

Assessing and Comparing Participatory Governance in Energy Transition: Evidence from the 27 European Union Member States

Maria Stella Righettini & Giulia Vicentini

To cite this article: Maria Stella Righettini & Giulia Vicentini (02 Nov 2023): Assessing and Comparing Participatory Governance in Energy Transition: Evidence from the 27 European Union Member States, Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis: Research and Practice, DOI: [10.1080/13876988.2023.2260994](https://doi.org/10.1080/13876988.2023.2260994)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13876988.2023.2260994>



© 2023 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.



Published online: 02 Nov 2023.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)



Assessing and Comparing Participatory Governance in Energy Transition: Evidence from the 27 European Union Member States

MARIA STELLA RIGHETTINI*, & GIULIA VICENTINI**

*Department of Political Science, Law and International Studies, University of Padua, Padua, Italy,

**Department of Law and Administrative Sciences Studies, University of Naples Parthenope, Naples, Italy

(Received 5 September 2022; accepted 14 September 2023)

ABSTRACT *The Energy Union governance regulation (CE 2018/1999) set new participatory procedures and governance standards for energy planning of Member States. This paper aims at identifying the contribution of this new mode of regulation in developing multi-sector, multi-level, and multi-stakeholder involvement and dialogue in the formulation of Energy Union plans. The article refines the concept of participatory governance in the energy sector and provides an operational and multidimensional definition. It innovatively compares the formulation process of the 27 Member States' energy plans (draft and final) to highlight national evolution in participatory governance dimensions, cross-country convergence, and variations in alignment with EU regulation. Despite the significant differences in the governance of national energy planning, the empirical evidence highlights the contribution of EU governance regulation in promoting, along different dimensions, the participatory processes of all Member States.*

Keywords: Energy Union; comparative participatory governance; governance regulation; NECPs; qualitative content analysis; energy democracy

1. Introduction

New strategies for governing energy transition policies have emerged as a response to the failures of downstream implementation and the high cost of politicizing regulation

Maria Stella Righettini is Associate Professor of Public Policy and Evaluation at the University of Padova, Department of Political Science, Law, and International Studies. Her research deals with comparative and evaluation policies in energy, food, and digital policy. Her most recent publications include articles in journals such as *Policy & Politics*, *Journal of Environmental Policy and Planning*, *Sustainability*, *Environmental Policy and Governance*, and *Review of Policy Research*.

Giulia Vicentini is Assistant Professor in Political Science and Public Policy at the University of Naples Parthenope. Her research interests focus on the internal organization of political parties, leadership selection, and public policy analysis. In the last couple of years, she has published articles in journals such as *Political Studies Review*, *European Political Science*, *Italian Political Science Review*, *South European Society and Politics*.

Correspondence Address: Maria Stella Righettini, Department of Political Science, Law, and International Studies, University of Padua, Via del Santo 28, 35123 Padua, Italy. Email: mariastella.righettini@unipd.it

© 2023 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, and is not altered, transformed, or built upon in any way. The terms on which this article has been published allow the posting of the Accepted Manuscript in a repository by the author(s) or with their consent.

processes. The energy–democracy nexus, for example, is associated with historical battles and movements for the democratization of decision-making processes dominated by the choices of central governments in line with the agendas of big multinationals but to the detriment of territories and their populations (Szulecki 2018; Szulecki and Overland 2020). Given that energy policies always have a significant impact on citizens and local communities, both directly and indirectly, the question of who decides, what to decide and how to decide has become increasingly central on the European level. The contradictory agenda-shaping role of the European Commission (EC) in energy policy through the co-decision process has been intensively analysed over time (Tosun et al. 2015; Solorio and Bocquillon 2017; Knodt 2018). The literature argues that the EC has substantially failed in actively engaging strategic actors to harmonize Member States’ energy policies towards effective decarbonization and the use of renewable energy sources. Consequently, recent EC regulatory changes can be interpreted as a strategy to influence national policy decisions indirectly by means of procedural tools and guidelines, which can be implemented without a formal consensus within the European Parliament and the Member States (Ringel and Knodt 2018). The Governance Regulation 2018/1999 pinpoints the relevance of European Union (EU) democratic and collaborative strategies to achieve transparency and acceptance as relevant dimensions of energy transition legitimacy and effectiveness. The role of EC assistance is to support participatory governance to align strategic planning formulation by the Member States in this direction. However, despite the increasing relevance of the European democratic and participatory governance mode issue and emerging vertical and horizontal collaboration dynamics (Saenz et al. 2015; Howlett 2019), the energy policy literature still focuses more on substantive issues such as decarbonization, competition policies, and climate policies (Knodt 2018; Goldthau and Sitter 2019; Von Homeyer et al. 2021). Furthermore, energy transition policies are empirically investigated with specific attention to national, local, or global dynamics. When explicitly addressing issues related to the transformation of European energy policy governance, on the one hand the literature empirically focuses on single regional–local case studies associated with empowering stakeholder participation through collaborative modes of governance (Sedlacek et al. 2020), or on “the willingness” to cooperate in renewable energy strategies at national and local levels of governments using survey techniques (Tosun et al. 2019). On the other hand, it stresses the theoretical development of the EU’s regulatory capacity as a state actor in the global political economy (Prontera and Quitzow 2022). Accordingly, the internal dynamics of the planning and new governance processes lack a comparative perspective within the governance of the Energy Union. Similarly, the growing literature in the field of energy democracy also presents shortcomings, ranging from conceptual analyses, literature reviews, normative papers, and qualitative case studies, while empirical and comparative works are mainly missing (Wahlund and Palm 2022). Furthermore, due to the relative novelty and vagueness of the concept, there is no workable description to derive a shared operational definition of participatory governance.

The paper aims to fill this gap by refining the participatory energy governance concept and proposing a functioning operationalization with specific dimensions and measurable indicators to analyse the evolution of energy transition planning in Europe between 2018 and 2020 in light of the EU Governance Regulation. Accordingly, the article delves into the empirical concept of “participatory governance” in the energy sector, considering the

extent of stakeholder involvement, communication and collaboration between actors, and delegation of power to different levels of governance for the development of renewable energy sources.

Examining the dynamics of the renewed and standardized formulation process of National Energy and Climate Plans (NECPs) produced by the 27 Member States and submitted to the EC for recommendations and evaluation, the article examines the evolution of participatory governance in the Energy Union following a descriptive and explorative approach. The comparative research assumes that the new European procedural framework for energy planning formulation inspired by participatory principles should boost more open and democratic formulation processes at the Member State level. Therefore, our primary research question is: to what extent does the formulation of Member States' energy plans adapt to the new European Governance Regulation? Secondly, we look at processual change and wonder to what extent the participatory features of the planning process vary between the first and final drafts. Finally, we investigate the role played by the EC in this process.

