

Social Networks and Climate Policy in Poland: An Analysis of Connections and Influences

Climate change poses a significant environmental and social challenge due to human activities and greenhouse gas emissions. It impacts various aspects of our society and the social sciences play a crucial role in understanding and addressing these challenges through effective policy-making and global collaboration.

The European Union has established a comprehensive and progressive climate policy, aiming for climate neutrality by 2050. However, member states differ in their commitment to implementing these policies. Some countries, including Denmark, lead in climate action and energy transition, while others, including Poland, show reluctance toward ambitious EU policies. We may attribute these differences to macro-level factors such as economic reliance on fossil fuels, national wealth, and micro-level factors such as attitudes toward climate change or the values that guide individuals within a society (e.g. what is more important to individuals, environmental well-being or economic growth?)

This research project focuses on the meso-level perspective. It will examine national political and social actors such as government institutions, political parties, businesses, mining trade unions, non-governmental organizations, or scientific institutions. These actors operate within the context of policy changes, meaning that the changes directly affect the actors. Thus, this demonstrates a keen interest in understanding the potential impacts of these policies within their respective countries. National actors represent diverse interests, values, and approaches to public policy formulation and implementation.

By utilizing Social Network Analysis (SNA) methods, the study aims to analyze the current network structure in Poland's climate policy system while identifying influential actors and coalitions and advocacy tactics (e.g. lobbying, informational campaigns, media activity) they use. Moreover, the study will explore whether existing collaborations align with drivers that potentially promote cooperation, such as shared beliefs, reliance on common information sources, or political influence of actors.

Collaboration among actors is essential to effectively address and adapt to climate change, because it requires the involvement of multiple stakeholders with diverse interests. It remains crucial to find common ground among actors, even those with conflicting views. The research findings will shed light on the meso-structural reasons behind Poland's less ambitious climate policy and suggest ways to enhance it.

The project adopts a mixed-methods approach by combining quantitative research through Social Network Analysis (SNA) with qualitative research methods. Investigators will collect data through media analysis to identify relevant actors and their beliefs on climate policy, online surveys incorporating network-related questions, and in-depth interviews with the representatives of key actors.