

HEROES, VICTIMS AND VILLAINS – EXPERT'S NARRATIVES ABOUT ENERGY TRANSITION IN POLAND

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Narrative Policy Framework

- Jones et al, 2014, Shanahan et al (2017),
- Narratives play a crucial role in shaping public opinion, policy preferences, and policy outcomes
- NPF analyzes the role of narratives in shaping public policy.
- Micro, meso and macro level of analysis

Narratives - stories that contain characters, plots, and moral judgments—play a fundamental role in how individuals understand and make sense of the world around them.

Data collection

Individual in-deph interviews with experts

- High profile experts on energy policy
- Purposive sampling (snowball)
- September 2022 - March 2023
- Incentives for experts (500 PLN)

NGO	Business	Politicians and government administration	Researchers
6	4	5	5



Data analysis

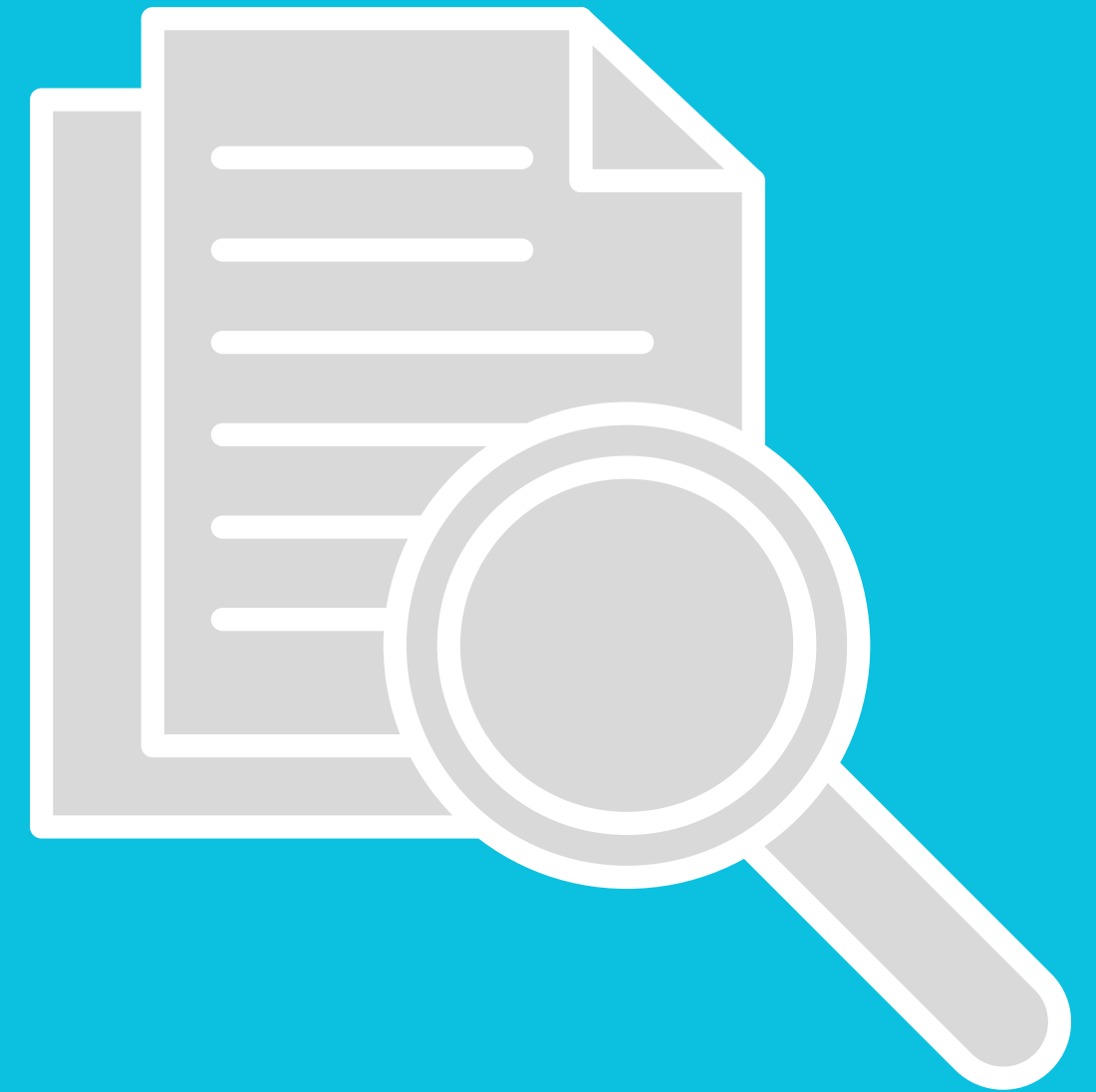
- Narrative analysis of interviews
- Codebook inspired Shanahan et al (2017)
- Coding using MAXQDA Software

Examples of analyzed narrative elements - characters:

Villain - those who create a harm, or inflicts damage or pain upon a victim or, in other cases as one who opposes the aims of the hero.

