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A Sea of Opportunities?

Socio-Political Acceptance of Norwegian Offshore Wind in a Globalised and Turbulent Energy Landscape

Ina Gundersen Sommarset

Fornybar Energi

Foreword

It is with great pleasure I present this thesis delving deeper into the socio-political acceptance of offshore wind in Norway. I feel privileged to have had the opportunity to research a topic of genuine interest through a methodology I am very fond of. The submission marks the end of a two-year master's course in Renewable Energy at NMBU.

The thesis has been written in combination of starting a new full-time job in the UK, which has at times been a though balance to strike. Therefore, I want to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor Prof. Kristin Linnerud, who has been an incredible support. Her inputs and support have no doubt lifted the quality of this research and made the write-up a lot more enjoyable.

I also want to thank my incredible support network of family, friends and colleagues who has rooted for me this entire journey. A special thank you to my fiancé Sebastian, my mum and dad, Tommy, and my study partner and motivator Johanne Sofie. Your continuous and unconditional support has been an incredible motivation throughout this process. Finally, I am sincerely grateful to all the participants who generously took time from their busy schedules to share their valuable insights and experiences for the purpose of my thesis.

Ina Gundersen Sommarset
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Abstract

Norway's offshore wind journey is transitioning from a long-standing plan to concrete implementation. This shift is materialising amidst heightened climate urgency, concerns over energy security, political tensions and lingering strains from the Norwegian onshore wind controversy. At the same time, offshore wind introduces new dimensions to the social acceptance debate—most notably, increased international involvement.

This thesis explores how a turbulent energy landscape, coupled with the globalisation of offshore wind, is shaping its socio-political acceptance in the Norwegian context. While offshore wind is often assumed to enjoy higher acceptance due to its limited visual impact, this study reveals a more complex and contested reality. Through abductive thematic analysis of nine in-depth interviews, I identify both legitimising and counter-narratives that reflect divergent stakeholder perspectives.

Crucially, the study uncovers a deeper ontological divide—a fundamental clash of worldviews—regarding the role of offshore wind in the green energy transition. Rather than stemming from knowledge deficits, resistance emerges from conflicting visions of what the green energy transition should entail. This has important implications for policy: social resistance is likely to persist despite improved communication or institutional learning, unless these deeper divides are acknowledged and addressed.

Sammendrag

Norges havvinds-ambisjoner er i ferd med å gå fra langsiktige planer til konkret implementering. Denne overgangen skjer i en tid preget av økt klimakrise, bekymringer for energisikkerhet, geopolitiske spenninger og vedvarende uenighet knyttet til den norske vindkraftkontroversen på land. Samtidig introduserer havvind nye dimensjoner i debatten om sosial aksept – særlig gjennom økt internasjonal involvering.

Denne oppgaven undersøker hvordan et turbulent energilandskap, kombinert med havvindens globalisering, former den samfunnspolitiske aksepten av teknologien i en norsk kontekst. Selv om havvind ofte antas å ha høyere aksept grunnet mindre visuell påvirkning, avdekker studien et mer komplekst og omstridt landskap. Gjennom abduktiv (abductive) tematisk analyse av ni dybdeintervjuer identifiserer jeg både legitimerende og de-legitimerende narrativer som reflekterer ulike aktørers perspektiver.

Avgjørende er studiens funn av et dypere ontologisk skille – en grunnleggende konflikt i virkelighetsoppfatninger – om hvilken rolle havvind skal spille i det grønne skiftet. Motstand mot havvind handler ikke nødvendigvis om kunnskapsmangel, men springer ut av ulike visjoner for hva energiomstillingen bør innebære. Dette har viktige implikasjoner for politikkutforming: sosial motstand vil sannsynligvis vedvare til tross for bedre kommunikasjon eller institusjonell læring, med mindre disse dypere skillelinjene anerkjennes og adresseres.

Table of Contents

Figures

Tables

Acronyms

RE - Renewable energy
IEA – International Energy Agency
GW – gigawatt
DCE - Discrete Choice Experiments
NIMBY – Not in my backyard
SMR – Small Modular Reactors
O&G – Oil and gas
AI – Artificial Intelligence

1 Introduction

"…conflicts are and will be a given in the decentralisation of energy systems relying on technologies with significant spatial impacts, with struggles over the fair distribution of benefits and burdens, and tensions between different understandings of the concepts of 'sustainability' and 'transition'." - from Cuppen (2018) and Pesch et al. (2017), cited in Desvallées and de Sartre (2023, p. 3).

The Norwegian energy transition is encountering a new crossroads with offshore wind being introduced and implemented under what the Government terms a "new industrial adventure" (Persen, 2022). At the same time, the landscape around the green energy transition is shaped by a complex interplay of accelerating climate impacts, lingering onshore wind tensions, repercussions of the energy crisis, and rising geopolitical tensions (Korsnes et al., 2023; Linnerud et al., 2025). Ensuring social acceptance of renewable energy (RE) technologies is essential for the successful execution of a green energy transition (Wüstenhagen, Wolsink, & Bürer, 2007). This particularly applies on the socio-political level, where the policies and narratives that both facilitate and frame RE developments are established (Wüstenhagen, Wolsink, & Bürer, 2007). Yet, lessons from the onshore wind controversy makes the intersection between socio-political acceptance and new RE technologies particularly contested in the Norwegian sphere (Korsnes et al., 2023).

Offshore wind developments are often assumed to avoid the local controversies associated with onshore projects. This is often referred to as the "out of sight, out of mind" argumentation (Heidenreich, 2016). Yet, emerging evidence suggests that offshore technologies are accompanied by their own evolving forms of controversies, shaped by economic, environmental, and moral arguments (Desvallées & de Sartre, 2023; Heidenreich, 2016; Skjolsvold et al., 2024). Inevitably, offshore wind brings new complexities into the debate, particularly due to the feasibility of foreign ownership and export of produced electricity (Linnerud, Dugstad, & Rygg, 2022; Nytte, Alfnes, & Korhonen-Sande, 2024). I refer to these two aspects as internationalisation or globalisation of offshore wind. The need for funding support through subsidies further exacerbates the complexity as it to a larger extent brings the general public (i.e. taxpayers) into the debate (Nytte, Alfnes, & Korhonen-Sande, 2024).

Within this context, this article examines the current state of public acceptance for the "new industrial adventure" following the turbulent and globalised RE landscape as detailed above. More specifically, through 9 in-depth interviews, I provide insights into the various dynamics that shapes the socio-political acceptance of the offshore wind technology. I find that the nature of social acceptance dynamics makes resistance inevitable as offshore wind materialises, yet stakeholders clearly highlight measures incorporated as lessons from the onshore wind controversy. I refer to the latter as implemented institutional capacity for learning (Wolsink, 2010).

However, the research also revealed a deeper ontological divide between those in favour of offshore wind and those who criticise it. A term often applied in the realm of philosophy, I define ontology as worldview, that is, how reality is perceived by different actors in society (Vidal, 2008). I capture these distinctions by identifying narratives. Inspired by the work of Holden et al. (2020), I define narratives as socio-political stories that collectively unifies ideas around the legitimacy or illegitimacy of offshore wind.

There is a growing body of research on social acceptance of offshore wind in Norway. Many studies employ discrete choice experiments (DCE) to establish the predominant public preferences in regards to ownership, funding models, intended use of electricity and siting locations (Linnerud, Dugstad, & Rygg, 2022; Linnerud et al., 2025; Nytte, Alfnes, & Korhonen-Sande, 2024; Nytte, Navrud, & Alfnes, 2024). This literature has shown that while the public often prefers offshore to onshore siting, the preference most often leans towards national ownership and benefits generated for Norwegian consumers (Linnerud, Dugstad, & Rygg, 2022; Nytte, Alfnes, & Korhonen-Sande, 2024). These preferences are not always viable in the sphere of offshore wind shaped by large capital requirements, predictions of high costs, viability of export and siting away from local communities.

Narrative analysis studies have also been performed in the Norwegian context (Heidenreich, 2016). This study captured narratives (or argumentation) that demonstrate how siting wind turbines offshore does not prevent controversy, as expected under the "out of sight, out of mind" argumentation. Similar conclusions have been drawn in other European contexts, for instance in Desvallées and de Sartre (2023). These studies include narratives on both national and local levels. On the local level, environmental concerns and local stakeholder conflicts are prominent (Desvallées & de Sartre, 2023; Heidenreich, 2016).

Although such narratives can shape discourse on the national level, they do not form part of the scope of this research. In contrast, this thesis focuses specifically on socio-political narratives regarding aspects of internationalisation and broader societal and geopolitical forces such as the energy crisis. The aspects are defined in Linnerud, Dugstad and Rygg (2022) as a significant, yet under-researched dimension of social acceptance for offshore wind.

While DCE studies are valuable for establishing the overarching public preferences for offshore wind, they do not capture the underlying dynamics and complexities that shape these preferences. To this date, no qualitative studies have been conducted focusing on how recent controversies around onshore wind, heightened by the energy crisis and shifting geopolitical conditions within the Norwegian context, are shaping current attitudes towards offshore wind. As such, this study addresses a significant research gap. Given the closer realisation of Norwegian offshore wind, addressing this gap might be pertinent in avoiding some of the controversies that rose for onshore wind developments.

As such, I ask: How do socio-political factors and narratives surrounding offshore wind influence public acceptance? I will answer this overarching objective by addressing the following sub-questions:

1. How is offshore wind currently perceived and accepted at the socio-political level in Norway, in light of recent onshore wind controversies, the energy crisis and geopolitical tensions?
2. What narratives are employed by various socio-political actors to promote different views of offshore wind?
3. How can social acceptance be balanced with the realities of international involvement in offshore wind, particularly regarding ownership structures, funding models, and intended use of produced electricity?

The thesis is structured as follows: Chapter 2 presents the key literature pertinent to the understanding of the current sphere of social acceptance in relation to offshore wind. Chapter 3 outlines the methodological approach, and Chapter 4 presents the empirical findings of the conducted interviews. The findings are presented two-fold. One part addresses broader dynamics on acceptance that emerged from the interviews, while the latter explores the findings were key distinctions were evident between the different stakeholders. The findings are linked

back to literature and the research questions in Chapter 5, with the last Chapter concluding with implications for policy and future research.

2 Literature review

2.1 Offshore wind as part of the green energy transition

The effects of climate change are manifesting across the planet faster and more perilous than ever predicted (Ripple et al., 2024). Amidst climate disaster, RE has been framed a key component in mitigating the climate crisis and decarbonising the energy sector. As a result, various RE technologies have seen extensive deployment worldwide and many have achieved cost-competitiveness when compared to more polluting fossil fuel alternatives (International Energy Agency, 2024a). Following international commitments in emission reductions targets, and global pressures to transition away from fossil fuels, growth in RE technologies is only expected to increase. The International Energy Agency (IEA) predicts, in their "Renewables 2024" report, a growth by 2.7 times the current RE capacity by 2030.

Amongst the various RE technologies, offshore wind is receiving particular attention in contributing to the wider green transition, also in Norway (Nytte, Alfnes, & Korhonen-Sande, 2024; Skjolsvold et al., 2024). IEA estimates this growth to be an additional 487 gigawatt (GW) of installed capacity by 2035 globally (International Energy Agency, 2024b). A prominent argument for this technology points to the stronger and more consistent wind resources at sea, which allow for a higher energy output (Nytte, Alfnes, & Korhonen-Sande, 2024). At the same time, the technology seemingly avoids the conflict with local communities and the natural environment associated with other RE technologies (Jay, 2008; Ladenburg, 2008). Literature has framed this as the "out of sight, out of mind" argumentation (Heidenreich, 2016), suggesting more successful implementation and operation by avoiding many of the local conflicts that rose for instance for onshore wind development in Norway (Korsnes et al., 2023).

