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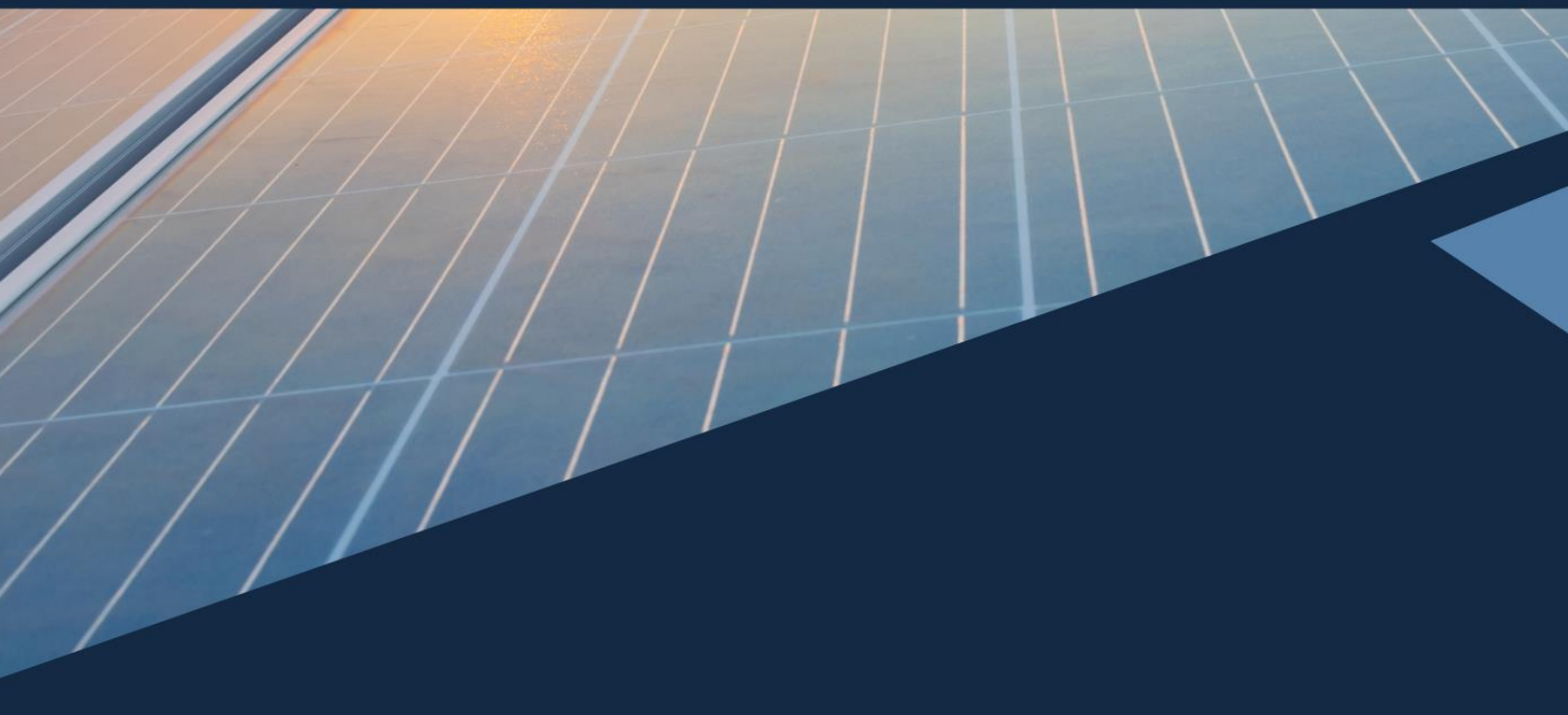
POLITICS AND POLICY PROCESSES FOR GREEN ENERGY TRANSITION AND CLIMATE NEUTRALITY



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- A Project Report

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A Project Report

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LiU-IEI-R No. 351

Contents

Abstract

This policy report outlines the group research on advocacy, decision-making, and EU policy change towards green energy transition and climate neutrality, focusing on resource- and energy-efficient buildings, as well as energy efficiency more broadly within the EU's Fit for 55 legislative packages. The research also includes analyses of advocacy and decision-making related to EU policy change for decarbonizing maritime shipping. The project explores how stakeholder coalitions shape policies for sustainable environments since decision-making is influenced by stakeholders and conflicts of interest. By providing better insight into EU policy change dynamics, this report offers valuable knowledge that can enhance policymakers' understanding of how to influence future EU policies on energy efficiency and building energy performance, as well as a clean energy transition more broadly, promoting Swedish interests. It highlights the complexity of decision-making in energy efficiency and climate impact reduction within the EU while also underscoring the influence of stakeholders and conflicts of interest. As a result, actors with inadequate grasp of political dynamics can hinder effective energy policy design and implementation, posing challenges to achieving climate goals and sustainable development. Similarly, since negotiations are key to advance regulation, it is found that less politicization and polarization facilitate deliberative negotiations and policy-oriented learning, among other things. Thus, strategic advocacy is crucial for Swedish policymakers aiming to successfully influence future EU energy and climate policies.

Keywords: energy, climate, EU policy, buildings, renewables, shipping, sustainable.

Executive Summary

In the context of transitioning to a carbon-neutral economy, research on energy and climate policies has traditionally emphasized technical and economic dimensions while overlooking crucial social and political aspects. Despite the increased importance of energy and energy efficiency policies motivated by events such as the aggravating climate change and geopolitical shifts (i.e., the Russian invasion of Ukraine), the persistent neglect of social dimensions has left a significant gap in understanding the factors influencing the energy pathways toward sustainability in Europe. Unfortunately, this gap has delayed progress toward sustainability within the EU, national and local levels. Similarly, it is argued that insufficient understanding of political processes and decision-making complexities has impeded effective energy policies.

In line with this, this research project aims to address this knowledge gap by delving into the intricate dynamics of decision-making surrounding energy efficiency and climate change mitigation policies. Acknowledging the complex European policymaking process shaped by diverse stakeholders at various levels of governance, conflicting interests, and strategic maneuvers, the project aims to analyze the roles of various actors including lobbyists and policy entrepreneurs in the EU policy process. This approach enables the project's research to contribute significantly to the existing body of social science research on energy efficiency, clean energy transitions, and climate impact by delving deeper into the political dynamics. Indeed, contrary to conventional political science research on lobbying, which primarily examines stakeholder preferences and outcomes, this project goes substantially deeper by investigating how policy entrepreneurs influence democratic policy processes and values such as accountability, transparency, legitimacy, openness, and justice. Thus, a greater understanding of how policy decisions are framed, formulated, explained, defended, and implemented in this context can help us advance in shaping future policy actions towards sustainable development within the energy sector.

Importantly, given that buildings are major users of energy and major contributors to greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) in Europe, the project strategically focuses on analyzing this concept and related policies.

As for the methods employed, the project relies on text analysis and interviews to triangulate important aspects of the policy process and the Commission's attempt to increase the EU's power in climate policy, primarily through European integration. Additionally, considering the project objectives, it is essential to investigate how stakeholders contribute to policymaking to understand how and why policy instruments are designed the way they are. Hence, the use of the theoretical frames Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF), Multiple Streams Framework (MSF) and discourse analysis allow us to map out the dynamics and decision-making processes involved in policy development. Namely, the mapping of agenda setting and interactions between the stakeholders and the conflicts of interest that arise and how these are managed.

Key findings from the research highlight the complexity of decision-making in energy efficiency and climate change mitigation, emphasizing the influence of various stakeholders, conflicts of interest, and strategic approaches. It demonstrates that a lack of understanding of political dynamics can impede the effective design and implementation of energy policies, making it more challenging to achieve climate goals and foster sustainable development. Notably, political and social factors play a significant role in shaping energy policy.

Additionally, the studies reveal that EU-level policymaking is heavily influenced by formal and informal negotiations, which are shaped by the principle of subsidiarity and conflicts of interest among member states, as well as between risk-oriented and process-oriented companies. In this context, case studies indicate that lower levels of politicization and polarization facilitate problem-solving, deliberative negotiations based on good arguments and policy-oriented learning. Consequently, the research underscores the importance of increasing lobbying transparency to ensure a fair and open political process.

The report is structured as follows: it begins with an overview of the entire project, highlighting its aims and rationale in detail. Following this, the literature review addresses key issues in energy policy and identifies gaps in existing research. The methodology section outlines the approach taken in this report, followed by an extensive section based on the lessons learned from the research articles and case studies performed for the investigation. Finally, the report concludes with a section highlighting the policy recommendations based on the key findings and observations for stakeholders that aim to influence the national and EU policymaking in energy policy.

Background

Research on energy and energy efficiency policy has predominantly centered around technical and economic dimensions, neglecting critical social and political aspects. This oversight becomes more evident and detrimental as the need for sustainable and climate neutral growth increases. In other words, as the growing significance of energy policy for societal development becomes imperative to face the challenges posed by climate change and the like, there is a deficiency in advancing sustainable policymaking at the EU and national and local levels notwithstanding the instruments already adopted by the EU and Sweden to achieve these ambitious goals.

More specifically, while said dynamic issues demand rapid action in policy domains involving diverse actors with distinct and diverse, often conflicting, interests, there remains a significant gap in understanding the social, political, and institutional dynamics that influence and drive the transformation of energy systems towards sustainability, particularly within the EU context. This complexity is evidenced by the revisions of policy instruments aimed at enhancing their effectiveness prompted by the need to improve their performance due to their partial fulfillment of the established goals. Given these circumstances, the proposed revisions to EU directives on energy efficiency, the building energy performance (a major sector that contributes to GHG), emissions trading, and shipping regulation could profoundly impact Swedish policies promoting across sectors such as buildings, industry, infrastructure, and shipping.

Buildings have a long-life cycle, and good energy performance is crucial to reducing the impact of their operational phase. Energy use in buildings and the building sector can be reduced through energy-saving or energy efficiency measures. While energy-saving measures do not necessarily result in a permanent reduction in energy demand, an energy-efficient building has a more long-term positive impact on resource demands. From being primarily technical, the building directive has evolved to encompass social aspects, such as energy poverty, linked to energy efficiency in buildings. Understandably, the focus on the existing building stock and increasing its energy efficiency has also grown significantly.

Therefore, addressing this knowledge gap is pivotal, especially regarding political processes and decision-making within energy and climate policies. However, accomplishing this task is challenging because decision-making in this domain is complex, shaped by diverse stakeholders, many conflicts of interest, and strategic maneuvers. It is thus the multifaceted nature of EU policymaking that poses a threat to effective policy design and implementation, hindering progress towards climate goals and sustainable development.

Nevertheless, this research project aims to deepen our understanding of decision-making processes and policy changes at both the EU and Swedish levels concerning climate-neutral policies, such as the retrofitting of existing buildings. By employing social science methods and theories to enhance our comprehension of political processes, especially within EU energy and climate policies, this research will inform future policy actions and contribute to sustainable development within the energy sector.

Aims

As briefly anticipated, this research project's purpose is to explore and understand the complex political processes surrounding energy efficiency and reduced climate impact, especially within the EU decision-making framework. Thus, the overall goal is to fill knowledge gaps in this area by providing a deeper understanding of the social, political, and institutional dynamics that shape energy policy.

Increasing our knowledge in this area is fundamental for several reasons. Firstly, it can undoubtedly contribute to a better design and implementation of public policies that promote energy efficiency and decarbonization. Policy analysis is not only about analyzing the effectiveness and cost-efficiency of a policy. To understand a policy, one must understand the discursive framing of the policy, since this defines how problems to be solved are described and which policy solutions are viable. Secondly, addressing these issues would provide us with a better understanding of the complex policy dynamics contributing to both public policy and research. Additionally, better knowledge would inevitably enhance the quality of democracy by equipping policymakers with better tools to respond to citizens' needs and make informed choices and to justify their choices. Overall, increased knowledge on this topic will contribute to a more open, accountable, and more effective design of energy and climate policies.

Conversely, failing to act would mean that political decisions and energy and climate policies risk remaining ineffective, hindering the successful transition to a carbon-neutral economy, and resulting in detrimental consequences.

Similarly, the purpose of this research project is also to explore and understand the complex political processes surrounding energy efficiency and decarbonization, especially within the framework of EU decision-making. Thus, to fill knowledge gaps in this area by providing a deeper understanding of the social, political, and institutional dynamics that shape energy policy.

Lastly, the project also extends to practical policy instruments, such as building regulation. Within this context, the insights gleaned from multi-level governance in this area contribute to a deeper understanding of zero-carbon building governance and regulations.

State of the Art

As the pursuit of low-carbon energy systems and economic growth to achieve sustainable societies in Europe gains momentum, it can be acknowledged that research in this area has advanced significantly toward these goals. However, a predominant focus on technical aspects within energy research has often overshadowed critical social, political, and institutional dimensions necessary for achieving societal decarbonization objectives and policies.