The paper is organized as follows: [Section 2](#) introduces the academic debate concerning the recent but burgeoning literature on energy democracy and participatory governance in the energy sector, its potential and limits, and how it can be applied to the EU context. [Section 3](#) is devoted to the research design, first introducing data and methods, and then focusing on operationalizing the seven variables considered. [Section 4](#) deals with empirical analysis, presenting the main findings to answer our research questions. In conclusion, we provide a final reflection concerning participatory governance in EU energy planning and propose further directions for future research in the field.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 From Energy Democracy and Collaboration to Participatory Governance

Energy policies are often characterized by high technical content and are traditionally the domain of experts, but they also have been highly politicized, in Europe and globally. As “knowledge becomes increasingly specialized and distributed” (Ansell and Gash 2008, p. 544) in a more and more complex institutional environment, the demand for democratization and collaboration increases (Szulecki and Overland 2020); accordingly, the call for more interactive relations between decision-makers, stakeholders, and beneficiaries in the energy sector has increased over the past few decades, and the role of citizens is more frequently seen as pivotal in supporting transformation towards sustainability (Hegger et al. 2022). In fact, when there is little opportunity for stakeholders, citizens, and local communities to provide feedback and voice on issues that impact them, policy decisions can be ineffective in the long run (Florini and Saleem 2011). However, rather than playing an active role in the energy transition, they are still largely excluded from planning and decision-making in this area.

All these things considered, the concept of “energy democracy” (ED) connects the typical technocratic and economic discussion on energy policy (Devine-Wright 2007; Palm 2021; Droubi et al. 2022) with the request to strengthen democratic governance and public participation to achieve a just and publicly accepted transition and to respond to the social injustices associated with energy systems at the local level. In fact, ED advocates suggest that the more energy governance is centralized, the more it is likely

to be dominated by the economic interests of big business. Accordingly, they called for a switch to more interactive network governance towards a dispersed and decentralized model (Szulecki 2018; van Veelen and van der Horst 2018; Szulecki and Overland 2020; Williams and Sovacool 2020). This is also expected to “humanize” the energy transition by exploring new ways of thinking about public engagement and participation beyond traditional and technocratic modes of governance, securing social acceptance and leading to more legitimate, fair, and sustainable outcomes (Burke and Stephens 2017; Wahlund and Palm 2022). In this regard, the arguments for democratizing energy are not exclusively normative (increasing the legitimacy of governmental decisions) but also pragmatic, as ED is likely to produce more efficient decisions closer to the optimal solution, acceptable to a broader range of stakeholders (Szulecki 2018).

Similarly, the collaborative governance (CG) framework emerged to replace adversarial, top-down, and managerial modes of policy-making and implementation, positively affecting desired policy outcomes (Ansell and Gash 2008; Ahn and Baldwin 2022). According to the CG framework, adequate starting conditions, including the history of conflict and cooperation, power, resources, knowledge asymmetry, incentives, interdependence between actors, and facilitative leadership equally impact the outcomes of the collaborative process. However, it still needs to be determined how CG needs to be concretely organized to foster energy transition (Sedlacek et al. 2020). The collaborative framework alone, based on face-to-face dialogue in specific public collective fora, makes it difficult to compare different modes of collaboration and understand their contribution to a great variety of energy policy outputs (decisions, plans, or services) (Berthod et al. 2023). Accordingly, the concept of “participatory governance” – which is just one of the three dimensions of ED, together with popular sovereignty and civic ownership (Szulecki 2018) – can be seen as *trait d’union* between the theory and practice of collaborative governance and a broader discussion on energy democracy to increase policy legitimacy, equity, and the empowerment of local communities (Fischer 2006, 2012; Heinelt 2018).

2.2 *Conceptualizing Participatory Governance*

Participatory governance implies that decisions must be taken within a profoundly plural system of governance with high levels of information, accountability, and transparency (Judson et al. 2022). In particular, Szulecki (2018) refers to four main components of participatory governance: inclusiveness (i.e. incorporating public consultations at any level), transparency (i.e. putting citizen interests/opinions on a par with the expert agenda), access to information (i.e. due process, clear procedures, and regulated lobbying), energy education and awareness raising (i.e. reporting on legislation and decision-making, the possibility and availability of independent research, and the existence of dedicated educational programmes). Indeed, information disclosure is a crucial component of governance in all sectors and at all levels to avoid corruption and guarantee regulatory effectiveness and governmental accountability (Florini and Saleem 2011). In turn, accountability is expected to foster the public’s control over experts and the right to question their decisions and policy choices (Mulgan 2003), reversing the typical technocratic and depoliticized conception of the energy sector that was used to justify the lack of public involvement until recently.

Moreover, participatory governance should also enhance procedural and distributive justice, increasing confidence in governance and procedural fairness (Segreto et al. 2020).

Finally, participatory governance cannot prescind from decentralization and distribution of power among different authorities just because local communities and stakeholders are supposed to have more chances to make their voices heard when more channels of access are available (van Veelen and van der Horst 2018; Judson et al. 2022). Therefore, Bazzan and Righettini (2022) consider the state level of decentralization as a context variable that can influence the ability to achieve a better level of governance integration. Still, a few scholars warn about the risk of a “local trap” assuming that organizations, policies, and actions at the local scale are inherently more likely to have desired social and ecological effects than activities at other scales (Wahlund and Palm 2022). Indeed, most of the case studies in the field of energy democracy focus on participation in local-level decisions. On the other hand, studies on participation in energy processes and decisions of central governments, which will impact on the daily lives of most citizens, are less widespread. In this respect, finding participatory practices within a centralized top-down process such as EU energy planning is a challenge.

Thus, according to the literature presented, this article intends *participatory governance* in energy transition policies as a multi-agency, multi-level mode of policy-making which promotes active civil society engagement along each phase of the policy cycle, expanding citizens’ opportunities to access, be consulted, and share strategic decisions on energy transition issues that, directly or indirectly, affect their lives at the community level.

2.3 Participatory Governance and the Energy Union

The recent EU energy sector legislation (2020 Climate and Energy Package, 2030 Climate and Energy Framework, Energy Union, and the “Clean Energy for all Europeans” package of 2016) demonstrates the political commitment to pursuing the national decarbonization policy more democratically and more collaboratively. Making EU energy governance open to citizen-led initiatives (Szulecki and Claes 2019) is also intended to respond to the international obligations set by the Aarhus Convention, requiring that the public be informed and allowed to participate in the environmental planning process. Therefore, the Energy Union strategy promises to initiate “an energy dialogue with stakeholders to inform policymaking and support active engagement in managing the energy transition” (EC 2015, p. 18). In turn, Regulation 2018/1999 states that “member states should provide the public with real opportunities to participate in and to be consulted on preparing integrated national energy and climate plans” (art. 10). In this regard, we can maintain that the Regulation has embraced some of the assumptions of normative theory on energy democracy.

The principles of participatory governance respond to the widespread concern to bring European citizens closer to decision-making since the formulation phase of energy transition policy. This recalls the core of the long-standing problem of EU legitimacy and democratic deficit (Bellamy and Castiglione 2002; Majone 2005; Follesdal and Hix 2006; Schmidt 2007; Risse 2015). Indeed, the issue of democratic governance of EU institutions is not just about the economic interests and pressures on political representation together with electoral accountability. Instead, it concerns some structural aspects of

the European Regulation's policy legitimization, including the capacity to reduce information asymmetry and balance technical and economic private interests with the local community and most vulnerable citizens' needs. In this regard, the political relevance of the institutional design and the participatory processes promoted by the Regulation goes beyond just enhancing the quality of Energy Union governance, proposing itself as a procedural mode to strengthen the very idea of (multi-level) democratic policy-making in the EU (Bellamy 2019). However, normative and prescriptive considerations exceed the scope of this paper; thus, the following section sets out the main analytical dimensions, variables, and indicators to empirically and comparatively assess the evolution of participatory governance in EU energy planning.

