Energy transiton narratives in Hungary and Poland

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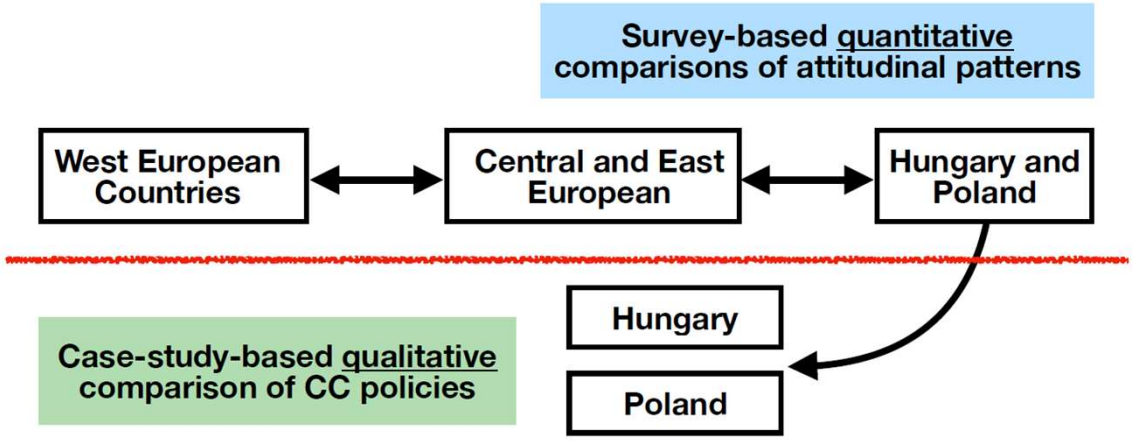
Introduction

Anthropogenic climate change:

1. Climate change policies
2. Difficult to implement

Do direct structural or indirect ideological factors explain populist opposition to climate policy?



Energy transition

1. Energy transition
   - Composition shift of primary energy supply – from a specific pattern of energy provision to a new state of an energy system (Smil 2010)

3. „Grand transitions” e.g.,
   a) From wood to charcoal in heating
   b) From coal to oil in households and industries (Smil 2010)

4. „Small transitions”
   a) Power (e.g., from ox to horse)
   b) transport (e.g., from sail to steamship)
   c) lighting (e.g., from candles to gas) (Fouquet 2011)

The energy transition specificity

1. Intentional – contrary to previous transitions
2. Uncertainties:
   a) Pace: a task for generations or for the near future?
   b) Technology development
   c) Effectiveness and efficiency of measures
   d) Side effects/externalities

Research question

What are the narrative aims of the energy transition in Poland and Hungary?

Conceptual framework

Technopolitics

1. Infrastructures and their technology reflect the social values and political outcomes of the given society, recursively shaping and determining these values as well
2. The strategic practice of designing or using technology to enact political goals