What is more, it seems that EU energy policy has primarily drawn from Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) disciplines, overlooking vital social aspects.[1] It is thus not surprising that energy policy objectives are constantly framed in terms of technological dimensions.[2] Hence, as researchers and policymakers predominantly concentrate on one aspect of the energy challenge, the social dimensions remain largely marginalized.[3]

In fact, Sovacool finds that there is an insufficient recognition of social factors in energy utilization and decision-making complexity and human dimensions of energy use and environmental change are seldom addressed.[4] Similarly, research that informs policymaking seems fundamentally based on models and experiments rather than interviews, surveys, and substantial qualitative methods.[5]

Notably, since energy systems are multifaceted, involving both technical and human dimensions, social scientists advocate for research topics that delve into important themes such as energy poverty, energy efficiency, just transition, alongside low-carbon buildings, given their significant contribution to pollution, within the context of policies and instruments aimed at reaching green energy and climate neutrality.[6] The rationale is that an enhanced understanding of these policy processes not only contributes to greater theoretical comprehension of evolving policies and instruments, but also offers increased knowledge for better policymaking towards sustainable growth. Particularly, research on energy efficiency is crucial for sustainability and economic prosperity since it reduces GHG and lowers energy costs, enhancing energy security.

However, research on policy change and advocacy in energy efficiency is sparse.[7] This research deficit might stem from the recent relevance of energy efficiency, boosted by initiatives such as the European Green Deal (EGD). Notably, social science research on climate policy surpasses that of energy policy, indicating a need for more attention to the latter.[8] More specifically, von Malmborg finds that a few researchers have investigated how advocacy by various stakeholder groups influences specific policy areas within the EU, such as the emissions trading scheme, renewable energy policies, and the like.[9] Concurrently, other studies have examined how diverse interest groups, despite differing positions, collaborate to shape EU climate and

[1] L. Ingeborgrud et al., 'Expanding the Scope and Implications of Energy Research: A Guide to Key Themes and Concepts from the Social Sciences and Humanities,' Energy Research & Social Science, vol. 63 (2020), p. 1.
[2] Ibid.
[3] B. Sovacool, 'Diversity: Energy Studies Need Social Science,' *Nature, vol.* 511 (2014), pp. 529–530.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Ingeborgrud et al., pp. 3-4.
[7] F. von Malmborg, 'Exploring Advocacy Coalitions for Change of EU Policy on Energy Efficiency,' Linköping University Electronic Press, 2021, p. 9.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Ibid., pp. 9-10.

energy policies. Nevertheless, as von Malmborg highlights, this literature emphasizes lobbying effectiveness rather than the comprehensive policy process.[10]

Policy Processes and Advocacy

To gain a deeper understanding of the governance and policies related to energy-efficient and low- and zero-carbon buildings, as well as decarbonizing shipping, it is essential to examine the policy processes, decision-making, and implementation of these policies. Therefore, this short section will provide an overview of the current state of research on policy processes and advocacy in this context.

When analyzing and evaluating policy processes, one useful paradigm and framework is the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF), developed by Sabatier (1986, 1988, 1998) and Jenkins-Smith (1990). This framework assumes that actors involved in the policy process share a set of political beliefs and form advocacy coalitions. These actors are rational and coordinate their actions as needed to achieve their policy objectives.

Moreover, given the complexity of policymaking, actors must specialize to influence policy effectively. In this context, the policy problem is about how to promote buildings to become more energy efficient and low-and zero-carbon.

Consequently, few studies focus on the entire policy process related to the energy efficiency of buildings. Among them, von Malmborg used the ACF to analyze lobbying and advocacy efforts in the EU, specifically on individual metering and billing in multi-family and multi-purpose buildings as provided by the EED to improve energy performance. Similarly, Giest examined policy coordination related to the roll-out of smart electricity meters in the UK. Overall, studies by von Malmborg, Szarka, Byskov-Lindberg, and Kammermann highlight the significant role of interest groups in policy change.

Another study worth mentioning is by Fawcett and Killip, who analyzed energy efficiency in buildings and found that a multiple benefits argument is persuasive when linked to the values and priorities of decision-makers, most of whom do not value energy efficiency on its own. Different contexts and benefits are salient for different stakeholders. This recognition has led to an alternative visualization of multiple benefits, decentering energy efficiency.

The study highlights the role of discourses in uniting organizations and actors, providing structure and direction to the policy journey. In other words, discourse can retrospectively reframe the policy journey, omitting inconsistent parts. However, it remains unclear if the technical aspects of sustainable housing advocacy can be separated from social aspects.

Thus, studies using ACF underscore the influence of policy entrepreneurs and show that by examining the views of skeptics and advocates, and addressing current knowledge gaps, policymakers can make better-informed decisions supported by more robust analysis.

[10] F. von Malmborg & P. A. Strachan, 'Advocacy Coalitions and Paths to Policy Change for Promoting Energy Efficiency in European Industry,' Energies, vol. 16, no. 9 (2023), p. 3785.

Multilevel Governance

Within the EU energy policy, the concept of Multilevel Governance (MLG) emerges as another important framework for understanding the dynamics of decision-making and implementation. At the core of the EU energy efficiency initiatives stands the European institutions. Noteworthy is the role of the European Commission (EC) which holds significant authority in proposing legislation and shaping policy agendas, specifically in the direction of EU energy policy.

Notwithstanding the EC's preeminence, its role is marked by contestation from MSs that, as Dupont shows, relates to debates surrounding the division of sovereignty and concerns over the choice and ambition of policy instruments. Despite these challenges, it seems that the EC has been advancing EU energy policymaking even amidst contestations. Consequently, in this section, it is briefly explored the intricate dynamics of Multilevel Governance within EU energy policy, characterized by various actors, underscoring the complexities of energy governance and mechanisms driving policy advancement in the realm of energy efficiency.

Therefore, MLG is a concept that has grown in use over the last 20 to 30 years. Initially used to describe the governance structure of EU organizational policy, it has since evolved into a more general concept encompassing various levels of governance and government, including non-governmental actors and issue-specific coalitions. This expanded view includes a broad range of business and civil society actors across all levels. Notably, von Malmborg (2021, 2022) highlighted the significant role of business and civil society in EU multilevel governance and policy for energy efficiency in buildings.

Locally, research indicates the necessity of massively expanding and upscaling local climate policies and initiatives within the MLG framework.[11] For example, Khan examined a Swedish context where cities can enhance the legitimacy and implementation capacity of an ambitious climate agenda through network governance, positioning municipalities as facilitators rather than commanders. Similarly, Gustavsson et al. found that local conditions significantly influence the ambition and strategies of climate policies in Swedish cities, illustrating the growing importance of cities as arenas of globalization and supporting the call for a multilevel network-governance approach.

The key role of local governments in combating climate change through sustainable energy planning is well recognized in scientific literature (Cormio et al., Mirakyan and De Guio). Interestingly, Rutherford and Jaglin note that while cities are often seen as sources of energy problems, they also offer substantial opportunities for shifting energy policies towards more sustainable pathways.[12] However, Fünfgeld underscores that many local governments remain under-equipped to assess and address climate change risks and local vulnerabilities.[13] In this context, the need for a new model of MLG is increasingly acknowledged as crucial for implementing climate policies.

[11] V. Dobravec et al., "Multilevel Governance Energy Planning and Policy: A View on Local Energy Initiatives," *Energy, Sustainability and Society,* vol. 11, no. 1 (2021), p. 2.
[12] G. Melica et al., "Multilevel Governance of Sustainable Energy Policies: The Role of Regions and Provinces to Support the Participation of Small Local Authorities in the Covenant of Mayors," *Sustainable Cities and Society* vol. 39 (2018), p. 730.
[13] Ibid.

At the EU level, the MLG approach also involves local-level initiatives contributing to strengthening dynamics. To this end, the EU has established the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) to support the implementation of EU legislation at local and regional levels.[14] Since the mid-1980s, the EU has developed a multilevel climate governance system that facilitates leadership and lesson-drawing at all governance levels, including the local level. However, national governance systems differ between MSs, leading to diverse MLG structures and regulations. This diversity can result in 'scalar clashes' and a chaotic status quo, disrupting the EU's transition towards clean energy sources.

For instance, Annunziata et al. provide an overview of the national regulatory frameworks in European countries, showing varied approaches to energy efficiency regulations. This is confirmed by Pereira and Da Silva and Apergis and Garćia, who identify four main factors contributing to this heterogeneity: different authorities involved in energy regulations, traditional building regulations and enforcement models, contextual characteristics, and the maturity of energy efficiency measures implementation. There are few in-depth case studies on national governance of energy-efficient buildings in individual EU MSs.

Thus, von Malmborg and Strachan argue that promoting energy efficiency in Europe is challenging due to the absence of specific EU legislation addressing this issue directly. Instead, EU legislation that encourages energy audits and energy management systems in enterprises across MSs, is seen as an approach to indirectly promote energy efficiency within industrial settings.[15]

It should be noted that EU legislation on energy efficiency and related policies are jointly decided by the Council and the European Parliament (EP) and are directed towards MSs, which are responsible for enacting and enforcing national legislation that impacts citizens, businesses, and public organizations at the regional and local levels.[16] Additionally, since implementation often requires additional policies and measures at the regional and local levels, in accordance with local authorities, MLG within the EU is quite diverse.[17]

In line with this, EU policy initiatives for energy-efficient and low-carbon buildings predominantly take the form of several legislative acts with policy initiatives in energy efficiency dating to the early 1970s when it was linked to oil supply security measures.[18] Subsequent directives, such as the Energy Labelling Directive (ELD) in the early 1990s and the directive to limit carbon dioxide emissions through energy efficiency improvements in 1993, went further.[19] Moreover, the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD), which replaced earlier directives in 2002, was recast in 2010 and further amended in 2018.[20] Importantly, the Energy Efficiency Directive (EED) encompasses a wide range of provisions, including energy savings obligations, efficient district heating and cogeneration, and consumer empowerment through enhanced information and education.[21]

[14] Ibid.
[15] von Malmborg & Strachan, p. 3785.
[16] M. Björklund, F. von Malmborg & J. Nordensvärd, 'Lessons Learnt from 20+ Years of Research on Multi-Level Governance of Energy Efficient and Zero-Carbon Buildings in the European Union,' Energy Efficiency, vol. 16 (2023), p. 23.
[17] Ibid.
[18] von Malmborg (2021), p. 8.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid.

Similarly, it has been documented the various EU governance instruments, including the 2018 Regulation on the Governance of the Energy Union and Climate Action (Governance Regulation), which standardizes planning, reporting, and monitoring of energy and climate policies across MSs.[22] Additionally, the EU employs both traditional and innovative financial instruments, such as grants, tax incentives, and funding mechanisms, to stimulate the development and adoption of low-carbon technologies.[23]

Taken together, these instruments underscore the decentralized nature of authority within the EU, which spans vertically and horizontally across administrative levels and diverse sectors.[24] Consequently, it could be inferred that this configuration contributes to making the EU a combination of intergovernmental collaboration among sovereign MSs in the Council and the EP, codified through several major treaties.[25] In this intricate landscape, policy instruments emerge as critical tools for managing the transition to a sustainable energy future, highlighting the complexity of this objective.[26]

In this scenario, the span of many EU policy instruments may appear excessive, prompting questions about the necessity of such multiplicity. Contrarily, Rosenow et al. argue that a comprehensive range of instruments is essential for facilitating the necessary energy transition.[27] Nevertheless, Visscher et al. highlight that governance instruments like the EPBD and EED, despite their implementation, have shown limited effectiveness in achieving significant GHG reductions or ensuring actual energy performance improvements.[28] Casals further underscores that policymakers lack a comprehensive understanding of building energy performance, along with the functioning of policy instruments across different governance levels.[29] This complexity might stem from the fact that EU energy policy does not hold exclusive competence, considering that MSs retain significant sovereignty in this domain. Over time, however, the EC has steadily expanded its competencies in EU energy policy.[30]

In addition, Pereira and Da Silva, along with Cabeça et al., emphasize the urgent need to enhance institutional capacities for transposing and implementing energy efficiency legislation and directives across the entire EU.[31] Specifically, they argue for the development of robust governance monitoring and reporting systems, transparent indicators, and comprehensive assessments to measure the impact of good governance on achieving energy efficiency goals.[32]

Finally, globally, Florini and Sovacool argue that 'global energy governance,' understood as international collective action efforts to manage and distribute energy resources and services, provides a useful framework for assessing energy-related challenges. Karlsson-Vinkhuyzen et al. suggest viewing a sustainable energy system as a global public good to reduce sensitivity towards global energy governance.

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[22] Björklund, von Malmborg, & Nordensvärd (2023), p. 7.
[23] F. von Malmborg, M. Björklund & J. Nordensvärd, 'Multi-Level Governance and Policy for a Transition Towards Energy Efficient and Zero Carbon Buildings in the European Union : A Literature Review,' Linköping University Electronic Press (2022), pp. 24-25.
[24] Björklund, von Malmborg, & Nordensvärd (2023), pp. 5-7.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Ibid.
[27] von Malmborg, Björklund & Nordensvärd (2022), p. 25.
[28] F. von Malmborg, P. Rohdin, & E. Wihlborg, 'Climate Declarations for Buildings as a New Policy Instrument in Sweden: A Multiple Streams Perspective,' *Building Research & Information* (2023), p. 2.
[29] von Malmborg, Björklund & Nordensvärd (2022), p. 26.
[30] Björklund, von Malmborg & Nordensvärd (2023), p. 7.
[31] von Malmborg, Björklund & Nordensvärd (2022), p. 26.
[32] Ibid.