Thus, there is a substantial drive within the Norwegian political sphere to develop both floating and fixed-foundation offshore wind sites in the North Sea. The Norwegian Ministry of Petroleum and Energy has set out an ambition to allocate areas that equals 30 GW of installed capacity by 2040 (Regjeringen, 2022). At the time of writing, two locations have been or are in the process of being allocated, namely Sørlige Nordsjø II and Utsira Nord. The fixed-

foundation site Sørlige Nordsjø II was successfully auctioned under an English inspired auctioning format in 2024. The winning bidder was the international consortia Ventyr, in which development will be funded through a contract for difference with a subsidy cap set at NOK 23 Billion (Regjeringen, 2024). More recently, also the floating offshore wind site Utsira Nord has moved one step closer to implementation. The support scheme for the Utsira Nord development was accepted by EU's Surveillance Authority in April 2025. The accepted funding model is a one-off payment to support the initial investment needed, due to the inherent uncertainty in the cost picture of the immature technology (Nytte, Alfnes, & Korhonen-Sande, 2024). Essentially, the development of offshore wind in Norway has become an unviability. Yet, questions on the social acceptance of this technology remain a prominent question. Especially as Norwegian taxpayers are now brought in as stakeholders to fund the technology (Nytte, Alfnes, & Korhonen-Sande, 2024), and as the preferences established for onshore wind on national control through ownership and use are harder to achieve given huge capital requirements and siting of the wind farms (Linnerud et al., 2025).

While offshore wind has been touted as a significant means to achieve the green energy transition - as Jay (2008) and Haggett (2008) pointed out already in the late 2000s - simply siting wind power offshore as opposed to onshore, to rid ourselves of siting associated conflicts, is naive (Jay, 2008, pp. 3). This naivety is further exacerbated by the complexity of the energy landscape that has risen. Linnerud et al. (2025) found that in the light of the energy crisis, the enthusiasm for offshore wind had significantly declined compared to a survey the authors conducted in 2020 (Linnerud, Dugstad, & Rygg, 2022). At the same time, Desvallées and de Sartre (2023) identified emerging counter-narratives undermining offshore wind within the French context that rose as a result of the energy crisis. Some of these narratives concerned offshore wind's ability to provide energy security given its intermittent nature and its dependency subsidies and funding. As such, literature is increasingly recognising the complex interplay of factors that shape the acceptance for offshore wind moving beyond the simple "out of sight, out of mind" argumentation.

The development of offshore wind energy presents distinctive and novel challenges for social acceptance. As highlighted by Wüstenhagen, Wolsink and Bürer (2007), despite RE projects often being smaller scale than in centralised models, the landscape of stakeholders involved goes beyond more traditional developments due to their siting. For offshore wind, foreign

investors and export of electricity is more feasible (Linnerud, Dugstad, & Rygg, 2022). Thus, the landscape of stakeholders often extends beyond national boundaries – what I refer to as internationalisation or globalisation of offshore wind. This is an aspect not widely researched in literature, although it can significantly affect the social acceptance of offshore wind. An extended discussion of these aspects is addressed in Section 2.4. Firstly, I will progress by setting the scene of how literature understands and interprets social acceptance in the context of RE technologies and offshore wind in particular.

2.2 Evolving understanding of social acceptance in energy transitions

The understanding of social acceptance as a concept has evolved in literature over time, influenced by internal debates on definitions and interpretations. According to a literature review conducted by Batel (2020), scholarly discourse on social acceptance has evolved through three broadly distinguishable waves, namely normative approaches, criticism approaches and critical approaches, illustrated by the timeline on Figure 1.

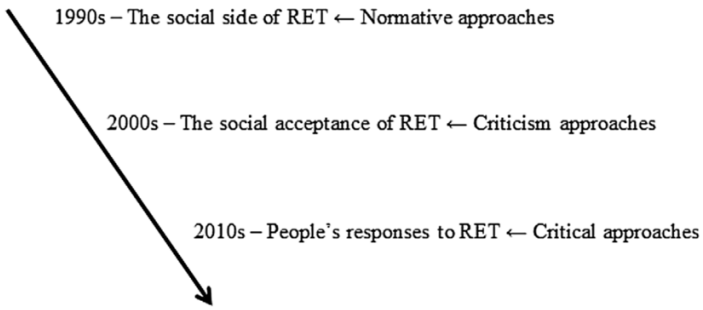

***Figure 1**: Three waves of social acceptance research understanding (Batel, 2020, p. 2)*

2.2.1 Normative approaches

Initial normative research in the 1990s and early 2000s considered social acceptance a relatively straight forward issue overcome by public education and attitude management. Public surveys pointed to high acceptance of RE technologies. It was thus peculiar that opposition emerged on the local levels. As such, the Not in My Backyard (NIMBY or NIMBY-ism) explanation to social acceptance was born (Batel, 2020; Desvallées & de Sartre, 2023).

2.2.2 Criticism approaches

Many scholars recognised the inaccuracy of the NIMBY-centric view, as it simply narrows opposition down to "selfishness", without taking into consideration the complex nature related to for instance emotional place attachments and perception of procedural justice. Many scholars

consider the publication of Wüstenhagen, Wolsink and Bürer (2007) a turning point – referred to as the shift from the normative to the critical wave by Batel (2020). This paper put social acceptance into a conceptual framework in which social acceptance was recognised as multi-dimensional concept. This contributed to a more nuanced understanding of social acceptance, with different layers and respective stakeholders. As illustrated on Figure 2, Wüstenhagen, Wolsink and Bürer (2007) distinguished between:

- **Socio-political acceptance:** acceptance at the broadest level in a nation. Agents include key stakeholders, policymakers and the public.
- **Community acceptance:** the acceptance on the immediate scale surrounding the project. Agents include community habitants, local authorities and stakeholders.
- **Market acceptance:** acceptance within a market sector by consumers and/or investors or internally within companies.

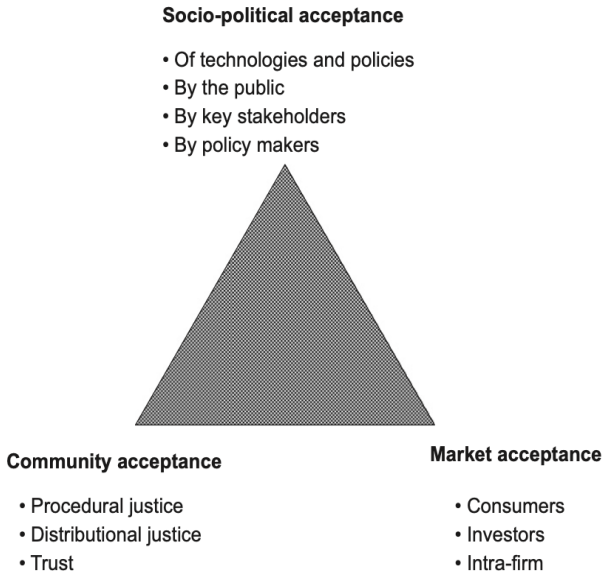

***Figure 2**: Three dimensions of social acceptance (Wüstenhagen, Wolsink, & Bürer, 2007, p. 2684)*

This framework has provided the foundation for a vast amount of social acceptance research, including this very article. For instance, Sovacool and Ratan (2012) identified nine factors under the respective social acceptance dimensions, as shown on Figure 3, to understand and conceptualise why some RE projects are neglected while others are accepted and implemented. They argue that the absence of any of these nine factors foster environments where projects are more prone to be rejected or receive social resistance (Sovacool & Ratan, 2012). As such, the article provides understanding on the nuanced sphere of social acceptance with the aim of

easing the transition to RE technologies – the key characteristic of the second wave of social acceptance understanding (Batel, 2020).

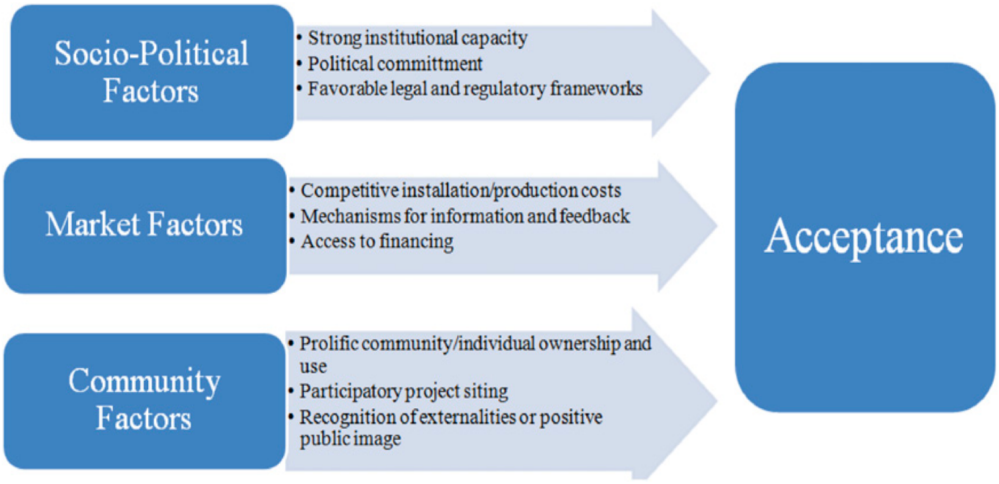

***Figure 3**: Nine factors for the three dimensions that foster social acceptance (Sovacool & Ratan, 2012, p. 5271)*

2.2.3 *Critical approaches*

Yet, the evolution of social acceptance research has not stopped there. Acknowledging the increasing complexity surrounding RE technologies, third-wave research introduces a critical dimension to the discussion (Batel, 2020; Desvallées & de Sartre, 2023). Moving beyond earlier aims of overcoming or merely understanding opposition, this body of work questions whether opposition to RE technologies and developments should be overcome at all, or whether opposition instead reveals deeper systemic issues of power relations, governance structures, and the need for institutional change (Batel, 2020).

In the light of third wave research, the co-author of Wüstenhagen, Wolsink and Bürer (2007) re-visited their original framework to better capture how the three dimensions forms different inter-connected layers of social acceptance, as seen on Figure 4. For the purpose of socio-political acceptance, this updated interpretation illustrates that conditions on the socio-political level feeds directly into the acceptance of the communities and the market (Wolsink, 2018). As emphasised by Wolsink (2018), social acceptance leans on the ability and willingness for

institutions to change[1]. The socio-political dimension is a crucial element to enable or undermine institutional change, as it sets out the formal rules that governs the system itself (Wolsink, 2018). This provides a strong rationale for the emphasis on socio-political acceptance in this research.

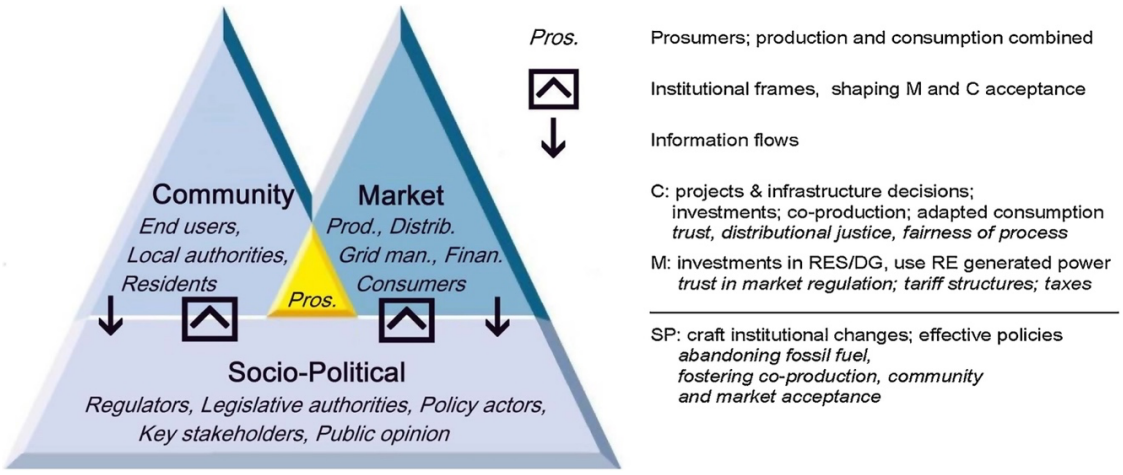

***Figure 4**: Multi-layered re-conceptualisation of the social acceptance framework (Wolsink, 2018, p. 291)*

As such, academic understanding of social acceptance has evolved away from two-sided society-technology relationship, to a nuanced, dynamic and multi-layered understanding shaped by complex societal relationships between institutions, stakeholders and policies (Ellis & Ferraro, 2016; Figari, Leiren, & Krange, 2024; Wolsink, 2010). Recent empirical research, such as Figari, Leiren and Krange (2024), illustrates this shift in practice. Rather than viewing local opposition or support as fixed or isolated attitudes, this study uncovers how social norms and governance dynamics can reshape and even suppress public opinion over time. In Åfjord, Norway, what began as open and legitimate debate over land use evolved into a landscape where local voices were increasingly silenced as the wind project advanced (Figari, Leiren, & Krange, 2024). This case highlights a core concern of third-wave research: that social acceptance is not only about overcoming opposition, but also about questioning the fairness of underlying governance systems. It draws attention to the risks of maintaining the institutional status quo, rather than applying revealed systemic issues to foster positive institutional change (Wolsink, 2018).

