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Local governments' sustainability reporting and public acceptance of green energy transition projects – The Fosen Case

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Preface

This master thesis finalizes my Master of Science at Nord University Business School. The thesis counts for 30 ETCS, and the topic is related to my major in Global Management. Instead of writing a more traditional monograph, I have chosen to write this thesis as a scientific article with a separate introductory chapter. The purpose of this thesis is to examine how public acceptance could be created in renewable energy project in the High North and areas with similar demographics through stakeholder dialogue and sustainability reporting.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor Igor Khodachek for valuable advice and feedback throughout the project and for his dedication and involvement, which has been a constant source of motivation and inspiration throughout the entire process of developing this thesis. We would also like to extend our gratitude to all the informants who generously participated in this study and devoted their valuable time, without whom this thesis would not have been possible.

Bodø, 22nd of May 2023



Abstract

The purpose of this study is to address an emerging theme of the role of public sector sustainability reporting in green energy transition. In particular, we investigate how a dialogue between the local governments and citizens is constructed when Norwegian municipalities plan and report the implementation of their green energy transition strategies.

The need for sustainable energy sources in Northern Europe is greater than ever before. The fossil fuel energy crisis and increased investments in electrification both in industry and in the public sector require new solutions to secure energy supply, which at the same time must be sustainable economically and environmentally. Norway has a rich history when it comes to developing renewable energy production. Most of its energy is produced using renewable energy sources, i.e. hydropower. The hydropower dams were mostly built in the 20th century, a period when the investment decisions were taken at the national level with little interference from the local level. Today we see an increased need to involve stakeholders at different levels to implement decisions taken at by governments. Therefore, it is increasingly important to understand whether and how regional and local governments create public acceptance of their green energy transition strategies. Existing research on sustainability reporting in Norway focuses primarily on corporate social responsibility. This study, however, focuses mainly on if and how Norwegian municipalities use sustainability reporting in creating public acceptance of green energy transition projects.

This article presents a case study of wind power development in Åfjord Municipality on the Fosen peninsula in Central Norway. The Fosen case is arguably the best representation of conflicts that could occur surrounding the development of renewable energy projects in the territories shared by the indigenous and non-indigenous populations and has been covered by extensive research addressing just transition and indigenous rights. However, the material side of dialogue between the local government, the project operator and the indigenous and non-indigenous communities has been limited to studying the legal side of the court case. This research investigates how local government sustainability reporting may be relevant to address the emerging challenges of just transition. The representatives from each group of stakeholders connected to the conflict of the Fosen wind farm project have been interviewed. The findings of this study suggest that the communication in the planning phase is vital to avoiding conflicts in an energy development project. The impact of early dialogue with local

stakeholders is shown when analyzing how projects and conflicts evolve over time. The further a project reaches its launch, the more difficult it becomes to influence existing plans that could lead to a higher public acceptance. The study contributes to the existing literature on public acceptance of green energy projects by showing the importance of stakeholder dialogue quality. A clear communication between the developer and affected groups is necessary for just energy transition. In the Fosen case, the main reason for conflict was a poor exchange of knowledge between the two polarizing parties, and a certain arrogance on the developer's part. Besides, transparency of environmental and sustainability reporting is vital for creating public acceptance. In the Fosen case the reporting, however, has been mainly outsourced to the public corporation responsible for developing the energy projects because of a lack of resources at a municipality.

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Introductory chapter

This Master thesis is a theoretical and descriptive study on local acceptance of green energy transition project in the High North and similar areas populated by indigenous communities. Through interviews and research articles, this study has gained a better understanding on how to decrease conflict surrounding new green energy projects. This contributes to some of the most important topics in sustainable development and green energy transition. With this study, I wish to look at why transparency and communication is important in all stages of a renewable energy project, and how local governments can use sustainability reports to increase public acceptance.

For this thesis I have interviewed 5 people from 4 different stakeholder categories connected to the Fosen Case: Developers, local government, local citizens, and representatives from indigenous communities to create an understanding of how dialogue and sustainability reporting could be used to create local acceptance for renewable energy development.

Background

The Hurdal platform points at the High North as the most important strategic area of interest in Norway. The government wishes to increase the value production created in the High North, and to make the High North the center of green transition (Hurdalsplattformen, 2021). The natural condition in the High North facilitates new green industrialization and green energy production. Examples of this can be found in Mo I Rana and Narvik, where plans to build large battery factories are undergoing. In Mo I Rana, Freyr have started the construction of a battery factory. This factory aims to install 50 GWh of annual battery cell capacity within 2025, 100 GWh capacity within 2028 and 200 GWh capacity within 2030 (Freyr Battery, 2023). Battery production demands a large amount of energy, so Freyr have made a deal with the national supplier of electricity Statkraft who is going to supply this factory with 1,4 TWh electricity in the period between 2024 – 2031 (Freyr Battery, 2022). In the long term this energy consumption could affect the total energy capacity as electrification is happening elsewhere in the community and increased energy prices in Southern Norway could lead to a more integrated electricity grid which again could lead to a more ‘European’ market price. In

all, the need for new and green energy production in the High North is becoming more important as local initiatives transit from fossil fuels to green energy.

To produce and transport this energy, there is an issue arising. Recent development of wind power in Norway has created conflict with local stakeholders, indigenous people, and environmental activists. Between 2016 and 2020 the largest land-based wind farm in Europe was constructed on Fosen. The company Fosen Vind, majority owned by Statkraft, was responsible for the construction of 6 wind parks which led to criticism of how the local stakeholders were treated. The Norwegian Supreme Court declared the concession invalid in 2021 because the development infringes the Sami's right to practice their own culture (Supreme Court of Norway, 2023). This study focuses on the conflicts surrounding renewable energy development on Fosen as these conflicts could be illustrative to show what we may expect regarding just transition issues in the High North.

Research question

The purpose of this study is to learn how to decrease the risk of conflicts in energy transformation projects. By addressing the emerging theme of the production and use of public sector reporting, this study aims to understand how transparency and dialogue between local governments and citizens could increase public acceptance for renewable energy production and implementation.

Sustainable development in the High North and areas with similar demographics is an important field to research as the region is a big part of a larger development strategy.

Throughout history there have been conflicts surrounding new energy projects. This study aims to look at what went wrong in previous cases, and to look at what could be done to reduce conflict in the future. Both the governments and the public have something to gain from a conflict-free development.

In recent years, sustainability reporting has become increasingly more important. This kind of reporting gives stakeholders insight into an organization's spending and the outcomes of those spendings, as well as impacts on the environment and society. These sustainability reports have shown to be effective when communicating with stakeholders. However, these reports

are most often seen created by and for private companies and not the governmental sector. Therefore, this study aims to look at how local governments in the High North could utilize sustainability reporting and how these governments could increase public acceptance for new green energy projects. This has resulted in the following research question:

How can the risk of conflict surrounding renewable energy development decrease via stakeholder dialogue?

Theoretical framework

The purpose of this chapter is to develop the theoretical background of the thesis. In the article I ask the research question: “*How can the risk of conflict surrounding renewable energy development decrease via stakeholder dialogue?*”, and in this introduction chapter I review theory that concerns perspectives on governance in the renewable energy transition, theory on dialogue, sustainability reporting, and public acceptance, as well as the methodology applied.

Sustainability reporting

There has been an exponential growth in financial and non-financial reporting such as social, environmental or sustainability reporting in recent years. Sustainability reporting as the most integrative and extensive type of reporting has gained the attention of corporations and institutions such as private companies, governmental institutions, associations, and non-governmental organizations (NGO's). There are different reasons to why organizations should disclose sustainability information. Herzig & Schaltegger (2011) argues that this can be a way to gain, maintain, and repair legitimacy. This applies to the public acceptance of the organizations generally, and more specifically the acceptance of different managerial decisions and activities by the organization's key stakeholders. Reporting on non-financial activities signals a willingness by the organization to communicate and deal with societal issues and may help in continuing a good relationship with the stakeholders. (Herzig & Schaltegger, 2011). Corporations often tend to use sustainability reporting as a competitive

advantage as those organizations seems invested in society and will meet less friction and conflict with the stakeholders.

Financial reporting originated in the 19th century when income levels rose, leading to a focus on the quality of life by the society and governments, while negative effects of quantitative economic growth were seen as negative in most parts of Europe (Herzig & Schaltegger, 2011). The result of this was companies beginning to report on their activities to reach their social goals and its impacts, also known as social reporting. The goal behind these reports were to inform the stakeholders of the company's positive and negative social impacts related to its activities, services, and products.

In the late 1980's, early 1990's, environmental reporting emerged. One of the main goals behind environmental reporting was to communicate the environmental impact of the company's activities, such as pollution of harmful chemicals into surrounding nature and water, waste etc. *'Environmental reporting can be seen as a response to hazardous incidents and environmental disasters such as Schweizerhalle (Switzerland), Icmea Ltd. (Italy), and Hoechst AG (Germany) in the 1990's'* (Herzig & Schaltegger, 2011). As a result of these incidents, some companies were seen as the major creator behind environmental problems, which again forced organizations to reveal activities that could impact the environment, partly through laws, and partly through pressure from stakeholders.

In the end of the 1990's, sustainability reports started to emerge, reporting in a wider perspective, including all sustainability activities to inform which steps organizations took to participate in sustainable development. When implementing environmental, social, and financial accounting information, there are different methodological integration challenges organizations face. Herzig & Schaltegger (2011) differentiate sustainability reporting strategies into three main categories: *Distinctive stakeholder- and theme-specific reports, stand-alone sustainability reports, and extended financial reports and integrated (business) reports* (Herzig & Schaltegger, 2011).