However, Florini and Sovacool also note that it is unlikely for a single international organization or regime to harmonize energy policies globally. Instead, various actors, such as the International Energy Agency (IEA), Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Partnership (REEEP) or the EU will continue to set rules for distinct aspects of the energy sector, often in conflicting ways.

At the Building Level

At the lowest level of MLG, the focus is on instruments aimed at enhancing energy efficiency in buildings. Energy retrofitting of existing structures is widely acknowledged as a significant challenge for CO2 emission mitigation policies across most countries. Buessler et al., Bright, and Weatherall highlight that multi-owned properties, such as apartments or condominiums, are particularly difficult to retrofit. Current laws and financial assistance fall short of overcoming the barriers to improving the energy performance of collectively owned properties.

Furthermore, Buessler et al. analyzed the role of stakeholders acting as 'facilitators' for co-owners in France, discovering that energy retrofitting could be accelerated with a strategic 50-year energy retrofitting program, substantial investment in support, and a more rigorous legislative framework for all collectively owned properties. Similarly, Bright and Weatherall, examining England and Wales, identified the complexities of co-ownership as a broader issue. They suggest that policy instruments must address the intricacies created by governance arrangements to enhance home energy efficiency.

Despite the EU's emphasis on low-energy and low-carbon retrofitting, recent policies have not achieved retrofits at scale, leading to grassroots initiatives addressing the challenge through community governance. Putnam and Brown investigated these initiatives in the UK, finding that community-led retrofitting effectively engages households and helps them access financing. However, they also highlight that strong government financial and regulatory support remains crucial. Lindstrand's case study of energy-plus buildings in a Swedish city district reveals that housing companies are keen to innovate but are uncertain about achieving energy efficiency due to occupant interaction with technology and energy concepts.

Regarding commercial buildings, Peterman et al. found that energy efficiency challenges drive the development of various voluntary and mandated programs. Understanding these programs involves considering economic incentives, certifications, partnerships, and internal company initiatives. Their framework assists building owners and managers in identifying motivations for energy efficiency, evaluating current programs, using them strategically, and anticipating new ones. However, improving environmental performance is complicated by conflicting interests, especially in rented spaces where leases often disregard environmental issues. In line with this, Janda et al. describe 'green leasing' as a means for landlords and tenants to collaborate on environmental goals, promoting cooperation despite varying objectives and enforcement.

Energy audits are also promoted as an effective tool to drive investment in energy efficiency measures in the residential sector. However, Murphy found that in the Netherlands, many audit recommendations are ignored because householders often consider their dwellings adequately energy efficient. In this context of smart

technology, the individual metering and billing (IMB) instrument, regulated under the Energy Efficiency Directive (EED), aims to provide households with better information on energy use.

Notably, energy service companies (ESCOs) Also play a significant role in enhancing building energy efficiency. Bertoldi and Boza-Kiss reviewed the ESCO market in the EU, noting that while driven by market forces (e.g., rising energy costs, increasing awareness, development of partnerships) and dedicated policy instruments, the success factors and barriers vary across countries.

Since traditional instruments are limited in achieving low-carbon buildings, governments, firms, and organizations are prompted to experiment with alternatives. These include certification and classification of buildings, new financing methods, and innovative ways of disseminating information. Van der Heijden analyzed 50 new-governance instruments from various regions, finding that certification and classification dominate. Certification involves assessing buildings against specific criteria to issue a compliance certificate, while classification indicates relative performance within the same certification system. According to Smith and Fischlein, these voluntary instruments may lead to the convergence of governance rules over time, though no single set of rules will prevail. Their findings illustrate that multiple and competing networks can provide innovative, legitimate, and evolving governance of sustainability, presenting new challenges for public and private sector actors.

While various instruments and initiatives aim to improve building energy efficiency, a significant gap remains in understanding their long-term impacts. Hence, to effectively meet the EU's ambitious targets, it is crucial to develop regulatory systems and instruments that address decision-making barriers and ensure harmonized and coherent policymaking across member states.

The Way Forward

Recognizing these challenges, von Malmborg, Björklund, and Nordensvärd advocate for radical and innovative regulatory systems and instruments to meet the EU's ambitious targets effectively. Similarly, von Malmborg, Rohdin, and Wihlborg stress the importance of designing policy instruments that address decision-making barriers, for instance in the buildings sector to improve energy efficiency and reduce GHG emissions.[33] Additionally, they emphasize the need to analyze policy development in the face of conflicting interests and stress the importance of understanding the policymaking process and the intricate interplay between ideas and interests that drive policy change.[34] In line with this, Stephenson highlights the underexplored complexity of actors within the EU, suggesting that more efforts should be directed toward comprehending the pluralistic nature of EU policymaking.[35]

An essential aspect of understanding policymaking is examining how policymakers articulate and frame problems and solutions, which deeply influences policy adoption processes.[36] For instance, there could be more focused on the EC since it is the primary agenda-setting institution in the EU, which plays a pivotal role

[33] von Malmborg, Rohdin & Wihlborg (2023), p.3.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Björklund, von Malmborg & Nordensvärd (2023), p. 5.
[36] F. von Malmborg, M. Björklund & J. Nordensvärd, 'Framing the Benefits of European Union Policy Expansion on Energy Efficiency of Buildings: A Swiss Knife or a Trojan Horse,' *European Policy Analysis*, vol. 9, no. 3 (2023), p. 220.

in framing discussions on energy efficiency.[37] Understandably, the way problems and solutions are framed by the EC can have significant implications for other political actors.[38]

In line with this, Economidou et al. provide a comprehensive overview of European policies and measures from the 1970s to 2018.[39] However, their analysis overlooks the justifications and framing of these policies, which are crucial for understanding the policy processes and actor motivations.[40] Dunlop further emphasizes the challenge of defining energy efficiency, noting its ontological ambiguity and the complexities inherent in applying efficiency concepts to real-world energy consumption processes and practices.[41]

Consequently, the ambiguity surrounding the concept of energy efficiency presents challenges for its study, as the value and impact of energy-efficient actions depend significantly on the context in which they are applied.[42] In fact, von Malmborg, by employing discourse analysis to investigate energy efficiency policy, reveals two distinct discourses: a multiple benefits discourse and a narrower climate change discourse. According to him, the multiple benefits discourse has become institutionalized within policy frameworks.[43]

Hence, in a context where the EU's pursuit of energy efficiency as a policy goal is not new but rather a recurring and evolving element of EU policymaking over time, the state of the art in social research on energy policy underscores several critical themes.[44] First, it highlights the significance of energy efficiency and the intersection with energy poverty, emphasizing the need for targeted policies in these areas. Additionally, research underscores the pivotal role of buildings in mitigating GHG, making them a key focus of sustainability efforts. Furthermore, the complexity and ambiguity inherent in energy efficiency research pose significant challenges, requiring in-depth investigation. Namely, research that goes beyond evaluating the effectiveness of policy lobbying, but that aims to understand the entire policy process, including actors and their motivations.

By addressing these gaps, this research group aims to enhance our theoretical understanding of policy development processes. The knowledge generated is not only valuable for decision-makers within EU institutions, member states, and interest organizations, but also for companies involved in construction, administration, industry, and the public sector. Moreover, the insights gained can inform analyses across diverse policy domains, extending the impact of this research beyond the realm of energy policy.

[37] Ibid.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid., p. 221.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid., p. 220.
[42] Ibid., p. 221.
[43] Ibid., p. 222.
[44] Ibid., p. 220.

Research Design and Methods

Overview of Methodology

The methodology employed in this project combines both qualitative and quantitative analysis to provide a deeper and better understanding of the research topics. On the one hand, the quantitative methods allow for the understanding of patterns considering it provides objective statistical analysis on large-scale data collection. On the other hand, qualitative methods represent a robust tool to research and analyze policy-relevant questions since they enable us to get deeper into the interpretation of the data.[45]

Similarly, case studies that combines both quantitative and qualitative methods enables the research to investigate a nuanced exploration of textual data, extracting both qualitative insights and quantitative patterns, thereby quantifying key themes and trends.

Thus, this research, which encompasses multiple dimensions related to energy policy, was organized into several stages: selecting the methodology, choosing the cases, collecting the data, and analyzing and discussing the results. Depending on the specific aspects of energy policy being studied, the analysis employed mixed methods, only qualitative text analysis or, in some instances, interviews.

Case Selection

Regarding the case selection procedures of the research articles on EU energy and climate policies, it could be said that they demonstrate a robust and systematic approach tailored to the specific aims and contexts of each study. Therefore, since the object of study is indeed European energy and climate policies, this report is based predominantly on EU documents and policy position papers produced by different stakeholders.

More specifically, some research focuses on the role of the EC considering its agenda-setting powers in proposing and prioritizing legislation. However, the legislative process extends beyond the EC. Therefore, studying the EP activities on energy and climate policies reveals additional layers of the policy process, as the EP can amend legislation and influence its drafting through Own Initiative Reports (EPOIR)[46]. Similarly, the Council has an influential role alongside the EP in deciding legislative procedures. Hence, as the primary drivers of policy formulation and implementation, these institutions play a pivotal role in shaping the energy agenda and directing the actions of other EU agencies and actors. Undoubtedly, selecting and examining these cases, such as the Council's role in the recast of the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive offers crucial insights into the policy process and decision-making dynamics within the EU energy governance framework.

Moreover, as highlighted in the literature review, understanding the complexity of energy and climate policies necessitates a thorough grasp of the current legislation. That is the reason among the selected cases, the research group focuses predominantly on the texts of final EU directives, resolutions, energy efficiency of buildings, FuelEU Maritime legislation, and Energy Efficiency.

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[45] F. von Malmborg, 'Advocacy Coalitions and Policy Change for Decarbonisation of International Maritime Transport: The Case of FuelEU Maritime,' *Maritime Transport Research*, vol. 4 (2023), p. 4.
[46] M. Webb & A. Kreppel, 'The European Parliament's Role as an Informal EU Agenda Setter: The Influence of Own Initiative Reports,' *Public Administration,* vol. 99, no.2 (2021), pp. 304-05.

Evidently, the texts of final EU directives serve as authoritative sources that illustrate the agreed policies and measures within the EU. Given that these documents outline the legislative framework and provide practical guidance for MSs, analyzing these texts offers knowledge into the formalized policies and strategies endorsed by EU institutions, thereby facilitating a comprehensive understanding of the regulatory landscape and its implications for energy governance.

Furthermore, the study of the legislation concerning the case of energy efficiency of buildings is strategic as this legislation constitutes essential components of EU energy policy. In fact, buildings play a significant role in energy consumption and GHG, making this sector crucial for sustainable energy transitions. Therefore, examining this case provides valuable insights into the regulation of a specific and impactful sector, highlighting the broader implications for EU energy policy.

In other words, selecting the cases of specific legislation for examination offers a clearer picture of the unique challenges and opportunities associated with promoting energy efficiency and reducing emissions across different sectors, thereby contributing to a more holistic understanding of EU energy policy objectives and strategies. Consequently, our case selection represents a strategic approach examining key components, drivers, and implications of EU energy policy.

Data Collection and Analysis Methods

As anticipated, data collection involved gathering textual data from diverse sources, including policy documents, reports, official communications, and public discourse. The data collection process was systematic and comprehensive, following specific criteria, such as coherence, relevance, and objectivity to ensure the integrity of the collected data.

Regarding the use of qualitative data analysis, this included rigorous techniques to extract meaningful insights from the textual data including coding, thematic analysis, and interpretation of textual patterns and discourse. In this context, it stands out the use of innovative theoretical analytical frameworks, such as the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF). Since ACF focuses on the cooperation of different actors to support policies, it is particularly well-suited for analyzing the implementation and revision of EU energy efficiency policies.[47]

Notably, although the ACF has been used in various policy development analyses, it has rarely been used to analyze energy efficiency policies. Consequently, given the robustness of the framework, our approach is both novel and impactful.[48] Likewise, the methodology stands out for employing argumentative discourse analysis (ADA) to ensure a detailed understanding of policy formulation and implementation processes. This combination of ACF and ADA within the methodological framework enhances the robustness of the research, contributing significantly to the field and offering a comprehensive view of the dynamics involved in EU energy policy development.

Last but not least, the qualitative methodology also made use of process tracing, which can provide insightful details on how public policies emerge by considering the context and the actors involved, and interviews

[47] F. von Malmborg, 'Exploring Advocacy Coalitions for Energy Efficiency: Policy Change Through Internal Shock and Learning in the European Union,' *Energy Research & Social Science*, vol. 80 (2021), pp. 3-4.
[48] Ibid.

with key individuals as well as participatory observations.[49] These analytical approaches offered deeper knowledge of the policy negotiation processes and framing strategies.

The quantitative analysis involved the application of coding schemes to systematically quantify textual content and derive statistical frequency measures. Among other things, this quantitative approach allowed for the creation of a sentiment lexicon tailored to the context of the material under study. In other words, by exploring the use of negative and positive sentiment based on the language used throughout the texts to defend policy positions, the analysis delved deeper into the textual data. Hence, the analysis is also marked by a systematic approach to assess changes across iterations of the text.

Finally, this multi-method approach ensured that while the selection of cases and collection of data were grounded in rich empirical evidence, the combination of qualitative and quantitative methods facilitated a thorough exploration and analysis of the factors influencing energy policy decisions in the EU, providing a comprehensive understanding of the policy processes.