[1] Institutional change is defined as the changing of the formal and informal 'rules' that governs behaviour in different socio-political domains.

The introduction of new RE technologies inevitably reshapes not only socio-technical systems but also the fabric of society. As Skjolsvold et al. (2024) argue, energy transitions are deeply entangled with socio-economic structures and cultural practices, raising critical questions of justice, power, and legitimacy, and as this thesis will reveal – also ontological differences.

2.3 Current socio-political acceptance of wind power

Having established the current scene of the concept of social acceptance, I now turn to the socio-political dimension particularly in the sphere of offshore and onshore wind power in Norway. By including the onshore wind power controversy in this discussion, I aim to establish the associated institutional status quo and address where institutional learning should be or is already applied in the realm of offshore wind.

The socio-political dimension was established above as the national level of social acceptance of technologies by the public, policymakers and/or stakeholders. It is on this level where the institutional frameworks and national conditions that either facilitate or undermine RE investments and installations are established (Wüstenhagen, Wolsink, & Bürer, 2007). It is also on this level policies and measures to systematically address social acceptance can be implemented (Wolsink, 2010). As such, this dimension is particularly important, as it acts as a cascading force shaping the wider landscape of social acceptance.

2.3.1 Empirical studies on socio-political narratives for offshore wind

In the realm of Norwegian offshore wind, the socio-political dimension is particularly salient. Despite progression of the Utsira Nord and Sørlige Nordsjø II sites, the technology is still in an early stage where the foundations of legitimacy are being negotiated in real time – through public narratives, stakeholder discourse and policy framing. Research on Norwegian media analysis from 2016 suggest initial enthusiasm around the technology. Heidenreich found the majority of argumentation often framed around the benefit of avoided local conflicts associated with onshore wind, climate change mitigation and economic opportunities associated with building up a new offshore industrial adventure (Heidenreich, 2016). Yet, the author identified an emerging controversy regarding high costs, local environmental impacts and conflicts around land-use.

More recently, Desvallées and de Sartre (2023) also picked up on an emerging controversy surrounding offshore wind in France. There, offshore wind emerges as an addition to a well-established centralised model based on nuclear power. They argue that this generates spatial embeddedness and fosters a path dependency that disadvantages offshore wind development (Desvallées & de Sartre, 2023). In this context, the authors identified a variety of narratives prominent on the socio-political level in which offshore wind was delegitimised. Alongside counter-narratives also identified in Heidenreich (2016), some of these narratives were related to concerns of energy security, intermittency and subsidies (Desvallées and de Sarte, 2023, pp. 5 and pp. 7). These concerns have likely emerged within the broader context of today's energy landscape, shaped by geopolitical tensions and the climate and energy crisis. Within this context, the literature highlights a strong preference for stability, predictability, and cost-effectiveness in energy technologies (Linnerud et al., 2025).

2.3.2 Lessons from the onshore wind controversy

The Norwegian onshore wind power trajectory offers important insights into how social resistance emerges. Literature point to the top-down and technocratic policy approach, that characterised the technology, as a key driver of opposition (Wolsink, 2010). The approach as characterised by a rapid rollout of numerous wind parks, many larger than initially agreed and located in ecologically sensitive areas, resulting in a surge in social resistance around 2017/2018(Korsnes et al., 2023). Additionally, the failure to address Samí cultural concerns, particularly related to reindeer grazing areas in Fosen, further intensified tensions. The Norwegian Supreme Court ruled in favour of the Samí in a landmark case; however, the continued operation of the wind park has raised fundamental questions about procedural justice within Norwegian institutions (Korsnes et al., 2023). These controversies have become deeply embedded in Norway's energy discourse, and the emerging resistance ultimately led to a temporary halt in all new developments. This top-down governance approach has contributed to a growing divide between political ambitions for RE expansion and public acceptance (Korsnes et al., 2023).

The WaddenSea offshore wind development in the Netherlands serves as a compelling example of the potential risks and pitfalls associated with adopting the same top-down, centralized approach to offshore wind that characterized Norway's onshore wind development (Wolsink, 2010). This development was characterised by exclusion of key societal stakeholders. This

reinforced a narrative of mistrust and procedural injustice, and fostered a divide between the public and the authorities (Wolsink, 2010). Local knowledge and values including from marginalised actors were never acknowledged by the developers, and the option of a much more feasible area (in terms of ecological value and social acceptance) for offshore wind nearby was never pursued by the developers (Wolsink, 2010). The example illustrate how socio-political acceptance is closely tied to institutional conditions that enable inclusive and fair involvement of civil society. When such conditions are absent, infrastructure projects face a significantly higher risk of public opposition and resistance (Wolsink, 2010).

2.3.3 Incorporating institutional capacity for learning

As Wolsink (2010) emphasises, a nation's ability to build socio-political acceptance hinges on its institutional capacity for learning—its willingness and ability to reflect on prior shortcomings, adapt governance practices, and modify implementation strategies accordingly. This involves moving beyond top-down, technocratic modes of decision-making that characterised the onshore wind approach. Instead, according to Wolsink (2010), stakeholders and decision-makers on the socio-political level need to embrace processes that actively engage a broad spectrum of stakeholders and incorporates lessons from past experiences. While there is limited research explicitly detailing the extent to which Norway's offshore wind policies have incorporated lessons from onshore wind controversies, a gap this research aims to address, existing studies suggest that past experiences have influenced current approaches, particularly concerning environmental considerations and stakeholder engagement (Nytte, Navrud, & Alfnes, 2024; Skjolsvold et al., 2024). Yet, there are obvious distinctions between offshore and onshore wind developments. The next few sections explore how these differences introduce new dimensions to the debate on social acceptance.

2.4 New dimensions of socio-political acceptance

2.4.1 Internationalisation of offshore wind; ownership, intended use and funding strategies

Offshore wind makes export of electricity and international ownership more feasible due to the complexity, scale and location of offshore turbines (internationalisation) (Linnerud, Dugstad, & Rygg, 2022). Additionally, the capital requirements do not only facilitate for foreign ownership, but it also necessitates funding, typically through state subsidies to contribute to technology development. This particularly applies for establishing Norwegian floating offshore wind – a technology shaped by immaturity and high costs (Nytte, Alfnes, & Korhonen-Sande,

2024). These aspects extend the discourse beyond merely local impacts on communities to socio-political discussions of energy politics priorities and has the potential to significantly affect the public acceptance of offshore wind.

Although not extensively researched, two studies by Linnerud, Dugstad and Rygg (2022) and Linnerud et al. (2025) contribute importantly to the impact of internationalisation within the offshore wind sector. Through DCEs Linnerud, Dugstad and Rygg (2022) find that Norwegians indeed prefer offshore and nearshore to onshore locations. However, above all, they find Norwegians are most concerned with national or local ownership over developments and Norwegian use of produced electricity – regardless of siting. The authors label this a strong Norwegian preference for "national control" (Linnerud, Dugstad & Rygg, 2022, pp. 1).

Nytte, Alfnes and Korhonen-Sande (2024) find similar preferences particularly for floating offshore wind, also through the methodology of DCEs. Support, or Willingness to Pay (WTP), is highest when the electricity produced clearly benefits Norwegian consumers. Supporting Norwegian industries, in particular electrification of oil and gas (O&G) platforms, with clean energy is preferred over exporting electricity. Consequently, the argument for contributing to international cost reductions in floating offshore wind technological development reaps little support. Lastly, when the justification for development is framed as ensuring future Norwegian electricity demand is met, as opposed to meeting climate targets, WTP is higher (Nytte, Alfnes, & Korhonen-Sande, 2024). These two DCE's provides a strong evidence base for the prominent preference of national control for Norwegians. Notably, Linnerud, Dugstad & Rygg (2022) find the strong preference for Norwegian use of produced electricity was somewhat lower for far-offshore locations (Linnerud, Dugstad, & Rygg, 2022).

By applying the same DCE methodology as Linnerud, Dugstad and Rygg (2022) in 2023, in the aftermath of the Russian attack on Ukraine and extreme and volatile electricity prices, the authors were able to capture the influence of the energy crisis on offshore wind acceptance (Linnerud et al., 2025). They found that Norwegian's enthusiasm for offshore wind had significantly decreased. At the same time, the scepticism for foreign ownership was lower and negativity towards electricity export had only increased for those significantly affected by high energy prices (Linnerud et al., 2025).

The three DCE's highlighted here point to a prominent Norwegian preference for national control, and a preference for stable, cost-effective and predictable energy sources in the context of "chaos" (i.e. energy crisis). These are all aspects which can collide with the realities of offshore wind (Linnerud, Dugstad, & Rygg, 2022; Linnerud et al., 2025). Yet, the quantitative nature of these studies leaves the interpretation of the findings to merely informed speculation by the authors. To understand the contexts of how these preferences arise, the authors amongst others call for qualitative research to provide further insight.

2.5 Complementing statistical surveys with qualitative research

The development of various dimensions and understandings of social acceptance has emerged through a range of methodologies, both through quantitative and statistical approaches as set out in section 2.4, but also qualitative methods as described in section 2.2. A clear distinction can be observed in the contributions of these two approaches. Quantitative studies are instrumental in identifying preferences and broader societal trends. However, they risk reinforcing a narrow, individualistic understanding of social acceptance by focusing on aggregated preferences and decontextualised responses. As Wolsink (2018) argues, this approach risks obscuring broader socio-political dynamics by overlooking the relational, procedural, and institutional dimensions that fundamentally shape how communities engage with RE developments.

Qualitative methods are effective in unpacking the procedural, cultural, and contextual factors that underpin and shape these preferences, aligning with the third wave of social acceptance research. For instance, Figari, Leiren and Krange (2024) identified forms of "silenced social resistance" that were not publicly expressed in Åfjord, Norway—insights that would be challenging to capture through quantitative surveys alone. Thus, while Linnerud, Dugstad and Rygg (2022), Linnerud et al. (2025) and Nytte, Alfnes and Korhonen-Sande (2024) importantly established Norwegian preferences regarding the internationalisation of offshore wind energy, their survey-based approaches cannot delve into the nuanced reflections or underlying factors influencing these preferences. As such, to provide insight into the quantitively established Norwegian preferences, the methodological approach to this research is qualitative. A through depiction of this methodology is provided in the upcoming section.

3 Methodology

As stated above, my research aims to provide insight into the socio-political acceptance of Norwegian offshore through a qualitative methodology. At the most fundamental level, qualitative research differs from quantitative research as it uses words, as opposed to numbers, to answer the research objective(s) (Bell, Bryman, & Harley, 2019). Its importance lays in its ability to grasp deeper insight into the social dimensions and interactions that shape worldviews, values and opinions (Bell, Bryman, & Harley, 2019).

This article applies thematic analysis to identify emerging themes within the raw data that provide insight to the research objective. While thematic analysis is often characterised by an inductive approach[2], this research does not start entirely from a blank theoretical slate. Both the research objectives and the interview-guide, described further in section 3.1, stemmed from pre-existing literature, namely the established preferences identified in the comparative DCEs conducted by Linnerud, Dugstad and Rygg (2022) and Linnerud et al. (2025). As such, the methodology is better described under an abductive research approach – wherein empirical findings are interpreted in light of existing theory, yet it remains open to emergent themes and theoretical refinements (Kovács & Spens, 2005). The strength of this approach is evidenced throughout the remainder of the article.

