

The right to resist: Protest as public engagement in the Danish renewable energy transition

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13 September 2024
AHRI Conference in Lund

KØBENHAVNS UNIVERSITET



Background

DART (2023 – 2026) - Grand solution project - Innovation Fund Denmark

DEEP and RigHydro – MissionGreenFuels (2022 – 2025) - Innovation Fund Denmark

Local civil resistance and protest in the Danish Green Energy transition (RE, PtX, CCS)

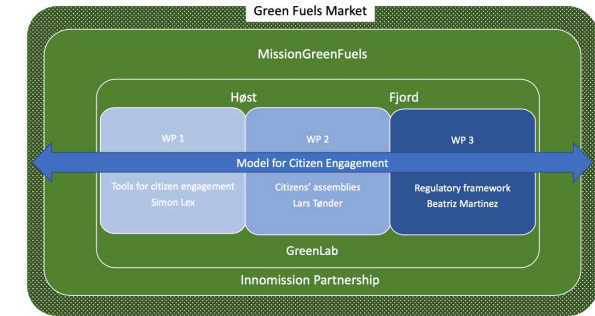
Models for engagement and collaboration across sectors and stakeholders

Qualitative data – anthropological fieldwork

Bornholm, Tønder, Aabenraa, Esbjerg, Fredericia, Kolding, Thisted and Skive

Quantitative survey in Danish Municipalities

Focus on their work with citizen engagement in renewable energy transition



Data

Industry

European Energy (+10)
CIP - HØST (+5)
Better Energy (3)
Green Hydrogen Systems (3)
BEOF (2)
Eurowind Energy
Jysk Energi
GreenLab
Unison
Green Power Denmark
Everfuel
Business Fredericia
Deltager Danmark
Behave Green
We do Democracy
Energifællesskaber.dk
Fornyning Helsingør
Mærsk centre for zero carbon shipping

Public sector

Københavns Kommune
Gentofte Kommune
Fredericia Kommune
Esbjerg Kommune
Skive Kommune
Aabenraa Kommune
Køge Kommune
Tønder Kommune
Holbæk Kommune
Solrød Kommune
Helsingør Kommune
Lolland Kommune
Energistyrelsen
Gate21
Amsterdam City
Nordsøfonden
Bornholm Elværk
Vadehavscentret

Civil society

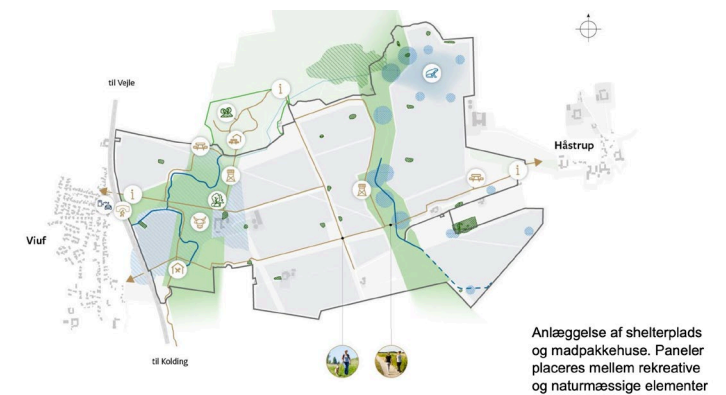
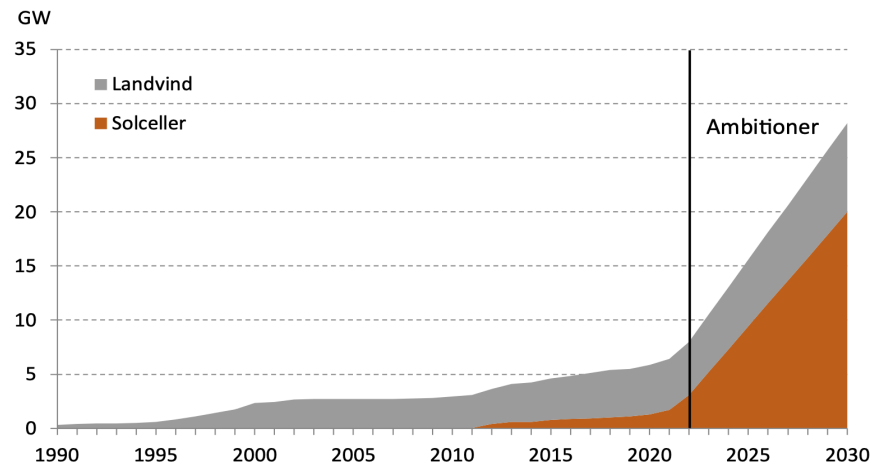
Bornholms Havvind
Nordisk Center for Vedvarende Energi
Hunderup Sejstrup Energifællesskab
Grønnere Skærbæk
Borgerforeningen energiø Bornholm
Dyssekilde (eco-village)
Permatobia (eco-village)
Selvforsynende landsby (eco-village)
Hjortshøj (eco-village)
Grønne Nabofællesskaber