Although research has mainly focused on corporate sustainability reporting, emerging trends in reporting from local governments show the importance of sustainability reporting in the

public sector. In cities in Europe, reporting initiatives have been both voluntarily and in response to legal processes. In a research conducted by Niemann & Hoppe (2018) six of the cities analyzed were labeled as ‘early adopters’ of sustainability reporting. All six cities initiated reporting voluntarily, and over time made major design choices to each adapt to their local needs. This research found that even though the financial costs of producing these reports, there was no evidence of organizational benefits, for example concerning increased staff motivation and data management capacities (Niemann & Hoppe, 2018). To meet different information needs of different stakeholders, this study found that it *‘requires smart strategies such as combining extensive, multi-year reports with executive annual updates disseminated in various media’* (Niemann & Hoppe, 2018). Citizens could start to lose interest over time when moderate change in outcomes corrodes the news value. Niemann & Hoppe found that sustainability reporting is no ‘magic tool’ for local governments. They argue that attempts to reach all audiences with a single document is doomed to fail (Niemann & Hoppe, 2018). It seems that no matter how relevant the information in the reports is to the sustainability projects in the cities, not enough citizens will devote their time to read them and participate in the dialogue. Therefore, local governments are dependent on the reports being included in media so that the population get it presented in a sounder way.

Public acceptance in renewable energy projects

A study conducted by CEDREN (Centre of Environmental Design of Renewable Energy) looks at the current management of public acceptance, especially regarding impact assessment and planning processes. They point at conflicts that can be created by different conditions and how to solve these issues possibly. This study divides public acceptance into three categories: public political acceptance, market acceptance, and local acceptance (Ruud et al., 2016). *Political acceptance* could be described as general issues where technologies and the choice of political tools are involved and could be used on decision-makers, central interests, and the public in general. Studies show that the general public in Norway has a high acceptance of renewable energy, but this does not necessarily mean that they have a high acceptance for specific local projects and locations (Aas et al., 2014). *Market acceptance* is defined as how investors, customers, and industry actors assess and deal with different technologies, offers, and projects (Ruud et al., 2016). Even though there is wide political acceptance for new energy production projects, there might be resistance from the

local community. The perception of unfair decision-making processes and an unreasonable distribution of benefits and disadvantages create challenges for local acceptance (Ruud et al., 2016). In recent years, it is precisely the issue of local acceptance that has been focused on. While there, in general, has been a wide political acceptance of the production of new energy sources, the acceptance in many cases has been low among the local communities. From a timeline perspective, political acceptance has been seen at national and local levels as the government has increased renewable energy strategies. At a local level, many of the municipalities where renewable energy development initiatives have been planned at a national level accept this because of the economic and social benefits that come with it.

When we look at the history of the Norwegian development of renewable energy, we see how important public acceptance is. Because of conflicts connected to local acceptance, some projects have been canceled, some have been postponed, and some have been compromised. In the beginning, the decisions were taken at a national level without the involvement of local stakeholders. These decisions often led to conflicts, but the projects were developed anyways. Today, however, the role and involvement of different stakeholders are in a much larger capacity involved in the established practices of developing new projects. Therefore, it has become increasingly important to create broad public acceptance. Different from the early days, it is now rarely seen that the licensing authorities accept new projects as long as the host municipality does not support the project.

Based on the development of hydropower in the period 1920 – 1970, the Norwegian environmental movement was created. A lack of public acceptance around the development of ‘Veig-Dagali’ and the ‘Alta-Kautokeinovassdraget’ was the background of the massive conflict created by these projects (Ruud et al., 2016). The conflicts around hydropower culminated in many ways when the previous prime minister, Jens Stoltenberg, in his 2001 new year’s speech, said that the ‘time for large new power installations was over.’ However, renewable energy projects still create a strong public engagement (Ruud et al., 2016).

In the early 2000s, the western part of Norway needed electricity. This region has large cities like Stavanger and Bergen and industrial locations like Kollsnes and Mongstad. The supply of electricity at the time was not sufficient, which led to a huge blackout in the region, and the area all the way from Rogaland to Bergen was without electricity. In a region south of the Hardanger Fjord, there was at the time an abundance of electricity coming from hydropower,

so the authorities decided to transfer some of this to the region in need further northwest. To transport this electricity, however, they needed to build huge power lines that later got the nickname “monster masts.” When developing this project, the authorities did not think it would lead to any conflicts and continued the development thereafter. In later times, the director of public relations and communications in Statkraft, Tor Inge Akselsen, would admit that there was no political treatment prior to this project. The company responsible for the transport of all electricity in Norway, Statkraft, thought they were on solid ground professionally speaking, but that this was not communicated well enough (Gammelsæter, 2022). The proposition for the project was presented the day before the public holiday in 2010, and all the factors included led to people believing this was fraud, trickery, and an attempt to deauthorize the local population.

In Norway, the responsible authority to decide what should be done in controversial cases like the power lines in Hardanger is The Ministry of Petroleum and Energy (OED), but the institution responsible for building the foundation on behalf of OED is The Norwegian Water Resources and Energy Directorate (NVE). The Ministry of Climate and Environment is only responsible for the external environment, meaning they have no authority over the energy administration. This is important to focus on when examining which laws, regulations, and measures that can be connected to public acceptance (Ruud, 2016).

Local acceptance is a term that could be connected to any energy measure, whether it is the energy efficiency of private and public buildings, EV chargers, or the construction of energy producers like wind turbines or solar panels. What is in focus is on a high degree connected to which subject each citizen is engaged in, and it is therefore important to understand and identify laws and regulations that ensure all relevant considerations are taken care of. Larger facilities for production, transport, and distribution need the concession to be developed, owned, or run. These concessions can only be given if the social benefit is greater than the loss (Ruud, 2016).

Socially rational measures have to be taken in the production, transformation, transportation, distribution, and use of energy to ensure that non-financial interests are valued and taken into consideration. This is connected to the Norwegian Energy Act, but it does, however, say very little about what are socially rational measures (The Energy Act, 1990, §1-2). To ensure that socially rational measures are taken into consideration, communication and dialogue is

essential. Which information strategy decision makers and developers choose will have a great impact on public acceptance management. Rowe and Frewer (2005) describe information as how communication flows between an initiator and affected parties by dividing between communication, consultation, and participation. Communication alludes to the one-way presentation of information coming from the initiative taker to the public, where a response is neither demanded nor searched. Consultation is described as a one-way information flow from affected public parties towards the initiative taker, and participation is the stage where information is shared by the initiative taker to facilitate dialogue and negotiation that, in the end, could change the outcome for the parties involved (Rowe & Frewer, 2005).

The citizens' opportunity for participation and the right to information are central principles in a democratic society. This and other principles, such as freedom of speech and a fair justice system, are regulated by both international conventions and national laws. In almost every discussion surrounding new energy development, one or more of these principles will be connected or affected.

CEDREN has defined what the public thinks is important and what could create conflict. The first concern is if the project is useful. It is important for the legitimacy of the project that there is a real need and that there is a general understanding of these needs. Further, the use of land is also a concern in the general public. How much land is needed in the construction of power plants, and what kind of land is affected: agricultural or forest areas, hiking areas, proximity to residential areas, schools and kindergartens, and preserved areas such as national parks. Depending on the project, different kinds and sizes of areas are affected.

Concerns connected to residential areas and the living environment are also present in public, such as a fear of possible health effects connected to electromagnetic fields, decreased value of properties, and noise, traffic, and accidents.

The Norwegian public, in general, thinks that the possibility of outdoor activities and recreation is important for their well-being. Therefore, the effects different projects have on surrounding outdoor areas could create conflicts. The public fears the area being ruined and that the outdoor area is ruined or that the area does not fill the previous function, so they could no longer use the area for the previous purpose. Wind turbines and the following

transportation routes could, for example, degrade the quality of an entire mountain, or hydropower could affect the amount of water in a river or lake.

Further concerns are the impact of visual effects on the landscape, biodiversity, and public interests, such as revenues and local entrepreneurs and organizations (Ruud et al., 2016).

CEDREN divides a typical energy development project into three phases: the planning phase, the development phase, and the operating phase. By following these guidelines, a developer may identify possible conflicts connected to each phase. In the planning phase, conflicts could be created when not communicating the project well enough. In the early 2000's we saw an example of this being done when new power lines were planned to be constructed over the Hardanger Fjord to supply major cities in Western Norway with much-needed electricity (Gammelsæter, 2022, pp. 54-65). This led to huge conflicts even before they got to the development phase. The same scenario could happen in the High North, as the region is surrounded by a similar national romantic environment. CEDREN argues that all knowledge surrounding the project should be communicated when logic and terminology could lead to conflict. If conflicts in the planning phase continue, the challenges could continue or even escalate into the development phase, especially if developers do not manage to create a local anchorage, by, for example, not using local entrepreneurs, something that can persist into the operating phase (Ruud, 2016).

Wind energy development on Fosen and Sami communities

Wind power policies in Norway are primarily shaped by key actors, such as developers, energy authorities, and interest organizations. These actors contribute to the policy discourse by emphasizing climate concerns, economic opportunities, and energy security as significant factors driving the promotion and implementation of wind power initiatives (Vasstrøm & Lysgård, 2021). The growing influence of environmental organizations, local governments, and engaged citizens is giving rise to new forms of political participation that center around the evaluation of environmental, distributional, and procedural justice, particularly at the local level. These voices advocate for the recognition and inclusion of alternative visions for future energy systems, encompassing innovative and sustainable energy imaginaries (Vasstrøm & Lysgård, 2021).

Otte et al. (2018) argues that the conflicts surrounding the Fosen Case go beyond the traditional NIMBY-ism and encompass intricate temporal and spatial dimensions of energy impacts. *“The project is characterized by a reproduction of existing social injustice with regard to the South Sámi population”* (Otte et al., 2018, pp. 153). Sami reindeer herders were involved in the planning process of the project from the beginning. Their industry knowledge and impacts on their way of operating was analyzed in expert reports. Nevertheless, the knowledge they put on the table had little to do with how the project developed and the final decision (Otte et al., 2018). Otte et al. (2018) asks a question whether it is possible to make decisions that are energy just for everyone. At a macro level, the state government has the responsibility to ensure energy security and to take decisions that serve the nation in the long-term future. In Fosen on the other hand, it was the local autonomy and democracy together with industrial parties that were the driving force. However, Åfjord municipality felt they were implementing national energy strategies and energy development in the name of climate (Otte et al., 2018). Normann (2021) suggests the introduction of wind power initiatives reflects a resurgence of historical processes of dispossession driven by accumulation and colonialism. These processes are facilitated by significant knowledge gaps within Norwegian society and institutions. Importantly, these dynamics run counter to the values of responsibility and ecological practices upheld by the Southern Saami community (Normann, 2021). *“The implication of these findings suggests an urgent need of rethinking renewable energy and including indigenous knowledge in climate change agendas”* (Normann, 2021, pp. 77).