[49] von Malmborg & Strachan, p. 5.

Lessons learned

Advocacy Coalitions and Policy Change

Research in advocacy coalitions and policy change explores the dynamics of political reforms and the development of legislative frameworks within the EU. Through various case studies, the research group has examined how advocacy coalitions, comprised of different stakeholders with shared beliefs, goals, and interests, influence policy outcomes. Thus, these studies shed light on the intricate processes of negotiation, coalition-building, and institutionalization of policy ideas, illustrating the complexities of EU energy and climate policymaking. Consequently, the following encompasses the lessons and insights learned as well as key research findings from the investigations into advocacy coalitions and policy change in EU energy efficiency, maritime decarbonization, and industrial energy efficiency.

Advocacy Coalitions and Policy Change at the EU level

In the realm of energy and climate policies and research, understanding how political reforms on energy efficiency and decarbonization are developed, modified, and implemented over time is crucial. Given the historical lack of social science research on this topic, we investigate with this paper the dynamics within the EU policy subsystem, particularly focusing on advocacy coalitions and paths to policy change regarding Sweden's lobbying efforts against the European proposals on Individual Metering and Billing (IMB) systems.

The theory underpinning the analysis is ACF where actors in the policy process coordinate their actions to effect change, which occurs over extended periods in response to both internal and external events. Major policy changes are often difficult to implement due to the stability of actors' core beliefs. However, the behavior of these actors is influenced by stable factors, such as the distribution of natural resources and socio-cultural values, and dynamic factors, like changes in socio-economic conditions and shifts in governing coalitions.

Notably, to investigate these dynamics, empirical data were collected through qualitative text analyses of various official documents, including EU legislative proposals, amendments, and final directives. The authors also considered interviews with key individuals involved in the negotiations.

The issue at the core of the study is the debate over IMB of heating and cooling in multi-apartment and multi-purpose buildings. The EC 2011 proposal, which included mandatory IMB installation, faced significant opposition from countries like Sweden and Finland. The Swedish government, supported by national interest groups, argued that IMB was often not cost-efficient and could negatively impact energy poverty, housing policy, and social policy.

Regarding the results, Sweden's strategy evolved significantly between the original EED negotiations and its revision. Initially passive, Sweden adopted a proactive approach during the 2016–2018 revision process. This involved presenting alternative proposals early, collaborating with national and EU interest groups, and engaging directly with influential EU officials and MSs. Sweden's advocacy work emphasized the importance of proportionality and cost-efficiency, gaining broad support and leading to amendments in the EED that aligned more closely with Swedish and Finnish positions.

Lessons Learned

- Through the case of Sweden, it is observed that successful advocacy requires building broad coalitions of interest, including other MSs and relevant sectoral groups. Sweden's collaboration with entities like Housing Europe and the International Union of Tenants was instrumental in its success.
- Similarly, advocacy efforts must address all relevant EU institutions, including the EC, the EP, and the Council. Sweden's comprehensive approach, which included direct engagement and strategic meetings and seminars, proved effective.
- Additionally, core beliefs among actors can remain stable even amidst government changes, as seen in Sweden's consistent stance despite a shift from a center-liberal-conservative government to a social-democrat-green government. However, the ability to adapt strategies and form new coalitions quickly is also critical.
- The acceptance of Sweden and Finland's proposals by most MSs highlights the role of policy-oriented learning. The process demonstrated that significant policy changes could occur without external dynamic factors, driven instead by internal shocks and advocacy efforts.

Conclusion

As part of the research project, this analysis is important because it underscores the importance of strategic advocacy and coalition-building in the complex landscape of EU energy policy. Notably, the findings challenge some traditional assumptions of the ACF, particularly regarding the pace and drivers of policy change. For smaller MSs like those in the Nordic region, the lessons learned emphasize the need for proactive and inclusive advocacy strategies to influence EU policy effectively in these areas. These insights are vital for shaping future energy efficiency policies and achieving broader energy and climate goals.

Advocacy coalitions and Policy Change for Decarbonization of International Maritime Transport

Since international shipping, responsible for transporting 80% of the world's trade by volume, is a critical component of the global economy and a significant contributor to GHG emissions, reducing the climate impact of maritime activities necessitates a shift towards alternative energy sources. Recently, the EU has taken substantial legislative steps to address this issue, including the inclusion of shipping in the European Union Emissions Trading System (EU ETS), the FuelEU Maritime regulation, and the Alternative Fuels Infrastructure Regulation (AFIR).

In March 2023, the EP and the Council reached a political agreement on the FuelEU Maritime legislation, marking a major policy shift aimed at setting a global standard for the maritime sector. Consequently, it is of research interest to understand the coalitions formed in advancing their interests regarding the proposal.

In fact, although the Council's general approach to FuelEU Maritime was unanimously approved by the MSs in 2022, some countries, including Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and Sweden, advocated for more ambitious GHG reduction targets. The EP, environmental NGOs like 'Seas at Risk' and 'Clean Air Task Force' (CATF), and various industry groups pushed for 100% reductions by 2050. There was also significant support for sub-quotas on Renewable and Low-Carbon Fuels (RFNBOs) to ensure the maritime sector's transition to greener fuels. However, other industry players feared insufficient supply to meet the ambitious targets. There were disagreements regarding penalties for non-compliance with these measures.

While the EP and shipping industry favored directing penalty revenues to a new Ocean Fund, the Council suggested that these revenues should go to MSs budgets but be earmarked for maritime innovation projects.

Let it be noted that in this case the empirical data for analyzing these negotiations were gathered through participatory observations and the examination of official and classified documents related to the EU's FuelEU Maritime discussions.

Regarding the advocacy coalitions, the negotiations revealed two primary advocacy coalitions. The dominant coalition, which included the EP, certain MSs, environmental NGOs, and progressive maritime companies, advocated for high emissions reduction targets and sub-quotas for RFNBOs. The subordinate coalition, consisting of the EC, most MSs, the Council, and major shipping associations like ECSA and WSC that supported moderate emission reductions and opposed sub-quotas for RFNBOs.

These negotiations and discussions on GHG reductions in the maritime sector occurred in the context of international green initiatives, such as the Paris Agreement and subsequent international declarations on green shipping corridors and zero emissions by 2050. Hence, the EU's FuelEU Maritime initiative, part of the broader European Green Deal, aiming at making the EU climate-neutral by 2050, was influenced by these global commitments (i.e., external shocks). The negotiation process within the EU was characterized by conflict and cooperation, reflecting the differing core and secondary beliefs of the coalitions involved. This process of negotiation, known for fostering mutual confidence and political compromise, was essential for policy change, highlighting the importance of institutionalized negotiation mechanisms in the EU.

Despite the intense negotiations, a compromise emerged. The EP succeeded in raising emission reduction targets, while the Council ensured revenues from non-compliance penalties would go to MSs, earmarked for maritime innovation projects.

Lessons Learned

- Successful policy formulation requires the active participation of a broad range of stakeholders, including governments, industry, and civil society.
- It is important that policymakers must strike a balance between ambitious climate targets and the practical realities of the market and the available technology.
- The EU's institutionalized negotiation processes, particularly the trilogues, facilitate compromise and foster cooperation, essential for advancing complex regulatory frameworks.
- External events, like international climate agreements, can act as catalysts for action on important policy issues, thereby providing the needed incentive to advance significant policy changes.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the EU's legislative journey towards decarbonizing maritime shipping demonstrates the importance of cohesive policy frameworks, collaborative negotiations, and adaptive strategies. Thus, the FuelEU Maritime regulation sets a precedent for future initiatives aimed at reducing the environmental impact of global trade.

Combining ACF and Discourse Analysis through the Case of the 'Energy Efficiency First' Principle

Since arguing is an important aspect of negotiations, as highlighted previously, the researchers also delve into the interplay between the ACF and discourse analysis. The assumption being that combining these approaches can provide deeper insights into how political realities are constructed and contested. Discourse analysis, which studies language use and sociocultural meaning structures, reveals that policies are not simply imposed but are actively disputed in an ongoing struggle for interpretation and implementation.

In this study, discourses are defined as ensembles of ideas, concepts, and categorizations produced and transformed through specific practices, giving meaning to physical and social realities. Understanding these discursive patterns is crucial because they shape the perception of events and political goals. Consequently, the ADA method sheds light on the mechanisms generating specific political realities through empirical research. In this case, the material consists of document analysis of official, semi-official, and classified documents from EU negotiations on the EE1 principle, a new legal concept in the EU. The EE1 principle prioritizes demand-side resources over supply-side alternatives, emphasizing greater societal value in meeting decision objectives.

Notably, the EE1 principle has been a contentious topic, with various EU bodies and interest groups endorsing it but disagreeing on its specifics and application. Advocacy coalitions, comprising different stakeholders like the EC, the EP, MSs, and interest groups, have divergent preferences on policy initiatives, leading to debates on preserving or changing governmental programs.

The results of the analysis show that initially, the EED linked energy efficiency with energy security and climate change mitigation. Nevertheless, the 2018 amendment expanded this to include multiple benefits of energy efficiency, reflecting the evolving and complex understanding of the term. This aligns with the concept of ecological modernization, which aims to broaden support for energy efficiency policies among policymakers, interest groups, and the public.

Furthermore, the EC, supported by most interest groups, argued that the EE1 principle is essential for cost-effective decarbonization and transitioning to renewable energy. The EP supported this view, advocating for a broader application of the EE1 principle across all relevant energy-related investment decisions, including in the public and private financial sectors. However, within the Council, some MSs called for flexibility and limitations on the EE1 principle's scope, influenced by private sector critiques. These MSs argued for confining the principle to major public sector investments and introducing economic thresholds to accommodate the private sector's concerns.

On the other hand, the Council's position indicated a preference for a weaker EE1 principle, focusing more on climate change mitigation, which has gained renewed importance due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine and its impact on EU energy security. This contrasts with the EC and EP, which, along with several interest groups, emphasize the multiple benefits of energy efficiency and advocated for strong legislation on the EE1 principle.

Thus, despite these discursive differences, there are overlapping narrative elements among the various stakeholders. While some prioritized climate change and energy security, others highlighted the broader societal benefits of energy efficiency. This interplay of discourse contributes to shaping the ongoing policy debates and the eventual formulation of energy efficiency policies in the EU.

Lessons Learned

- The study underscores how discourse shapes policymaking. Throughout the paper, it is shown how different stakeholders use language and social practices to construct and contest political realities, influencing the development and implementation of policies like the EE1 principle.
- The varying views of EU bodies and interest groups highlight the complexity of achieving consensus in policy processes at the EU policymaking level. Consequently, understanding these divergent perspectives is crucial for effective policy negotiation and implementation.
- The transition of the EED from a focus on energy security and climate change to encompassing multiple benefits illustrates the dynamic nature of policy negotiation. Policymakers need to adapt to evolving societal and environmental contexts and find common positions with different stakeholders.
- The interaction between different advocacy coalitions reveals that coalitions significantly influence policy outcomes, demonstrating the importance of coalition-building in policy processes.

Another study from the research group analyzes even in more depth the EE1 and the use of discourses highlighting related results and confirming that while the amendments to the EED were originally focused on energy security and climate change mitigation, they have broadened its scope to highlight multiple benefits, including climate action, energy security, and poverty alleviation.

Research into the politics of the EE1 principle reveals how different actors shape its interpretation and implementation. As anticipated, the EC, the EP, MSs, and various interest groups assign different meanings to the EE1 principle. While all endorse it broadly, they diverge on specifics.

It is also noted that discourse coalitions emerge based on shared concepts rather than interests. For instance, one coalition focuses on the multiple benefits of energy efficiency and advocates for strong regulation. Another emphasizes climate change mitigation with weaker regulatory frameworks. These coalitions influence the policy process by structuring and institutionalizing the discourse, where dominant storylines gain coherence and credibility, shaping policy outcomes.

According to Hajer, conflicts in environmental politics are not fixed scenarios where actors play predefined roles like environmentalist, policymaker, scientist, or industrialist. Instead, they are dynamic argumentative struggles where actors try to shape how others perceive the problem and position them accordingly.

In line with this, a particular understanding or perception of a policy problem becomes dominant through 'discourse structuration' (achieving coherence and credibility) and 'discourse institutionalization' (being acted upon within the policy process and replacing previous understandings). As expected, this discursive predominance is built using resources like knowledge and demonstrated benefits. In the case of the EE1 principle, the discourse emphasizing multiple benefits became more structured and institutionalized than the climate action discourse. Let us remember that two main discourse coalitions existed around the EE1 principle: one focused on multiple benefits with strong regulation, and the other on climate change mitigation with weaker regulation.

As shown, during Council negotiations, interdiscursive communication between MSs and the EC did not alter the Council's views on energy efficiency but persuaded a minority of MSs to drop their idea of limiting the EE1 principle to the public sector. Both the multiple benefits and climate change discourses remained intact. In subsequent trilogue negotiations between the Council, the EP, and the EC, climate change stayed the top benefit of energy efficiency, but the Council also recognized other benefits like energy security and poverty alleviation, especially due to the energy crisis triggered by the Russian war on Ukraine.