3.1 Research design

This research draws on data obtained through 9 semi-structured in-depth interviews with key offshore wind stakeholders on the socio-political level. In-depth interviews allow for authentic insight into respondents' immediate environments and opinions (Bell, Bryman, & Harley, 2019). The semi-structured format allows for both structure and flexibility, as conversation can deviate from the pre-determined structure where appropriate and necessary (Bell, Bryman, &

[2] When theories from research are generated inductively from the data, without pre-determined hypotheses. Opposite to the deductive approach where data is applied to test pre-existing theories, typical for quantitative data (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019).

Harley, 2019). This method allows for a deeper examination of each respondent's unique context while maintaining consistency and relevance in findings across all interviews.

The pre-determined structure was established in an interview guide which can be found in Appendix 1. The interview guide followed a three-part structure, an introduction, main part and conclusion. The main part was made up of four overarching topics, which were in part based on the findings from Linnerud, Dugstad and Rygg (2022) and Linnerud et al. (2025). Respondents were in some instances presented with the finding of the articles and prompted to reflect as to why they think this preference is prominent, while other questions were more open to allow for broader discussion. One interview was performed in person, while the eight others found place over Microsoft Teams. The interviews lasted on average 1 hour and were recorded and transcribed in real time through Nettskjema's "Diktafon" application. This allowed for transcription and handling of data in line with NMBU´s data privacy policy. All interviews were performed in Norwegian and further translated by the researcher with assistance from Artificial Intelligence (AI) (see section 3.5 for further remarks on AI).

3.2 Data collection

3.2.1 The sampling process

To capture the width of the socio-political dimension, it was crucial to establish a diverse sample of stakeholders, representing industry, politicians and the public. The sampling method followed the principle of purposive sampling – where potential participants were strategically identified due to their relevance to the research objective (Bell, Bryman, & Harley, 2019). This ensures information-rich participants that can provide valuable insights on the objectives of the research (Palinkas et al., 2015). Potential respondents identified as relevant to the socio-political sphere of Norwegian offshore wind were energy companies, government agencies and authorities, industry associations, interest groups, media representatives, research and academic institutions, political parties, lobby groups and civil society organisations. These stakeholders were identified as relevant because they represent and shape public discourse, influence policy development, drive technological advancements, and reflect the diverse interests and perspectives that contribute to the socio-political acceptance and governance of offshore wind in Norway.

The process of purposeful sampling consisted of the following steps: Firstly, brainstorming between supervisor and researcher formed an initial sample which consisted of stakeholders from immediate networks and connections. Further respondents were identified through internet searches across different media, for instance, by reading commentaries and social-media posts. Additionally, openly searching for key terminology led to identification of further respondents. Lastly, identifying respondents within political parties through associated websites allowed for identifying potential respondents from the political sphere. Some of the initially approached stakeholders also referred to further respondents within their network. Literature labels this as snowball sampling (Bell, Bryman, & Harley, 2019), and it is considered a crucial step in diversifying and consequently reducing bias within the obtained sample.

After an initial round of sampling respondents, two observations were identified in which further respondents were approached. Firstly, to capture the nuanced nature of social acceptance, it was important to identify both critical and positive perspectives. As I only got hold of either advocating or neutral perspectives initially, I had to do separate research to approach more critical stakeholders. These were identified through thorough internet searches including analysing politic party policies, opinion articles and the wider literature. Two respondents accepted the research invitation as a result of this process: a representative from Motvind Norge and one from a smaller political party in parliament. While Motvind Norge is often portrayed as a controversial actor, its influence in the public discourse should not be dismissed. With over 15,000 members, the organisation represents a significant segment of public opinion with a prominent role in shaping national debates on wind power. Rather than excluding such perspectives, this thesis seeks to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of socio-political acceptance by engaging with the full spectrum of views — including those that challenge dominant narratives.

Secondly, in approaching political stakeholders, the initial round revealed a skew towards left oriented stakeholders, and as such, I deliberatively approached potential respondents on the right side of Norwegian politics. With one respondent from Høyre accepting the invitation as a result, I ensured a more politically robust and balanced sample.

All potential respondents where sent a request to participate over email. The template for this email is given in Appendix 2. A total of 30 stakeholders were emailed, where 9 stakeholders accepted the invitation to participate in the research project.

3.2.2 Overview of the obtained sample

Information of the different backgrounds of the sample, as well as justification of their relevance to the socio-political dimension, is given in Table 1. The sample consists of stakeholders from various aspects of the RE industry as well as stakeholders that represents the general public through political parties and independent organisations. By no means does the sample represent the socio-political dimension as a whole. Rather, the sample provides key insights into the acceptance of Norwegian offshore wind from various perspectives. Importantly, the participant perspectives from the interviews were not necessarily representative of their associated organisations[3], as personal opinions and experiences were also explored in the interviews.

Table 1: Participant overview

Respondent / Interview ID	**Affiliation**	**Description of company or organisation**	**Relevance to socio-political dimension**	**Stance on development of Norwegian offshore wind**
1	Fornybar Norge	Employer and industry interest-organisation on RE	Representative of the interest of many RE industry related companies within the Norwegian landscape.	Positive
2	Arbeiderpartiet	A left wing Norwegian political party and the political party currently[4] in government.	Representing a large proportion of public interest, as well being at the forefront for the development of Norwegian offshore wind policy.	Positive
3	Statnett	State-owned system operator of the Norwegian transmission grid.	In charge of building the grid that will eventually support Norwegian offshore wind developments.	Neutral
4	The Norwegian Coastal	An agency under the Norwegian Ministry	A key stakeholder in the impact assessments and further	Neutral

[3] This was the case for most respondents.
[4] May 2025

	Administration (Kystverket)	working with coastal management and maritime safety.	development of offshore wind, in regard to maritime traffic.	
5	Equinor	Norwegian energy company and offshore wind developer, partly owned by the Norwegian State.	A potential developer of future offshore wind developments in Norway with existing experience of offshore wind developments internationally.	Positive
6	A smaller political party[5]	A smaller Norwegian political party in parliament.	A political party who are against the development of wind power, both offshore and onshore.	Negative
7	Motvind Norge	Non-partisan organisation against the development of wind power.	The organisation established as a result of the Norwegian onshore wind controversy, working against the development of wind power in Norway.	Negative
8	The Norwegian Competence Centre for Offshore Wind (Nasjonalt kompetansessenter for havvind)	Independent Norwegian company for establishing and disseminating offshore wind competence.	A company at the forefront of developing a knowledge base and assisting the industry on Norwegian offshore wind.	Positive
9	Høyre	A major Norwegian political party on the right side of politics.	Representing a large proportion of public interest, in favour of offshore wind from a different perspective than current governmental approach.	Positive

3.2.3 Data handling and privacy

Maintaining ethical integrity is essential in qualitative research, as its inherently personal and interactive nature introduces specific ethical challenges not normally present in quantitative methods (Bell et al., 2018). Therefore, prior to all of the above, an application was submitted

[5] Anonymised as per request from participant.

to and approved by the "Norwegian Agency for Shared Services in Education and Research" (SIKT). The approval of this application is given in Appendix 5. This step was crucial in ensuring compliance with Norwegian data protection laws, NMBU guidelines and ethical research standards. This application stresses the importance of secure handling of personal data, use of consent forms and anonymisation of data. All requirements given by SIKT are incorporated into the research. For instance, the information sheet and consent form, a SIKT requirement, is attached in Appendix 3. Signed copies of these from participants are stored on a secure researcher server. Prior to submission, all participants were sent a quote check to ensure accuracy and to provide an opportunity to clarify or correct any misrepresentations. Please refer to Appendix 3 and 5 for further details on data handling and privacy.

3.3 Data analysis

3.3.1 The qualitative coding process

This study employs thematic analysis, a qualitative research approach in which raw data—such as interview transcripts— is systematically categorised by identifying, extracting, and restructuring data into emerging themes and patterns (Bell, Bryman, & Harley, 2019). The interviews generated a total of 85 pages of raw data. These were methodically categorised through qualitative coding. This process entails labelling smaller components of the data into codes to construct meaning that assist in answering the research objectives (Williams & Moster, 2019). The open-source qualitative research tool Taguette (Rampin & Rampin, 2021) was utilised to conduct the qualitative coding.

3.3.2 An iterative process of open, axial and selective coding

Qualitative coding is an iterative and dynamic process (Williams & Moster, 2019). In this study, the coding process followed a continuous approach of open, axial, and selective coding. An illustrative example of the coding process under three types of coding is given Figure 5. It is this continuous approach that allows for rigorous data analysis, through establishing meaningful emerging patterns and themes by continuously engaging with, re-visiting and refining codes (Williams & Moster, 2019). To monitor all the codes, explore and define relationships and continuously refine them, the use of mind maps was actively applied throughout the data analysis.

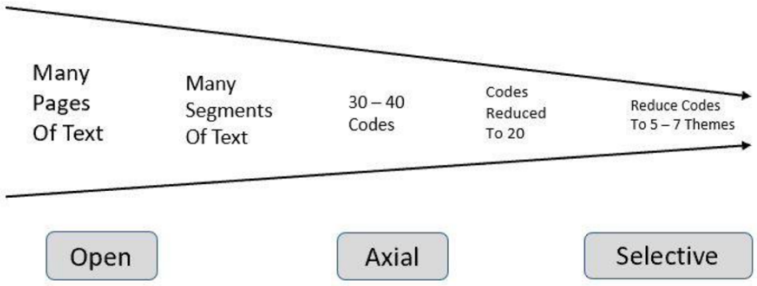

***Figure 5**: Example of the coding process and the respective coding process for each stage (Williams & Moster, 2019, p. 47)*

While coding process is an iterative approach, it is described in three distinctive steps below. In reality, the distinctions between the steps were more blurred demonstrating the nonlinear approach taken, as illustrated on Figure 6. Initially, open coding was applied to all transcripts by highlighting interesting and relevant quotations and labelling them as tags in the Taguette software. This process ensures an unrestricted and unbiased examination of the data, allowing patterns and concepts to emerge organically without imposing predefined categories (Williams & Moster, 2019).

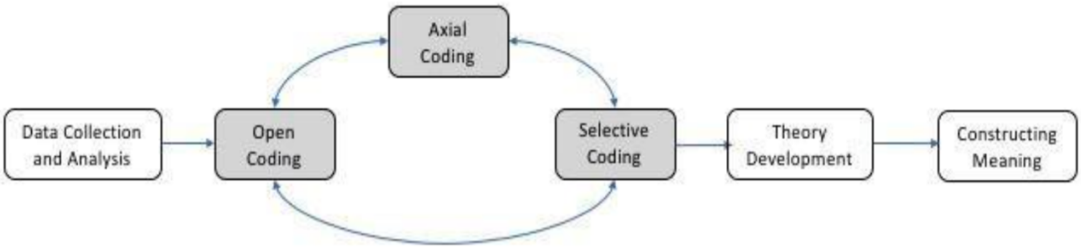

***Figure 6**: Demonstration of the iterative approach to qualitative coding (Williams & Moster, 2019, p. 47)*

Axial coding was conducted to further categorise the codes by identifying relationships among them. In this stage data is re-structured into interrelated subcategories, providing a more comprehensive understanding of underlying patterns (Williams & Moster, 2019). This was primarily done by re-structuring and merging codes in the mind map and editing and merging tags in Taguette accordingly. It is during this step relationships and connections between the transcripts are explored and coded (Given, 2008). This step quickly revealed a key strength of the semi-structured format and the abductive approach as discussed in section 3.1. Many observed relationships made it evident that findings beyond what was expected had emerged -

an illustrative example being the many respondents who spoke of the nuclear power debate, although this was not prompted by the interview guide.

The final phase, selective coding, involved re-structuring the refined codes into overarching themes that captures the core narratives within the dataset. Similar to the axial coding step, this was done through mind map alterations, i.e. categorising the codes into groups depending on their connectivity. This ensured the emergent themes remained grounded in the empirical evidence from the datasets (Williams & Moster, 2019).