Methodology

Data collection from interview will be gathered using a combination of purposive sampling and snowball sampling, as this gives the best base of exploring this phenomena. Since the study explores how cities in the High North could create public acceptance of their energy transition via sustainability reporting, sampling respondents that are linked to energy management and sustainability reporting within the local municipalities or city councils and then utilize their network will give the best professional assessment of this research question. By using a semi-structured interview guide, there is room for a constructive dialogue which could encourage the interviewees to give more useful information.

In this chapter, I give an in-depth explanation of the methodology used in this thesis. The research design presents philosophical and methodological approaches, assessments, and data selection criteria that create the framework for the data collection of this research.

The chapter begins with a description of the research design, including the research philosophy, approach, and strategy, and continues with a thorough explanation of the data collection and analysis methods.

Research philosophies and paradigms

To determine the way in which my data is collected to answer the research question, I will use the research ‘onion’, created by Saunders et al. (2019). The outer layer of this ‘onion’ describes the philosophy of my research. This broad concept pertains to the advancement of knowledge and the characteristics of said knowledge. The chosen research philosophy encompasses significant suppositions regarding our perception of the world. These suppositions will serve as the foundation for the research strategy and the methods that are selected in the context of that strategy. Saunders et al. (2019) suggest three major ways of thinking about research philosophy: epistemology ontology, and axiology (Saunders et al., 2019).

Epistemology pertains to the standards used to determine what is considered valid knowledge within a field of study. Epistemology is a branch of philosophy that focuses on the characteristics of knowledge and belief, as well as the process by which we obtain knowledge and validate our beliefs (Saunders et al., 2019). It aims to address queries such as "What constitutes knowledge?", "What constitutes evidence to support our beliefs?", and "How do we know what we know?". As a fundamental element of research philosophy, epistemology influences how researchers approach their research questions and choose appropriate methods and techniques (Saunders et al., 2019).

Saunders et al. (2019) identifies three different epistemological positions in research: positivism, realism, interpretivism, postmodernism, and pragmatism (Saunders et al., 2019).

In my research, I will focus on Interpretivism, as this position advocates that it is important for the researcher to understand the differences between humans in our role as social actors. Interpretivism suggests that reality is shaped by social interactions and that meaning is created through the interpretation of experiences and contexts. According to interpretivists, there is no objective reality that exists independently of human perception and interpretation (Saunders et al., 2019). As a result, research should concentrate on comprehending the subjective experiences and meanings of individuals and groups. Interpretivists typically employ qualitative research techniques, such as interviews, observations, and textual analysis, to attain a thorough understanding of the social world (Saunders et al., 2019).

Interpretivism share some similarities with the social constructionism paradigm in Easterby-Smith et al. (2016). Both approaches dismiss the idea of objective reality and emphasize the importance of subjective interpretation and purpose making in understanding the social world. However, social constructionism argues that social reality is actively constructed through social interactions and processes (Easterby-Smith et al., 2018) while interpretivism is primarily focused on understanding the subjective experiences and meanings of individual groups (Saunders et al., 2019).

Saunders et al. (2019) differ between two approaches: deductive and inductive. A research approach is used to identify the practical use of an understanding of a philosophical position (Saunders et al., 2019). In this study, I will be taking an inductive approach as I will collect data and develop theory based on the result of my data analysis. An inductive approach owes more to interpretivism than any of the other research philosophies because it emphasizes the importance of exploring and understanding the subjective interpretations and experiences of individuals, rather than starting with a hypothesis or preconceived theories (Saunders et al., 2019). The process of inductive reasoning involves deriving general principles or theories from specific observations or experiences. This approach is particularly appropriate for interpretive research, which endeavors to comprehend social phenomena from the perspective of those who are experiencing it (Saunders et al., 2019).

Research design

Saunders et al. (2019) explains research design in simple terms as *“The general plan of how you will go about answering your research question”* (Saunders et al., 2019, pp. 173). In the research ‘onion’, the research design contains three layers: strategies, choices, and time horizons (Saunders et al., 2019).

The research strategy I have chosen in this study is a case study. Yin (2018, as cited in Saunders et al., 2019) defines case study as *“an in-depth inquiry into a topic or phenomenon within its real-life setting. The ‘case’ in case study research may refer to a person, a group, an organization, an association, a change process, an event, as well as many other types of case subject”* (Saunders et al., 2019, pp. 196). When conducting a case study, the ability to explore the context of the research is higher compared to other research strategies (i.e., survey), because of the high number of variables in which data can be collected. When choosing this strategy, it implies that this research will triangulate multiple sources of data. *“Triangulation involves using more than one source of data and method of collection to confirm the validity/credibility/authenticity of research data, analysis and interpretation”* (Saunders et al., 2019, pp. 218). The reason behind a case study strategy in this research is the rich and detailed data in this study allows me to generate in-depth insights into my research topic, as well as allowing me to explore the phenomena in its real-life context, providing a possibility to understand how different factors interacts with and influence the phenomenon of this study. A case study also requires a limited number of resources such as time and access to data.

In this study I have chosen Fosen as a single case. The ‘Fosen Case’ as it is called is an ongoing conflict concerning wind power development on the Fosen peninsula in the county of Trøndelag. The reason behind choosing this case for this study is the many similarities between this conflict and possible areas of conflict around the development of renewable energy in the High North. First of all, an area conflict has arisen between the developer and the reindeer herders who operate in this area. These herders are from Sami origin, and their right to operate reindeer husbandry in the area is protected by §108 of the

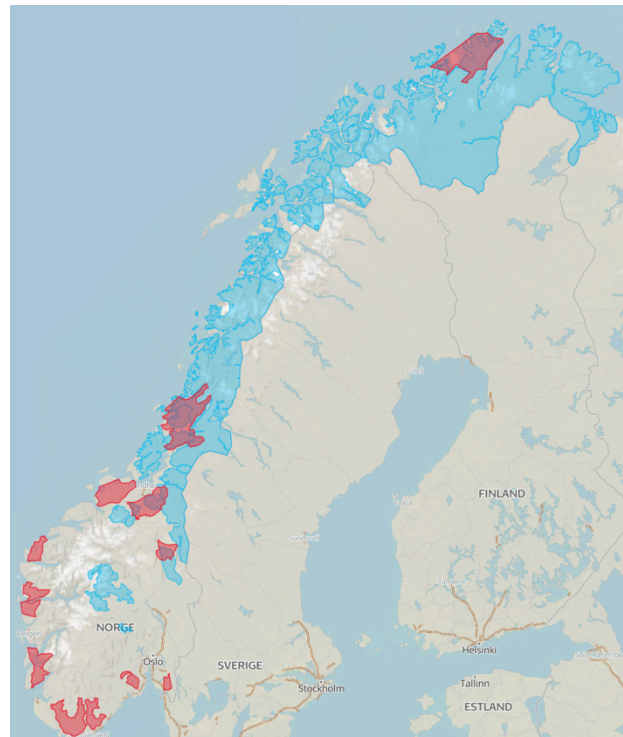


Figure 1: Blue: Reindeer herding area, Red: Favorable for wind power. (Knežević et al., 2023)

Norwegian Constitution and international law (County Governor of Nordland, 2017). As the majority of the Norwegian High North is covered by reindeer husbandry areas, the Fosen case will act as a litmus test to understand what could be done to reduce potential conflict in future energy projects. In a news article published by NRK, we get an illustration over areas The Norwegian Water Resources and Energy Directorate (NVE) has pointed out as favorable for wind power inside reindeer husbandry territories (Knežević et. al., 2023).

Qualitative methodology

In the social sciences, methodology is utilized as a means to highlight a research question or hypothesis. It outlines the approach and analysis to be employed to investigate the research question or hypothesis and ultimately draw a conclusion. Qualitative research is a scientific approach that delves deeply into a particular phenomenon. Its objective is to examine and elucidate the fundamental significance underlying a specific phenomenon, with emphasis on the reasons and methods of its occurrence, rather than its frequency (Easterby-Smith et al., 2018). Compared to a quantitative methodology, a qualitative methodology requires a smaller number of respondents. This is because each respondent maintains a deeper knowledge around the phenomena that could be analyzed to understand special patterns. This information

is usually extracted using methods like interviews and observations. Qualitative methodology is especially suitable when there is little existing research on the phenomena which we wish to understand more thoroughly (Johannessen et al., 2011).

Based on the research question being explorative, I consider qualitative methodology being the best suited. The aim of this study is to explore how dialogue could be used to increase public acceptance for the green transformation, and with a qualitative methodology, I am able to dive deep into the phenomenon. I will be able to identify and select informants that possess the right experience and knowledge needed for me to be able to answer my research question based on a qualitative methodology.

Data collection

To accomplish a successful empirical research, the utilization of data as evidentiary support is crucial for substantiating research findings and facilitating the derivation of conclusive inferences (Mehmetoglu, 2004). This necessitates the collection of a substantial volume of pertinent data, forming a robust foundation upon which researchers can formulate sound arguments. It follows that the quality of qualitative research is intrinsically linked to the quality of the underlying data (Mehmetoglu, 2004). Within this chapter, I introduce different methods for data collection in qualitative research. Subsequently, I elucidate the specific approach adopted in our study, followed by a delineation of our strategy and criteria for selecting informants.

In the beginning of this study, I conducted a literature review to create a base of knowledge and to discover relevant concepts. By engaging in a critical review of the literature, I can establish a solid foundation for my research. The primary objective of this review is to facilitate the development of a comprehensive understanding and deep insights into the pertinent previous research and the emerging trends (Saunders et al., 2019). My literature findings come from both manual and computerized searches. I found that the university's online library was the most valuable source of literature, in addition to literature provided to me by my supervisor Igor Khodachek. I also utilized the database Google Scholar and Scopus in finding literature. By searching for key terms and subjects connected to my research topic I

was able to find relevant reports, articles, and books. Throughout this process, my aim was to approach the existing studies critically, carefully selecting materials that were specifically relevant to my field of research.