It should be noted here that the negotiations around the EE1 principles underscore the politics of meaning with different actors actively positioning themselves. In this context, 'storylines' play a crucial role because in this process they act as the connector uniting various elements into specific, understandable problems. Consequently, new storylines can drive political change by reordering meanings. In this case, the multiple benefits discourse had stronger, more compelling storylines than the climate mitigation discourse.

Lessons Learned:

- Energy efficiency policy in the EU has evolved from addressing immediate crises, such as the oil shocks of the 1970s, to encompassing broader goals like climate action and socioeconomic development. This evolution reflects changing understandings of energy challenges and opportunities.
- The concept of energy efficiency principles, like EE1, is subject to interpretation and dispute among EU actors. Such disputes often revolve around the scope and objectives of energy efficiency measures, highlighting the complexity of aligning diverse interests and priorities.

- The framing strategies of energy efficiency policies to emphasize multiple benefits can broaden support and enhance policy effectiveness. Highlighting co-benefits such as energy security and poverty alleviation can help increase broader political and societal backing.
- Understanding discourse coalitions and the dynamics of discourse is crucial for shaping energy efficiency policy outcomes. These coalitions, based on shared terms and concepts, are instrumental in defining policy problems and shaping agendas.

Conclusion

The integration of ACF and discourse analysis provides a comprehensive framework to analyze the political, social, and linguistic dimensions of energy policy. By examining how different stakeholders construct and contest meanings, these studies highlight the complex and multifaceted nature of policy-making processes and the critical role of discourse in shaping political realities and outcomes.

Moreover, in navigating the complexities of energy efficiency policy within the EU, policymakers must recognize the power of narrative construction and the politics of meaning. By understanding lessons learned from past policy experiences, stakeholders can better address challenges and capitalize on opportunities to promote sustainable energy transitions across the region.

Thus, a better understanding of these dynamics is essential for developing effective energy policies that balance diverse interests and achieve sustainable outcomes.

Tales of Creation

As previously inferred, the EU adoption of the EE1 principle, a legally binding regulation requiring MSs to prioritize energy efficiency in all planning, policymaking, and major investment decisions, represents a significant policy shift. This change occurred within the complex institutional framework of EU legislative procedures, influenced by various interest groups and stakeholders. Understanding how this policy change was achieved requires analyzing not only the policy's effects but also the underlying values, beliefs, and decision-making ambiguities associated with it that made possible the institutionalization of the discourse around this.

Therefore, to comprehend the institutionalization of the EE1 principle, the research group relied on the ACF as a critical theoretical lens, process tracing and qualitative text analysis. The choice is partly motivated by the framework assumptions, namely, that policy actors' behaviors and beliefs are deeply embedded in informal networks and that policymakers seek allies with shared core beliefs to form advocacy coalitions. These coalitions coordinate their activities toward common goals, whether through strong deliberate plans or weak unconscious alignments. Accordingly, the methodology helped identify groups of actors with shared beliefs, focusing on their narratives, views, and beliefs regarding energy efficiency and the EE1 principle.

Despite general endorsement of the EE1 principle, stakeholders had differing views on its purpose, scope, and sectoral application. Key lines of dispute included whether the policy should target all projects or only large ones, and whether it should encompass both public and private sectors.

The critical MSs in the Council, initially resistant, learned from others and accepted middle-ground positions, demonstrating the role of learning and adaptation in the policy process.

As per the coalitions, it could be said that four primary advocacy coalitions emerged around the EE1 principle, each with distinct views on its strength and scope. These included the EC and majority of interest groups advocating a strong EE1 principle, the EP and major interest groups supporting extensive application across all sectors, and two coalitions preferring weaker implementations limited to large investments and the public sector.

These coalitions, while not formal entities like political parties, played significant roles in shaping policy through varied networks ranging from shared beliefs to coordinated political activities.

The shift, it is said, was possible also due to the negotiation processes. In fact, the EU decision-making processes are characterized by problem-solving exercises. Negotiations on the EE1 principle involved deliberate problem-solving rather than mere bargaining. The institutionalized negotiation style in the EU facilitated cooperation between co-legislators, creating mutual confidence and positive trust spirals.

In the case of the policy change, this followed an external shock—namely, the adoption of an EU climate law post-Paris Agreement, which led to the 'Fit for 55' legislative package. This external shock, combined with a negotiated agreement between the Council and the EP, underscored the importance of adaptive and cooperative approaches in policy formulation.

Thus, the final policy outcome was a result of a negotiated agreement between the Council and the EP, demonstrating the importance of cooperative and problem-solving approaches in EU policymaking. Critical MSs in the Council, initially resistant, learned from other actors and accepted middle-ground positions, reflecting the role of learning and adaptation in the policy process.

Lessons Learned:

- The process of institutionalizing the EE1 principle demonstrated the crucial role of advocacy coalitions in shaping policy. Four primary coalitions emerged, each with distinct views on the EE1 principle's scope and application. Notably, these coalitions, while not formal entities, significantly influenced the policy process through shared beliefs, coordinated actions, and strategic alliances.
- The discourse surrounding the EE1 principle revealed critical insights into the policy process. The primary lines of dispute—regarding the purpose of energy efficiency policy, the size of projects covered, and the sectors included—highlighted the importance of belief systems in policymaking. Accordingly, taken their discourses into account, these four coalitions could be grouped into two main groups: a coalition advocating for a strong EE1 principle which viewed energy efficiency as a multi-faceted policy with numerous benefits, and another coalition favoring a weaker implementation focused primarily on climate change mitigation.
- The EU's institutionalized problem-solving negotiation approach played a pivotal role in the adoption of the EE1 principle. The negotiations were characterized by deliberate problem-solving rather than mere bargaining, fostering cooperation rather than confrontation. Understandably, this approach facilitated policy learning and a negotiated agreement.
- Finally, regarding said policy learning, it is evident that the initially resistant MSs learned from other actors and accepted middle-ground positions. This adaptability facilitated the final agreement and underscored the importance of flexibility in policymaking.

Conclusion

The institutionalization of the EE1 principle in the EU illustrates the formation and influence of advocacy coalitions, combined with problem-solving negotiation approaches, highlighting the multifaceted nature of policymaking.

Promoting Energy Efficiency in European Industry

Energy efficiency in the industrial sector is a crucial issue for achieving sustainability goals. However, there is no unified EU legislation specifically targeting this sector. Instead, legislation promoting the use of energy audits or energy management systems within business serves as a proxy. Evidently, a fragmented approach complicates the promotion of energy efficiency across diverse MSs.

That is the reason this study by Malmborg and Strachan on understanding and addressing this complex policy problem is crucial. By employing the ACF they analyze how energy efficiency policies in the EU are created and modified. The use of said framework is most suitable since it posits that public policies are shaped not just by government actions but by belief systems, which are manifested through goals, rules, incentives, sanctions, subsidies, taxes, and other regulatory instruments thereby facilitating its analysis.

In the case of energy efficiency in the EU, the coalitions formed around shared beliefs and goals. Thus, the EC proposed mandatory energy audits and energy management systems as part of the recast of the EED. This proposal aligned with the European Green Deal and new climate laws, reflecting a broader policy shift towards greater sustainability.

However, support for this proposal varied among MSs. While some MSs and most interest groups supported the EC's view, many MSs focused on other aspects of the EED. This divergence in priorities illustrates the complexity of forming effective coalitions.

The study found that the deliberative nature of EU negotiations facilitated policy-oriented learning across belief systems. MSs learned from each other, leading to acceptance of middle-ground positions. Such learning also occurred during trilogue negotiations between the Council, the EP, and the EC, highlighting the importance of dialogue and compromise in policy development.

Lessons Learned

- The lack of unified EU energy legislation specifically targeting industrial energy efficiency necessitates the use of proxy measures like energy audits and management systems, which further complicate cohesive policy development.
- As seen earlier, policies are also influenced by the belief systems of various stakeholders, making it essential to consider such beliefs in the policy-making process.
- Significant policy changes can also result from external shocks, such as the European Green Deal and new climate laws. It is hence important to make the most of similar events as catalysts for policy changes since these can shift the focus and priorities of policy makers.
- Deliberative negotiations appear to play a key role in fostering policy learning, consensus and developing effective policies. Consequently, fostering the engagement of different stakeholders with different belief systems could lead to more balanced and accepted policy outcomes.

Conclusion

Since promoting energy efficiency in the EU industrial sector is a complex challenge due to the lack of unified legislation and diverse priorities among MSs, it is imperative to facilitate deliberative negotiations to develop common positions and facilitate policy learning and the influence of the policy development. As the EU continues to pursue ambitious energy efficiency targets, these lessons learned will be critical for shaping effective and sustainable policies.

Energy Efficiency in Buildings and Multi-Level Governance

The research discussed in this section explores the intersection of energy efficiency in buildings and multi-level governance, particularly focusing on policy development and implementation. Importantly, the analyses utilize the Multiple Streams Framework (MSF) and the MLG theoretical frames to understand the dynamics of policy formation, considering factors such as problem identification, policy options, and political context.

Lessons learnt from 20+ years of research on multi-level governance of energy efficient and zero-carbon buildings in the European Union

The transition towards energy-efficient and zero-carbon buildings is essential for achieving a sustainable and climate-neutral future. Governance and policy play pivotal roles in guiding corporations and consumers towards sustainable innovations, particularly in the building sector. The EU has been at the forefront of this effort, yet challenges persist in achieving the ambitious targets set for 2050. In fact, policymakers in the EU must navigate complex MLG frameworks to address environmental challenges. Understanding these complexities is vital for crafting effective policies.

Since this intricate MLG system underscores the need for thorough comprehension to advance ambitious legislation at the EU and national levels, Björklund, Von Malmborg and Nordensvärd endeavor in a thorough literature review encompassing over 20 years of research on MLG of energy efficient and zero-carbon buildings in the EU. Initially, they gathered over 1000 scholarly works from diverse global sources, refining their selection to approximately 250 after filtering out materials not focused on EU governance. The aim is to assess how the EU is addressing the diverse challenges posed by multitiered governance structures in the clean energy transition and the decarbonization of the building sector by identifying the obstacles in managing this transition, offering thus insights into policy pathways and areas for further research.

Challenges Learned

Ambiguous Leadership

Global energy efficiency governance lacks a cohesive leadership structure, resulting in fragmented efforts. The EU has taken significant steps, such as initiating the Covenant of Mayors and integrating concepts from the IEA into its policies. However, the absence of a global institution to harmonize energy policies creates challenges. The EU's leadership role is evident in its stringent regulations, but its influence is limited globally. Moreover, the effectiveness of EU policies depends significantly on the willingness of MSs to align with these ambitious goals, especially if other major global players do not follow suit.

Heterogeneity of Implementation

The EU's multilevel governance system is characterized by diverse national governance structures, leading to varied implementation of policies. For instance, MSs apply different thresholds for energy performance certificates and have distinct building traditions and climate conditions. This diversity results in a "chaotic status quo," complicating the transition to clean energy sources. The EED and the EPBD are key policy instruments, yet their transposition into national laws varies. The EU should then consider these differences to formulate effective policies and ensure a more harmonized approach.

Lack of Incentives

Effective incentives are crucial for encouraging the renovation of existing buildings and the construction of new energy-efficient ones. Despite the availability of financial instruments, the results have been limited. Building owners, especially in the commercial sector, often lack sufficient motivation to invest in energy efficiency. The challenge is exacerbated by the fragmented incentives between building owners and tenants. To meet the EU's goal of significantly increasing the renovation rates, more targeted and effective incentives are needed since it is the building owners and managers that are making decisions on the lowest governance level.

The Limitations of Non-Regulatory Policy Instruments

Non-regulatory policy instruments, such as voluntary initiatives and certifications, have shown limited success. These instruments often work well in high-end commercial property development but fail to impact residential buildings and other sectors significantly. Voluntary approaches provide flexibility but lack the enforcement power needed to drive widespread adoption of energy-efficient practices. Therefore, while non-regulatory instruments can complement traditional policies by addressing specific issues that policy instruments fail to cover, they cannot replace the need for binding regulations.

Limited Diffusion Between Governance Levels

Local and regional governments play a critical role in implementing energy policies, often going beyond national standards. Initiatives like the Covenant of Mayors illustrate the potential of local actions. However, these efforts frequently remain isolated, with limited vertical diffusion of lessons learned. The lack of integration between local, national, and EU levels inhibits the overall effectiveness of policies. Consequently, ensuring better communication and coordination across all governance levels is essential for achieving the desired outcomes.

Conclusion

The transition to energy-efficient and zero-carbon buildings in the EU faces significant governance challenges. Ambiguous leadership, heterogeneous implementation, insufficient incentives, limitations of non-regulatory instruments, and limited diffusion between governance levels are key obstacles. As shown by research, to meet the ambitious targets set by the EU, a combination of voluntary and compulsory policy instruments is necessary. Additionally, policymakers must account for the diverse national contexts and enhance coordination across all governance levels. By addressing these challenges, the EU could create a more effective and cohesive approach to achieving a sustainable future.

Framing the Benefits of European Union Policy Expansion on Energy Efficiency of Buildings within the MLG Framework

The EU has long focused on energy efficiency, particularly within the building sector, which accounts for about 40% of energy use and 36% of energy-related GHG. Despite this focus, the concept of energy efficiency remains ontologically ambiguous. It has repeatedly been noted that its application varies significantly depending on context, leading to complexities in defining, measuring, and implementing energy efficiency measures.