As a result of this iterative process, a total of 6 themes emerged. These are addressed in detail in the upcoming sections. An overview of the codes that fed into the thematic findings, as well as example quotations, are given in Appendix 4. The thematic findings were:

1. The enthusiasm for offshore wind wanes as we approach realisation.
2. The onshore wind controversy has highlighted the importance of social acceptance.
3. Resistance does not stem from knowledge deficits, but ontological divides.
4. Offshore wind is not a systemic solution to the green energy transition.
5. The persuasive strength of the industrial adventure narrative is weakened.
6. Is nuclear power a better alternative than offshore wind?

3.3.3 Distinguishing between codes, narratives and thematic findings

Thematic finding 3 to 6 build on identified ‘narratives. These were captured as separate codes and can be seen in Appendix 4. Inspired by the methodology of Desvallées and de Sartre (2023), I define narratives as socio-political “stories” told to either advocate for or undermine offshore wind. While thematic findings reflect broader patterns emerging across interviews, the narratives highlight the argumentation behind how these patterns were framed. Often, when some supported offshore wind through a certain narrative, others challenged it with a counter-narrative. To exemplify, one narrative portrayed offshore wind as a solution to the climate crisis. In contrast, others questioned whether an intermittent energy source can cut emissions in industry. Both of these narratives were captured as codes, and they helped shape the larger thematic finding: “Offshore wind is not a systemic solution to the green energy transition”. A simplified illustration of this process is provided on Figure 7.

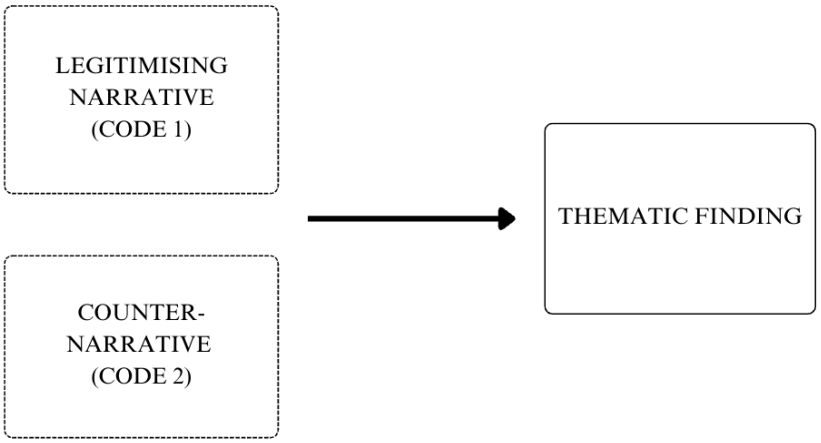

***Figure** 7: The distinction and relationship between narratives and thematic findings*

3.4 Research limitations and assessment of reliability and validity

Ensuring and assessing reliability and validity in qualitative research is essential in establishing the quality of research findings (Bell, Bryman, & Harley, 2019). While the applicability of these concepts has been debated due to qualitative research's focus on context-dependent meaning, insight and interpretation, measures to enhance reliability and validity still need to be implemented to ensure research quality (Bell, Bryman, & Harley, 2019).

3.4.1 Assessment of reliability

The measures to ensure reliability, or trustworthiness, was addressed through the research design and through a structured and systematic approach to data collection and analysis. The use of semi-structured in-depth interviews balanced consistency across participant responses, while still allowing for flexibility in exploring individual perspectives. The continuous and iterative approach to coding (open, axial and selective) ensures rigor in the results of the research. However, qualitative coding is inevitably affected by researcher interpretation (Bell, Bryman, & Harley, 2019). Thus, the use of the Taguette software and mind maps for organising and identifying coding patterns ensured consistency and reduced human error. Additionally, the transparency of the research project methodology, ensures understanding of the research design and underlying assumptions for external readers – enhancing reliability.

3.4.2 Assessment of validity

Validity refers to the extent to which the research accurately represents the subject matter (here, stakeholders' perspectives on Norwegian socio-political trends) as opposed to researcher

viewpoints. This was strengthened through continuous engagement with the data in the coding stage. However, response bias remains a limitation of qualitative data, as individuals with particularly strong views on offshore wind may have been more inclined to participate, potentially skewing results. Purposive sampling, while useful for reaching information-rich respondents and reducing risk of a sample reflecting solely researcher's value system, may also introduce selection bias, as participants tend to refer individuals within similar professional or ideological networks. The snowball sampling process was key to address this bias, as it allowed for identifying respondents beyond the researcher's selection. However, these limitations affect the transferability of the study. While findings offer rich insights, they are not generalisable to broader public perceptions of socio-political acceptance (Bell, Bryman, & Harley, 2019).

Theoretical saturation refers to when there are no further themes identifiable within the data collection and is a critical aspect of ensuring research validity (Rahimi & Khatooni, 2024). The iterative and continuous approach to the coding process was the key measure to ensure this. However, the research findings may have been constrained by time and resource limitations as the timeframe for to perform the research was relatively short. This implies that additional interviews could have resulted in further refined or expanded key themes (Rahimi & Khatooni, 2024). However, a comprehensive literature review and thorough background research ensured that findings were situated within the broader academic discourse on social acceptance and wind power.

3.4.3 Ensuring validity and reliability through the abductive approach

Finally, basing this research on the quantitative studies by Linnerud, Dugstad and Rygg (2022) and Linnerud et al. (2025) strengthens its validity by grounding the findings in established data, making them more credible and relevant. It also improves reliability by providing a structured framework that helps ensure consistency in the research approach and in the interview guide. However, there is a risk that the qualitative analysis may become too focused on confirming the quantitative findings rather than allowing new themes to emerge. Additionally, differences in methodology between survey-based research and in-depth interviews may make direct comparisons difficult, affecting both reliability and validity. The abductive research designs address this, as the study remains open to unexpected findings and ensures that the qualitative data is still analysed independently.

3.5 Use of Artificial Intelligence

AI has been used responsibly in this research project. Embedded in the transcription assistance function in Nettskjema's Diktafon Open AI Whisper V3 is used to transcribe the interviews from audio to text. The use of this software is in accordance with NMBU privacy policy as both authentication tools in the form of multi-factor authentication and passwords are required for login and access. For research purposes, OpenAI ChatGPT engine 4o was also utilised to perform internet searches for potentially relevant literature. In these instances, ChatGPT was merely applied as a search engine, where the literature revealed was read in detail to individually assess applicability to the research, and draw own conclusions. Lastly, OpenAI ChatGPT engine 4o was used in the write up of this project for the purpose of proofreading for grammatical mistakes, use of appropriate language and translating citations. In all instances, the generated output was used as mere guidance, and not directly copied into the thesis. As such, the use of AI is in accordance with the NMBU AI policy, as stated on the NMBU website (NMBU, 2025).

4 Results

Presented below are the thematic findings that emerged from the coding process of the 9 conducted interviews. The section is structured as follows: Section 4.1 presents the thematic findings that were overarching and uncontested in the interviews. These findings are valuable for the purposes of this research, as they offer insight into the intersection between social acceptance and offshore wind development within the Norwegian context. As such, they serve as an explanatory basis for understanding the development of socio-political acceptance in Norway.

Section 4.2 presents the thematic findings of the coding process where clear distinctions emerged in the interviews. These distinctions are portrayed through differing narratives that were explicitly conveyed by respondents. As discussed in section 3.3, I distinguish between narrative and thematic findings. Thematic findings are the findings that emerged as the result of the qualitative coding process, while narratives are "stories" on the socio-political scale told to either justify or undermine Norwegian offshore wind. These "stories" were captured as different codes. While thematic findings reflect patterns emerging across interviews, the narratives reveal how some of these patterns were justified, contested, or framed by the stakeholders.

4.1 Section 1: The contextual and dynamic nature of offshore wind acceptance

This section presents key insights from the interviews that illustrate how respondents perceive the intersection between social acceptance and offshore wind development within the Norwegian context. These findings offer an explanatory basis for understanding how socio-political acceptance evolves in Norway, highlighting perceptions, reflections, and lessons drawn from prior RE experiences. While this section outlines important perspectives shaping the broader acceptance landscape, the specific distinctions and narratives underpinning these dynamics are developed in greater detail in Section 4.2.

4.1.1 The enthusiasm for offshore wind wanes as one approaches realisation

The interviews made it evident that the declining enthusiasm for offshore wind is part of a larger dynamic of how social acceptance evolves over time. The codes that generated this thematic finding, alongside some example quotations in which the codes originated from, are provided in Table 2. This relationship between codes and thematic finding applies for all further findings discussed in the upcoming sub-sections. However, for the purpose of effectively presenting the findings, the remainder of the section will focus primarily on the link between quotations and thematic finding. The codes are instead provided in Appendix 4.

***Table 2**: Codes and example quotations in relation to thematic finding 1*

Code	Example quotation	Thematic finding
Acceptance is dynamic	*"We are often in favour of what cannot be built here and now."*	The enthusiasm for offshore wind wanes as one approaches realisation
Not NIMBY	*"...people do not want onshore wind power in their hiking terrain"*	
Changing preference	*"But there was uniform support just a few years ago, whereas now it's getting closer to a 50-50 split."*	

Regardless of their affiliation, respondents agreed that the preference for offshore wind stem from its less visible impact on communities and individuals - in contrast with onshore wind (Interviews 2; 3; 5; 7). For instance, in Interview 2 it was emphasised that "[offshore wind is]

farther out at sea" and thus *"not seen in the same way"*. Respondents tied this preference to personal reflections on the onshore wind debate, and in particular a broader Norwegian cultural preference for unspoiled nature, particularly in recreational areas:

> *"...people do not want onshore wind power in their hiking terrain*" (Interview 3)

And

> *"...Norwegians hold nature in high regard. We do not want to intrude it and see it* [here talking about onshore wind turbines] *when hiking..."* (Interview 5).

Considering the long-term acceptance of offshore wind, many respondents noted that social acceptance is dynamic in nature. RE industry respondents conveyed reflections and experiences that illustrate how acceptance changes throughout the various stages of developments or over the entire lifespan of technologies (Interviews 1; 2; 5; 8; 9). Specifically, they pointed to the fact that acceptance is often highest when technological development is in its early and abstract stages. Consequently, as technologies become more realised and concrete, acceptance declines. As one respondent put it:

> "*We are often in favour of what cannot be built here and now."* (Interview 2).

This reflection was evidenced by comparisons to the historic patterns for hydroelectric power and O&G developments. Respondents expressed these were also shaped by opposition in Norway yet are now widely accepted (Interviews 1; 2; 8). Additionally, this dynamic nature of social acceptance was linked to the onshore wind debate. Also here, social acceptance declined as offshore wind developments materialised across Norway. Drawing on personal experience, respondent 1 reflected:

> "*We were criticized for not building enough wind power in Norway. (...) It was seen as a winner—the future (...) I remember very well telling people, 'Relax, we've introduced certificates, it's coming.' And I was right—lots of wind power was built in Norway. But I didn't get any thanks. Because once it was built, the protests came (...) That's kind of the story of my life."* (Interview 1)

As such, it became clear that arguments in favour of offshore wind due to its physical distance also applied to its temporal distance — enthusiasm is stronger when projects remain abstract and future-oriented. As offshore wind is much closer to implementation, with the successful auctioning of Sørlige Nordsjø II and the planned development of floating turbines on Utsira

Nord[6], many respondents were under the same impression; the enthusiasm for offshore wind in Norway has declined (Interview 2; 7; 8).

This change was made particularly evident by reflections made in Interview 1, 2 and 8. The representative from Arbeiderpartiet emphasised how they have in the political sphere experienced a shift from "*uniform*" acceptance for offshore wind to a closer to a "*50/50 split*" (Interview 2). Respondent 8 explained that in their line of work, the resistance towards offshore wind has commenced and it is significantly affecting their workload (Interview 8).

Though not framed as the explanatory factor of why the enthusiasm has declined, which are instead discussed through the narratives identified in the section 4.2, this decline in enthusiasm was framed as an inevitability in RE development.

