Assessing Agency in Norway's Energy Transition Through the Lens of Procedural Justice

Analyse qualitative data from SAMVIND (observations, interviews, workshops) in Båtsfjord and Aremark to assess procedural justice in renewable-project decisions. Review European and Norwegian energy-community models to identify policy pathways and priorities for future research.

Brief description of the project

Processes of acceptance and non-acceptance of renewable energy at the community level depend not only on distributive factors (e.g., municipal revenue, jobs) but also on procedural and contextual issues such as the contested history of infrastructure development, local relationships with the environment, and competing narratives about benefit sharing and stakeholder consultation (public authorities, civil society and industry). Understanding these procedural justice concerns is essential for fair and feasible energy transitions.

The objectives of this project will be to (1) Analyse decision making processes and community responses to wind energy using existing qualitative data from the SAMVIND project, which employed a community led approach (participant observation, stakeholder semi-structured interviews and workshops) in Båtsfjord and Aremark (2) Review the state of energy communities in Europe, with emphasis on Norway, to identify pathways for future research and policy that advance local agency and procedural justice.

Context

Energy communities (ECs) are nascent in Norway. Legal concepts from the EU—Citizen Energy Communities (CEC) and Renewable Energy Communities (REC) as defined in the Electricity Market Directive (2019/944) and Renewable Energy Directive (REDII, 2018/2001)—are not yet enacted in Norwegian law. Historically low electricity prices and a hydropower-based system have limited interest in local energy solutions, and Norway's non-EU status delays adoption. Nevertheless, pilots and growing public interest suggest momentum for ECs.

Energy communities could support Norway's climate goals and increase local acceptance of renewable projects by offering communities not only benefits (e.g., more stable supply in rural areas, lower costs for prosumers) but also procedural gains through enabling greater transparency and participation in planning. EC can also enable complementary local systems (e.g., microgrids with storage) that relieve peak loads on the main grid, extend infrastructure life, enhance system flexibility, and potentially reduce state investment needs in grid maintenance.

The expected outcome of the project is to conduct a targeted analysis of procedural justice factors shaping wind energy acceptance in Norwegian communities and a synthesis of energy community models to guide future empirical work and policy recommendations.

Name of supervisor(s)

This work will be supervised by Paola Velasco Herrejón, postdoctoral research fellow, Marianne Zeyringer, associate professor at the Section of Energy Systems, Department of Technology Systems, University of Oslo located in Kjeller and Karina Standal, senior researcher at CICERO.

Preferred background of candidate(s)

- Development Studies, Environmental Sciences, Human Geography, Psychology, Sociology, Social Anthropology, Economics, Political Science or closely related subject areas
- Ability to undertake desk-based documentary evidence collection and analysis

- Experience in field data analysis (semi-structured interviews and workshops, desired)
- Experience in writing project reports and contributing to outputs in peer-reviewed journals
- Fluent written and verbal communication skills in English
- Fluent written communication skills in Norwegian (desired)
- Experience using NVIVO (desired)
- Ability to work independently and collaboratively
- Readiness to present and discuss findings at conferences and meetings
- Willingness to engage social media and non-academic organisations in the dissemination of research outcomes

Number of available positions

2

Preferred project period

- The projects will ideally start from mid-May 2025, but can also begin during the summer recess.

Outline of project work, including expected outcomes/deliverables

- Cleaning, organising, analysing and synthesising data from semi-structured interviews and workshops
- Conducting a literature review of the state of energy communities in Europe, with emphasis on Norway
- Conducting a literature review on procedural justice, particularly related to renewable energy projects
- Building a conceptual framework, building from concepts linked to energy justice, power analysis and the capabilities approach
- Preparing and writing project reports, peer-reviewed publications in high-quality scientific journals, and non-academic dissemination
- Preparing a session to present findings to the general public and/or project stakeholders