in street-level reactions. The movement has since ceased to exist in its original form and has rebranded itself as 'New Generation'.
 - Form of contestation: civil disobedience, public debate, protest
 - Domain: climate policy (& democracy)
 - Time-scale of case: ca. 2023-2024
 - Place/setting: national, urban
- Methodology
 - Document analysis
 - Interviews

Farmer protests against the reduction of environmentally harmful subsidies

- Definition of case incl. case study boundaries
 - Arena: Civil movement
 - Description: peak moment: Federal Minister was attacked during a ferry crossing; agricultural lobby highly influential; movement was partly infiltrated by far-right actors
 - Lines of conflict: anti transition
 - Actors involved: farmers, farmers association, right wing poulist actors, far-right actors
 - Form of contestation: protest, civil disobedience (e.g. blocking roads), in some instances (threat of) violence
 - Domain: energy policy, climate policy
 - Time-scale of case: ca. 2023-2024
 - Place/setting: national, rural
- Methodology



- Document analysis
- Interviews

Italy

Farmers protests

- Definition of case incl. case study boundaries
 - Arena: Mainly Electoral politics (party responses to the protestors' demands, EU policing that sparked and then attempted to contain the protests) and Civil movements, with potential study of relevant contentions being taken in the legal arena.
 - Description: This case study investigates recent farmers' protests in the Netherlands, Italy, and Denmark, focusing on the intersection of agricultural policy, environmental regulation, and populist mobilization. The protests emerged in response to state-imposed measures aimed at reducing nitrogen emissions and promoting sustainability, perceived by many farmers as existential threats their production sector and very lifestyle. The study analyses how such mobilizations have been framed as grassroots resistance to technocratic governance and top-down imposed ecological transition policies. It also explores the role of right-wing political actors in amplifying agrarian discontent (e.g.: the League in Italy), illustrating broader tensions between climate imperatives, economic interests, and democratic legitimacy in European environmental politics.
 - Actors and lines of conflict: Political parties active at the EU level, association of farmers, protest movements, environmentalist groups contesting the protests. Conflict along the line of climate protectionism vs prioritisation of economic growth and social stability.
 - Time scale: 2019-ongoing (different timeframes for each Country)
 - Place /setting:
- Methodology
 - Document analysis – party internal and external documentation, manifestos and pamphlets of social movements, visual data attached to these documents
 - Media analysis – newspapers, online outlets
 - Social media – Facebook, Instagram
 - Statistics (eurobarometer, ESSS)
 - Visual analysis of critical events



- Both Thematic and Discourse analyses, content analysis

From civil contention to legal persecution: the case of the environmental defacers and Brothers of Italy

- Definition of case incl. case study boundaries
 - Arena: civil society/street level, party/electoral politics, legal arena
 - Description: This case study examines the shift from civil disobedience to legal persecution in the treatment of environmental activists, specifically focusing on climate protestors labeled as "environmental defacers" in Italy. It analyzes the political and juridical response to acts such as symbolic vandalism and nonviolent disruption, contextualized within the rise of the far-right Fratelli d'Italia (Brothers of Italy) party. The study traces how protest actions have been reframed as criminal threats, reflecting a broader securitization of climate activism. It highlights the implications of punitive legal mechanisms deployed against dissent, emphasizing tensions between democratic contestation and authoritarian tendencies in contemporary environmental governance.
 - Actors: political parties (especially Brothers of Italy), environmentalist groups that performed defacing protests in Italy (Extinction Rebellion, Last Generation).
 - Lines of conflict: prioritisation of security/legality vs perception of climate as fully developed emergency
 - Time scale: 2022-ongoing
 - Place /setting:
- Methodology
 - Document analysis – party internal and external documentation, manifestos and pamphlets of social movements, visual data attached to these documents
 - Proceedings of policy making processes related to the criminalisation of defacement protests, court rulings related to the legal struggle for the right to protest of involved activists
 - Media analysis – newspapers, online outlets
 - Social media – Facebook, Instagram
 - Statistics (eurobarometer, ESSS)
 - Visual analysis of critical events
 - Both Thematic and Discourse analyses, content analysis



Poland

Climate court case against the Law and Justice government-led investment in the new coal-fired power plant in Ostrołęka

- Definition of case incl. case study boundaries
 - Arena: legal system; but also partly: electoral politics (in terms of politicized coal-dependency policies of the right-populist government), civic movements (protesters and NGOs)
 - Description: A long and ultimately halted process of funding a newly built coal-fired power plant in Ostrołęka, initiated by the Law and Justice government. From the outset, the project stood in clear opposition to EU climate policies, emissions targets, and economic rationality. It was conceived as both a symbol and a flagship of the Law and Justice party's energy policy.
 - Actors and lines of conflict: Client Earth (legal actions), Greenpeace (direct actions) vs Ministry of Energy, Ministry of Climate and Environment, Ministry of State Assets as well as Enea and Energa Polish Energy Group (public enterprises, controlled by the United Right government);
 - Form of contestation: Court litigation, demonstration, public debate, expert discourse
 - Domain: energy transition, related to climate policy
 - Time-scale: 2018– ongoing
 - Place/setting: national and regional
- Methodology
 - Documents (legal documents, secondary documentation of court cases), interviews (with civil movement representatives, ideally also representatives from Ministry of Energy, but may be difficult), media analysis