To complicate matters even further, policymakers frame problems and solutions to influence the policy process and outcomes. As a result, the evolution of EU policy on energy efficiency of buildings reflects this complexity and diversity of benefits and justifications over the past five decades.

For these reasons, this research group has played a critical role in unraveling the multifaceted nature of energy efficiency policies. In fact, the extensive review of EU policy documents reveals how energy efficiency has been framed differently over time to address various political, economic, and social issues.

Notably, the MLG framework is particularly relevant here, as it helps explain how diverse levels of governance—EU institutions, MSs, and local authorities—interact and influence the policy process. The framework is particularly instrumental in illuminating how policies are shaped, adopted, and implemented through the interactions between these different governance levels.

Lessons Learned

- The justification for energy efficiency policies in the EU has expanded significantly since the 1970s. Initially focused on energy security, the scope now includes climate change mitigation, economic competitiveness, job creation, and social benefits such as alleviating energy poverty. It could be argued that this evolution reflects the EU's adaptability to external events and changing priorities.
- The concept of "multiple benefits" has become central in EU policy documents. Energy efficiency is not only seen as an environmental policy but also as an economic, security, and social policy. Notably, this broad framing is used to gather broader support from various stakeholders and policymakers. For instance, consider the recast for the EED, the benefits cited include improved air quality, public health, reduced GHG emissions, and enhanced energy security.
- Despite the broad framing and multiple claimed benefits, the implementation of energy efficiency measures in buildings faces significant challenges. These include skepticism about the claimed benefits, the high initial costs, and the complexity of achieving effective outcomes with a "Swiss knife" approach, where it is attempted to address multiple issues simultaneously (like a Swiss knife with many tools) without specialized targeted measures that might be more effective. As a result, policymakers often struggle with the high investment required and the perceived lack of immediate and tangible benefits.
- The shift in policy frames can be partly attributed to the EU's response to external events, such as the oil crisis in the 1970s, the increasing urgency of climate change, and recent geopolitical events like the Russian war on Ukraine. These events have prompted the EU to reframe energy efficiency to include energy security and other pressing issues.

- As seen also in earlier discussion, the strategic framing of energy efficiency policies serves as a tool to align various policy domains and achieve broader policy goals. However, this also raises questions about the efficacy of a generalized approach versus specialized, targeted measures. The "Swiss knife" metaphor suggests that while energy efficiency can address multiple issues, it may not be the most effective solution for each individual problem.

Conclusion

The evolution of EU energy efficiency policy highlights the dynamic nature of policymaking in response to changing external and internal factors. The research underscores the importance of framing in policy development and the role of the MLG framework in understanding policy processes. After revising the lessons learned, there is a need for a clear and consistent framing of benefits, addressing implementation challenges, and the importance of adapting policies to external events. As the EU continues to face the complexities of energy efficiency, it must balance broad policy goals with the need for effective, targeted measures to achieve tangible outcomes.

Improving Energy Efficiency of Buildings

Building on what has been previously established, and with the same shared goal of improving energy efficiency in buildings to mitigate climate change, von Malmborg, Björklund and Rohdin investigates on the importance of improving energy efficiency among both existing and new buildings. Notably, understanding the energy use in buildings involves analyzing numerous factors such as space heating, cooling, hot water, appliance usage, and human behavior. Technical measures play a significant role, but behavioral aspects are equally important.

Lessons Learned:

- No single policy instrument is sufficient to promote energy efficiency effectively. A combination of regulatory, financial, and informative policies tailored to different building contexts is necessary.
- Horizontal and vertical coordination of governance is essential, from the EU level down to local authorities and upwards from national to global levels. This ensures effective implementation and consistency across the different levels of governance.
- While much attention is given to new constructions, existing buildings constitute most of the future building stock. Therefore, policies need to prioritize retrofitting existing buildings for energy efficiency, as exemplified by the EU's 'Renovation Wave' initiative.
- Policies and governance mechanisms must evolve based on ongoing evaluation and learning. Understanding why property owners are reluctant to retrofit existing buildings can inform the development of more effective policies.

Conclusion

As the authors show, improving energy efficiency in buildings is a complex challenge requiring a holistic approach. Effective policies and governance mechanisms must address technical, behavioral, organizational, and design-related aspects while considering diverse building contexts. The EU's experience highlights the importance of policy mixes, multi-level governance coordination, and a focus on existing buildings.

Climate Declarations for Buildings in Sweden: A Policy Analysis

In Sweden, the construction and management of buildings are significant contributors to GHG emissions, accounting for approximately 20% of the nation's total emissions. While private heating of buildings contributes minimally, the construction phase alone is responsible for nearly half of the building sector's emissions. This highlights the pressing need to address GHG emissions in the construction phase.

The EU has established policy frameworks to address these issues, such as the EED and the EPBD to promote energy-efficient and low-carbon buildings. However, the Swedish government recognized the necessity for additional measures to further reduce the climate impact of building construction. Thus, the introduction of climate declarations for buildings emerged as a new policy instrument aimed at providing valuable information to influence climate-conscious decisions in construction practices.

Designing effective policy instruments requires an understanding of the barriers to decision-making within the building sector, which often involves conflicting interests and complex political landscapes. In this research, the MSF, developed by Kingdon (1984), serves as an appropriate tool to analyze, and explain the policy process since it contextualizes policy analysis within unique institutional arrangements and the interplay between ideas and interests, facilitating the identification of conditions under which policy change can occur.

The MSF framework identifies three key streams that must converge for policy change: the problem stream, the policy stream, and the politics stream. The problem stream highlights the necessity for policy change, in this case, due to the significant GHG emissions from the construction phase of buildings. The policy stream involves technically feasible solutions, such as using wood-based materials for carbon storage. Finally, the politics stream encompasses the decision-making environment, including public mood, political support, and institutional norms.

Lessons Learned

- The policy window for climate declarations opened through a timely convergence of the problem, policy, and politics streams. Accordingly, the extensive public consultation process, required by Swedish law, revealed significant stakeholder support for mandatory climate declarations. The broad consensus among stakeholders, including the government, political parties, national authorities, and industry groups, was crucial in advancing the policy.
- Key disputes centered on whether the legislation should be mandatory or voluntary, the scope of emissions to be included, and the timing of the climate declaration submission. The dominant stakeholder group favored a mandatory system focusing on construction-phase emissions, to be submitted at the end of the construction phase. These decisions reflected a balance between administrative feasibility and the potential for climate impact.
- Policy entrepreneurs, mainly public officials in Sweden's consensual political system, played a vital role in framing the problem and advocating for the policy. Their persistent and resourceful efforts, particularly those of the NBHBP, the Government Offices of Sweden, and the government's envoy for a Fossil-free Sweden, were instrumental in aligning the streams and pushing the policy through.
- The Swedish policy-making process emphasizes extensive inclusion and organized interest groups, rather than individual advocates. In this line, this system facilitated the consolidation of the climate

declaration policy by ensuring broad-based support and addressing various stakeholder concerns through structured dialogue.

Conclusion

The introduction of mandatory climate declarations for buildings in Sweden exemplifies how a coordinated policy effort can address significant environmental challenges. By utilizing the MSF, it has been shown how the Swedish government effectively navigated complex political and institutional landscapes to implement a policy aimed at reducing GHG emissions from the construction sector. Key lessons from this process highlight the importance of stakeholder consensus, the strategic role of policy entrepreneurs, and the necessity of aligning problem recognition, feasible solutions, and political support.

Policy Entrepreneurship and Member State Lobbying

Research into policy entrepreneurship and MSs lobbying provides a comprehensive understanding of the intricate dynamics inherent in democratic decision-making processes, especially within environmental policy and climate change management. Through case studies like Sweden's involvement in shaping the EU's EED, the research group offers insight into the specific impact of state lobbying efforts. Similarly, by examining the role of policy entrepreneurs, we provide understandings on how they drive policy change by shaping political agendas and advocating for tailored solutions, thereby significantly influencing the policy landscape. Collectively, these studies offer invaluable knowledge into the complexities of democratic governance and the multifaceted roles played by various actors in shaping environmental policies.

Lessons from the EU's Energy Efficiency Policy Reform: Insights from Process Tracking and Advocacy

The policy changes in the EU's energy efficiency regulations, specifically regarding IMB, offer valuable insights into the complex dynamics of policy development.

As shown, the initial Energy Services Directive of 2006 and the EED aimed to enhance energy efficiency among end users, including tenants and apartment owners. However, the diverse property and heating systems across MSs led to varied implications and resistance. For example, countries like Sweden and Finland, where district heating and cooling are prevalent, faced different challenges compared to other MSs, complicating the implementation of IMB.

In this case, the study group utilized public documents, proposals, amendments, and interviews with key individuals involved in the policy process, highlighting the importance of evidence-based advocacy. A notable gap noticed was the reliance on consultancy studies rather than scientific research, underscoring a need for more rigorous academic involvement in policy debates.

More specifically, it is shown that lobbying efforts were pivotal, particularly Sweden's strategic shift in its approach during the revision of the directive. Initially unsuccessful due to a lack of collaboration, Sweden later formed a broad coalition with various stakeholders, including the European Property Federation, Housing Europe, and the International Union of Tenants. This coalition, coupled with targeted lobbying of influential European Parliament members, significantly impacted the policy outcome.

Lessons Learned

- Successful advocacy requires forming broad coalitions that encompass diverse stakeholders. Sweden's initial failure and subsequent success illustrate the importance of collaboration and strategic alliances within the EU's complex political landscape.
- The policy change process benefits from continuous learning and adaptation. Sweden's shift from focusing solely on Council negotiations to engaging with the EP and various interest groups highlights the dynamic nature of effective policy advocacy.
- Strong leadership is also necessary for driving policy change. The committed efforts of Swedish administrators and their coordination with interest groups and EU parliamentarians were instrumental in revising the energy efficiency directive.
- Coalition resources played a critical role in shaping the EU's energy efficiency policy regarding IMB. In fact, the Swedish government, recognizing the complexity and challenges posed by the initial directive, strategically use the resources from the broader coalition into lobbying, financing activities, such as events, seminars in the EP, and dedicating personnel.
- The internal shock was the realization by Sweden and its allies that negotiations needed to be broadened beyond the Council to include the EP and various EU interest groups. This strategical shift, combined with their coordinated actions fundamentally altered the advocacy landscape facilitating a more effective approach.
- While consultancy studies played a role, the reliance on such sources rather than peer-reviewed scientific research indicates a need for more robust academic input.
- The case of an EU policy with diverse implications across different MSs like individual metering and billing necessitates a nuanced understanding of local contexts. Namely, policies must be flexible enough to accommodate varying national conditions while aligning with overarching EU goals.

Conclusion

The reform of the EU's energy efficiency policy, particularly the regulations on individual metering and billing, underscores the importance of strategic coalition building, continuous learning, and the involvement of committed leadership in the policy process. Therefore, this case study serves as a guide for policymakers and advocates aiming to influence policy within the intricate framework of the EU.

Sweden's Lobbying on European Union Energy Efficiency Policy

As evidenced before, Sweden recognized that lobbying independently was ineffective and proceeded to form alliances with other opposing states and interest groups. However, as von Malmborg argues, state lobbying has been under researched considering that in this context lobbying is not a solitary endeavor but a collective process involving various interest groups and states that form coalitions to influence policy outcomes. Thus, drawing insights from the ACF, research looks closer at the lobbying characteristics of the Sweden's effective coalition campaign during the EED amendment negotiations between 2016-2018.

Consequently, it appears that ACF theory identifies crucial factors such as actor type, coalition size, issue complexity, and conflict degree as determinants of lobbying success. As a result of these factors, the

coordinated effort led by Sweden eventually influenced the EC to align with the coalition's arguments, marking a significant policy shift.

Actor Type

The type of actor involved in lobbying plays a crucial role in determining its success. Klüver notes that interest groups representing diffuse interests often find it more challenging to lobby effectively compared to those representing concentrated interests. For Sweden, the lobbying coalition opposing IMB was highly concentrated, focusing specifically on the IMB provisions. This concentrated interest allowed the coalition to present a unified and strong front, making their lobbying efforts more effective.

Coalition Size

The size of the lobbying coalition is another significant factor. Larger coalitions can amass more resources and present a stronger united front. This is evident in the case of Sweden, that by lobbying unsuccessfully independently increased its efforts by forming a large coalition with various national and EU-level interest groups, thereby increasing its resources and expertise.

Issue Complexity

Complexity denotes the difficulty in analyzing, understanding, or solving a policy problem. When issues are overly complex, legislators often require external expert knowledge, making them more open to lobbying. The IMB issue in the EED was complex, involving technical aspects related to building regulations and energy efficiency. Consequently, this complexity allowed for Sweden's coalition to provide empirical evidence and expert knowledge significantly increasing their influence.

Conflict Degree

The degree of conflict over a policy issue significantly impacts lobbying success. High conflict means various actors have opposing preferences, making it challenging to influence decision-makers. Conversely, low conflict allows for more straightforward advocacy as there are fewer opposing forces. In the case of the IMB provisions, there was significant conflict initially. However, by forming a coalition and presenting a united front, Sweden managed to reduce the internal conflict within their advocacy group, strengthening their position.