What distinguishes qualitative research in the social sciences from the natural sciences is the people who are the main source of the data. The natural sciences primarily encompass phenomena that lack language and self-awareness, making it impossible to engage in discussions or question these objects of study, such as atoms, genes, cells, or animals. In contrast, social research focuses on the study of individuals who possess opinions and perceptions that are inherently dynamic and subject to constant change (Johannessen et al., 2011). “The social scientist is a participant in society and cannot just be a spectator to what he studies” (Skjervheim, 1957/1976, as cited in Johannessen et al., 2011 pp 35). To collect the necessary data in a qualitative study, there are different ways of doing this, with the most common methods being: observation, interviews, and group discussions (Johannessen et al., 2011). The selection of an appropriate research method depends on factors such as the desired level of interaction with informants, the study objectives, and any physical constraints that may be present (Johannessen et al., 2011). Considering my research question and adopting an interpretivist research design, I believe that in-depth interviews serve as the most efficient method for data collection in this study. Given the complexity of this research question, it is crucial to delve into the deeper meanings conveyed by the informants' expressions to gain a comprehensive understanding.

Interview as the main data collection method

In this study a qualitative semi-structured interview is used as the main data collection method. “*The research interview is a purposeful conversation between two or more people, during which the interviewer asks concise and unambiguous questions and listens attentively to the interviewee talking*” (Saunders et al., 2019, pp. 434). Interviews stand as the prevailing method for gathering qualitative data, renowned for their versatility. This flexible approach can be applied across diverse settings and enables researchers to obtain comprehensive and detailed descriptions. In general, informants tend to feel at ease during interviews, particularly when the topic under discussion is neither sensitive nor complex (Johannessen et al., 2011). In the case of this study, as the topic is neither sensitive nor complicated, interviews emerge as a

suitable method to foster informant comfort and elicit comprehensive insights. According to Kvale and Brinkmann (2009), the qualitative research interview can be described as a purposeful conversation with a defined structure. This structure revolves around the allocation of roles between the participants involved in the interview. The interviewer assumes the role of asking questions and probing further into the informant's responses (Kvale & Brinkmann, in Johannessen et al., 2011). Consequently, the power dynamics in the interview situation are asymmetrical, with the interviewer holding control over the questioning process. However, interviews are not merely rigid question and answer sessions; they often take the form of dialogues, aiming to understand or describe certain phenomena (Johannessen et al., 2011). In this study, it was imperative to obtain in-depth and comprehensive information from the interviewees to effectively address this research question.

The interview process in my study follows a sequential progression comprising seven distinct stages, as outlined by Kvale and Brinkmann (2009). These stages serve as a framework to guide the researcher's engagement throughout the entire investigation, ensuring the preservation of the initial research vision. The seven steps encompass thematizing, designing, interviewing, transcribing, analyzing, verifying, and reporting (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

Thematizing, the first stage, involves formulating the study's aim and conceptualizing the overarching theme. The subsequent stage, design, focuses on planning the research methodology. In the third stage, actual interviews are conducted based on a predetermined script. Following the interviews, the fourth stage entails transcribing—converting oral speech into written text for subsequent analysis (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

Moving forward, the researcher progresses to the analysis stage, meticulously examining the gathered data to identify relevant material that substantiates the research topic. Once the analysis is completed, the question of verification arises, leading to the sixth stage. Here, the researcher ensures the study's reliability, validity, and if possible – the generalizability of the results (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

Lastly, in the reporting stage, the findings of the study and the conclusions pertaining to the research question are communicated through a comprehensive written report, marking the culmination of the interview process (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

The interviews were conducted based on an interview guide. The interview guide included an introduction, questions of facts, introductory questions, transitional questions, key questions, complicated and sensitive questions, and conclusion as suggested by Johannessen et al. (2011). An interview guide can be structured in three different ways: unstructured, semi-structured, and structured (Johannessen et al., 2011). In an unstructured interview, the researcher asks open questions where a topic is given in advance, but the questions are adapted to the individual interview situation. This type of interview is informal and could more or less resemble a conversation (Johannessen et al., 2011). In a structured interview the questions asked, and the interview topic is determined in advance, and there are fixed answer options that the researcher ticks off. In this type of interview, it could be difficult for the researcher to gain a deeper knowledge of the interviewees' thoughts. This type of interview could often resemble a questionnaire, the difference being the questions in a structured interview often being open and without formulated answer options (Johannessen et al., 2011). This research utilized a semi-structured interview guide. A semi-structured interview guide is the intermediate point between the two outer edges and is the most widespread form of qualitative interviews (Johannessen et al., 2011). When preparing the interview guide, the researcher identifies central themes that form part of the overall problem. Sometimes the researcher is content to ask questions directly from this interview guide, but often the questions are guided so that the interviewee should come up with an in-depth reflection (Johannessen et al., 2011).

In the beginning of each interview, I began by introducing myself and the project. I briefed the informant about their rights to remain anonymous as well as their option to withdraw from the study either during the interview and afterwards. Before conducting the interview, an application was sent to Sikt for processing personal data. An information letter based on a template made by Sikt was sent to the informant in advance of the interview, and the most important points of the information letter was again stated in the interview. To establish a relation with the informant, easy questions were asked first. This automatically led the informant to the main research topic which was the dialogue surrounding the Fosen Case. In this part of the interview, unexpected things often appeared that were interesting to go into in more detail. Some information received needed a more in-depth review, and that is where the key questions were asked. The key questions gave me the information I needed based on the study's purpose and research question. At the end of the interviews, summary questions were asked to explore if the informant possessed additional information on the topic. To end the

interview, information about the informants' rights to stay anonymous and the option to withdraw from the research were given once again. Some informants wanted to stay completely anonymous, while others wanted some personal information, like the position in the organization, to be included in the study. The interviews were recorded and later transcribed with the informants' permission.

Selection strategy

Within qualitative research, it is unusual for informants to be recruited randomly. The purpose of qualitative research is to gain as much knowledge as possible about the phenomenon and not to make statistical generalizations (Johannessen et al., 2011). In this study, purposeful sampling was used to select informants. Purposeful sampling entails a deliberate approach in which the researcher identifies the specific target group necessary to collect the required data. Subsequently, the researcher proceeds to select individuals from this target group who meet the criteria for participation in the survey (Johannessen et al., 2011). In this phase, I identified the main selection criteria to be the main stakeholders in the Fosen Case. In order to create as much understanding of the conflict as possible, I decided to recruit informants from each side of the conflict. Based on knowledge about the case, stakeholders were divided into four different categories: Local government, developer, local citizen, and representative from the indigenous community. By doing this, I was able to retain information from both the impacted part and the developers of the energy project.

In the search for relevant informants, I used the internet to search for people in the different categories, as well as asking the acquaintances that I knew were a part of this project. I contacted several people that matched my criteria directly, either by phone or email, and some of them were willing to be interviewed. Unfortunately, the number of people in these categories was limited, so the recruitment proved to be more difficult than planned. In the end I was able to recruit at least one person from each category, giving me a satisfying insight to the conflict. After the interviews, the informants were kindly asked to name other people they knew could be relevant for this study. This selection method is called snowball sampling and is common when it is difficult to identify and obtain people who may be relevant to the study (Johannessen et al., 2011).

Data analysis

In this chapter I will review different methods for analyzing data based on interviews as the main data collection method. Before analyzing the data, the interviews need to be transcribed, that is, reproduced as a written account using the actual words (Saunders et al., 2019). When transcribing an interview, it is not only important to be interested in what was said, but in the way it was said. Equally important is to establish a link between the interview data and the contextual information that provides a specific location or setting for the interviews (Saunders et al., 2019).

Because of the complex and diverse nature of qualitative data, the approach to the analysis is not so standardized. Saunders et al. (2019) outlines a number of inductively based analytical procedures to analyze qualitative data; (1) data display and analysis, (2) template analysis, (3) analytic induction, (4) grounded theory, (5) discourse analysis, and (6) narrative analysis (Saunders et al., 2018).

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Scientific article

Local governments' sustainability reporting and public acceptance of green energy transition projects – The Fosen Case

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to address an emerging theme of the role of public sector sustainability reporting in green energy transition. In particular, we investigate how a dialogue between the local governments and citizens is constructed when Norwegian municipalities plan and report the implementation of their green energy transition strategies.

The need for sustainable energy sources in Northern Europe is greater than ever before. The fossil fuel energy crisis and increased investments in electrification both in industry and in the public sector require new solutions to secure energy supply, which at the same time must be sustainable economically and environmentally. Norway has a rich history when it comes to developing renewable energy production. Most of its energy is produced using renewable energy sources, i.e. hydropower. The hydropower dams were mostly built in the 20th century, a period when the investment decisions were taken at the national level with little interference from the local level. Today we see an increased need to involve stakeholders at different levels to implement decisions taken at by governments. Therefore, it is increasingly important to understand whether and how regional and local governments create public acceptance of their green energy transition strategies. Existing research on sustainability reporting in Norway focuses primarily on corporate social responsibility. This study, however, focuses

mainly on if and how Norwegian municipalities use sustainability reporting in creating public acceptance of green energy transition projects.

This article presents a case study of wind power development in Åfjord Municipality on the Fosen peninsula in Central Norway. The Fosen case is arguably the best representation of conflicts that could occur surrounding the development of renewable energy projects in the territories shared by the indigenous and non-indigenous populations and has been covered by extensive research addressing just transition and indigenous rights. However, the material side of dialogue between the local government, the project operator and the indigenous and non-indigenous communities has been limited to studying the legal side of the court case. This research investigates how local government sustainability reporting may be relevant to address the emerging challenges of just transition. The representatives from each group of stakeholders connected to the conflict of the Fosen wind farm project have been interviewed. The findings of this study suggest that the communication in the planning phase is vital to avoiding conflicts in an energy development project. The impact of early dialogue with local stakeholders is shown when analyzing how projects and conflicts evolve over time. The further a project reaches its launch, the more difficult it becomes to influence existing plans that could lead to a higher public acceptance. The study contributes to the existing literature on public acceptance of green energy projects by showing the importance of stakeholder dialogue quality. A clear communication between the developer and affected groups is necessary for just energy transition. In the Fosen case, the main reason for conflict was a poor exchange of knowledge between the two polarizing parties, and a certain arrogance on the developer's part. Besides, transparency of environmental and sustainability reporting is vital for creating public acceptance. In the Fosen case the reporting, however, has been mainly outsourced to the public corporation responsible for developing the energy projects because of a lack of resources at a municipality.