3. Research Design

3.1 Data Source and Collection

This sub-section illustrates the source and method used to collect and code the empirical data. According to Regulation 2018/1999, all EU countries were to submit their first draft energy plans for 2021–2030 to the Commission by 2018. Final plans were to be delivered by the end of 2019, considering the EC's assessment and recommendations on the draft plans. The EC's assessment of the final plans was published in October 2020. Member States are required to submit a progress report every two years. Annex I of the Regulation provides a general framework and formal template to be followed by all Member States for drafting and finalizing their plans. Our analysis focuses on the evolution of section 1.3 of each energy draft and final plan (2018–2020) entitled "Consultations and involvement of national and Union entities and their outcome". Moreover, we also consider the EC's individual staff working documents that account for the EC observations on the draft and final NECPs, particularly the initial section entitled "Preparation and submission of the draft/final plan".

However, since these sections are extremely concise, we also conducted two semi-structured interviews with members of the Directorate-General (DG) for Energy, who took part in assessing the NECP process.

Our research design, therefore, investigates participatory governance achieved by Member States in the Energy Union planning phase to explain whether and how procedural governance requirements of Regulation 2018/1999, including EC assistance during the planning process, effectively obtain the desired effects. In this regard, the standardization required by the Regulation makes the outcome of the process easily comparable, allowing for a diachronic qualitative content analysis of how the different Member States accounted for their participatory commitment in their NECP.

The coding work consisted of several phases to guarantee the maximum reliability and consistency of the final dataset. After a series of initial discussions on the adequacy of the codebook and the various indicators considered, the two authors individually proceeded with a first test coding, selecting two NECPs each (one from a pre-enlargement country and one from a post-2004 Member State). These codings were successively shared and discussed jointly to highlight any problems and doubts. After defining a joint modus operandum, the two authors shared the NECPs and individually proceeded to complete the coding. The EC working documents were used for subsequent cross-checking of the coding carried out. At the end of the individual work, each author recorded 10 per cent of

the variables identified by the other. This further cross-checking stage revealed a degree of agreement between the authors of more than 90 per cent. The few inconsistencies found were subsequently re-discussed and corrected.

3.2 Dimensions and Operationalization of Participatory Energy Governance

Drawing on the evolution of literature presented above, we single out a few relevant dimensions of participatory governance: decentralization, collaboration, inclusiveness, openness, transparency, and accountability. These dimensions are successively operationalized and empirically detected in national plan formulation processes based on the specific requirements of the Governance Regulation.

Table 1 presents the operational definition of these dimensions and the specific indicators and measurements applied. All dimensions are measured according to an index ranging between 0 and 1, where 0 represents the lowest level of the variable and 1 the maximum level.

The first dimension (governance decentralization/dispersion) concerns the polity dimension and the idea that the energy policy democratic formulation process should pursue a dispersed governance model (Szulecki 2018). The Regulation clearly states that the planning process must involve four different governance actors. The national government is supposed to be the leading actor in the process. However, the legislative sphere, local authorities, and stakeholders must also be involved. Indeed, the first three subsections of section 1.3 are entitled “Involvement of the national parliament”, “Involvement of local and regional authorities”, and “Consultations of stakeholders and engagement of civil society”. Nonetheless, as we will see in the next section, not all Member States respected this requirement in full since they excluded one or more actors, especially in the drafting stage.

The second dimension refers to collaboration within central government. Starting from the premise that the national government role is pivotal in developing the plan compared to the other levels of governance, we focus more specifically on the collaborative dynamics that develop within the executive. While drafting and finalization of the plan are supposed to be handled by a single minister/ministry (notably, the Environmental Minister or even the Energy Minister), the formulation process could be characterized by different levels of inter-ministerial collaboration. Since energy transition is a strategic and transversal goal, the European regulatory framework assumes that the more ministries (i.e. more policy sectors) collaborate in the drafting and finalization of the plan, the more collaborative and effective the central government can be in pursuing energy performance (Bazzan and Righettini 2022). However, we are also interested in the role national energy agencies can play in the planning process. Regardless of their degree of governmental independence, national energy agency collaboration within central government brings professional expertise into the formulation process; such collaboration is more legitimate and effective if the minister(s) in charge involves or, to some extent, relies on the advisory role of energy agencies in the planning process, increasingly fed by stakeholders’ and consumers’ consultation (Beyers and Arras 2020).

The third dimension (inclusiveness of the planning process) shifts the focus from “institutional” to social actors, looking at the type of stakeholders and public involved (Douglas et al. 2020). The more different actors/stakeholders involved, the more

Table 1. Participatory governance: dimensions, operational definition and indicators

Variables	Operational definition	Measure (index: 0–1)
1. Governance decentralization/dispersion	Governance configuration according to the different actors involved in energy planning; four possible types of actors involved: executive, legislative, local authorities, stakeholders	0: only one type of actor (executive) involved 0.33: two types of actors involved 0.67: three types of actors involved; 1: all four types of actors involved (= high decentralization/dispersion)
2. Collaboration within central government	Inter-ministerial collaboration, transversality and intersectorality in energy planning (i.e. how many ministries are involved) + energy agency involvement	\sum of ministries (+ inter-ministerial committees/working groups + energy agency) for each NECP/ max number of ministries (among the 27 plans)
3. Inclusiveness of the planning process	Variety of stakeholders involved; nine possible types of stakeholders	\sum of types of stakeholders for each NECP/ max number of stakeholders (nine)
4. Openness of the planning process	Variety of participatory tools/fora to connect institutional actors and stakeholders; nine possible types of participatory tools	\sum of tools for each NECP/ max number of tools (nine)
5. Transparency of the planning process	The extent to which recommendations and comments received by stakeholders and civil society during public consultations are reported in the plan	0: the plan does not report the recommendations/comments received; 0.5: recommendations/comments are just generically reported; 1: recommendations/comments are reported in detail (in the same section 1.3 or even in a separate annex)
6. Accountability of the planning process	Extent to which recommendations and comments received by stakeholders and civil society during public consultations are considered in the plan	0: the plan does not consider the recommendations/comments received; 0.5: the plan generically states that recommendations/comments have been taken into account, but it is not clear how and to what extent; 1: the plan explains in detail how recommendations/comments have been taken into account
7. Saliency of democratic governance	Length of section 1.3 “Consultations and involvement of national and Union entities and their outcome” in the Member State plan.	No. of words of section 1.3 for each NECP/no. of words of longest section 1.3 (among the 27 plans)

inclusive the process. Accordingly, we inductively identified nine different types of stakeholders cited in the national plans: local government associations (such as Unions of Regions or Municipalities), energy companies, industrial and business associations,

trade unions, non-governmental organizations, civic associations, professional associations, the scientific/academic community, and individual citizens. Therefore, we aim to identify with whom and to what extent Member States maintain contacts and differentiate within this range.