Lessons Learned

- Forming broad and strategic coalitions with national and EU-level interest groups enhances lobbying effectiveness. Sweden's initial failure and subsequent success underscore the critical importance of collaboration in the EU's complex policy environment.
- Successful lobbying requires substantial resources, including financial means to employ experts, maintain negotiators, and gather empirical evidence.
- The quality of arguments and their alignment with the issue significantly influences lobbying outcomes. Sweden's ability to present well-researched and resonant arguments against IMB was pivotal in their successful advocacy.

- Frequent lobbying activities lead to better understanding and navigation of the EU policy system. Sweden's consistent lobbying efforts since joining the EU in the mid-1990s have contributed to their success by accumulating experience and an extensive network.

Conclusion

Sweden's evolving approach to lobbying within the EU's energy efficiency policy framework offers valuable insights into the dynamics of successful advocacy. The shift from an isolated to a coalition-based strategy, coupled with effective resource mobilization and high-quality argumentation, underscores the multifaceted nature of lobbying. These lessons highlight the critical role of collaboration, strategic resource use, and experienced policy entrepreneurs in influencing EU policy outcomes. Finally, the Swedish coalition's success can be attributed to a concentrated focus on IMB, effective mobilization of resources, and a strategic use of high-quality arguments that resonated with the nature of the issue. Consequently, Sweden's experience provides a model that can be generalized to other policy areas within the EU, emphasizing the importance of adaptability and strategic planning in the context of EU policymaking.

The State as a Lobbyist

Lobbying in political spheres often involves informal efforts to persuade decision-makers in various governance arrangements. This activity typically garners attention when undertaken by companies, interest groups, or NGOs. However, the role of states as lobbyists is less understood. The Swedish government's lobbying efforts during the amendment of the EU EED (2016-2018) highlight the state's active role in influencing policy outcomes. This case study focuses on the regulations concerning IMB for heat, cooling, and hot water in apartment buildings, a contentious issue debated for over a decade.

Understanding the dynamics of state-led lobbying is crucial for several reasons. First, it reveals how states can leverage their resources and networks to impact policy at multiple governance levels—local, national, regional, and international. Second, the research underscores the necessity of strategic coalition-building and issue complexity in successful lobbying efforts.

The Swedish government's proactive strategy involved forming a lobbying coalition early on, identifying key targets, and utilizing various channels to disseminate information. This approach was underpinned by a thorough understanding of the political landscape and the strategic use of existing resources and networks.

Thus, the analysis show that the Swedish government's lobbying activities were successful due to several factors. They formed a strong coalition with both national and EU-level interest groups, including Allmännyttan Sweden, Energy Companies Sweden, the European Property Federation, Housing Europe, and the International Union of Tenants.

Key targets for lobbying included all significant EU institutions: the EP, the EC, and the MSs of the Council. Sweden utilized previous lobbying attempts as a learning tool, refining their strategy based on past experiences during the initial negotiations of the EED in 2010-2012.

Multiple channels were used to transmit information effectively. Position memoranda supplemented formal positions and amendment proposals, while informal meetings and seminars facilitated direct engagement with stakeholders. Notably, a seminar on energy efficiency in buildings, organized in collaboration with

coalition partners and under the auspices of two Swedish MPs, exemplified their strategic use of such platforms.

The Swedish government's success can be attributed to several critical factors:

- ★ Concentrated Interests: representing concentrated interests yields more influence than diffuse interests. The coalition against strict IMB rules was larger and more focused than the one advocating for IMB.
- ★ Resources: personnel and financial resources played a pivotal role. A senior officer from the Ministry of the Environment and Energy dedicated considerable time to the negotiations, and a full-time energy council in Brussels worked tirelessly on lobbying efforts.
- ★ Experience and Contact Network: the officials involved had extensive experience with EU energy legislation and maintained robust contacts within the EC n and the EP due to their previously created network.
- ★ Leadership: strong leadership from the Ministry of the Environment and Energy was crucial in forming and guiding the coalition.

Lessons Learned

- Forming alliances with relevant stakeholders can amplify lobbying efforts and increase the likelihood of success.
- Linking the primary issue to broader policy areas, such as housing and social policy, can necessitate external expertise and create more opportunities for influence.
- Effective lobbying requires significant personnel, financial, and informational resources. Leveraging these resources strategically can greatly enhance lobbying effectiveness.
- Long-standing EU membership and prior engagement in EU legislative processes provide a solid foundation for successful lobbying.

Conclusion

The Swedish government's lobbying strategy during the 2016-2018 revision of the EED underscores the importance of strategic coalition-building, resource utilization, and the benefits of the complexity of the issue. By leveraging their established networks and previous lobbying experiences, Sweden successfully influenced the policy outcome. This case study provides valuable insights for other small MSs aiming to navigate and influence the intricate EU policy landscape effectively.

Energy Efficiency and Climate Policy: Lessons from Policy Entrepreneurs

As seen, addressing climate change through policymaking requires significant policy innovation and implementation besides navigating the complex landscape of actors. On top of that, the process of setting agendas and translating values into actionable goals remains complex and often opaque. Coherently with this third line of research, key players in this field are policy entrepreneurs, whose influence and methods raise critical questions about political responsibility, transparency, and inclusiveness in democratic systems.

Policy entrepreneurs play a crucial role in shaping climate policy. Introduced by John Kingdon in 1984, the concept describes individuals or entities that drive policy change by connecting problems, solutions, and political processes. Contrary to lobbyists who often focus on securing benefits for specific interests, policy entrepreneurs are engaged in technical and legal aspects of policy solutions.

The EC exemplifies a policy entrepreneur in the EU, notably through initiatives like the 2021 FuelEU Maritime proposal aimed at regulating maritime shipping emissions. Despite opposition from the shipping and fossil fuel industries, advocacy groups such as Transport & Environment (T&E) successfully pushed for more ambitious emission reduction targets, demonstrating the power and influence of policy entrepreneurs.

Precisely, the influence of policy entrepreneurs, while essential for policy innovation, also brings challenges regarding transparency and accountability. Although the EU has measures to identify lobbying activities, the actual power dynamics behind agenda-setting can remain concealed. Ultimately, political responsibility lies with decision-makers in the Council and the EP, who must balance competing interests and ensure democratic accountability.

Furthermore, while the EU's green initiatives strive for a prosperous, net-zero emissions society by 2050, they often underemphasize justice issues and the social impacts of climate policies. The integration of justice aspects, particularly in combating energy poverty, shows progress, but discussions on fair energy distribution and usage remain insufficient. Perhaps, because climate policy processes in Sweden and the EU lack sufficient social inclusion, with established organizations and policy entrepreneurs dominating, thereby excluding young people and climate justice advocates. This exclusion can lead to protests, as seen at the Kristersson climate summit.

While broader participation is needed, which is the responsibility of the EC, Government, and Government Offices, it should not be exclusivist. For instance, Sweden's system, characterized by close cooperation between political entities and industry, is criticized for being elitist, contrary to the inclusive ideals of ecological democracy. Hence, policy entrepreneurs should build coalitions with climate justice organizations to enhance inclusion. However, Sweden lacks policy entrepreneurs for climate justice, leading to the exclusion of new environmental groups like Fridays for Future and Extinction Rebellion from policy discussions. These groups favor a bottom-up, inclusive approach, creating a dilemma on how to reconcile this with the established, more elitist democratic framework for effective climate policy discussions.

The Role of Policy Entrepreneurs in Energy Efficiency and Democracy

Similarly, given that in recent years, the influence of policy entrepreneurs and lobbyists has dramatically increased within democratic institutions, it appeared important to consider critical questions about accountability, legitimacy, participation, and fairness in the policy-making process. A significant increase in lobbying efforts has been observed, particularly within the EU, where the number of registered lobbying organizations tripled between 2011 and 2018. As of November 2023, the EU Transparency Register listed over 7,300 companies and industry organizations, nearly 3,500 NGOs, including environmental groups, and about 900 think tanks and universities. This surge in lobbying activity has contributed to a growing concentration of power in executive bodies like the EC and national governments, sidelining legislative assemblies and creating a more complex multi-level political environment.

The rise of policy entrepreneurs and lobbyists underscores the necessity of research into their impact on democracy, particularly in the context of energy efficiency and climate change. Moreover, since policy entrepreneurs aim to increase the visibility of specific issues and interests in political debates, often seeking to establish a monopoly over problem definitions and solutions, von Malmborg noticed that this practice has sparked a debate about whether policy entrepreneurs are beneficial or detrimental to democracy, with concerns about their potential to disrupt rational decision-making and promote narrow interests.

The researcher examines it with criteria from two theories: ecological democracy and environmental democracy. On the one hand, the theory of ecological democracy, which emerged in the 1990s, criticizes traditional liberal democratic institutions and emphasizes the need for local participatory democracy and the representation of non-human and future generations' interests. On the other hand, environmental democracy focuses on reforming existing institutions to better address environmental issues from an anthropocentric perspective. Both theories highlight the importance of restructuring decision-making processes at local, national, and global levels and ensuring more inclusive public deliberations.

Accountability and Transparency: for policy entrepreneurs to contribute positively to democracy, they must operate transparently and be held accountable for their actions. Public decision-makers need to justify their actions and decisions clearly to the public, ensuring that everyone understands how and why decisions are made and who is responsible.

Legitimacy and Participation: policy entrepreneurs should enhance democratic legitimacy by promoting broad participation and strengthening representation. They should advocate for solutions that address collective problems fairly and inclusively, ensuring that all stakeholders have a voice in the decision-making process.

Openness and Impartiality: maintaining open communication channels with all affected stakeholders is crucial. This involves providing information and expertise, engaging actively in public decision-making, and ensuring that participation occurs without biases. Power should be exercised transparently and justifiably, without cases of corruption or discrimination.

Procedural and Distributive Justice: the processes through which policy entrepreneurs gain access to power and influence policy must be just and fair. Proposals should aim to reduce inequalities and respect human rights, distributing benefits equitably.

Lessons Learned

- The success of policy entrepreneurs in advancing ambitious climate policies, as seen in the EU's maritime emissions regulation and the EE1 principle, underscores their vital role in linking problems with effective solutions.
- The considerable influence of policy entrepreneurs necessitates robust transparency measures. Ensuring that their activities and the resulting policies are visible and accountable to the public is crucial for maintaining democratic legitimacy.
- The limited inclusion of diverse voices, particularly young people, and climate justice advocates, in policy processes is a significant gap. Broader participation is essential for creating holistic and just policy solutions, especially climate policies.
- While energy efficiency targets have advanced, integrating justice considerations remains a challenge. Discussions on fair energy distribution and addressing social impacts should be prioritized to ensure better policy outcomes.
- Policy entrepreneurs can enhance their impact by building coalitions with climate justice organizations, fostering broader inclusivity and stronger advocacy for comprehensive climate policies.

Conclusion

The lessons learned from the role of policy entrepreneurs in climate policy emphasize the importance of transparency, accountability, and inclusiveness in the decision-making process. It is essential to integrate diverse perspectives and justice considerations into energy efficiency and broader climate policies to achieve sustainable and equitable outcomes. The complex and multifaceted nature of policy entrepreneurs' impact on democratic decision-making illustrates the importance of adhering to democratic norms and principles. A critical examination of their influence is necessary to ensure they contribute positively to democratic processes and facilitate strong environmental outcomes.

Policy Recommendations

In the section on policy recommendations, we will outline key areas of focus for those aiming to influence the policymaking process on sustainable energy policies. Drawing on the lessons learned from the studies conducted by our research group, as highlighted in the previous section, we will identify strategies that can contribute to shaping EU energy policy. This comprehensive approach will provide stakeholders with practical insights and knowledge to navigate the complex legislative landscape.

1. Swedish Politicians Need More Knowledge about the Process behind the Eu's Energy Policy.
2. Understanding the Role of Policy Entrepreneurs in Shaping EU Energy Legislation.
3. Political Measures are Needed for Increased Lobby Transparency.
4. Swedish Decision-Makers Should Develop Clearer Energy Policy Goals and Strategies.
5. Maximizing Long-Standing EU Membership for Policy Advocacy.
6. Promote Evidence-Based Policy Advocacy.
7. Greater Coalitions in Multilevel Governance Frameworks.
8. Promote Inclusive Participation in Policy Processes.
9. Enhance Accountability of Policy Entrepreneurs.

1. Swedish Politicians Need More Knowledge About the Process Behind the EU's Energy Policy

Within the social sciences, research on energy and energy policy has traditionally focused on technical aspects and economic dimensions, while the social and political aspects have received less attention. Although the importance of energy policy for societal development and the increasing urgency of climate change have been recognized, there remains a lack of understanding regarding the social, political, and institutional factors that influence the energy system and its transformation towards sustainability. For that matter, studies focusing on energy efficiency and climate impact in EU policy, as well as the use of climate declarations for buildings, have highlighted the complex process of designing and implementing energy policy measures within the EU.