Keywords: Renewable energy development, dialogue, dialogic accounting, just transition

Introduction

In the Hurdal platform presented by the Norwegian government in 2021, the High North is presented as the most important strategic area of interest in Norway. The government wishes to increase the value production created in the High North, and to make the High North the center of green transition (Hurdalsplattformen, 2021). The natural condition in this region facilitates a development of new energy sources, mainly wind energy.

However, developing renewable energy projects in this region could also create different conflicts between decision makers and local stakeholders. The Norwegian High North is a region with natural beauty, making it an area of interest among those willing to preserve this originality. Conflicts between organizations and locals have been seen in many cases before where the preservation of nature has been threatened. The Norwegian High North is also home to indigenous groups. The Sami population in this region has a constitutional right to cultural practice. In the Reindeer Herding Act, reindeer herding is defined as a Sami industry, and is protected under the Norwegian constitution § 108 which sounds like this: “It is the responsibility of the state authorities to create the right conditions for the Sami people group to secure and develop their language, culture and social life” (County Governor of Nordland, 2017). The Sami reindeer herding industry is divided into reindeer herding districts. These districts are distributed through the majority of the three northernmost counties in Norway: Trøndelag, Nordland, and Troms og Finnmark. In Norway, reindeer husbandry is carried out over an area of approx. 145 000 m², which corresponds to 45% of the total land area in the country (NINA, 2023).

This study looks at how sustainability reporting could be used as a tool to create public acceptance of a renewable energy project in the High North and similar areas populated by indigenous communities. Sustainability reporting, which is recognized as the most comprehensive and inclusive type of corporate reporting, has gained attention from a range of industry bodies and associations, government entities, consulting firms, non-governmental organizations, and research institutions. This is evident at both national and international levels, as seen in the proliferation of general and sector-specific frameworks and guidance documents, regulations and disclosure requirements, as well as the interest of various organizations in monitoring and analyzing the evolution of sustainability reporting. According to Herzig & Schaltegger (2011), “*Defining strategies to disclose sustainability information can be a way to gain, maintain and repair legitimacy (Deegan 2002). This applies to the*

public acceptance of the company generally, as well as to the acceptance of particular management decisions and activities by the company's key stakeholders” (Herzig & Schaltegger, 2011). Disclosing non-financial activities of a corporation reflects a willingness to communicate and address societal concerns, which can foster and maintain positive relationships with the company's stakeholders. Businesses that are regarded as high achievers in both financial performance and social responsibility are likely to experience fewer challenges and obstacles in their dealings with stakeholders. (Herzig & Schaltegger, 2011). We look at how sustainability reporting has been used to increase public acceptance when developing the wind farm on Fosen and identify how effective sustainability reporting is in cases like this.

This study concentrates on how public acceptance surrounding renewable energy development can be gained through stakeholder dialogue. The context is the Norwegian High North and similar territories with indigenous population in Central Norway, which represent a region with great potential for future sustainable development. Within this context, previous research has not, to our extended knowledge, emphasized how conflict levels could increase and engagement could be created with stakeholders in this region. We therefore ask the following question: *How can the risk of conflict surrounding renewable energy development decrease via stakeholder dialogue?*

To address this question, we study the role of sustainability reporting in creating and maintaining the dialogue between stakeholders in the Fosen wind farm case in Central Norway. As we investigate a complex stakeholder composition and unveil the dialogue dynamics, we utilize Brown's (2009) perspective on dialogic accounting in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of participatory forms of social organization.

Theory

Just transition: sustainable energy and indigenous rights

The concept of just transition entails meeting the climate change mitigation goals while ensuring the non-discrimination of a widest range of stakeholders, i.e. greening the economy in a fair and inclusive manner (UNDP, 2023). The leading role in just transition belongs to governments at all tiers of public governance who are legitimate actors to introduce necessary

regulations and impose restrictions thus leveraging unbalanced relations between various stakeholders. “Governments participate in just transition processes as convenors of social dialogue; regulators who decide the rules of industrial, climate, energy and labor market policy; investors; owners of state enterprises and infrastructure; and employers of public sector workers” (OECD, 2017). With this said, the relationships between various stakeholders in just transition are very complex and ambiguous, being often trapped in opposed policy core beliefs, which creates a strong demand for transparent decision-making processes regarding the distribution of environmental and economic gains and losses (Scherhaufer et al, 2017). Thus, there is a widespread acknowledgment of the necessity for "new accountings" that promote democracy and enable more inclusive forms of social organization. This recognition is particularly evident in the domains of sustainability and environmental reporting that can both benefit organizational change but may also bring ‘fatigue’ to the parties engaged (Niemann and Hoppe, 2018). Therefore, our study suggests addressing the need for dialogue in just transition from a very core of public sector accounting theories via dialogic accounting approach (e.g. Brown, 2009; Rajala et al., 2018).

A dialogic approach to sustainability reporting

The dialogic literature on governance and public administration is particularly valuable when researching the green transformation’s dialogue development. Brown J. (2009) looks at how “democracy” should be approached in accounting. The need for a new accounting that facilitates a participatory form of social organization and fosters democracy have a wide-ranging recognition in literature. A monologic approach in accounting inevitably takes sides where there are conflicting viewpoints. The process of naturalizing particular social pathways through the creation and reinforcement of "taken for granted" meanings is facilitated by linking actions to axiomatic values, such as maximizing shareholder wealth (Dillard & Ruchala, 2005). This linking allows decision-makers to distance their actions from their political and moral contexts and establish certain subjects as "off-limits" (Brown, 2009).

On the other hand, a dialogic approach in accounting allows for a more pluralistic expression of public interests by recognizing heterogeneity and refusing to privilege capital markets, “mitigating the dominance of instrumental rationality" (Brown, 2009). This is key in social and environmental accounting as social accounting is rooted in democracy and neo-pluralism. Brown (2009) argues that there is a need to develop a model based on participative,

multidimensional approach, by for example ‘*advocate a social and environmental accounting that takes stakeholder engagement seriously; one that recognizes conflicts among stakeholders, engages multiple viewpoints and explicitly addresses power dynamics*’ (Brown, 2009). The central concept underlying dialogue is to reconcile contradictions that exist among disparate worldviews. Rather than rejecting these differences and imposing a single dominant worldview, the objective is to recognize and reinforce the shared aspects of these views (Rajala et al., 2018). In the dialogic approach, energy transition projects should be looked at as a complex, political process, where dialogue between stakeholders and decision makers are key to sharing knowledge that leads to an understanding of differences, ideological conflicts, and the dynamics of power on the global-local plan.

The dialogue framework that the accounting literature (e.g., Brown, 2009; Bebbington et al., 2007) suggests using to address issues surrounding the green transition stems from the Russian philosopher and literary critic, Mikhail Bakhtin (Trunova et al., 2022). The dialogic approach, which has been revived in modern accounting literature and facilitates the expression of public interest in a pluralistic manner, presents a challenge to conventional monological accounting practices by incorporating democratic strategies into the engagement process (Bellucci et al., 2019).

For numerous scholars and practitioners, the social accounting endeavor is firmly grounded in the principles of democracy and neo-pluralism (Gray, 2002, O’Dwyer, 2005, as cited in Brown, 2009). Multiple approaches have been proposed as strategies to enhance democratic dialogue and accountability. Recently, attention has been directed towards initiatives that aim to create new forms of visibility for environmental and social concerns, such as triple bottom line reporting, full cost accounting, and silent/shadow accounts (Bebbington & Gray, 2001, Dey, 2003, Gray, 1997, Gray & Bebbington, 2001, Herbohn, 2005, as cited in Brown, 2009).

Boyce (2000) argues that *accountants need to develop accounting systems that “prevent premature closure” and “which infuse debate and dialogue, facilitating genuine and informed citizen participation in decision-making processes”* (Boyce, 2000, p. 55, as cited in Brown, 2009).

Method and research setting

Method

This research employs a framework that is inspired by phenomenology, which emphasizes the interpretation of the meaning that is derived from the interviews (Johannessen, Christoffersen & Tufte, 2011; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). The data was gathered through in-depth interviews, some in person while most online via Microsoft Teams. Conducting interviews online was the easiest and most convenient way in this research, because of the geographical location of the informants. During the interviews, the informants were asked to reflect upon their experience with dialogue surrounding renewable energy projects in the specific surrounding the wind energy on Fosen. The informants were asked about their experience of dialogue and how they were able to influence the project. The interviews focused on the role that the informants played in the Fosen case and their knowledge on the wind farm project. For instance, the mayor of Åfjord Municipality and the unit manager for agriculture and technical services in the same municipality have different knowledge and experience on the same project. Therefore, we followed a semi-structured interview guide. This allowed us to be more open-minded while it gave a holistic understanding of the phenomenon. By adopting this approach, we were able to gather responses related to the topics we had pre-determined for the study, while also delving into additional areas of interest that were identified either by the interviewer or by the participants themselves (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). All interviews were recorded with permission from the informants, and each interview lasted from 25 to 45 minutes.

The criteria for finding relevant informants to this study was divided into four groups to get all the different perspectives of this case to determine what had been done, and what can be done in the future to reduce conflicts and increase public acceptance. The main criterion was a deep knowledge and personal experience about this case in specific. In the process of selecting informants, the aim was to gather informants with as large variety of knowledge about this project as possible. We've chosen to divide the informants into four different stakeholder categories: Local citizens, local government, developer, and representatives from the indigenous community. This allowed gathering insight data from each affected party in this case. We used the method of snowball sampling (Saunders et. al., 2018) to first begin asking people who one of the co-authors knew in person who had experience in this project,

who then again referred to other people they knew matched our criteria. Of the five informants, one was a local citizen, two worked in the local municipality, one worked with the project developer, and one worked with reindeer husbandry in the area. The reason for it being only five informants is the origin of the conflict surrounding this project. After the interview with the local citizen and the local municipality, we came to a conclusion that this conflict was based on disagreements between the developer and the indigenous people involved in reindeer husbandry. Because of the lack of people directly involved from those two sides, the number of respondents was lower than originally planned. The focus changed to selecting one person with a significant position in the company that owns the wind farm and one person with a significant role in the reindeer husbandry of Fosen.