Climate movements and disruptive actions: the case of Last Generation, Poland

- Definition of case incl. case study boundaries
 - Arena: Civic movements
 - Description: Numerous disruptive events—such as road blockades, spray-painting, and other actions—carried out by LG activists sparked a



- heated and polarized debate, accompanied by moral panic over the meaning and legitimacy of their actions.
- Actors and lines of conflict: Last Generation vs political parties' representatives, politicized influencers,
- Time-scale: 2022-ongoing
- Form of contestation: demonstration, public debate
- Domain: climate policy
- Place/setting: national but limited to biggest cities
- Methodology
 - Interviews (with civil movement representatives, ideally also representatives from political parties, but may be difficult) + Media analysis: nationwide media of opposite editorial lines: right wing (Do Rzeczy, W Sieci, wpolityce), centre and left (Gazeta Wyborcza, Oko.Press, Krytyka Polityczna) + Social media - Facebook/X/Tik Tok profiles of political actors to study politically/ideologically determined reactions towards activists, their claims and repertoires (specifics of the sample to be determined)/social media profiles of the Last Generation
 - Qualitative Content Analysis/Discourse analysis informed by the frameworks developed by two strands of literature: moral panics and media representation of social movements

Israel

The Disposable Tableware Tax in Israel: A Case of Contested Politics

- Definition of case incl. case study boundaries
 - **Arena:** electoral politics.
 - **Description:** This case study examines the political controversy surrounding Israel's short-lived tax on disposable plastic tableware, highlighting the intersection of environmental regulation, cultural identity, and coalition politics. Introduced in 2021 as part of a broader effort to reduce plastic consumption and align with global sustainability goals, the tax sparked significant backlash from ultra-Orthodox (Haredi) communities, for whom disposable products are a practical and religious necessity. The policy was framed by its proponents as an environmental imperative, while opponents portrayed it as a culturally targeted measure imposed by secular elites. The study analyzes how this conflict became a flashpoint for broader grievances over representation, lifestyle autonomy, and social marginalization. It also explores the strategic role of Haredi political actors in mobilizing resistance and how the issue was instrumentalized in subsequent coalition negotiations, leading to the tax's



repeal under the Netanyahu government in 2022. The case reveals deeper tensions between environmental modernization efforts and the pluralistic challenges of policymaking in a religiously and socially divided society.

- **Lines of conflict:** Cross-cutting — the debate over the disposable tableware tax reveals tensions between environmental policy goals (e.g., climate responsibility, sustainability) and cultural-religious autonomy, particularly that of the ultra-Orthodox community. The conflict also highlights broader divisions between technocratic environmentalism and identity-driven representation, with underlying disputes over who bears the cost of ecological transition.
- **Actors involved:** Government ministries: Ministry of Finance (Avigdor Lieberman); Ministry of Environmental Protection (Tamar Zandberg); Knesset members: Coalition MKs supporting environmental reform; Opposition MKs (particularly from Shas and UTJ) voicing cultural grievances; Ultra-Orthodox community representatives; environmental NGOs and policy experts (occasionally invited to committee discussions)
- **Forms of contestation:** Institutional contestation through Knesset committee protocols: Sharp rhetorical clashes in Finance and Internal Affairs Committees; Allegations of "anti-Haredi discrimination"
- **Time scale:** 2020-2023
- Place /setting: national/local

- **Methodology**

document analysis of parliamentary protocols

The contested legislation of the Israeli climate law

- Definition of case incl. case study boundaries
 - **Arena:** electoral politics, civic movements.
 - **Description:** The Israeli Climate Law, officially known as the Climate Law 5774-2024, underwent a contentious legislative process marked by internal government disputes and external criticism from environmental groups. Introduced in 2020, the bill aims to establish a legal framework for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and preparing for climate change impacts. The bill faced significant opposition from various ministries, particularly the Finance and Energy Ministries, which resisted binding emissions targets and favored non-committal language. The bill has changed dramatically after the replacement of the government and the election of the Israeli populist government
 - **Lines of conflict:**
 1. Binding Targets vs. Flexibility:
 2. Budgeting and Implementation:
 3. Ambition Level:
 4. Public Participation and Climate Justice:



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- **Actors involved:** Government Ministries; Coalition Lawmakers: Divided—some supported the law as is, while others wanted stricter enforcement; Criticized the bill as weak and symbolic; pushed for stronger targets, enforcement mechanisms, and public accountability; Environmental NGO; Scientific and Academic Institutions; Private Sector and Industry Representatives
- **Forms of contestation:** Institutional contestation through Knesset committee; legal arena through appeal to the supreme court
- **Time scale:** 2020- present
- Place /setting: national/local
- **Methodology:**
 - document analysis of parliamentary protocols