4.1.2 The onshore wind controversy has highlighted the importance of social acceptance

In discussing the preference for national control over Norwegian RE developments and resources, respondents indicated that this preference relates to the tensions that rose from onshore wind controversy. I found most respondents agreeing that onshore wind was approached in a very flawed manner (Interview 1; 2; 3; 5; 6; 7; 8). In this context, the interviews made it evident that the approach to developing Norwegian offshore wind actively applies the lessons learnt from the onshore wind controversy. As one respondent put it:

> "*This is not the same as what happened with onshore wind. We have actually learnt from it. The authorities have learnt*" (Interview 8).

This viewpoint was made particularly prominent, when a respondent who does not favour offshore wind expressed that:

> *"I do think the authorities are doing a better job with offshore wind, than onshore, because they have a process of assessing in advance, and announce the area, so it is a lot more predictable"* (Interview 7)

[6] This was the current progression at the time of the interviews (first quarter of 2025). Since, the Utsira Nord funding model has also been approved.

Respondents emphasised various political and industry practices that are now incorporated into the offshore wind policy approach. Essentially, they highlighted how communication and engagement with stakeholders, as well as increased focus on co-existence, are now vital aspects that are taken into consideration at a much earlier stage than with onshore wind (Interviews 1; 2; 4; 5; 8). Additionally, practice is now more focused on local value-creation (Interviews 5; 2). This applied even though offshore wind developments are located further away from communities. The Equinor representative highlighted this increased focus on stakeholder communication in practice:

> *"…of course it is busy at sea as well. There is competition for areas there as well. So, it is important to us that we have a good interaction, a good dialogue and clear communication with other users of the sea."* (Interview 5)

Importantly, I did not just capture abstract reflections; these lessons from the onshore wind experience were evident in practice. The interview with the Norwegian Coastal Administration, working with maritime traffic and ships on the Norwegian continental shelf, confirmed that early-stage communication had indeed been established. They stressed that their insights and concerns on inadequate areas for offshore wind was actively taken into account when assessing potential offshore wind locations (Interview 4).

However, it is challenging to give back to communities when the technology is in its early stages and does not yet reap profits, as stressed in Interview 2. Thus, discussions on adapting a natural resource tax for developments fostered some enthusiasm in relation to political measures. This can re-generate income back to the state and thus Norwegian taxpayers. Although currently highlighted as challenging due to the unprofitability of offshore wind (Interviews 1; 3), two respondents expressed that it may be a good option when offshore wind generates income. Particularly because it can be designed in a way which makes the state an indirect owner to alleviate developer risk (Interviews 1; 9).

To summarise, it seems the decline in enthusiasm for offshore wind is an inevitability given its closer implementation. Yet, policymakers point to evidence illustrating that the lessons from the onshore wind journey is actively applied in the development of both offshore wind policy and practice.

4.2 Section 2: Opposing views on the legitimacy of Norwegian offshore wind

The following section presents the differing narratives which revealed clear distinctions in preference between the respondents. Specifically, I find three legitimising narratives for offshore wind. For most industry and politics representatives, these narratives were portrayed as objective and evidence-based argumentation for why offshore wind in Norway is both coherent and sound. These narratives were interconnected, each addressing aspects that link back to the green energy transition and broader societal challenges and forces, such as climate change and the energy crisis. The narratives were:

1. **Creating a new industrial adventure (N1):** Norway can leverage skills from the O&G industry to develop offshore wind and use this to secure employment as we transition away from fossil fuels (Interviews 1; 2; 3; 5; 9).
2. **Meeting increased energy demand (N2):** With projections of increasing domestic energy needs and a shift away from fossil fuel reliance, offshore wind is a necessary tool to prevent a future energy deficit, meet future energy demand and ensure energy security in the current energy landscape. (Interviews 1; 2; 3; 5).
3. **Mitigating climate change (N3):** Offshore wind is a RE source in which development demonstrates commitment to climate change mitigation and helps meet long term decarbonisation goals and international commitments. (Interviews 1; 2; 5; 8; 9)

Importantly, some respondents noted that the climate argument (N3) has faded from the public debate, overshadowed by narratives of energy security (N2) and economic concerns (N1), particularly in the wake of the Ukraine war (Interviews 1; 5; 8).

Nevertheless, given the composition of the sample—which included participants who were openly and actively critical of offshore wind—the study was well positioned to explore how scepticism is articulated by those unconvinced by the legitimising narratives. As such, the coding process revealed counter-narratives that demonstrate this discrepancy. These are captured within the thematic findings below.

4.2.1 Resistance does not stem from knowledge deficits, but rather ontological divides

The interviews brought light to a divide in perceptions on what a green energy transition should constitute. Supporters viewed offshore wind an adequate solution to the problems set out by the three narratives presented above (Interviews 1; 2; 5; 8; 9). These were portrayed as objective

and non-negotiable facts. For instance, that we need more electricity (N2), offshore wind can provide jobs built on O&G expertise (N1) and offshore wind mitigates climate change (N3).

As such, they articulated how public resistance can stem from widespread misinformation and misunderstandings of energy market dynamics (Interviews 1; 2; 3; 8; 9). While acknowledging the complexity of the energy landscape, many stressed concerns that oversimplified argumentation risk exacerbating social resistance on the wrong premises. Some of this frustration was rooted in the energy crisis. This complexity and public confusion were for instance expressed by respondent 8, who remarked:

> "*People didn't know what to blame—but they really wanted to blame something*." (Interview 8).

Inevitably, offshore wind introduces additional complexities to the energy debate, such as foreign ownership, electricity export, and public subsidies. Respondents emphasised that to foster acceptance on these complexities, transparent communication is key. They discussed the need to establish understanding on the following:

- Why foreign ownership is, at times, necessary due to capital requirements and project scale (Interview 9);
- How foreign ownership is managed through taxes and ownership criteria (Interviews 9, 2);
- How electricity exports, if carefully managed, can serve national interests (Interviews 2, 3, 9);
- And, how greater offshore wind penetration could ultimately lower consumer electricity prices through reduced operational costs (Interview 1).

However, what to supporters were portrayed as objective facts regarding offshore wind legitimacy, was not accepted as objective facts for critics (Interviews 6; 7). Despite potential benefits like lower consumer prices, and implementation of measures to ensure national ownership over developments, scepticism remained. This scepticism was rooted in concerns over governmental priorities, failure to systemically address climate change, weak or absent democratic control, and a belief that other societal needs are more urgent than offshore wind (Interviews 6; 7).

This revealed a clear divide, shaped not by knowledge deficits, but by fundamentally different worldviews on the wider green energy transition. Consequently, the three up-coming sections delve deeper into the counter-narratives that revealed this very ontological divide. Through this analysis, it showcases why information deficits set out in this section are not adequate in explaining nor addressing public resistance – at least for the participants of this research.

4.2.2 Offshore wind is not a systemic solution to the green energy transition

When discussing offshore wind's role in mitigating climate change (N3), respondents 6 and 7 were sceptical towards offshore wind's contributions. Importantly, they did not dismiss climate change as a perilous reality. Rather, their concern was that building more RE, at the cost of taxpayers and nature, seemed an inadequate solution to the problem. They specifically questioned the use of intermittent wind power to support the electrification of fossil fuel-dependent industries that require a stable and predictable electricity supply. While most industry respondents did not see wind power's variability as an issue, viewing it as something to be managed through future grid expansion and storage technologies, respondents 6 and 7 framed it as a significant concern. They argued that investing heavily in offshore wind while also needing significant investments in storage and backup generators for energy-intensive industries was counterproductive.

Also, the approach to the green energy transition focusing on continuous and progressive deployment of RE developments was criticised by respondent 6 and 7. Rather, they spoke of systemic issues, such as increasing and excessive consumerism, increasing emissions, dismissing the nature crisis (Interviews 6; 7), as well as weak or absent democratic control over our natural resources (in relation to internationalisation) (Interview 6). They highlighted that these aspects should receive even more attention than relying on RE alone (Interviews 6; 7). The respondents noted that we should shift the focus from building RE to meet increasing demand (N2), to reducing demand in the first place:

> *" First and foremost, it is about reducing our consumption. That is the problem after all. To put it very simply, you are not going to solve the climate crisis by building wind turbines or buy a Tesla or other things. It takes more than that*." (Interview 7).

Which was portrayed in a similar manner by respondent 6:

"*...we cannot just rely on the green transition (...) and drive more electric cars and such. I think we have to realise that we way we are living, particularly in the Western part of the world - that way is doomed to be changed*" (Interview 6).

4.2.3 The persuasive strength of the industrial adventure narrative is weakened

In discussing the narrative of a new industrial adventure (N1), economic counter-narratives emerged which seemed to contribute to weakening the appeal of the narrative. From interviews with industry and energy politics representatives, it was made evident that the projections of high costs have adversely affected the enthusiasm for offshore wind (Interviews 2; 8; 9). This was related to both broader public discourses portraying offshore wind as financially unviable in the long term as well as criticism towards the funding strategy for offshore wind through government subsidies. A politician, working with the development of the subsidy scheme for the technology, had experienced this first hand:

"*…the cost of offshore wind has increased recently, while it was expected to get cheaper and cheaper. I think there's a sense that the technology has actually developed in a negative direction, rather than the positive direction people envisioned (...) some people have read that the development is only going to be negative, and they assume that's the truth*" (Interview 2).

Stakeholders from industry and politics largely approved of the subsidy scheme - describing it as both necessary and appropriate for ensuring financial viability while the technology remains immature (Interviews 1; 2; 8). In stark contrast, respondent 7 voiced concern about the governmental priorities, emphasising that using Norwegian tax money to fund a technology that is shaped by narratives of economic unviability, when there are more urgent societal matters that should be addressed, is not a good approach:

"*Should we finalise the hospital in Stavanger, or spend our money on offshore wind?"* (Interview 7)

Respondent 9 made an interesting remark connecting the social resistance between offshore wind and climate-related subsidies in general. The participant held forth that a better approach would be that offshore wind projects should be installed with in-built interconnections so that part of the produced electricity could be exported and help fund the investment. They explained:

> *"... we believe that this approach would have better legitimacy over time. If we manage to build plenty of offshore wind power with minimal or no subsidies, we will also get more power and lower power-prices in Norway, which could create a positive momentum for offshore wind power here*." (Interview 9).

Scepticism was also raised to the extent this new industrial adventure accommodates for secured future employment (Interviews 6; 7). They spoke of the differentiation between the O&G industry (both with backgrounds from this sector) and the offshore wind industry. Emphasising that offshore wind does not create as many jobs as O&G in the operational phase (Interview 6) and that the rate of unemployment is higher in areas where offshore wind is unattainable to develop (Interview 7). This argumentation was disputed by respondent 8, noting that this does not apply in the long term (i.e. when the demand for O&G eventually declines). Nevertheless, it is still important for the purpose of this research to identify how narrative 1 is perceived – because it helps explain the declining enthusiasm.

4.2.4 Is nuclear power as a better alternative than offshore wind?

A significant strength of qualitative research, and the abductive approach, is its ability to capture novel and unexpected findings that adds insight to the research objective. Unexpectedly, the majority of respondents brought up nuclear power in various forms (Interview 2; 3; 5; 7; 8) – entirely unprovoked by the pre-determined questions of the interview guide. It seems the dominant narratives legitimising offshore wind in Norway appear to have unintentionally catalysed a broader national debate on nuclear energy. This was indeed made evident as some of the more critical participants within the interviews argued that nuclear power better fulfils the justifying narratives. Respondent 7 argued nuclear power is more space-efficient, less intrusive on nature, and capable of delivering higher and more stable power output, thus better suited to meet long-term energy demand (N2) and decarbonize energy-intensive industries (N3):

> "*If you really want to do something about climate change, it is hard to avoid huge contributions from nuclear power"* (Interview 7).

In this context, several respondents observed that nuclear energy is increasingly entering public and political debate, particularly as offshore wind moves closer to implementation (Interviews 2; 5; 8). However, several respondents expressed caution. They framed the nuclear power debate another iteration of a broader pattern of dynamic social acceptance: the tendency to

favour technologies that remain abstract or not yet implementable (Interview 2). This dynamic nature of social acceptance is addressed further throughout the remainder of this article.