Table 1: List of informants

Informant no.	Category	Relevance to this study
1	Local citizen	Resident in Åfjord Municipality – Knowledge from local stakeholder view
2	Local government	Major of Åfjord Municipality
3	Local government	Unit manager for agriculture and technical services in Åfjord Municipality
4	Developer	Communication director in Fosen Vind DA
5	Representative from the Sami community	Part owner and board member of Nord-Fosen Siida

When conducting a phenomenological study with in-depth interviews, it is likely that the informants will provide accounts that take the form of narratives, or stories. This allows the informants to share their subjective experience in detail, which allows the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of their perspectives (Saunders et. al., 2018). By actively looking for similarities and dissimilarities in each informant’s perspective in the data material, it became

clear that each group of informants had a different view of how the dialogue had been conducted. We attempted to identify a deeper understanding of what the reason of the conflict was, and how this type of conflict could be avoided in the future.

Research setting: The Fosen Case

In 2010, the Norwegian Water Resources and Energy Directorate (NVE) permitted two large wind turbine development projects on the Fosen peninsula, called 'Storheia' and 'Roan' wind power plants. The Fosen peninsula is located in Trøndelag County, in the middle of Norway. Roan wind power plant was put into operation in 2019 and was at the time Norway's largest of its kind with 71 turbines. One year later, in 2020, Storheia wind power plant was put into operation and surpassed Roan in turbine quantity with 80 turbines (Skogvang, 2023). Roan and Storheia produce 543,6 MW of renewable electricity (Hovland, 2021). The company behind the development of Storheia and Roan is Fosen Vind DA. Fosen Vind DA was responsible for developing seven wind power plants on and around Fosen, the largest onshore wind power project in Europe, with a total capacity of 1 057 MW (Fosen Vind DA, 2023). Fosen Vind DA is a joint venture company owned by Statkraft (52,1%), Aneo (7,9%), and Nordic Wind Power DA (40%), a European investor consortium

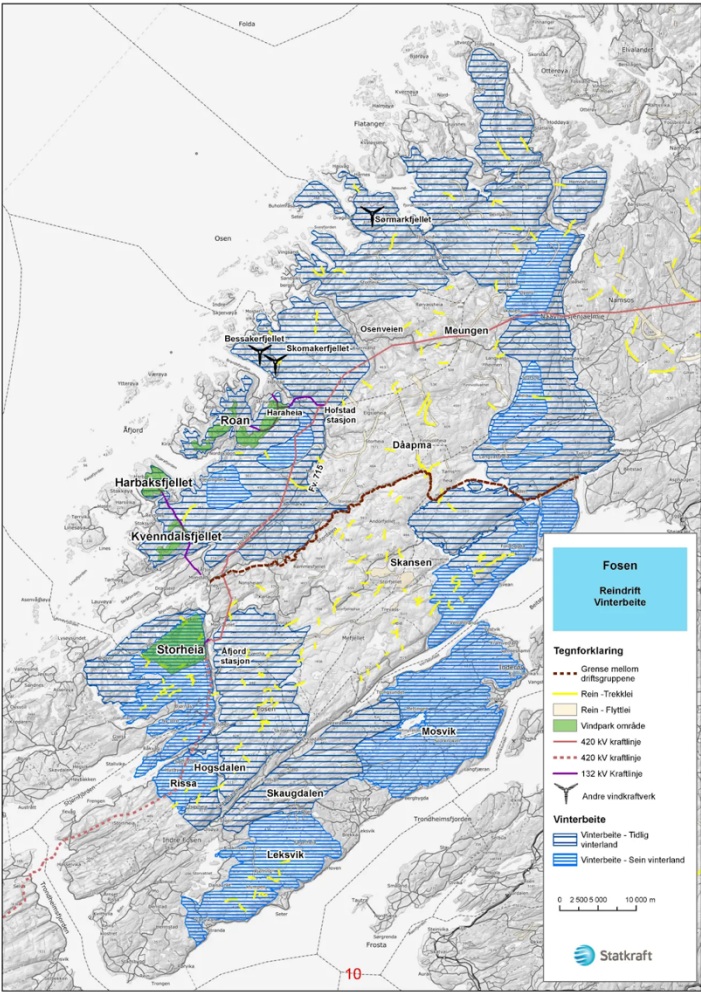


Figure 2: Winter grazing & wind farm area (Fosen Vind, 2023).

owned by EIP (Energy Infrastructure Partners) and the Swiss power company BKW (Fosen Vind DA, 2023). The Norwegian Ministry of Trade, Industry, and Fisheries owns the majority shareholder Statkraft.

The Storheia and Roan wind power plants are located in the area of the Fosen reindeer herding district. Both Sør-Fosen Sijte and Nord-Fosen Siida practice reindeer husbandry in

separate parts of the district. The Siidae are often referred to as the Southern Group and the Northern Group. According to § 51 of the Reindeer Herding Act, a siida is a group of reindeer owners who jointly herd reindeer on specific areas (Skogvang, 2023).

The reindeer herding Sami believed that the development of the wind power plant at Fosen would make it impossible to engage in reindeer herding in the area and took the case to court. After a hearing in both the District Court and the Court of Appeal, neither party was satisfied, and the case went to the Norwegian Supreme Court. In 2021, the Supreme Court concluded that "the wind power development will significantly negatively affect the reindeer owners' ability to cultivate their culture at Fosen". Next, the Supreme Court considered whether the mitigating measures implemented could make the project's legality valid. However, after a thorough evaluation, the Supreme Court concluded that *"the*

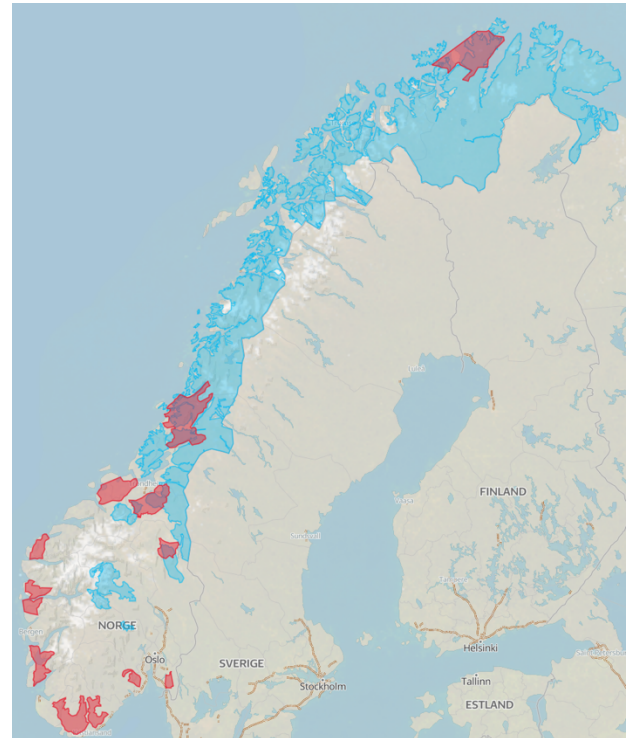


Figure 3: Blue: Reindeer herding area, Red: Favorable for wind power. (Knežević et al., 2023)

concession decision contravenes the reindeer owners' rights according to the convention provision" (Article 27 of the UN Convention on Civil and Political Rights), and then that the decision is invalid (Skogvang, 2023). This research aims to understand how these types of conflicts could be avoided through communication and dialogue early in the project.

The Fosen case is arguably the best representation of conflicts that could occur surrounding the development of renewable energy projects in the territories shared by the indigenous and non-indigenous populations and has been covered by extensive research addressing just transition and indigenous rights (Normann, 2019; Otte et al., 2018; Ravna, 2023; Sønneland and Lingaas, 2023; Vasstrøm and Lysgård, 2021). However, the material side of dialogue between the local government, the project operator and the indigenous and non-indigenous communities has been limited to studying the legal side of the court case (e.g. Ravna, 2023). This research investigates how local government sustainability reporting may be relevant to address the emerging challenges of just transition.



Figure 4: Protestors outside the MPE (Berg-Rusten, 2023).

Findings

Our findings show different perceptions of how the dialogue in the Fosen Case has been conducted and the quality of it. The two main perceptions differentiate in the quality of the dialogue. First, early, and continuous dialogue through all project phases is essential. Our findings suggest that early dialogue was established in the Fosen Case and continued throughout the development and operating phase. The quality of the dialogue, however, is

perceived differently. The findings are presented using a framework based on Brown (2009), Bebbington et al. (2007).

Table 2: Analytical framework

Element of dialogue	Meaning
Main actors involved in the dialogue	Who are the actors involved in the dialogue? What are their perspectives?
Purpose	What are the actors' goals and preferences? How are they formulated?
Organization (material context and power dynamics)	How is the dialogue organized? What is the context and social setting for the dialogue?
Outputs	What are the material results of the dialogue?
Outcome (s)	What was achieved through the dialogue? What was the objective of the dialogic process (agreement, rational disagreement, appreciation of the complexity of issues)? What 'desired change' does the dialogue promote?

Main actors in the dialogue include Fosen Vind (Statkraft), Åfjord Municipality, local citizens, local companies, and Sami reindeer herders. In the first phase of the project, NVE also included in the project. NVE is responsible for the license application and Statkraft who as the project developer is responsible for stakeholder dialogue. In this case, NVE and Statkraft initially explored the possibility to develop wind power plants in several different locations on Fosen. Geographically these possibilities were located both east and west on Fosen. Before the start of the project, a joint license application was prepared for a total of 24 projects at Fosen, with a total production capacity of 4,000 MW. When asked which strategies are used to facilitate dialogue surrounding the planning and development of new energy projects, the representative from Fosen Vind answered:

“...It begins with an exploration of the possibilities, a dialogue with landowners, an exploration meeting with the municipality, and a public meeting for everyone, to provide information about our intentions, and what plans we have. We had a series of public meetings in Åfjord, which has become the municipal center, concerning this. Extensive meeting activities with municipal bodies and with other stakeholders for a long time. These are projects that normally take a long time to develop. At Fosen, we started in 2002 with Harbark Mountain. And it is a licensing process that usually takes 5-7 years, where there are meetings and dialogue and consultation bodies at all levels. An initial orientation meeting with the landowner, the municipality, and the population must take place before the licensing process starts. There must be acceptance from the municipality before you can proceed to investigate and develop, carry out an impact assessment, make a report before it is submitted for approval...”