The fourth dimension (openness of the planning process) is expected to be positively correlated with the previous one. Here, we consider the variety of participatory tools (or participatory fora) adopted in the formulation process (Douglas et al. 2020). Indeed, according to the regulation aims, the formulation phase should engage a significant number of actors and stakeholders in preliminary discussions about the energy content and strategies to be pursued. In this regard, the variety of tools/venues may be a way to foster pluralism and collect the different energy transition options and collaborative propositions of the actors, and the probable conflicts to be addressed. The more types of meetings (formal and informal) and consultation events among these actors, the more open the planning process. Accordingly, we identified nine possible types of participatory fora/tools: conferences/congresses, round tables, forums, panels, working groups, seminars, workshops, webinars, and public consultations.¹ The more a Member State combines these different tools during the planning process, the greater the opportunity for stakeholders and the public to express their opinions.

The fifth and sixth dimensions concern the importance of assuring transparency and accountability in energy transition planning processes (Boyte 2005). We therefore focus on how recommendations and comments received from stakeholders, civil society organizations, and the public during consultations concerning the plan are reported, treated, and used. Indeed, this is one of the more attentively considered and commented on aspects in the EC assessment documents.

In relation to transparency, a Member State may decide to report in detail the comments received, whether supportive or critical, limit reporting to a brief overview, or even avoid any reference to them. As far as accountability is concerned, we assess the extent to which social actor opinions (and their recommendations/comments) have been taken into account throughout the planning process (Douglas et al. 2020).

The last dimension (salience of participatory governance) is the only one not directly linked to the EU Regulation and the dimensions mentioned above. However, we include it because the salience refers to the significance afforded by energy policy-makers to specific issues by framing and shaping policy debate and policy-making dynamics (Jabotinsky and Cohen 2020). In this regard, it encourages policy actors to respond to constituent and stakeholder preferences (Righettini and Stefano 2021), which is the essence of participatory governance. Here, the salience of participatory governance in EU energy planning is assessed by considering the length (number of words) of section 1.3 of each NECP. We expect that the more space each MS devotes to the section, the higher the salience of consultations and hence the relevance assigned to participatory objectives. Furthermore, we hypothesize that the changing saliency of participatory governance also reflects improvements in the overall degree of participatory governance. Thus, we expect it to be positively correlated with the other variables considered. In fact, the more a Member State practises participatory governance during the planning process (pursuing decentralization, transversality, inclusiveness, transparency, and accountability), the more likely it is to put its efforts on paper, and to obtain positive comments from the EC during evaluation of the

plan. Conversely, we suspected that when this section of the plan is succinct, this is probably because consultations and other participatory and collaborative practices have yet to occur.

Of course, we are aware there may be some other relevant indicators to consider for the empirical analysis: the total number of actors involved in consultations, the total number of meetings, the number of comments received, the duration of public consultations, etc. Unfortunately, since most of the plans do not provide precise information in this regard, we were forced to exclude these kinds of indicators from our dataset. They may, however, be considered for future research in the field.

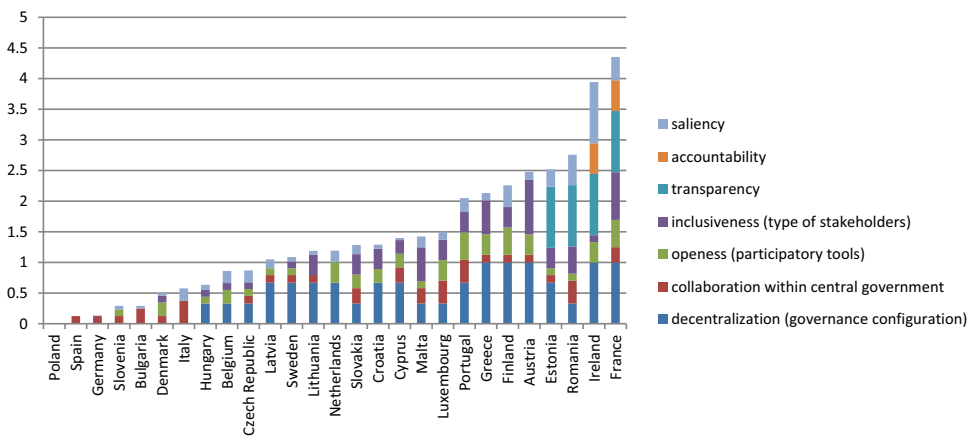
4. Empirical Evidence

4.1 Member States' Starting Point: Participatory Governance in 27 Draft NECPs

This section shows the empirical findings related to the degree of participatory governance in the energy planning drafting phase, ranking the 27 Member States accordingly. Figure 1 confirms a significant level of cross-country variation. The Member States differ on the seven variables, but the greatest variability concerns decentralization and transparency. France and Ireland show the highest index of participatory governance by far, while Poland, Spain, and Germany are at the bottom of the ranking.

Regarding governance decentralization/dispersion, the findings suggest that the national executive is the only actor involved in drafting in a minority of countries (Bulgaria, Denmark, Germany, Italy, Poland, Slovenia, and Spain). However, only five Member States (Austria, Finland, France, Greece, and Ireland) involved the four actors (executive, Parliament, local authorities, and stakeholders) from the beginning of the

Figure 1. Participatory governance in draft NECPs by country



Source: Authors' elaboration, https://energy.ec.europa.eu/topics/energy-strategy/national-energy-and-climate-plans-necps_en.

Note: The histogram's columns represent the sum of the values of the seven indexes (ranging from 0 to 1) for each country.

planning process. In the remaining countries, stakeholders are more frequently involved during the drafting phase than Parliaments and local authorities.

Member States also differ significantly with regard to the second dimension, namely collaboration within central government. It is worth noting that most of the plans are overseen by a single ministry, or two at most. Only Italy prepared the draft “in close cooperation of several Ministries and Authorities, notably the Ministry of Economic Development, the Ministry of the Environment and Land and Sea Protection, and the Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport” (EC Assessment of the draft NECP of Italy, 2020b, p. 4). In half of the countries considered, the Energy Ministry is exclusively in charge, often separated from the Environmental Ministry (although sometimes it has other responsibilities beyond “energy”). The Ministry of Economic Affairs is in charge in six countries, followed by the Ministry of Infrastructure (Italy, Slovenia, and Sweden). However, some other ministries or inter-ministerial committees/working groups were involved during NECP drafting (with an average of two ministries per country), suggesting a medium/low degree of transversality in the drafting phase. However only six governments (Austria, Denmark, France, Portugal, Romania, and Sweden) involved energy agencies during the drafting phase.

The draft plans are not highly inclusive in terms of the type of stakeholders involved, with an average of 2.2 per country. However, there are also two Member States (Austria and France) that involved almost all types of stakeholders from the drafting phase. At the same time, eight countries failed to involve any stakeholders. This seems to be strictly linked to our fourth dimension, namely openness of the planning process, intended as the variety of participatory fora. First, less than half of Member States started consultations during the drafting phase, but the other tools are even less used (apart from working groups). The only draft plans reporting four different participatory tools are those of France, Finland, and Portugal. The average number of tools employed by each Member State is only 1.7, which also reflects a relative scarcity in the types of stakeholders involved. Indeed, as expected, there is a strong positive correlation between the variety of participatory tools and the variety of stakeholders.

As mentioned, the absolute majority of Member States did not hold consultations during the drafting phase, and when they did, there was generally a lack of time (or willingness) to report the results. Therefore, transparency and accountability are measurable only for a few drafts. However, it is interesting to note that the few NECPs that mention the comments received do so in detail and not just in general terms (Estonia, France, Ireland, and Romania). This explains the considerable cross-country variation in terms of transparency. Instead, the recommendations received are not really considered or, at most, the draft plan generically states that they have been considered, but it is not clear how and to what extent. Accordingly, the general level of accountability is extremely low in the drafting phase.