Due to this lack of understanding, the political environment within the EU is often perceived as complex, especially when it comes to energy policy. Nevertheless, it is known that the EU's energy efficiency policies are built upon diverse problem descriptions, with security of supply serving as a fundamental pillar since the 1970s oil crisis. This focus was renewed following the energy crisis resulting from the EU's sanctions against Russia after its invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

Similarly, climate issues have been a priority since the 1990s, gaining renewed attention following the Paris Agreement in 2015. The IEA analysis and promotion of energy efficiency as the "first fuel" have also been significant. Notably, since 2018, combating energy poverty has been a vital component of the policy proposals put forward by the EC.

At the core of the EU policymaking process is the fac that decision-making in EU climate policy, especially regarding energy efficiency, is influenced by a variety of factors, including stakeholders, conflicts of interest and strategies. By examining specific measures, such as climate declarations for buildings or the EE1 principle, our research has provided insights into their effectiveness, legitimacy, and feasibility. As a result, the studies guide and assess how different policy measures can contribute to or counteract the goals of energy efficiency and reduced climate impact.

Energy and climate policy is shared competence in the EU, which means that legislation is negotiated between the EC, the Council and the EP. Energy was first introduced as a separate policy area in the EU through the Treaty of Lisbon in 2009. The issue of subsidiarity has been and is still central to the negotiations. This is clear in the negotiations surrounding the legislative package Fit for 55. Generally, the EC wants harmonized legislation to promote European integration, while the EP usually wants harmonized legislation albeit with more ambitious requirements regarding who should be covered by the legislation and what should be expected from them.

MSs within the Council are often divided into several groupings or coalitions. Some want to go further than the Commission's proposals, others seek lower requirements, and some prefer no requirements at all. This division is evident in the analysis around the EE1 principle and requirements for energy efficiency in businesses. The conflicts of interest that exist between these legislative EU institutions are handled in different ways. Central to these processes is negotiation, which can be either deliberative or conflict-oriented. Importantly, the form negotiations take is significantly influenced by the level of politicization and polarization on a particular issue.

The importance and visibility of an issue in the political debate, its significance to different political groups, environmental organizations, and various sectors of business, all play a role. In the area of energy efficiency, it is affected by, among other things, how important it is to reduce the climate impact and the strength of those stakeholders who stand to gain or lose from policies impact the negotiations. For instance, the politicization and polarization for EE1 and Energy Efficiency in Business (EED) were relatively low, while it was higher for issues of zero-emission buildings and renovation of buildings (EPBD). In the EED, the negotiations were mainly of a deliberative nature and there was political learning between the coalitions. The parties listened to each other and corrected their values and beliefs. In conflict-like negotiations, no political learning takes place.

Hence, a deeper understanding of these dynamics is essential to effectively design and implement policy measures. In other words, Swedish stakeholders need to deepen their understanding of the entire EU's energy policy process. This involves not only grasping the technical and economic aspects but also the complex social, political, and institutional dynamics at play. Increased knowledge should facilitate them to contribute more effectively to negotiations and to advocate for policies that balance the diverse interests within the EU.

2. Understanding the Role of Policy Entrepreneurs in Shaping EU Energy Legislation

Through its monopoly on submitting legislative proposals, the EC plays a leading role as a policy entrepreneur. However, its proposals are also influenced by other policy entrepreneurs, who are akin to lobbyists but work more actively with policy proposals and policy change. Notable examples include the think tank Regulatory Assistance Project, the environmental organization European Climate Foundation, and the network Energy Efficiency Finance Institutions Group.

Since 2014/2015, these organizations have actively lobbied the EC to establish the principle of EE1 in the EU's energy and climate policy. The concept has been introduced in various policy documents from the Commission, defined in the EU regulation for the management of energy and climate policy, and was legally protected through the revision of the EED in 2023.

The focus on EU directives is established early in the process and it is primarily the stakeholders involved in these initial stages who can exert influence. According to them, the opportunity to influence decreases once a proposal from the EC has been presented.

Generally, Brussels-based organizations find it easier to gain access to parliamentarians, but more difficult to reach the Council. In trilogue negotiations, it becomes clear that the EP is more far-reaching, while the Council protects the principle of subsidiarity and wants to build in national flexibility. Representatives from the EP feel that the EC and the Council align more closely during these negotiations.

Additionally, policy change in the EU is driven by various significant factors, including external shocks, negotiation processes, and learning. An illustrative case is the adoption of the EE1 principle and the introduction of climate declarations for buildings, which mark important steps towards reducing climate impact and promoting sustainability.

To influence political decisions within the EU, strategically targeted lobbying and the formation of broad coalitions are essential. As seen with the case studies on Sweden, small MSs can also influence EU policy by forming alliances and implementing effective lobbying strategies. Consequently, the research highlights the key role of different actors, including EU legislative institutions, MSs, interest organizations, and companies, in managing the complex political environment in energy policy. Their varying perspectives and interests significantly impact the design and implementation of energy policy.

3. Political Measures Are Needed for Increased Lobby Transparency

The research highlights the significant role of lobbyists and policy entrepreneurs in the EU's political processes. Strategic advocacy can have a decisive impact on political decisions, influencing democratic norms and principles. Therefore, careful monitoring and regulation are required to ensure a fair and transparent political process.

In order to improve cooperation and coordination within the EU's energy policy, it is necessary to promote dialogue and collaboration among different actors and discourse coalitions. This may be achieved by establishing platforms for regular communication and coordination between EU institutions, MSs, interest organizations, and companies. By facilitating openness, dialogue and cooperation, decision-makers and actors can work together to design and implement more effective and sustainable energy policy measures within the EU.

Enhanced lobby transparency within the EU is also crucial to ensure a more open and inclusive political process. This could include increased reporting and disclosure of lobbying activities and financial sources, as well as rules requiring policymakers to account for their meetings with lobbyists. Hence, by increasing transparency, democratic processes can be strengthened and ensure that political decisions are well-founded and benefit society.

4. Swedish Decision-makers Should Develop Clearer Energy Policy Goals and Strategies

The complexity of climate policy means that many lack insight into decision-making in Brussels and how Swedish actors can influence this process. Our research has shown that successful lobbying in Brussels requires clear goals and well-developed strategies. Swedish decision-makers need to act as policy entrepreneurs. Notably, good arguments are not enough; information must be used strategically and at the right time.

Alternative proposals must relate to the EC's problem statement or present an alternative problem statement that demonstrates goal conflicts. Likewise, influencing and building coalitions with MSs in the Council alone is not sufficient for success. Effective advocacy requires networking and coalition building with various interest groups in Brussels, including property owner organizations from the private and public sectors, as well as consumer organizations. Notably, strategic cooperation with Swedish interest groups is crucial. Coalition building is also needed in the EP, and the broader and more diversified the coalition, the greater the chance of success.

Another insight from the research is that Swedish stakeholders have a greater chance of influence when they do it through contacts with the government. Said chance can increase provided they effectively manage their coordination with Swedish EU parliamentarians on issues that are central to Sweden. The national dimension is more important in certain matters. For example, phenomena such as condominium associations (BRF), hot rents, and public benefits are unique to Sweden and, therefore, important to convey to the EC.

In addition, politicians and other stakeholders should spend more time participating in the discourse, not only in the Council but also in the creation of discourse in the EP and the EC. As seen, the discourse has a vital role in uniting organizations and actors and giving structure and direction to policies. By becoming more involved in these forums, Swedish actors can better influence and shape climate policy in the EU.

The biggest challenge for decision-makers in promoting Swedish innovation and implementation lies in addressing the incentive problem and establishing clear frameworks for financing renovations. Additionally, there is some uncertainty about how EU funds, set aside for such efforts, should be allocated to actors. Understanding the decision-making process and identifying the optimal times for intervention is crucial to avoid missing opportunities to influence outcomes. Engaging early in dialogues with the EC is essential for effective influence.

5. Maximizing Long-Standing EU Membership for Policy Advocacy

As anticipated, Sweden's long-standing EU membership and experience in legislative processes provide a strategic advantage in advocating for equitable and effective energy policies. As shown throughout the studies, a long-standing membership has provided Sweden with a broad network of helpful stakeholders and reputation that can result in stronger coalitions, greater funds, and support for policy suggestions. Hence, Swedish policymakers should actively leverage this experience by participating in EU policy discussions and building alliances with other MSs that share similar energy policy goals and priorities. This could involve forming coalitions and working together on joint advocacy initiatives, ensuring that their collective interests are represented in EU policy discussions.

Being an active member of a coalition involves engaging with key EU institutions, such as the EC, the EP, and the Council, as well as other stakeholders, such as industry associations, civil society organizations, and think tanks. This involves presenting coherently evidence-based arguments, sharing best practices, and leading initiatives that promote sustainable and appropriate energy policies to build support around energy policies. Additionally, Sweden can host and participate in EU-wide forums, workshops, and conferences to facilitate knowledge exchange and collaboration on energy policy issues.

In other words, as highlighted in the results, Sweden could benefit from a more active role in advocacy. An active role, therefore, entails actively participating in the policy and decision-making processes of EU energy policies, ensuring that they align with national priorities and contribute to broader sustainability and climate goals.

Moreover, the research shows that since Sweden reaped better benefits once it assumed an active role, it also equipped its personnel to lobby more at the EU level. Consequently, to further strengthen its advocacy efforts, Sweden should invest in building the capacity of its policymakers and other stakeholders, that is training and capacity-building programs that equip participants with the knowledge and skills needed to effectively engage in EU policy discussions and advocacy efforts.

6. Promote Evidence-Based Policy Advocacy

As already mentioned, to maximize long-standing EU membership for policy promotion it is necessary to make use of an evidence-based advocacy since the latter is crucial for ensuring that energy policies are grounded in scientific research. Notably, studies have shown that coalitions around energy policies have mostly referred to consulting studies rather than scientific research. As a result, Sweden should promote the use of rigorous academic research and empirical evidence in the advocacy efforts of policy entrepreneurs and decision-makers.

This might also involve the funding of research projects and disseminating research findings to policymakers and stakeholders. Nevertheless, what it is sure is that incorporating evidence-based analysis in policy discussions and decision-making processes can enhance the credibility and effectiveness of advocacy efforts.

An active policy advocacy role for Sweden where it leads the way on using and promoting evidence-based lobbying can significantly contribute to establish standards for the use of evidence in policy advocacy. These stands can subsequently foster the idea that energy policies are well-informed and effective.

7. Greater Coalitions in Multilevel Governance Frameworks

While it is necessary to have an active role and leverage long-standing EU membership to effectively influence EU policymaking with evidence-based advocacy, it is as important to strengthen multilevel coalition-building efforts. This involves engaging not only at the EU level but also within MSs, leveraging both national and transnational networks to create broad, supportive coalitions.

Lessons learned from the adoption of the MLG frameworks underscore that successful advocacy at the EU level requires a comprehensive approach that integrates actions across multiple governance levels. Hence, a lobbying state should engage stakeholders at the national, regional, and local levels, and within the EU framework. As mentioned earlier, the more stakeholders approached, the greater the support.

Regarding the lowest level of governance, states should foster strong relationships with national and regional stakeholders, such as government agencies, industry groups, NGOs, and academic institutions. For instance, the Council of Mayors can help strengthen relations between European cities. Furthermore, at EU level, states could actively participate in transnational European networks sharing common interests and goals. Illustrative examples are the Visegrad 4 or the Nordic Council. However, these transnational groups are limited in their scope. After all, since transnational coalitions can amplify a state's voice, providing greater influence in EU negotiations, it is imperative to increase the reach of the ties.

8. Promote Inclusive Participation in Policy Processes

Since energy policies reflect the interests of the stakeholders, it is important to foster inclusive participation so that energy policies also reflect the needs and priorities of all societal groups. As seen, Sweden's corporatism is at times perceived as elitist. Therefore, to promote more inclusivity, Sweden should establish formal mechanisms that guarantee the involvement of diverse voices, including youth, marginalized communities, and climate justice advocates, in the energy and climate policy-making processes. This could be achieved by setting up participatory workshops that are regularly consulted during policy development stages.

What the research shows is that it is vital to facilitate meaningful dialogue and input, providing participants with the necessary information and support to engage effectively. Additionally, maximizing digital tools and platforms can enhance accessibility and reach a broader audience, ensuring that more citizens can participate in the policy-making process. By institutionalizing inclusive participation, Sweden could develop more equitable and representative energy policies that address the diverse needs and concerns of its population, fostering social cohesion and public trust in the policy process as well as greater support for its policies.

Broader support is not the only advantage in opening the consultation process. In fact, greater inclusiveness can result in newer and better mechanisms for feedback and accountability. In other words, policymakers can receive feedback during the policy-making process. Similarly, regular participatory processes can also enhance transparency and accountability.

9. Enhance Accountability of Policy Entrepreneurs

The case studies have also shown that policy entrepreneurs can involve both advantages and disadvantages for democracy, depending on the criteria used to analyze them. However, to strengthen democracy, it appears vital to ensure enhancing the accountability of policy entrepreneurs for their activities to align with democratic principles and public interest.

To this end, Sweden could develop a robust accountability framework that include regular reporting requirements and independent evaluations to assess the effectiveness and alignment of their activities with public goals.

Furthermore, it is important to establish clear guidelines and standards for the conduct of policy entrepreneurs both at the EU and national level, thereby ensuring that policy entrepreneurs contribute positively to the policy-making process and support the development of well-informed and balanced energy policies.

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