Interview 4 - Fosen Vind

Purpose. From a Sami perspective, the purpose behind the dialogue was to keep as much land as possible to continue their way of living without having to scale down on their production. By entering the dialogue, they hoped to share their knowledge to be included in the future planning.

The purpose behind the project was to accommodate the existing energy situation in the region at the start of the 2000s.

“The reason for the projects at Fosen was basically the power situation in Trøndelag where there was a crisis, high prices. A gas power plant was established at Kjellbergodden to make up for the lack of power. In the background that there was a desire from the authorities to develop more energy in this region. At the same time, this “green certificate regime” came to motivate and stimulate just that”.

Interview 4 - Fosen Vind

Initially, Statkraft’s goal was to apply for a license for several areas that would have affected reindeer husbandry on Fosen, although the license application was quickly reduced based on input from the consultation meetings.

Organization. We found that the dialogue was initially organized by Statkraft and NVE who contacted landowners and the municipality. To ensure involvement from the local citizens,

dialogue was facilitated through meetings in town halls. The meetings were organized by both the municipality and Statkraft.

“...Then we helped plan the public meetings, we had open days and information leaflets for the residents about when there were meetings and that it was actually possible to ask all questions, and that we wanted feedback”.

Interview 2 - The mayor of Åfjord Municipality

When asked which strategies are used to facilitate dialogue surrounding the planning and development of new energy projects, the representative from Fosen Vind answered:

“...It begins with an exploration of the possibilities, a dialogue with landowners, an exploration meeting with the municipality, and a public meeting for everyone, to provide information about our intentions, and what plans we have. We had a series of public meetings in Åfjord, which has become the municipal center, concerning this. Extensive meeting activities with municipal bodies and with other stakeholders for a long time. These are projects that normally take a long time to develop. At Fosen, we started in 2002 with Harbark Mountain. And it is a licensing process that usually takes 5-7 years, where there are meetings and dialogue and consultation bodies at all levels. An initial orientation meeting with the landowner, the municipality, and the population must take place before the licensing process starts. There must be acceptance from the municipality before you can proceed to investigate and develop, carry out an impact assessment, make a report before it is submitted for approval...”.

Interview 4 - Fosen Vind

Output. As mentioned, the early dialogue, before the licensing process resulted in a reduction of projects on Fosen because of inputs from the reindeer industry. *“Based on the input that came during the hearing (in 2006), Statkraft chose to proceed only with the license application for Storheia. No progress was made with the other three projects, including wind farms in the grazing areas of Rissa and Leksvik. The consideration of the impact the projects would have on reindeer husbandry in total at wind farms in all the proposed areas was one of the conditions that was emphasized”.* (Fosen Vind, 2023). The outcomes of the later dialogue led to several different project reductions. Originally, there were 24 different projects with a

portfolio of up to 4000 MW. Inputs from different stakeholders led to a total assessment from NVE to continue on 4 projects with a portfolio of up to 800-900 MW production capacity.

“We have a tradition of holding regular information meetings, precisely to get input on what we should look at. Then it becomes part of the basis for which impact assessment we will do, which topics and local conditions are important. Then you have to ‘fly’ around the base where everything has to be seen... .. Through a notification phase and a licensing phase, half of the applications are lost because it is found that there is too much conflict or it is found that it is not justifiable, you do not get more out of it than the value of the power plant”.

Interview 4 - Fosen Vind

The dialogue between Statkraft, Åfjord municipality, and local entrepreneurs resulted in local entrepreneurs being used to construct the wind power plant. 20% of the total development budget of 11 billion NOK was used on local companies based on Fosen. This created jobs which helped increase local acceptance. Production taxes on wind energy has led to Åfjord municipality budgeting 50 million NOK in tax revenue for 2023-2026 (Åfjord Municipality, 2022).

In the sustainability report for 2022, Statkraft included *overarching improvement initiatives*. Statkraft updated their website with information regarding their approach to human rights in preparation for the entry into force of the Norwegian Transparency Act. The updated website included new information on the Fosen Case – this being Statkraft’s approach, processes, key risks, and an updated historic view on the projects and how the projects have assessed human rights impacts (Statkraft, 2023). According to their latest report, Statkraft is aiming to become more transparent in the future and set up an internal communication campaign to be able to respond to requests for information (Statkraft, 2023). Efforts were also made to implement e-learning on human rights: *“The company is currently working on further training and awareness- raising activities, as well as developing tools and templates, etc. to ensure implementation and continuous improvement in the organization”* (Statkraft, 2023, pp. 65). Statkraft’s work on stakeholder dialogue is guided by different international frameworks, including the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises, the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and IFC performance standards on Environmental and Social Sustainability (Statkraft, 2023). Dialogue with indigenous groups on Fosen will continue until they can reach an agreement on mitigation measures.

The Fosen Case has been mentioned in Statkraft's reporting since the annual report in 2016 (Appendix 1). The human rights issue has been mentioned in each report since 2017. Statkraft has committed to the UN guidelines on Human Rights since before the Fosen Case, even though in the report before the court ruling it was only mentioned briefly and not in connection to the Fosen Case. A more in-depth reporting on human rights and the human rights violations at Fosen was not mentioned in a report before the report from 2021. According to the historical reports, Statkraft has committed to follow the UN's guiding principles for business and No violation of international human rights, as well as aiming not to violate internationally recognized human rights. Nevertheless, it emerged in the Supreme Court's judgment from 2021 that the wind power plants on Storheia and Roan infringed the right of the reindeer herding Sami to practice culture according to Article 27 of the UN Convention on Civil and Political Rights

Outcomes. The major area of conflict in this project was between the developer and the indigenous groups engaged in reindeer husbandry. Therefore, it became clear early in the study that the quality of dialogue could be the reason behind the conflict. Analyzing the implementation of the dialogue and its outcomes paints a picture of areas to improve in stakeholder engagement, especially when the stakeholders are indigenous communities. As mentioned, indigenous groups are protected by human right laws (Skogvang, 2023), making the stakeholder engagement different from other situations. After interviewing the part owner and board member of Nord-Fosen Siida, the company in charge of reindeer husbandry in the Northern part of Fosen, it became clear that the transaction of knowledge between reindeer herders and developers were inadequate, from a Sami perspective. In the licensing process, the reindeer herders in Nord-Fosen Siida gave green light under doubt for wind power development on Harbark and Kvenndal Mountain, as long as Roan was left undeveloped. This was however not taken into consideration. Based on our impression of the communication process between Statkraft and Nord-Fosen Siida, knowledge shared from Nord-Fosen Siida could have prevented the later court ruling. A kind of 'superiority' has been felt by the representatives from Nord-Fosen Siida in the meetings with the representatives from Statkraft. In the interview with the representative from Nord-Fosen Siida, it was claimed that Statkraft had an impression that the knowledge the reindeer herding Sami relied on was not correct in relation to how the reindeer behaved around wind turbines and the wind turbines' general impact on reindeer herding.

“What has been most difficult [in the dialogue] is that we have constantly met new people. You can imagine that every time you go to a meeting with someone, you have to explain exactly the same thing because everyone asks: “How do you operate reindeer herding on Fosen?”. I've only been around for 3 years, and I've explained it maybe 50 times in meetings with people because they bring new people, or they bring someone who hasn't been there before, or they want to hear it one more time. So, it's been quite tiring, that you feel like you're meeting new people. There are only 3 of us”.

Interview 5 - Nord-Fosen Siida

500 days after the court ruling, the conflict escalated when demonstrators started appearing at the Ministry of Petroleum and Energy (MPE) in Oslo (NTB, 2023). This was evidence of the conflict expanding beyond the Sami community on Fosen. Because of media attention, more pressure was put on MPE and Statkraft to create a new dialogue with the reindeer herders finding mitigating measures.

In the latest sustainability reports, Statkraft and Aneo, the current owner of Roan Vind, address some of these issues. Fosen Vind is *“working continuously to fulfil its legal obligations to undertake human rights due diligence and continue the dialogue with the impacted sijte. Fosen Vind is keeping its website updated as the case is progressing... MPE will consider relevant changes to the wind farm licenses to ensure the protection of Sami’s indigenous rights. In light of our commitment to respect human rights, Fosen Vind and Statkraft will support this process and have proposed an impact assessment program requested by MPE”* (Statkraft, 2022). In the same report, Statkraft commits to create an open dialogue around sustainability issues with all who are part of or impacted by their activities.

This study also located another interesting outcome of the dialogue. We found that the local citizens in Åfjord Municipality were in general very positive to the wind farms. They were aware of the importance of such a project on a national and global scale, as well as they saw how they could benefit from the increased revenues to the municipality.