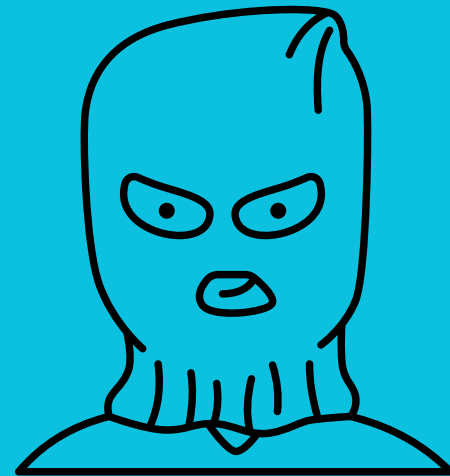
Victim - those who are harmed by a particular action or inaction.

Hero - those who take action with purpose to achieve or oppose a policy solution.



How do experts construct characters in narratives about the energy transition in Poland?

Villains



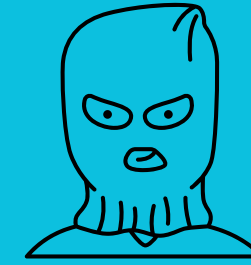
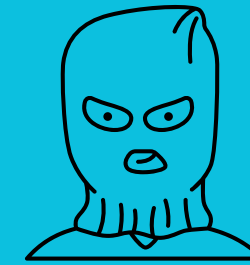
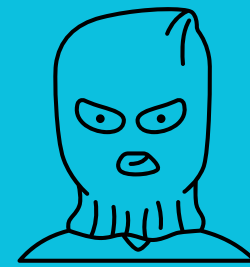
Politicians ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒

"The energy transition requires massive investments that need to be initiated during one term, implemented during the second, and celebrated as achievements during the third. While there are costs involved, there is no immediate political gain within the same term. Politicians are reluctant to take long-term steps due to the associated risks. Regardless of the ruling parties in Poland, I have the impression that this populism is taking a toll on us." (10-R)

State energy companies ☒ ☒ ☒ ☐

"This is how monopolies work, i.e. they want to maintain the status quo in which they are located, they are not very ambitious and not very innovative, and it would just suit them if they had coal and would have a lot of it. They can exercise this monopoly through various things. You can even see what is the dynamics of increasing renewable sources in these companies, and what is in the private sector. Such large companies have very large investment opportunities, if they do not use them for energy transition, in my opinion it means that they are de facto blocking it." (56-NGO)

Villains



Miners' trade unions

NGO	BUS.	RES.	GAP
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"The strategies of previous governments have been rather conservative, aiming to avoid upsetting the mining trade unions. This interest group, although not very large in size as we are talking about tens of thousands of workers, holds significant influence and is **highly vocal, with considerable mobilization capabilities and strong alliances**. It is a powerful brake on progress." (15-NGO)

Transmission system operators

NGO	BUS.	RES.	GAP
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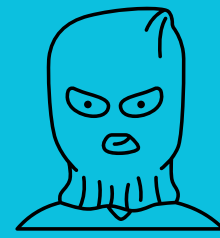
"These strategic companies hold considerable sway over the trajectory of Poland's energy mix. **They maintain the status quo**. If they argue that we need a stable coal-fired power plant in Ostrołęka, politicians believe in that." (41-R)

Energy insighters

NGO	BUS.	RES.	GAP
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"People who have worked in the energy sector for a long time often hold a **skeptical view regarding a broader shift towards renewable energy sources**. There is no doubt that these individuals possess **significant internal knowledge about how things work** and can easily eat activists for the breakfast. Moreover, due to their control over this knowledge, they often transition between government ministries and energy companies" (15-NGO)

Villains



Academia ☒ ☐ ☒ ☐

NGO BUS. RES. GAP

The presence and influence of academia in this context are limited, except "Nauka o Klimacie" portal, but overall, the voice of academia is not very powerful. Additionally, academia can be quite conservative, particularly among energy experts and researchers focused on coal, who are essentially insiders and tend to hold reactionary positions. (15-NGO)

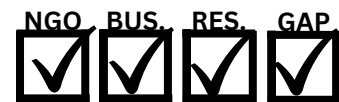
European Union ☐ ☐ ☐ ☒

NGO BUS. RES. GAP

"The EU also has a complete lack of understanding of our situation. We are expected to align with European Union policies, and failure to do so results in enormous economic costs. How are we supposed to lead the energy transition when the expenses involved are astronomically high? It may sound good from Brussels' perspective, but from Warsaw's perspective, it looks different. This is an area where sovereignty seems to be most limited at the moment." (3-GA)

Victims

Mining regions(?)