Narratives

1. Uncertainties
2. Sense-making - to implement a policy

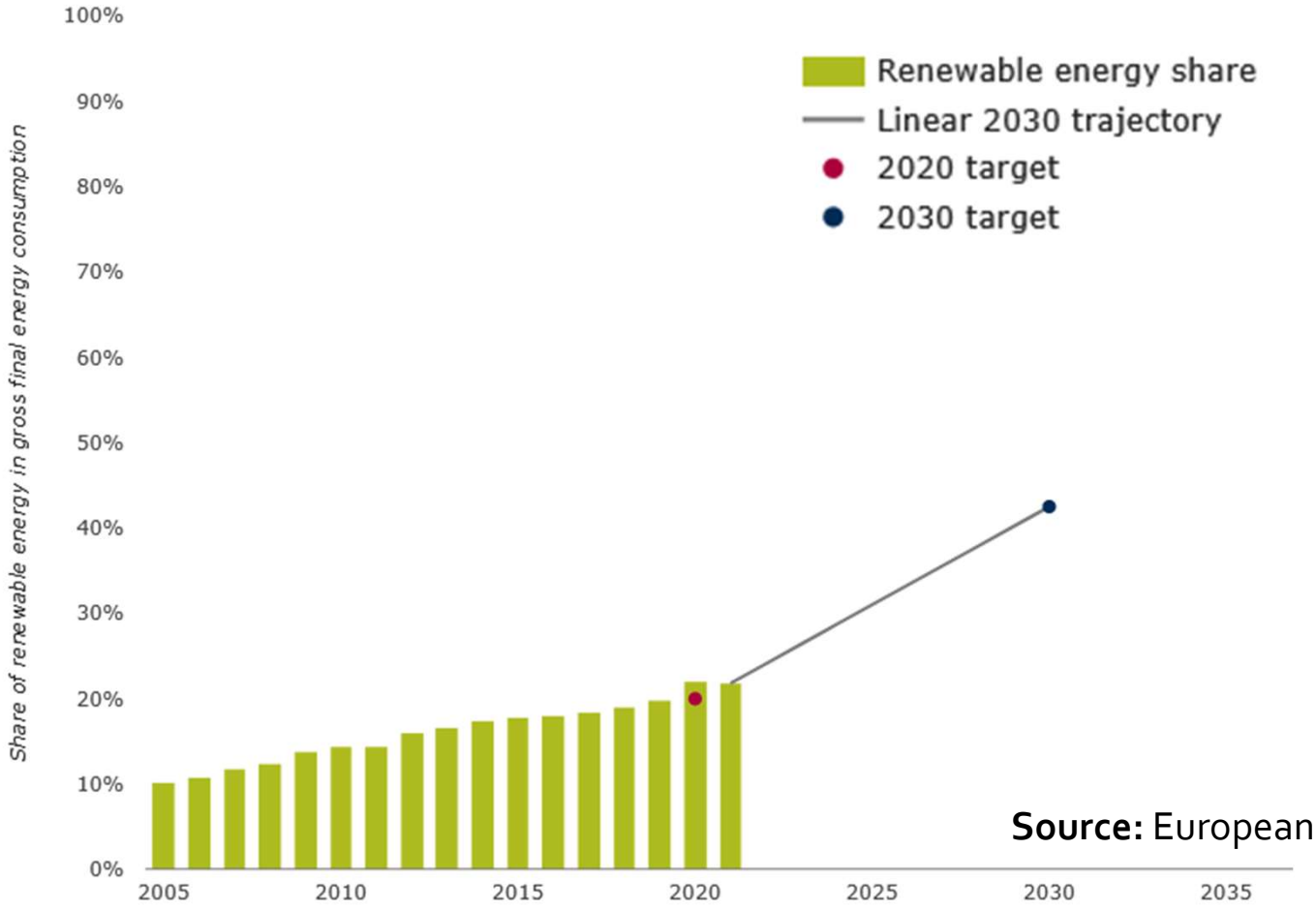
Narratives: aims of energy transition

1. Climate neutrality/decarbonisaton (institutionalised environmentalism: NGOs, IPCC)
2. To satisfy popular demand (awareness of voters)
3. To follow international policies' pressures (the Paris Agreement etc.)