Finally, there is also substantial cross-country variation in terms of the saliency of participatory governance. Indeed, the average length of section 1.3 in the draft plans is around 1,000 words, but we have a few drafts (Poland, Spain, and Germany) in which the section is completely missing. This suggests that participatory governance is not at all salient in the drafting phase for these three countries. Conversely, we highlight the special case of Ireland, which turns out to be the country in which participatory governance is the most salient. Indeed, the Irish draft devotes a disproportionate number of words to section 1.3 (more than 6,000), presenting each question of the public

consultation one by one and providing a detailed summary of the main points raised in the responses received. Not surprisingly, it is also confirmed that the saliency of participatory governance is positively correlated with all the other variables, except governance decentralization/dispersion, which does not seem to increase significantly with the increase in the length of section 1.3.

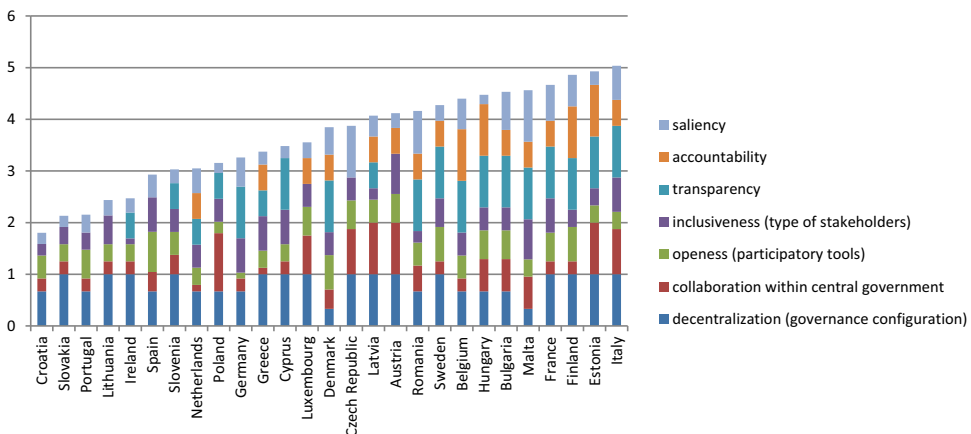
4.2 Participatory Governance in 27 Final NECPs

In this sub-section we assess whether and in what directions Member State participatory processes were boosted in the second phase of planning after EC comments and assistance. Figure 2 confirms improvements for all seven variables. There is, however, significant cross-country variation. Furthermore, the Member State ranking changed significantly compared to the draft plan, with Italy and Estonia at the top and Croatia, Slovakia, and Portugal at the bottom.

Governance configuration evolves in most Member States: first, countries involving all four governance actors tripled compared to the drafting phase. Unlike in the first phase, stakeholders are always involved in the second phase. However, this is not always the case for local authorities and/or the national Parliament, despite the requirements of the Governance Regulation. Indeed, both actors are excluded in Denmark and Malta, while the remaining ten countries excluded one of the two.

Regarding the second dimension, i.e. collaboration within central government, the average number of ministries involved or consulted rose from 2 to 3.3. Latvia and Poland mentioned as many as seven different ministries in their final plans. Moreover, Member States that involved governmental/regulatory/independent energy agencies almost tripled compared to the draft phase (from 6 to 15). This suggests a relevant role of “agencification” in finalization of EU energy planning.

Figure 2. Participatory governance in final NECPs by country



Source: Authors' elaboration, https://energy.ec.europa.eu/topics/energy-strategy/national-energy-and-climate-plans-necps_en.

Note: see Figure 1 above.

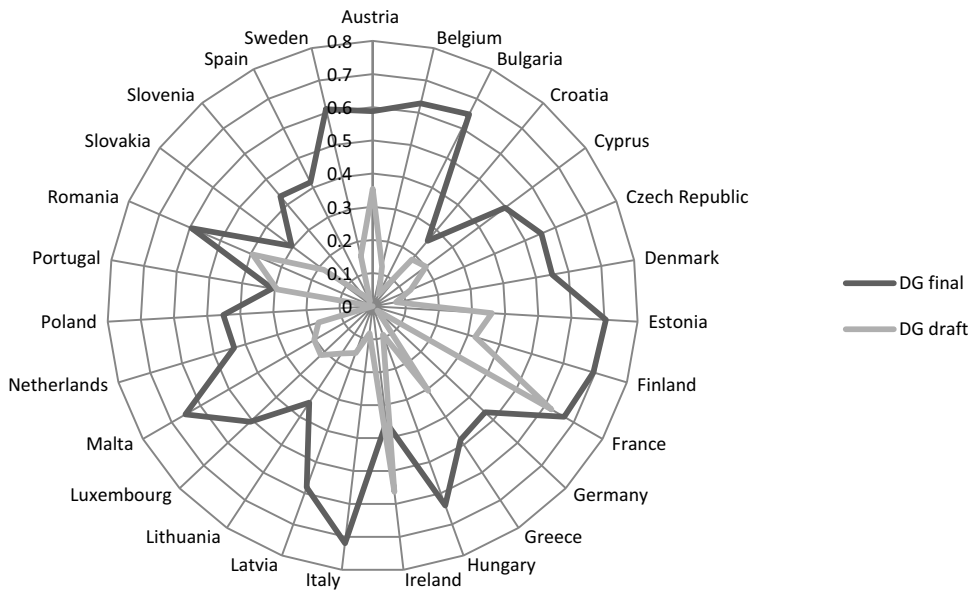
A further increase concerns inclusiveness and openness of the planning process, with an average of 4.3 types of stakeholders and participatory tools for each Member State during the second phase. Austria and Malta are the two Member States presenting the greatest variability in types of stakeholders involved (seven), but the improvement compared to the drafting phase is marginal. On the other hand, Italy, Spain, and Germany increased from zero stakeholders involved to six. Similarly, Spain rose from zero participatory tools in the drafting phase to seven, followed by three Scandinavian countries (Denmark, Finland, and Sweden). However, it should be mentioned that the correlation between type of stakeholders and variety of participatory fora seems much weaker than in the drafting phase. This suggests that while several participatory fora help involve more types of stakeholders in the initial planning phase, in a subsequent phase different stakeholders may also meet in a single arena.

The increase also concerns transparency and accountability, but we continue to see significant cross-country variation: eight plans fail to report comments received during public consultations (Austria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Portugal, Slovakia, and Spain), although two of them (Austria and Luxembourg) at least state (generically) they have been taken into account; a further six plans (Greece, Ireland, Latvia, Netherlands, Poland, and Slovenia) were vague in relation to comments received and how they have been considered. At the same time, a relative majority of Member States were highly transparent in reporting comments (in the final plan or in a separate document submitted to the EC). However, according to the EC's final assessment, only four seem to have been "accountable" in respect of the recommendations received (Belgium, Estonia, Finland, and Hungary). Indeed, one of our two interviewees from DG Energy confirmed that the EC was unhappy with how stakeholders' views were considered in both the draft and (less so) final NECPs, because links between stakeholders' recommendations and the policies proposed in the plans were generally missing.