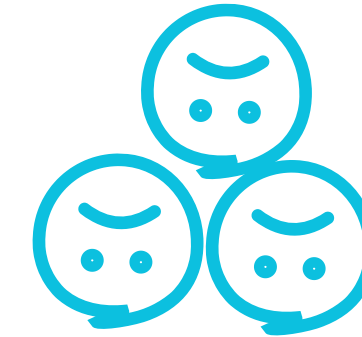
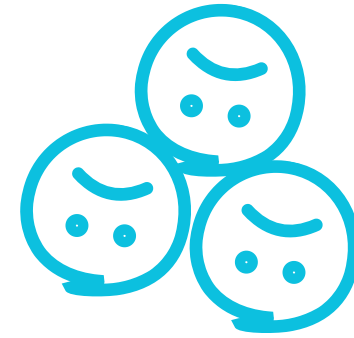


"There are certain places that may experience a particularly difficult transformation, especially those with monoculture production. Such places include **Eastern Wielkopolska, Bełchatów in Łódź Voivodeship, and Turów**, to a lesser extent Silesia and Lubelszczyzna. There will be mine closures, **job reductions**, and a decrease in the activities of coal-fired power plants, affecting all companies servicing power plants and mines as well. At this moment, it is crucial to consider how this transformation should look and which regions and groups should receive attention. Properly directed resources and the emergence of new investments can ensure that these regions **do not have to be victims of this process.**" (15-NGO)

Energy-intensive business | NGO | BUS. | RES. | GAP | |-----|------|------|-----| | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

"It would be more cost-effective to produce or purchase equipment with a higher price tag but a lower carbon footprint in Germany or another country, rather than in Poland. In Poland, such production would simply **result in higher emissions and a larger carbon footprint**. This is an increasingly significant danger for energy-intensive companies. So, even if they invest in energy efficiency, the fact remains that if their energy source is high in carbon, it will **make their goods uncompetitive.**" (34-B)

Victims



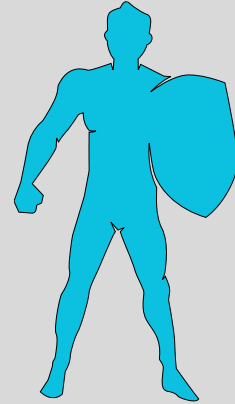
Private sector energy business ☒ ☐ ☒ ☐

"There is complete chaos that is harming businesses. If I make a decision now and spend significant resources, I need to have some certainty that it will bring me some benefit. Polish companies investing in the energy sector are losing huge amounts of money due to the **instability we have**. An example of this is the government's withdrawal from the exchange obligation for wind energy." (1-NGO)

Poland ☐ ☐ ☐ ☒

"I believe that these delays in energy transition are also due to financial issues. **Poland is undeniably a poorer country compared to the majority of European nations**. We are striving to catch up with these processes, but it is challenging for us to break through the narrative that we **emit a lot and transform ourselves too slowly**. Aligning ourselves with this viewpoint is like casting ourselves as the scapegoat." (46-GA)

Heroes



European Union

NGO	BUS.	RES.	GAP
✓	✓	✓	✓

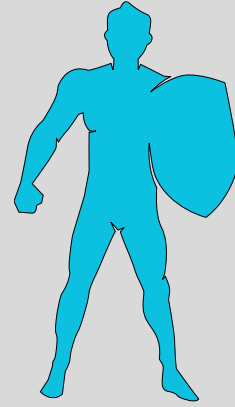
"The role of the European Union and other institutions is incomparable. They serve as catalysts and creators in our climate policy. If Poland were not a part of the European Union, our ambitions would likely be much lower. It can be said that thanks to the European Union, we are undergoing significant changes." (34-B)

Energy-intensive business

NGO	BUS.	RES.	GAP
✓	✓	✓	✓

"Companies like Azoty and KGHM, which have a high demand for green energy, cannot rely on the state to provide it in the current circumstances. Consequently, they are taking the initiative to organize their own green energy sources. They are actively pushing for energy decentralization and the development of renewable energy sources (RES). By taking control of their energy production through RES, these companies aim to ensure a sustainable and reliable energy supply for their operations." (15-NGO)

Heroes



Civil society ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒

"If it wasn't for the increasing awareness of a large and growing part of civil society towards climate and environmental issues, we wouldn't even be discussing these topics politically. They are quite challenging for any ruling party, as they involve balancing interests with the energy and mining sectors. However, we have built a strong critical mass within society, and grassroots activism has led to the message of the benefits of decarbonization breaking through to the public and the media. This message is primarily conveyed by non-governmental organizations and the power of social movements." (10-R)

Russia ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒

"It may sound terribly, but ironically, Russia is contributing to the energy transition. The crisis caused by the war and Russia's continuous use of energy for political purposes has made people realize that investments in energy transition are not just an idea promoted by environmentalists, but a real and beneficial investment that will lead to a decrease in prices." (58-NGO)

Concluding remarks

- Participant's narratives about politicians as villains prioritize short-term and populist goals and highlight the absence of a consistent, long-term vision for energy transition.
- Mining regions, businesses can be victims without appropriate action but they don't have to be in case of just and effective transition.
- Some government administration and politicians experts view the European Union as an overbearing force, while other experts see it as a crucial catalyst for transition in Poland.
- Some government administration and politicians experts perceive Poland as a “too poor” country to do an effective energy transition; this is criticised by NGOs, researchers, and business experts for as a harmful narrative that hinders active change.
- All experts portray energy transition as an inevitable process that needs to be carried out. Among interviewed experts, there is agreement on the necessity of transformation, but there is no agreement about assessment of characters, pace and direction of ET.

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"Determinants of the populist opposition towards climate policy" - POPCLIM



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