Citizens

Duegård and Riseskov (Bornholm)
Skærbæk (Fredericia)
Bylderup Bov og Hynding (Tønder)
Ravsted og Svejlund (Aabenraa),
Gram (Haderslev)
Solrød
Svinninge (Holbæk)
Skibstrup (Helsingør)
OMØ
Copenhagen

Context

- Danish Climate Act: reduce total greenhouse gas emissions by 70% in 2030 compared to the 1990 level.
- Political agreement: quadruple onshore and quintuple offshore renewable energy production by 2030.
- Accelerate the implementation of new renewable energy systems – develop wind farms and solar parks



Political and industrial support – but local resistance

- Clear political support for more renewable energy in Denmark
- Industry is eager to invest and develop more RES
- 87 % of the population supports more renewable energy

- 20 % of all wind turbine projects planned between 2009 and 2020 were cancelled due to local resistance
- 75 % of 325 local politicians in 55 municipalities to a high or very high degree experience conflicts

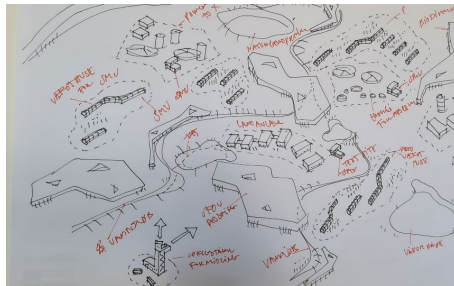
- Instituted a pessimistic approach to citizens and local communities - industry and politicians identify citizens as barriers and risks - not reaching the targets
- Strategies, initiatives and debates - how to avoid resistance and opposition?

NIMBY – “Not in My backyard”

- Local protesters are identified as NIMBYists - individuals see the development as necessary, but not near home or local community - "not in my backyard" (Wolsink, 2000)
- Protesters are defined as selfish, ignorant and obstructing the "common good"
- Local community vs Green Energy developers
 - Local and individual vs national and collective
 - My interest vs a common good
 - Irrational vs rational
 - Myths vs facts
 - Inactive opponent vs active supporter
- Oppositions are counter-productive as they escalate the conflicts



Resistance in Southern Jutland (2018 – 2024)



- Local resistance and internal conflicts
- Protest groups developed counter-expertise and designed alternative suggestion
- Municipality decided to prioritize the local input
- Resistance turned into an alternative solution
- Resistance groups mobilize across projects and villages
- Organising a “voice” anchored in the local communities
- Citizen groups evolve into a more powerful actor
- Resistance as a form of engagement and participation in the green transition

Opposition leading to social and technological innovations

- **Germany:** Protesters of nuclear power plants founded the ECO-institute where researchers and civil groups developed new alternative energy solar technologies (Hager 2015)
- **Russia and China:** Protest movements against the construction of energy facilities in places with unique nature mobilized democratic engagement in authoritarian political systems (Plantan 2015)
- **USA:** Protest movements in California opened a constructive debate about inclusive participation in decision-making structures in the energy transition processes (Schreurs and Ohlhorst 2015)

Protest as public engagement

- Local resistance not as anti-green or anti-development, but as way for citizens to engage in and contribute to the green (energy) transition
- Local resistance open a space for voicing civil concerns and ensure broad democratic inclusion in the green transition
- Different forms of local resistance turns into an engine for political, social and technological innovation (Hager & Haddad, 2015)

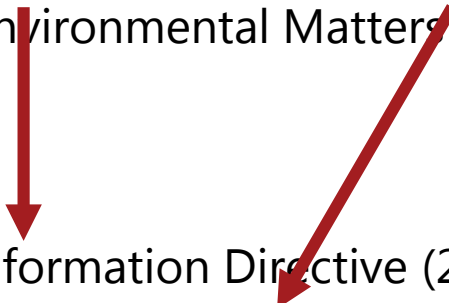
The legal framework

- The international level
 - Aarhus Convention
Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters
- European Union law
 - Access to Environmental Information Directive (2003/4/EC)
 - Public Participation Directive 2003/35/EC

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The Danish implementation can or may have significant variations!

The legal framework

- Specific issues
 - Does the law take into account the loud opposition-quiet acceptance phenomenon?
 - Can Denmark's experience with windfarms be applied to other forms of green energy? Does the legal framework help this?

Thank you.