4. To use the opportunities of technological progress (economical)
5. To build resilience to critical shock events (e.g., Russian aggression on Ukraine)

Energy transition in European Union

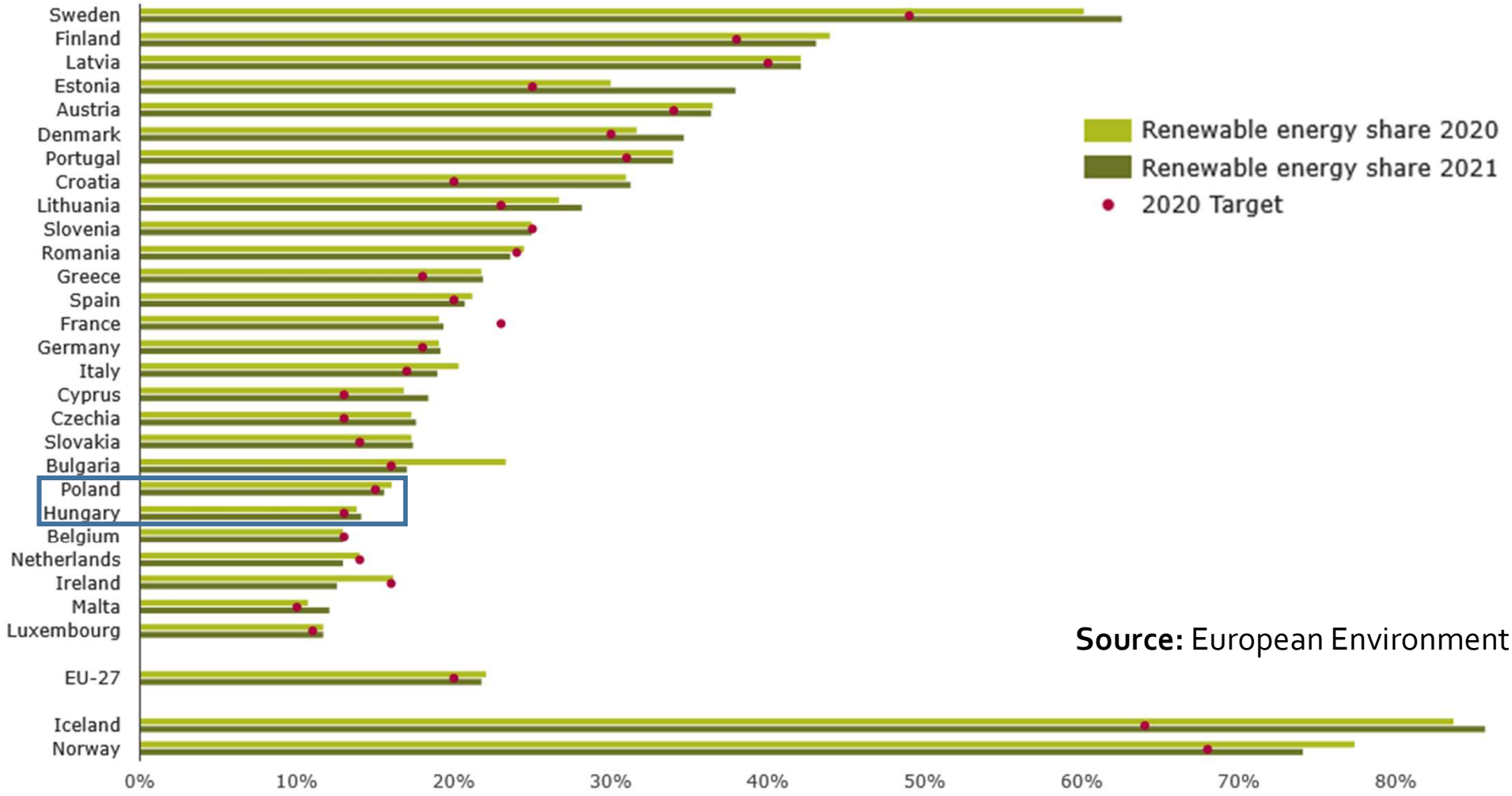
1. European Green Deal – climate neutrality by 2050
2. Fit for 55 - legislative package to reduce emissions by 55% by 2030
3. Just Transition Mechanism