Respondents also raised concerns about misinformation in the public nuclear debate, particularly around the true costs of nuclear power and the readiness of the technology (Interviews 2; 8). While most welcomed feasibility assessments and agreed that nuclear should be explored as part of a diverse energy portfolio (Interviews 2; 5; 8), they questioned whether Norway—lacking existing infrastructure and deep expertise as opposed to offshore experience—was well positioned to lead in this space:

> "*Why should we become world leaders in something we don't know how to do?"* (Interview 8).

5 Discussion

Evidenced in the findings above, I will proceed by systematically addressing the three research questions set out in the introduction. By aligning these findings with relevant literature, the section concludes with a synthesis that responds to the overarching research objective: How do socio-political factors and narratives surrounding offshore wind energy influence public acceptance?

5.1 Research sub-question 1

How is offshore wind currently perceived and accepted at the socio-political level in Norway, in light of recent onshore wind controversies, the energy crisis and geopolitical tensions?

Initial enthusiasm for offshore wind, as documented in Linnerud, Dugstad, and Rygg (2022) indicated that offshore wind was preferred over onshore wind in Norway. My findings provide further evidence for this preference, with the most prominent reasoning being the reduced visibility of offshore compared to onshore developments. This aligns with the "out of sight, out of mind" argumentation as addressed in Section 2.1 (Heidenreich, 2016; Skjolsvold et al., 2024). This argumentation is often applied as an extension of NIMBY. However, I find this preference is rather rooted in the perception of Norwegian identity, shaped by a prominent culture for outdoor recreational activities and appreciation for the natural outstanding Norwegian landscape. This reflects what Devine-Wright (2009, p. 426) termed "place-protective action" – resistance arises due to emotional place attachments and feelings of

identity. These are indeed criticisms that were at the core of the onshore controversy (Korsnes et al., 2023). As they were applied actively to legitimise offshore wind, it is made evident that the onshore wind controversy has advocated for the fruition of the Norwegian offshore wind journey.

However, despite initial support, aligned with the findings of Linnerud et al. (2025), I find the acceptance for offshore wind is weakened. That is not to say the socio-political acceptance within industry and policymaking is weakened per se, as such stakeholders remained enthusiastic in the interviews. However, they highlighted a noticeable shift in public sentiment rooted in the mere fact that offshore wind is becoming more realised in the Norwegian landscape. As highlighted within the framework article from Wüstenhagen, Wolsink and Bürer (2007), as RE technologies transition from concept to implementation, opposition often decreases. While described as most prominent at the community level, my findings suggests that this too apply in broader public discourse, that is, on the socio-political level. This suggests a double meaning of the "out of sight, out of mind" argument where, in addition to physical distance, "out of sight" also applies to temporal distance.

Within the community dimension, this dynamic is in literature labelled the U-curve (Wüstenhagen, Wolsink, & Bürer, 2007). This implies that acceptance might increase again as developments become a familiarity. The extent this is true for Norway and the socio-political level, is yet to be established if and when developments progress. However, as will be discussed in the upcoming sections, a revealed deeper ontological divide in the perception of offshore wind legitimacy implies that, in the instances this holds true, resistance might persist.

From the interviews, larger societal factors such as the energy crisis has indeed affected the acceptance of offshore wind. To provide insights on the findings of the DCE conducted by Linnerud et al. (2025) – I find that acceptance of offshore wind has been adversely affected in the post-crisis context. My data suggest that the extreme volatility in electricity prices has amplified Norwegian consumers' sensitivity to energy costs – whether it is related to end-price or subsidies. Consequently, the persuasive power of the "industrial adventure" narrative is weakened. Despite the fact that offshore wind will bring down end-consumer prices, this rationale appears to be neither fully comprehended nor broadly accepted within the public discourse. Instead, the prospect of allocating taxpayer funds to subsidise a technology that might 'never be profitable' is met with notable scepticism, particularly in light of competing

societal priorities and the need for storage technologies to support the technology. As such, in line with the conclusion drawn by Linnerud et al. (2025), also I conclude a negative answer to the question raised by Goldthau and Tagliapietra (2022) – sky-high prices do not necessarily boost renewables, at least not for offshore wind in Norway.

Interestingly, while Linnerud et al. (2025) conjecture that the decline in acceptance for offshore wind innovation following the energy crisis, might be counteracted by increased acceptance of "more immediate, less uncertain, and less expensive alternatives" (Linnerud et al., 2025, p. 11), I identify an emerging debate for a technology with opposite characteristics - namely nuclear power. This might be a re-iteration of the dynamic nature of social acceptance as discussed above – nuclear power is far from realisation in the Norwegian context. The extent to which the offshore wind debates is catalysing a broader debate on nuclear power is a novel contribution of this research to the wider literature – a strength of abductive research. Yet, I cannot draw generalisations to the wider public. Consequently, this remains a conjecture that warrants further empirical investigation.

In sum, while offshore wind initially benefited from strong socio-political acceptance—particularly in contrast to the contested history of onshore wind—this support appears increasingly conditional. As offshore wind shifts from concept to implementation, public acceptance is challenged by new concerns, exacerbated by remnants of the energy crisis and predictions of unprofitability. To understand how these revealed concerns are framed, contested, and legitimised, the next section examines the narratives employed on the socio-political scale in promoting or opposing offshore wind development.

5.2 Research sub-question 2

What narratives are employed by various socio-political actors to promote different views of offshore wind?

Narratives, or stories, are powerful tools in shaping public discourse, particularly on the socio-political level. They allow us to collectively share ideas that align with our values and priorities. As elegantly put by Holden et al. (2020): "When people collectively imagine such ideas, history changes" (Holden et al., 2020, p. 1). Such narratives can be vital in aligning society with the broader aims of what constitutes the 'green energy transition'. But challenges arise when stakeholders express fundamentally different narratives of what they believe 'the green energy

transition' entails. This was a noteworthy finding of the interviews and implies tangible complications in the further pursuit of Norwegian offshore wind and the broader green energy transition.

This study identified three prominent pro-offshore wind narratives. These were related to transferability of offshore competence (N1), meeting future energy demand (N2) and mitigating climate change (N3). These were distinctive yet interdependent narratives all told to justify how offshore wind is legitimate as it meets current challenges within the wider energy landscape and in the wider global context.

More interestingly, the study captured how these narratives are applied to develop further counter-narratives that delegitimises both the pro-narratives itself as well as offshore wind as a technology. Some narratives were directly related to prominent public debates such as the argumentation for economic infeasibility and technology characteristics – as addressed in the previous section. Yet, some counter-narratives reflected broader societal concerns where respondent's worldviews did not align with offshore wind as a pathway to meet the green energy transition. I refer to this as an ontological divide between supporters and critics.

Comparable narratives were identified in the Heidenreich (2016) analysis of Norwegian media discourse, where a similar pattern of pro- and anti-offshore wind narratives (here labelled arguments) emerged. These are shown on Figure 8. Although Heidenreich's study had a wider scope, also identifying narratives on the community level, many of the narratives overlap with those found in this research. For instance, "supporters" in Heidenreich's study emphasised offshore wind's potential as a new industrial opportunity and a response to the climate crisis, while "opponents" pointed to concerns over economic feasibility, opposition to electricity export, and anxieties over rising electricity prices.

However, several narratives identified in this thesis were absent from the 2016 study. In particular, the rationale of offshore wind as a response to growing energy demand and concerns over energy security, as well as counter-narratives positioning nuclear energy as a more viable alternative. These narratives likely reflect the shifting geopolitical context, particularly how the energy crisis has redirected political and public focus toward stability, reliability, and national energy resilience (Linnerud et al., 2025).

	Supporters	Opponents
Economic issues	*Industrial development* *Energy export* *Local development* *Jobs*	*High costs* *Electricity prices*
Environmental issues	*Climate change mitigation* *Green clean energy*	*Environmental impact* *Visual impact* *Biodiversity*
Moral issues	*Moral obligation to produce and export renewable energy*	*No production of renewable energy for export*
Site-specific (offshore) issues	*Prevention of public opposition through siting at sea*	*Area conflicts at sea (fishery)*

***Figure 8**: Argumentation identified through Norwegian media analysis of offshore wind (Heidenreich, 2016, p. 467)*

Notably, many of my identified narratives are not uncommon in the wider European offshore wind landscape. Also Desvallées and de Sartre (2023), through lexicometric content analysis of French databases, identified a similar composition of offshore wind narratives in France, as shown on Figure 9. Similar to Heidenreich, this study applied a wider scope, identifying narratives that also captures environmental and local stakeholder concerns[7]. Yet, many of the narratives shown mirror the narratives and arguments identified within this study. Desvallées and de Sartre (2023) captured a similar divide, where public is split between narratives of economic opportunities and climate change mitigation, with counter-narratives of economic uncertainty, local environmental impacts, intermittency and concerns over energy security[8].

[7] These are also prominent in Norway, as can be seen in for instance Heidenreich (2016), but remain beyond the scope of this article.
[8] Notably, the energy security counter-narrative was rooted in the marginal addition from offshore wind at only 3% planned supply in 2028 (Desvalleés and De Sarte, 2023).

Narratives legitimising OFW	Narratives delegitimising OFW
LN1 – OFW is a mature technology capable of meeting climate-change mitigation targets. LN2 – OFW generates economic value and creates local jobs and activities. LN3 – OFW reduces costs for final consumers.	DLN1 – OFW is redundant in the French electricity mix dominated by low-carbon nuclear power. DLN2 – OFW economic impact and job creation are lower than advertised by developers and projects undermine local tourism and fishing industries DLN3 – OFW is a high-cost technology unaffordable for consumers. DLN4 – OFW damages marine landscapes and environments DLN5 – OFW is developed in an authoritarian manner with ineffective public engagement. DLN6 – OFW does not grant energy security.

***Figure 9**: Narratives identified for offshore wind in France (Desvallées & de Sartre, 2023, p. 5)*

Particularly relevant to this research is Desvalleés and de Sarte's finding that resistance to offshore wind in France is tied to the spatial embeddedness of the country's nuclear power system. France's centralised model, based on stable and affordable electricity from a few large nuclear plants, has created a resistant and rigid path-dependency (Desvallées & de Sartre, 2023). This mirrors aspects of Norway's hydroelectric model, which, though decentralised, also provides reliable, low-cost energy embedded in the national landscape and public consciousness. Resistance arises, the authors argue, when offshore wind projects are introduced in areas previously untouched by energy infrastructure, leading to perceptions of illegitimacy.

This makes the finding on nuclear power as an emerging debate particularly interesting. When compared to offshore wind, nuclear power better replicates the characteristics of hydroelectric power in which the energy crisis has reinforced the preference for: stability, reliability and predictability. As such, rooted in reflections by my respondents, nuclear power may fit better under the justifying narratives applied for offshore wind; decarbonising energy-intensive sectors, securing long-term and stable electricity supply (and energy security), and mitigating climate change with less spatial impact. Albeit a significantly more expensive technology[9], given its temporal distance, these arguments could serve as an explanation for the emerging nuclear power debate highlighted in the interviews.

[9] And arguments on local environmental impacts which I do not address in this research.

The emerging counter-narrative of nuclear power reveals a deeper divide between those in favour of offshore wind and those who criticise it – the fundamentally different worldviews that shape these preferences. This ontological divide in relation to energy transitions was defined by Stirling (2014) as opposing views between those that pushes for progressive change and one that tries to preserve the status quo. As highlighted initially by both Pesch et al. (2017) and Cuppen (2018), differing interpretations of what "sustainability" and "transition" entail inevitably fuel social conflicts within energy transitions. Indeed, far from being objective and fact-based concepts, sustainability and green energy transitions are inherently subjective matters, shaped by diverse understandings and dimensions.

While supporters see offshore wind an adequate solution to the problems underpinning the identified narratives (N1, N2 and N3), critics call for deeper systemic change than solely relying upon extensive development of RE projects. They highlighted aspects of re-examining consumption, tackling inequality and securing reliable and secure power supply, governed by national control. Korsnes et al. (2023) argue that such controversies should not be seen as obstacles, but as valuable arenas for revealing justice-related tensions within proposed transition pathways. These conflicts expose differing interpretations of what constitutes a green transition and underscore the shortcomings of current policy responses, which often remain sector-specific and fail to address broader societal concerns (Korsnes et al., 2023).