Finally, as expected, the salience of participatory governance increases significantly for most Member States. On average, the number of words devoted to section 1.3 doubled between the draft and the final plans. This is because most final NECPs resemble the drafts, simply giving more details on public consultations and stakeholder involvement (which are more likely to occur in the second planning period). The most significant exception is Ireland, falling from about 6,000 words to just above 1,000. Indeed, contrary to the draft plan, the final Irish NECP does not include the public consultations summary report (submitted to the EC in a separate document). Considering the significant increase in salience and in most other dimensions for many other Member States, this explains why Ireland fell around 20 positions in the ranking between the two phases. Section 1.3 of the Estonian final plan is the only other one that was shortened, but the decrease is minimal.

4.3 Participatory Governance Evolution in Formulation of NECPs and the Role of the European Commission

The scenario outlined above shows that the level of participatory governance improves for most Member States during the two-phase planning process, progressively approaching the governance requirements of Regulation 2018/1999. [Figure 3](#) provides a graphic comparison of the concise index of participatory governance in the draft and final plans for each

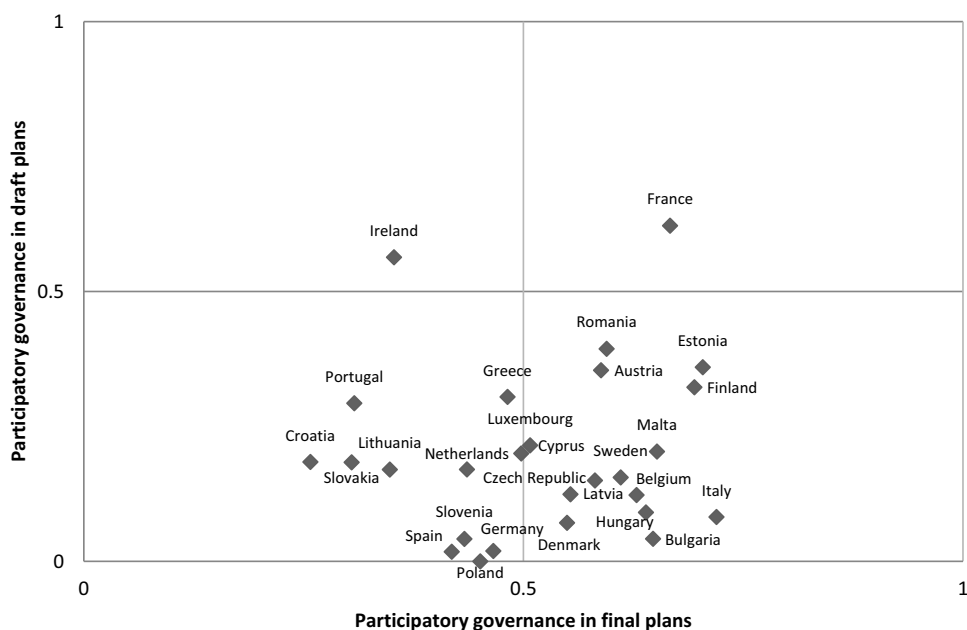
Figure 3. Participatory governance in draft vs. final NECPs by country: radar chart

Source: Authors' elaboration, https://energy.ec.europa.eu/topics/energy-strategy/national-energy-and-climate-plans-necps_en.

Member State, measured as the average index of the seven dimensions under consideration. Firstly, we note that none of the countries approach the maximum level of participatory governance (= 1). It follows that there is still much room for improvement. In this regard, it should be noted that it was easier to improve for Member States starting from a low level of participatory governance in the drafting phase (i.e. Bulgaria, Italy, Malta, etc.). On the other hand, improving from an already high ranking (such as France) is much more challenging, and there is even a risk of downgrading (see Ireland). However, some countries engaged only minimally in promoting participatory governance during the drafting phase and failed to achieve any significant improvement also during finalization (i.e. Croatia, Slovakia, and Portugal).

Figure 4 allows us to better evaluate the relative position of each Member State along the entire energy plan formulation process. The y -axis and x -axis represent the level of participatory governance respectively in the draft and final plans. If we assume the 0.5 value as the limit for a sufficient level of participatory governance in energy planning, the majority of the final NECPs (15 out of 27) exceed the threshold (lower-right quadrant). In contrast, there are just two drafts (France and Ireland) beyond this threshold (upper-left quadrant), but only France maintains a high level of participatory governance throughout the entire energy planning formulation process. In this regard, the upper-right quadrant represents the most desirable positioning for a Member State. Indeed, to effectively allow stakeholders and the public to have a say in the final plan, their involvement should start well in advance:

Figure 4. Participatory governance in draft vs. final NECPs by country: scatter plot



Source: Authors' elaboration, https://energy.ec.europa.eu/topics/energy-strategy/national-energy-and-climate-plans-necps_en.

The first stage is when public authorities don't know what they will do, and they consult in order to decide how to proceed. They then draft it and formally consult a large spectrum of the public to confirm what was done. And if you consult a large spectrum of the public the answers go in all directions on most of the issues, so unless there is a strong tendency towards one answer or another, it's not an excellent basis to change what you have already drafted. (Interviewee 1)

All these matters considered, focusing more specifically on the role played by EC-DG Energy assistance in the planning process may help to explain the evolution we witness and the capacity of Member States to enhance participatory governance modes along their energy transition plan formulation processes. As the Governance Regulation was a major novelty in the EU energy framework, this was also the case for EC-DG Energy technical assistance. The two interviews conducted with the DG Energy explained that the DG coordination technical working group met regularly with governmental experts from different Member States to support the drafting and finalization process. The meetings were intended to facilitate the commitment to comply with the EC recommendations on draft NECPs; nevertheless, "they did not influence the draft or the final plans tremendously" (interviewee 1). Besides, dedicated technical assistance from the DG was also available for reforms, and from a contractor in the form of a consortium of external consultants that provided targeted technical assistance to a few Member States that

requested it. In this regard, the plans prepared with the support of contractors were typically more complete and better developed (interviewee 1). The EC's restraint in balancing technical assistance with Member State autonomy in planning formulation was one of the crucial issues, because the EC could not interfere excessively in the national decision-making process. Therefore, both interviewees confirm that the EC provided "non-intrusive" assistance to Member States, working around the provisions and general principles of the Regulation, such as the obligation for each Member State to conduct public consultations and report the views of the various stakeholders in the plan. Notwithstanding, participatory issues were apparently not a priority for the EC's assistance compared to other major challenges, although they were expected to make the changes more readily acceptable to citizens and were also intended to increase the ambition and broaden the scope of the plans.

Likewise, in some cases, procedural and participatory issues seem to become a secondary priority with respect to substantive decisions regarding renewable energy production, and supply strategies and techniques. Interestingly, the interviewees emphasised that Member States were generally supportive of public consultations along the planning process; they saw some added value in having stakeholder endorsements and gathering ideas or attempting to steer a debate on energy issues to enhance the prominence of the overall process. Indeed, the EC expressed satisfaction with the first implementation of the new integrated planning framework set out in the Governance Regulation: "the energy plans were the outcome of wide consultation and participation at the national and sub-national level, building a strong sense of ownership of the energy and climate transition objectives ... final plans are substantially more ambitious than the 2018 draft plans" (EC 17 September 2020a, p. 25). However, while it takes time for participatory procedures to be developed effectively, Member States were confronted with the stringent deadlines imposed by the Governance Regulation and were forced to find a balance between participation and finalization of their plans (interviewee 2).