Progress towards renewable energy source targets for EU-27



Source: European Environment Agency

Share of energy from renewable sources, by country

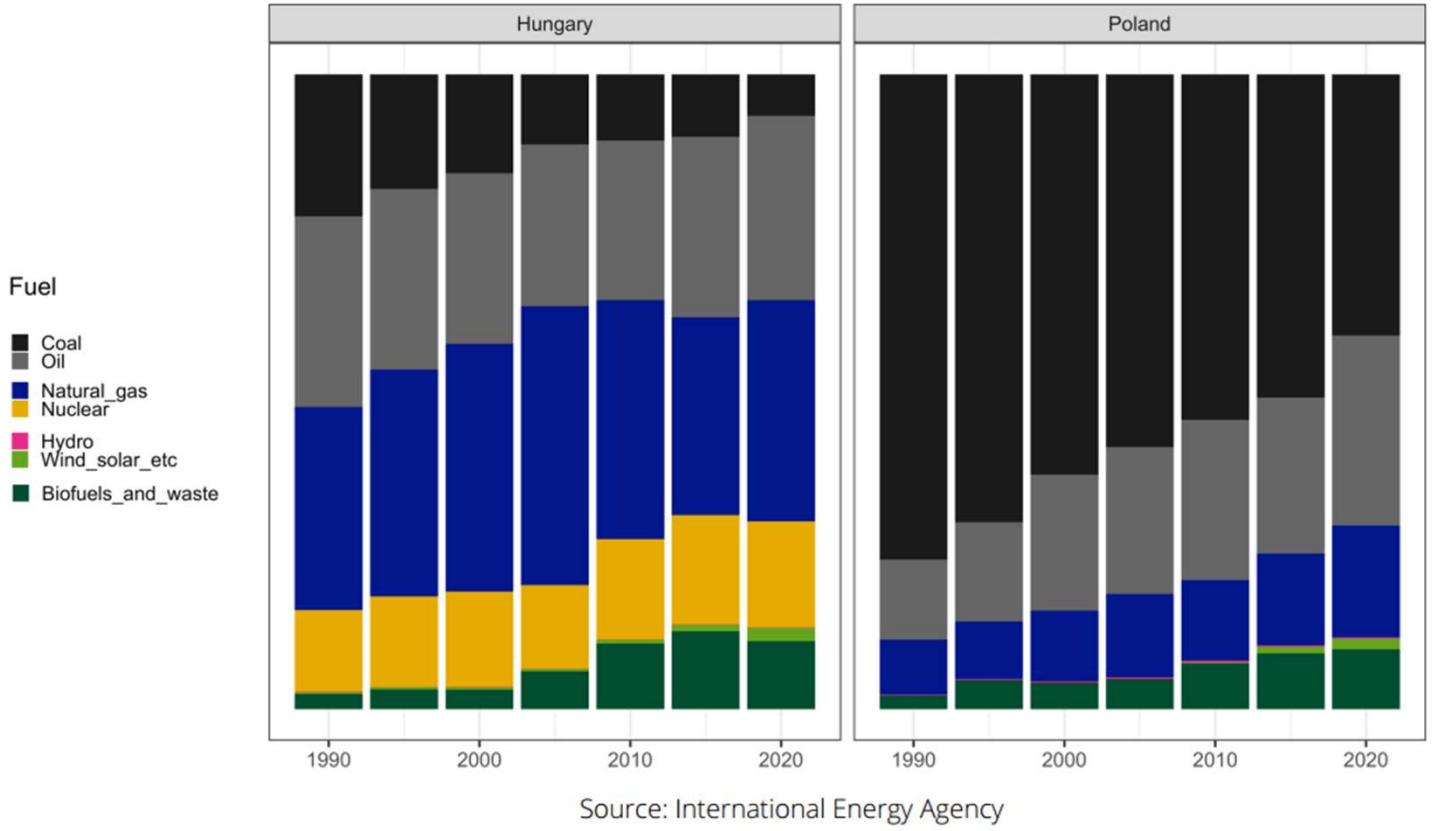


Source: European Environment Agency

Poland, Hungary - defiant cases

1. Post-communist countries
2. Since 2004 – European Union Members
3. „Populist” governments (PL: 2015-, HU: 2010-)
4. Opposition to the EU climate change policy/Energy transformation
5. Various energy mix

Energy mix of Poland and Hungary



Hypotheses by Szabo and Fabok (2020)

1. Poland is aiming to maintain energy **self-sufficiency** instead of facilitating EU vision of energy transition:
a) Cautious phase out of coal
b) Antagonistic relation with Russia
c) Access to global markets (e.g. LNG) instead of reliance on regional market
d) Nuclear and not RES based energy producton

2. Hungary is aiming to become regional **energy hub** on the basis of both EU and Russian-backed infrastructure
a) Utilization of geographical location (between Russia and Western Europe)
b) Close relations with Russia and access to natural gas from Russia
c) Expanding infrastructure to other gas markets

Research question

What are the narrative aims of the energy transition in Poland and Hungary?

Method

1. 40 in-depth interviews (20 per country)
2. High-profile experts (public administration, business, science, etc.)
3. Selection: literature review + snowball sampling
4. Length: 40-110 min.

	HU	PL
Public administration and decision- makers	6	5
Researchers and experts	6	5
NGOs	5	6
Business	3	4

Focus of the interviews

Experts' perspective on:

1. The change in energy public policies in Poland and Hungary in the last 20 years
2. The role of the European Union in energy policy shaping
3. The importance of the war in Ukraine for the shape of future energy policies in Poland and Hungary
4. Aims of energy transformation

Opinions related to policies or – „private" ones

Results

Most important aims of energy policy - PL

A1	Decarbonizing the economy
A2	Climate neutrality by 2050
B1	Energy security (i.e., stable energy supply from diversified sources)
B2	Energy independence (i.e., development of own energy sources)
C	Economic competitiveness
D	Economically accessible energy
E	Increasing the share of RES in the energy mix
F	Development of energy sources that stabilize RES (e.g., nuclear, biogas plants)
G	Decentralization (dispersion) of the energy industry
H	Investment in the development of new technologies and electrification of the economy
I	Reduction of pressure on the environment
J	Development of nuclear power as the basis of the energy system
K	Energy efficiency
L	Development of a useful strategy to reach neutrality by 2050, based on realistic assumptions
M	Development of green hydrogen technology

Most important aims of energy policy - HU

A	Satisfying the need for energy supply as more important than efficiency due to limited energy sources in Hungary
B	Affordability - cheap energy provision as a political tool for winning elections which also blocks development of more efficient energy
C1	Sustainability – greening energy policy but mainly due to EU policies
C2	Decarbonization and climate neutrality
C3	Turn Hungary into „solar energy country” – political and not real aim
D	Development of nuclear energy – essential for the energy supply, controversial due to further dependencies on Russia
E	Implementation of innovations and smart techniques
F	Gain competitiveness for the industry
G1	Securing the energy supply – diversifying the energy import including China
G2	Decreasing dependency from other countries but without any real actions
G3	Decentralisation of energy structure
G4	Become important storage with a capacity of 6.5 billion tons in 5 gas storages

Results

1. Szabo and Fabok's theses partially confirmed:
   - PL: self-sufficiency is not salient but …
   - Economic competitiveness and energy efficiency are
   - (Economic competitiveness and energy efficiency appear also in HU)
   - HU: Hungary as Energy hub – prominent narrative
2. Compliance with the EU policy is taken for granted
3. Energy affordability – in PL and HU

Conclusions

- The narratives partially differ between PL and HU
- The narratives are not coherent – there is no one view on energy transition
- Conditional aims – analysis via propositional logic

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Thank you!

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