“If they decide to tear down the wind turbines, we might go up to the mountain and protest against that”

Interview 1 – Local citizen

Table 3: Complete analytical framework

Element of dialogue	Meaning
Main actors involved in the dialogue	NVE, Statkraft (Fosen Vind), Åfjord Municipality, Local citizens, landowners, local entrepreneurs, and Sami reindeer herders.
Purpose	<p>From a Statkraft and NVE perspective: To accommodate the existing energy situation in the region at the start of the 2000s. Explore the possibilities for developing 24 different projects on the Fosen peninsula.</p> <p>From a Sami perspective: To keep as much area of the winter grazing zone as possible.</p>
Organization (material context and power dynamics)	Statkraft initially reaching out to the municipality, landowners, local entrepreneurs. Statkraft and Åfjord Municipality then organized the dialogue through town hall meetings to ensure involvement from the local citizens. Statkraft had and still has a dialogue with the indigenous community throughout the project
Outputs	<p>Early dialogue, before the licensing process, resulted in a reduction of projects on Fosen because of inputs from the reindeer industry. The outcomes of the later dialogue led to several different project reductions.</p> <p>The dialogue between Statkraft, Åfjord municipality, and local entrepreneurs resulted in local entrepreneurs being used to construct the wind power plant. 20% of the total development budget of 11 billion NOK was used on local companies based on Fosen.</p> <p>Statkraft reporting human rights issues in their annual sustainability report since 2016. They emphasize the importance of continuous stakeholder dialogue through such projects, and the importance to continue dialogue with the reindeer herders on Fosen.</p> <p>Åfjord Municipality does not include stakeholder dialogue or human rights issues in their most recent budget.</p> <p>Statkraft updated their website to include more information on the Fosen Case. Efforts were also made to implement internal e-learning on human rights.</p> <p>The Fosen Case has been mentioned in Statkraft's reporting since the annual report in 2016 (Appendix 1). The human rights issue has been mentioned in each report since 2017.</p>

Outcomes	<p>Based on interviews with both the developer and Sami reindeer herders, this study argues that the dialogue quality is a significant part of the cause of the conflict.</p> <p>The transaction of knowledge between reindeer herders and developers were inadequate from a Sami perspective.</p> <p>The Fosen Case gained media attention in March 2023 when a group of protestors sat inside and later outside the offices of the Ministry of Oil and Energy for several days. This was a result of it being 500 days since the Supreme Court of Norway concluded that the wind turbines located at Storheia and Roan were a violation of human rights.</p> <p>Dialogue with indigenous groups on Fosen will continue until they can reach an agreement on mitigation measures.</p>
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Concluding discussion

Early dialogue

Our findings suggest creating stakeholder dialogue as soon as possible. This is a standard procedure by Statkraft, who started dialogue in the Fosen Case before the licensing process. Important actors in the dialogue process include government officials, regional and local governments, landowners, local citizens, customers, suppliers, employees, and media. Dialogue with non-governmental organizations is also important to gain acceptance. In this early stakeholder engagement, it is key to provide information and transparency. Information is communicated through direct connection or via public meetings. These public meetings have been organized by Statkraft and the municipality, with the aim being information sharing and the possibility for stakeholder feedback. The key stakeholders in this project were contacted directly as their individual feedback could have a greater importance to the project.

Organization of dialogue can be critical in renewable energy development

Literature shows the importance of early dialogue (Ruud et al., 2016). However, the importance of dialogue quality is just as important to reduce the risk of conflicts. Our study shows that the dialogue should be organized to make it as frictionless as possible for stakeholders to include their knowledge in the development of a project. The knowledge indigenous groups hold is particularly important in this kind of projects. Structuring the

dialogue so that these stakeholders are able to communicate with large energy companies is vital because of the lack of resources and usually knowledge they combined hold on energy development and its impact. In a situation like this, a large company like Statkraft has an advantage in terms of resources. Therefore, we argue that the dialogue must be organized to be as equal as possible.

Municipalities and sustainability reporting

We believe the municipality could serve a larger role in creating the stakeholder dialogue. We found that no 'Human rights' item was communicated in the latest budget from Åfjord Municipality. We compare that to the sustainability reports published by Statkraft who emphasize the need for further dialogue in the Fosen Case.

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Appendix 1

Organization	Theme		Comment
Starkraft	Report 2016	https://www.starkraft.com/globalassets/0_/com/sustainability/our-reporting/downloads-archiv/2016/starkraft-corporate-responsibility-report-2016.pdf	First time Fosen is mentioned, but only about compensation.
	Report 2017	https://www.starkraft.com/globalassets/0_/com/sustainability/our-reporting/downloads-archiv/2017/starkraft-as-corporate-responsibility-report-2017.pdf	Human rights are mentioned, but short.
	Report 2018	https://www.starkraft.com/globalassets/0_/com/sustainability/our-reporting/downloads-archiv/2018/starkraft-sustainability-report-2018.pdf	Human rights and Fosen are mentioned, but short. Pretty much the same info as 2017
	Report 2019	https://www.starkraft.com/globalassets/0_/com/sustainability/our-reporting/downloads-archiv/2019/starkraft-sustainability-report-2019.pdf	Same as before. Fosen is mentioned 1 time.
	Report 2020	https://www.starkraft.com/globalassets/0_/com/sustainability/our-reporting/downloads-archiv/2020/sust-report-2020-1-20221.pdf	Mentions stakeholder dialogue on Fosen. More about the lawsuit.
	Report 2021	https://www.starkraft.com/globalassets/0_/com/sustainability/our-reporting/downloads-archiv/2021/starkraft-corporate-responsibility-report-2021.pdf	Mentions the High Court ruling.
	Report 2022	https://www.starkraft.com/globalassets/0_/com/sustainability/our-reporting/downloads-archiv/sustainability-2022.pdf	All the previous reports include stakeholder dialogue. This report focuses on dialogue to solve the conflict.
Fosen Vind	Timeline of the licensing process and beyond	https://www.fosenvind.no/barekraft/minoritiesrettigheter/storheia-vindpark-og-reindrift/	(Norwegian) Shows a timeline of what happened when in terms of dialogue with the Sami groups and project changes.
TrøndereEnergi / Anco	Report 2021	https://trondereenergi.no/media/2021-barekraftsrapport-4.pdf	(Norwegian) Mentions the High Court ruling. Mentions dialogue with local stakeholders and politicians, but nothing specific to Fosen.
	Report 2022	https://trondereenergi.no/media/2022-sustainability-report-2.pdf	Say that they will cooperate with the ministry. Stakeholder dialogue as a main priority.
Afjord Municipality	Budget 2023-2026 (Sustainability included)	https://www.afjord.kommune.no/_/fp/1/b0acdafd-e54c-423a-b1fa-126043453bd4/budsjett-2023-afjord-kommune-vedtatt.pdf	(Norwegian) Mentions the 50 mill NOK from wind energy. Mentions that wind energy gives them the opportunity to increase welfare.
The Sami Parliament	Notice of external investigation of the Fosen Case	https://mnsyn.onacos.no/sametinget/norsk/w/document.aspx?journalpostid=2021093302&dokid=1183819&version=5&variant=PR&	(Norwegian) Published right after the demonstrations started.
Supreme Court of Norway	Judgement - 2021	https://www.domstol.no/globalassets/upload/hret/decisions-in-english-translation/hr-2021-1975-s.pdf	The whole judgement.
Naturvernforbundet [The Norwegian Nature Conservancy]	Notice of support to the demonstrations	https://naturvernforbundet.no/nyheter/fosen-ma-tilbakefores-til-reindriften/	(Norwegian) Support to the demonstrations from the organization that has actively been against wind turbines.

Appendix 2 – Interview guides

Local citizens

Theme	Questions	Follow-up questions
Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Presentation of me and the thesis - Inform about the informant's option to not answer or withdraw from the interview - Informa about the tape recorder and ask for permission for the interview to be recorded - Inform about confidentiality and anonymity 	
About the interviewee	- Role and how it relates to this study?	
Phase 1: Renewable energy projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What do you know about renewable energy projects and their potential benefits and challenges? - Have you heard of any new energy projects in your area of residence? - Have there been any energy projects in the area in the past? - How do you approach the establishment of new energy projects? - Do you see the need for renewable energy projects in your area of residence? 	
Phase 2: Dialogue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do you see dialogue taking place between decision makers/developers and the local community? - How do you think local citizens can be included in the dialogue? 	- Can you provide an example of successful or un-successful dialogue?
Phase 3: Local acceptance and sustainability reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If developers or decision makers published sustainability reports, would you have read it? - How do you think the acceptance of renewable energy projects in your community can be improved? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can you describe how perspectives and knowledge from local citizens could be incorporated in sustainability reports? - What are the key factors for acceptance in your community?
Conclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Are there anything you would like to add? - Inform about the opportunity to contact me if there is something they would like to add, or if they want to use their right to withdraw from the project. 	

Decision makers / Developer

Theme	Questions	Follow-up questions
Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Presentation of me and the thesis - Inform about the informant's option to not answer or withdraw from the interview - Informa about the tape recorder and ask for permission for the interview to be recorded - Inform about confidentiality and anonymity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The personal data will be handled with pseudonyms
About the interviewee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Role and how it relates to this study? 	
Phase 1: Renewable energy projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What are the reasons for establishing new energy projects in the High North? -What are the ripple effects of such a project, both on local municipalities and local citizens? -How do you approach the establishment of new energy projects? What are the main considerations that you consider when evaluating renewable energy projects? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How does this create value? - How do you view the future of renewable energy projects?
Phase 2: Dialogue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What strategies have been used to facilitate dialogue around the planning and development of new energy projects? - What influence do local stakeholders have in such matters? - How do you think the decision makers and the local community could work together? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can you provide an example of successful dialogue?
Phase 3: Local acceptance and sustainability reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What are the procedures to create local acceptance? - Does your organization publish sustainability reporting? - If yes, how is the sustainability report used to create local acceptance? 	
Conclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Are there anything you would like to add? - Inform about the opportunity to contact me if there is something they would like to add, or if they want to use their right to withdraw from the project. 	

Representative from Sami community

Theme	Questions	Follow-up questions
Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Presentation of me and the thesis - Inform about the informant's option to not answer or withdraw from the interview - Informa about the tape recorder and ask for permission for the interview to be recorded - Inform about confidentiality and anonymity 	
About the interviewee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Role and how it relates to this study? 	
Phase 1: Renewable energy projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What do you know about renewable energy projects and their potential benefits and challenges? - What part do renewable energy projects play in your community and how do they affect your way of life? - What potential effects do you foresee that renewable energy projects may have on the natural or cultural resources in your community? - What part do you see your community playing in the planning and development of renewable energy projects? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do you see the need for renewable energy projects in your area of residence?
Phase 2: Dialogue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do you see dialogue taking place between decision makers/developers and the local indigenous people? - What strategies have been successful in facilitating dialogue and cooperation between indigenous communities and renewable energy project developers? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can you provide an example of successful or un-successful dialogue? - If there is dialogue, how do you see the inclusion of indigenous voices in the dialogue surrounding these projects?
Phase 3: Local acceptance and sustainability reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How can interests and concerns of indigenous communities be better incorporated into the decision-making process? - Can you describe any efforts to incorporate indigenous perspectives and knowledge into sustainability reporting? - What do you think are the key factors that influence the acceptance of renewable energy projects in indigenous communities? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How can these factors be addressed?
Conclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Are there anything you would like to add? - Inform about the opportunity to contact me if there is something they would like to add, or if they want to use their right to withdraw from the project. 	