This said, both interviewees affirm that the evolution of participatory governance during the planning process is probably linked to the country's participatory tradition. In this regard, EC-DG Energy assistance was facilitated in relation to Western countries whose culture and legacy are more oriented towards participation in policy-making, while it was more difficult in relation to Central and Eastern European (CEE) Member States, which traditionally have an insulated and non-participatory energy governance mode (Horváthová and Dobbins 2019; Szulecki and Claes 2019). Nevertheless, our findings do not suggest a specific pattern for cross-country variation. In fact, the participatory governance index for CEE countries is barely below the average for both the draft and final plan and evidence suggests that all Member States, in the West as well as in CEE have highlights and shadows in the various participatory dimensions and in the overall level of participatory governance.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

This paper set out a unique analytical framework for assessing and comparing the dynamics and degree of participatory governance in energy transition planning

formulation in European Member States through dimensions and measurable indicators that can also be adapted to match different policy sectors.

This was intended to fill a gap in the new energy governance literature, keeping in mind all the challenges and research limitations due to the explorative nature of our study, which is unique in terms of the comparative method employed and the completeness of European national planning processes considered.

The empirical evidence confirms a general convergence towards enhancing participatory governance and the EU Regulation's role in progressively pushing all Member States towards the preferred formulation process. Many Member States have increased their awareness and consideration of promoting participatory governance between the first and second stages of the formulation process, even if not in the same manner and with the same intensity. We expected a variation between countries that is confirmed by empirical evidence, but first we were looking for a general convergence of the Member States in the effort to adapt participatory governance procedures in the formulation phase of energy transition plans.

Looking at the evidence, three prevailing patterns of institutional adaptation of participatory governance in the Energy Union emerge. The first pattern consists of a limited number of countries that immediately take all dimensions of participatory governance seriously (France and Ireland); a second pattern is countries that improve their planning on all dimensions between the draft and the final version; finally, a third pattern consists of countries that enhance their planning but not on all dimensions. The accountability dimension, together with that of transparency, is among the most neglected.

However, the EC's contribution to boosting participatory governance processes at Member State level between the drafting and finalization phase cannot be demonstrated as a causality. Nevertheless, the EC's assistance in guaranteeing the integration of national energy plans regarding the new regulation principles was "non-intrusive" but constitutes an undeniable contribution to boosting participatory governance in the energy transition policy, as were also the diverse reactions and adaptation capabilities of the Member States.

Still, the findings confirm that there is still ample room for improvement. Indeed, developing the NECPs is an iterative process that does not end on submitting the final plans in 2019–2020. Member States must update and revise their NECPs in 2023 (drafts) and 2024 (final). Accordingly, the first possible direction for future empirical research in the field is to compare current results with the analysis of participatory governance in 2023–2024 NECPs, also to match the relevant changes that have occurred on the international level. In fact, EU priorities are changing so rapidly that the entire NECPs experiment is likely to be largely reconsidered in the near future. Indeed, the EC is currently working on the guidance for revision of NECPs to reflect the current situation, i.e. the need to phase out fossil fuels due to the Russian–Ukrainian conflict, as well as the fact that NECPs represent an essential part of the Recovery and Resilience Plan.

The Governance Regulation was a significant novelty in the EU energy sector because it changed the procedure and work method in the energy transition perspective until 2050. It proposed a single plan that streamlines different pre-existing reporting tools while at the same time combining energy and climate priorities. When the Commission proposed it, the tools in question were created for planning in the long term, setting long-term goals, and ensuring that the defined policies and measures are adequate to achieve

the long-term purpose. The time frames have now changed significantly, and it is unclear whether the governance schedule and procedures (including public consultations and other participatory forms) are still adequate. The runaway climate crisis and the urgency of rapid energy transition due to the Russia–Ukraine war will make energy policies more and more central in the academic and political debate in years to come, especially on the EU level. There is a substantial risk that participatory tools will be set aside throughout the process because they are time-consuming. Thus, we need to better understand whether changing (in the positive or negative directions) some aspects of participatory governance can tell us if and how the various participatory and democratic dimensions are sensitive to the turbulent contexts in which the new strategy of the Energy Union is developing. That's why empirical and comparative analysis is essential to assess the real potential and limits of participatory governance and energy democracy at the EU level and beyond. Moreover, the partly contradictory findings concerning the role of traditional public administration models in European macro-regions require a more specific theoretical reflection, as the study of the formulation of individual plans is too limited to explain these differences. Although our empirical evidence suggests that the geographical variable does not represent a discriminating factor for the policy stage we have considered, further studies should investigate its implications in the subsequent phases of policy-making. These may include both reflections concerning the normative implications of the participatory processes promoted by EU legislation and more in-depth empirical analyses based on national documents and a higher number of interviews to single out specific explanations for cross-country variation at procedural and organizational levels.

Note

1. We know that sometimes the different words used in the plans may indicate similar things (i.e. seminars, workshops, round tables, and so forth). Still we decided to consider all semantic differences to fully grab the variability of NECPs.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

References

- Ahn, M. and Baldwin, E., 2022, Who benefits from collaborative governance? An empirical study from the energy sector. *Public Management Review*. doi:10.1080/14719037.2022.2044505.
- Ansell, C. and Gash, A., 2008, Collaborative governance in theory and practice. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, **18**(4), pp. 543–571.
- Bazzan, G. and Righettini, M., 2022, Designing integrative governance arrangements for policy performance in the Energy Union: Evidence from seven member states. *Journal of Environmental Policy and Planning*, **25** (1), pp. 88–102.
- Bellamy, R., 2019, *A Republican Europe of States: Cosmopolitanism, Intergovernmentalism and Democracy in the EU* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Bellamy, R. and Castiglione, D., 2002, The uses of democracy: Reflections on the European democratic deficit, in: *Democracy in the European Union* (New York: Routledge), pp. 79–98.

- Berthod, O., Blanchet, T., Busch, H., Kunze, C., Nolden, C., and Wenderlich, M., 2023, The rise and fall of energy democracy: 5 cases of collaborative governance in energy systems. *Environmental Management*, 71 (3), pp. 551–564.
- Beyers, J. and Arras, S., 2020, Who feeds information to regulators? Stakeholder diversity in European Union regulatory agency consultations. *Journal of Public Policy*, 40(4), pp. 573–598. doi:10.1017/S0143814X19000126.
- Boyte, H. C., 2005, Reframing democracy: Governance, civic agency, and politics. *Public Administration Review*, 65(5), pp. 536–546. doi:10.1111/j.1540-6210.2005.00481.x.
- Burke, M. J. and Stephens, J. C., 2017, Energy democracy: Goals and policy instruments for sociotechnical transitions. *Energy Research and Social Science*, 33, pp. 35–48.
- Devine-Wright, P., 2007, Energy citizenship: Psychological aspects of evolution in sustainable energy technologies, in: J. Murphy (Ed.) *Governing Technology for Sustainability* (London: Earthscan), pp. 63–88.
- Douglas, S., Ansell, C., Parker, C. F., Sørensen, E., ‘T Hart, P., and Torfing, J., 2020, Understanding collaboration: Introducing the collaborative governance case databank. *Policy and Society*, 39(4), pp. 495–509. doi:10.1080/14494035.2020.1794425.
- Droubi, S., Heffron, R., and McCauley, D., 2022, A critical review of energy democracy: A failure to deliver justice? *Energy Research & Social Science*, 86, p.102444. doi:10.1016/j.erss.2021.102444.
- European Commission, 2015, *Energy Union Package. Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions and the European Investment Bank. A Framework Strategy for a Resilient Energy Union with a Forward-Looking Climate Change Policy.*
- European Commission, 2020a, *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions. An EU-Wide Assessment of National Energy and Climate Plans. Driving Forward the Green Transition and Promoting Economic Recovery Through Integrated Energy and Climate Planning.*
- European Commission, 2020b, Commission staff working document. Assessment of the draft National Energy and climate plan of Italy. *Commission Recommendation on the Draft Integrated National Energy and Climate Plan of Italy Covering the Period 2021-2030.*
- Fischer, F., 2006, Participatory governance as deliberative empowerment: The cultural politics of discursive space. *The American Review of Public Administration*, 36(1), pp. 19–40.
- Fischer, F., 2012, Participatory governance: From theory to practice, in: A. C. Di David Levi-Faur (Ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of Governance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp. 457–471.
- Florini, A. and Saleem, S., 2011, Information disclosure in global energy governance. *Global Policy*, 2 (SUPPL.1), pp. 144–154. doi:10.1111/j.1758-5899.2011.00135.x.
- Follesdal, A. and Hix, S., 2006, Why there is a democratic deficit in the EU: A response to majone and moravcsik. *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 44(3), pp. 533–562.
- Goldthau, A. and Sitter, N., 2019, Regulatory or market power Europe? EU leadership models for international energy governance, in: *New Political Economy of Energy in Europe* (London: Palgrave Macmillan), pp. 27–47.
- Hegger, D. L. T., Mees, H. L. P., and Wamsler, C., 2022, The role of citizens in sustainability and climate change governance: Taking stock and looking ahead. *Environmental Policy and Governance*, 32(3), pp. 161–166. doi:10.1002/eet.1990.
- Heinelt, H., 2018, *Handbook on Participatory Governance* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing).
- Horvathova, B. and Dobbins, M., 2019, Organised interests in the energy sector: A comparative study of the influence of interest groups in Czechia and Hungary. *Politics & Governance*, 7, p. 139. doi:10.17645/pol.v7i1.1784.
- Howlett, M., 2019, *Designing Public Policies: Principles and Instruments: Second Edition* (New York: Routledge).
- Jabotinsky, H. Y. and Cohen, N., 2020, Regulatory policy entrepreneurship and reforms: A comparison of competition and financial regulation. *Journal of Public Policy*, 40(4), pp. 628–650.
- Judson, E., Fitch-Roy, O., and Soutar, I., 2022, Energy democracy: A digital future? *Energy Research & Social Science*, 91, pp. 102732.
- Knodt, M., 2018, EU energy policy, in: *Handbook of European Policies* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing), pp. 224–240.
- Majone, G., 2005, *Dilemmas of European Integration: The Ambiguities and Pitfalls of Integration by Stealth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

- Mulgan, R., 2003, One cheer for hierarchy - Accountability in disjointed governance. *Political Science*, **55**(2), pp. 6–18. doi:10.1177/003231870305500202.
- Palm, J., 2021, Exploring limited capacity in the grid: Actors, problems, and solutions. *Frontiers in Energy Research*, **9**, p.663769. doi:10.3389/fenrg.2021.663769.
- Prontera, A. and Quitzow, R., 2022, The EU as catalytic state? Rethinking European climate and energy governance. *New Political Economy*, **27**(3), pp. 517–531. doi:10.1080/13563467.2021.1994539.
- Righettini, M. S. and Stefano, S., 2021, Detecting and comparing institutional change: Evidence from consumer/user protection's salience in telecommunications in nine European countries. *Rivista Italiana di Politiche Pubbliche*, **2**, pp. 191–217.
- Ringel, M. and Knodt, M., 2018, The governance of the European Energy Union: Efficiency, effectiveness and acceptance of the Winter Package 2016. *Energy Policy*, **112**, pp. 209–220. doi:10.1016/j.enpol.2017.09.047.
- Risse, T., 2015, *A Community of Europeans?: Transnational Identities and Public Spheres* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press).
- Saenz, M. J., Ubaghs, E., and Cuevas, A. I. (Eds), 2015, Vertical collaboration and horizontal collaboration in supply chain, in: *Enabling Horizontal Collaboration Through Continuous Relational Learning* (Cham: Springer International Publishing), pp. 7–10.
- Schmidt, V. A., 2007, *Democracy in Europe: The EU and National Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Sedlacek, S., Tötzer, T., and Lund-Durlacher, D., 2020, Collaborative governance in energy regions—Experiences from an Austrian region. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, **256**, pp. 120256. doi:10.1016/j.jclepro.2020.120256.
- Segreto, M., Principe, L., Desormeaux, A., Torre, M., Tomassetti, L., Tratzl, P., Paolini, V., and Petracchini, F., 2020, Trends in social acceptance of renewable energy across Europe—A literature review. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, **17**(24), pp. 1–19.
- Solorio, I. and Bocquillon, P., 2017, EU renewable energy policy: A brief overview of its history and evolution, in: I. Solorio and H. Jörgens (Eds) *A Guide to EU Renewable Energy Policy* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing).
- Szulecki, K., 2018, Conceptualizing energy democracy. *Environmental Politics*, **27**(1), pp. 21–41. doi:10.1080/09644016.2017.1387294.
- Szulecki, K. and Claes, D. H., 2019, Towards decarbonization: Understanding EU energy governance. *Politics and Governance*, **7**(1), pp. 1–5. doi:10.17645/pag.v7i1.2029.
- Szulecki, K. and Overland, I., 2020, Energy democracy as a process, an outcome and a goal: A conceptual review. *Energy Research & Social Science*, **69**, pp. 101768.
- Tosun, J., Biesenbender, S., and Schulze, K., 2015, *Energy Policy Making in the EU* (London: Springer).
- Tosun, J., Zöckler, L., and Rilling, B., 2019, What drives the participation of renewable energy cooperatives in European energy governance? *Politics and Governance*, **7**(1), pp. 45–59.
- van Veelen, B. and van der Horst, D., 2018, What is energy democracy? Connecting social science energy research and political theory. *Energy Research and Social Science*, **46**, pp. 19–28.
- Von Homeyer, I., Oberthür, S., and Jordan, A. J., 2021, EU climate and energy governance in times of crisis: Towards a new agenda. *Journal of European Public Policy*, **28**(7), pp. 959–979.
- Wahlund, M. and Palm, J., 2022, The role of energy democracy and energy citizenship for participatory energy transitions: A comprehensive review. *Energy Research & Social Science*, **87**, pp. 102482. doi:10.1016/j.erss.2021.102482.
- Williams, L. and Sovacool, B. K., 2020, Energy democracy, dissent and discourse in the party politics of shale gas in the United Kingdom. *Environmental Politics*, **29**(7), pp. 1239–1263. doi:10.1080/09644016.2020.1740555.