Instead, green transition policies must be embedded across both fossil and RE systems and extend beyond a technology or project based scale to question the wider systems holistically (Korsnes et al., 2023). For instance, as my respondents noted, Korsnes et al. (2023) emphasise such a transition must also account for the reduction of overall energy demand**,** to align the energy transition with the broader climate goals. The extent this ontological divide holds true and requires further research. Regardless, there is a need to reframe policymaking to also engage with the deeper systemic issues that underpin the energy transition itself to align the energy transition with the wider climate goals and policies. This remains a valuable contribution of this study.

Uncovering some of the subjective dimensions and ontologies undermining or underpinning offshore wind is a key strength of qualitative research. Statistical surveys, such as DCEs, primarily highlight the comparative willingness to pay (WTP) for different features. In such

quantitative studies, the underlying drivers of why the preferences arise are left to speculation. At worst, this can lead to mistaken and discourteous claims about public preference. For instance, a DCE conducted by Nytte, Alfnes and Korhonen-Sande (2024) concluded that "*Respondents opposing all the projects are likely climate skeptics* (…)" (Nytte, Alfnes, & Korhonen-Sande, 2024, p. 1)

My findings indicate a different picture, where opposition does not arise from climate scepticism. Rather it stems from what is arguably a deeper concern for the climate and environment - one where wind power is not perceived an adequate solution to the challenges at hand. Instead, more radical and systemic change is called for. Mischaracterising sceptics as simply misinformed or climate deniers risks exacerbating an "us versus them" dynamic, which is counterproductive for a healthy energy transition debate.

In summary, the narratives surrounding offshore wind in Norway reveal a complex interplay of justifications, counterarguments, and deeper ontological divides. While pro-offshore wind actors emphasise technological competence, energy demand, and climate mitigation (N1, N2 and N3), critics respond with counter-narratives that question the legitimacy, feasibility, and systemic relevance of offshore wind. These perspectives are shaped by fundamentally different views of what a green energy transition should entail—whether it is technology-driven and market-oriented or demands broader structural change. As Korsnes et al. (2023) and Stirling (2014) argue, such variances are not merely discursive tensions, but markers of contested perceptions of transition pathways. Recognising these narratives not only uncovers the deeper justice concerns and policy shortcomings but also highlights the importance of embracing subjective, value-driven perspectives in energy policymaking (Korsnes et al., 2023). I proceed by addressing some specific challenges on how we can navigate this complex landscape of narratives within the new dimensions offshore wind brings to the social acceptance debate.

5.3 Research sub-question 3

How can aspects of social acceptance be balanced with the realities of international involvement in offshore wind, particularly regarding ownership structures, funding strategies and the use of generated electricity?

The findings of this research align well with the prominent Norwegian preference of national control over RE developments. This preference is already largely established in the wider

Norwegian literature (Linnerud, Dugstad, & Rygg, 2022; Nytte, Alfnes, & Korhonen-Sande, 2024). In the context of offshore wind, I find that this preference is largely tied to the controversies surrounding onshore wind developments in Norway. At the same time, given the respondents of the interviews representing both industry and energy politics, I also find that the lessons from the onshore wind controversy is reflected in decision-making and practice for development of Norwegian offshore wind. This reflects a degree of institutional capacity for learning – a critical aspect in sustaining socio-political acceptance (Wolsink, 2010).

The dynamics surrounding the preference for national control are nuanced. As previously highlighted, Linnerud, Dugstad, and Rygg (2022) demonstrated that the emphasis on national ownership and Norwegian use of produced electricity is so pronounced it overrides even the preference for wind power siting. Similarly, a DCE conducted by Nytte, Alfnes, and Korhonen-Sande (2024) found that Norwegians exhibit a greater willingness to subsidise offshore wind projects when clear domestic benefits are evident, such as supplying electricity to the public and national industries, particularly the (O&G) sector. By contrast, willingness to pay (WTP) diminished when offshore wind development was framed primarily in terms of contributing to international cost reductions or when the generated electricity was intended for export. Notably, Linnerud, Dugstad and Rygg (2022) found Norwegians to be more accepting of export of electricity as long as national ownership is maintained.

Interestingly however, Linnerud et al. (2025) concluded that social acceptance of offshore wind can be maintained even under scenarios of foreign ownership, provided that policy frameworks and decision-making processes are designed so that they preserve some degree of national ownership. This conclusion was drawn when comparing results from their initial survey with a new survey conducted in 2024. They reveal a decline in public scepticism toward foreign ownership post energy crisis. The authors speculate that this shift may be attributable to recent political decisions ensuring that wind power developments safeguard national control over the resources they generate (Linnerud et al., 2025).

While I am unable to fully assess the extent to which the Norwegian public's strong preference against foreign ownership has softened given the qualitative nature of the study, my findings support the latter reflection made by Linnerud et al. (2024). Policymakers interviewed as part of this research increasingly acknowledge that offshore wind power developments must include

mechanisms to secure domestic benefits and maintain national control. The highlighted initiatives in the interviews were framed as lessons drawn from the onshore wind controversies. Notably, even one critical respondent admitted that the offshore wind approach, with its use of predetermined development areas, offers greater predictability for Norwegians compared to the more contentious onshore process. Perhaps this is an indication of rebuilt trust between government and the public, where there is more confidence that domestic benefits of Norwegian offshore wind will be rendered even under circumstances of foreign ownership. Regardless, it is indeed an evident finding of applied institutional learning (Wolsink, 2010).

Respondents indicated that to balance Norwegian preferences with the aspects of offshore wind that does not necessarily align with these preferences[10], there should be more emphasis on information-sharing to the Norwegian public. From their perspective, resistance was rooted primarily in a lack of knowledge and understanding of how offshore wind contributes to broader societal goals. This "knowledge deficit" framing by industry and RE stakeholders was similarly identified during workshops, with similar participants to this study, conducted by Skjølsvold et al. (2024). The relationship between information deficit and social acceptance is indeed an argumentation identified in literature (Boudet, 2019; Ellis, Barry, & Robinson, 2007; Skjolsvold et al., 2024). Many agree that the complexity of the energy system leaves space for misinformation and simplistic narratives to evolve. To determine the extent this holds true in the Norwegian landscape is beyond the scope of this research, and future research may benefit from exploring this in further detail.

There is a growing body of literature that critiques the argumentation that the sole barrier to RE opposition is lack of knowledge and misinformation (Aitken, 2010; Ellis, Barry, & Robinson, 2007). This argumentation implies that opposition can be “corrected” through increased dissemination of knowledge (Aitken, 2010). However, as noted by both Aitken (2010) and Ellis, Barry and Robinson (2007), there are no empirical studies that proves this very point. In fact, studies point to opposers often being very knowledgeable (Aitken, 2010; Ellis, Barry, & Robinson, 2007). As such, simply providing information, to enhance familiarity for the public, will not necessarily foster acceptance (Boudet, 2019). Public resistance should

[10] Such as foreign ownership, need for subsidies and the feasibility of export.

instead be perceived an opportunity to understand the social dimensions of RE and the green energy transition (Aitken, 2010). Skjolsvold et al. (2024) note that for a productive energy transition debate we need to acknowledge that what industry and authorities perceive as objective facts, or inevitable truths, may not align with the lived realities of citizens.

In this study, I add to this understanding by highlighting the ontological divide in which offshore wind resistance can arise from. In this context, simply bridging the "information deficit" gap to enhance acceptance will be insufficient, as resistance would remain for those who do not perceive offshore wind, and wind power in general, a systemic and sustainable solution to the green energy transition.

Nevertheless, this is not to deny that the energy landscape is complex, as for instance highlighted by the multitude of factors which resulted in the energy crisis[11]. As such information-sharing and debates should still be fostered. But the approach needs to demonstrate epistemic justice (Skjolsvold et al., 2024). That is, it should be transparent, mutual and inclusive. Rather than continuing to frame offshore wind as an inevitable success, the debate should be balanced and portrayed through thorough knowledge and honesty. For instance, instead of highlighting the industrial adventure as a win-win, which inevitably has made it lose its persuasive power due to narratives of economic infeasibility, narratives should address contributions to energy security and decarbonisation, while also being transparent about challenges such as biodiversity impacts and grid integration. By moving away from exaggerated optimism and recognising that public acceptance involves values, norms, and emotions—not just facts—stakeholders can foster more meaningful and trust-based engagement with society (Skjolsvold et al., 2024).

In conclusion, this study shows that while Norwegian preferences lean toward national control, a nuanced balance can be struck between these preferences and the international realities of offshore wind development. The findings reveal an evolving institutional capacity for learning, where lessons from onshore wind have shaped more transparent, predictable frameworks for offshore wind policies and practice. However, balancing public acceptance requires more than

[11] Some refer to this as 'the perfect storm' conditions influenced by a complex interplay of climatic, economic, and geopolitical factors.

strategic communication or correcting perceived knowledge deficits. Rather, offshore wind must not be framed as an inevitable and unconditional success, but as part of a broader, contested transition that demands transparency and epistemic justice (Skjolsvold et al., 2024).

5.4 Answering the research objective

How do socio-political factors and narratives surrounding offshore wind energy influence public acceptance?

The findings of this study demonstrate that socio-political factors and narratives play a pivotal role in shaping public acceptance of offshore wind in Norway. While offshore wind initially benefited from high levels of acceptance—partly due to its spatial and temporal distance—this support is shown to be conditional and dynamic**,** declining as projects move closer to realisation. This mirrors historical patterns in Norwegian RE development and reflects the wider literature on the dynamic nature of social acceptance (Ellis & Ferraro, 2016; Wüstenhagen, Wolsink, & Bürer, 2007).

My research aligns with the contributions typical for third wave research (Batel, 2020). Critically, the study uncovers a deeper ontological divide among stakeholders. Proponents of offshore wind base their arguments on a triad of legitimising narratives: industrial development, energy security, and climate mitigation. These are often framed as objective necessities within the green transition. However, opponents challenge these premises through counter-narratives that question offshore wind's systemic adequacy, economic and technical feasibility, and democratic legitimacy. Resistance, therefore, does not primarily stem from information deficits, but from fundamentally different worldviews about what a just and sustainable energy transition entails (Boudet, 2019; Skjolsvold et al., 2024).

Furthermore, this divergence is exacerbated by concerns related to foreign ownership, electricity export, and public subsidies—issues which tie public acceptance to broader questions of governance, equity, and national identity. While policy actors appear to have learned from the onshore wind backlash—evidenced by improved planning processes and stakeholder engagement—this institutional learning may be insufficient if deeper narrative conflicts and systemic concerns are not addressed. Ultimately, these findings highlight that public acceptance cannot be fostered through technical solutions or communication strategies alone but requires meaningful engagement with diverse and often conflicting societal values and visions of the future.

6 Conclusion

This thesis has examined the socio-political acceptance of offshore wind in Norway by investigating how internationalisation and broader societal factors shape stakeholder and public perceptions. Based on nine in-depth interviews, the study reveals that acceptance is situated within a landscape of competing narratives, evolving societal dynamics, and fundamentally different ontologies.

A key finding is that the reduced enthusiasm for offshore wind appears to be part of a broader dynamic; acceptance declines as technologies move from abstract concepts to concrete implementation. Nonetheless, the study also finds clear evidence of institutional learning, with lessons from the onshore wind controversy actively informing the policy design and early-stage practice of offshore wind development.

While dominant narratives promote offshore wind as a response to climate urgency, a source of industrial growth, and a step toward energy independence, these discourses are increasingly challenged. Critics highlight economic risks, the intermittency of wind power**,** and the growing role of foreign actors. These concerns have contributed to a weakening of the once-persuasive "industrial adventure" narrative.

A particularly notable and unanticipated finding was the emergent debate around nuclear power. This debate may stem from three interrelated dynamics, as theorised in section 5:

- The narratives used to justify offshore wind may align more naturally with the characteristics of nuclear power.
- The spatial embeddedness of Norwegian hydroelectric power, and the importance of energy security, makes Norwegians favour more stable and predictable energy technologies.
- The temporal distance of nuclear power implementation makes acceptance higher at this moment in time.

Most importantly, this study identifies a deeper ontological divide between supporters and critics of offshore wind. At the heart of this divide are competing visions of what a green energy transition should entail. One perspective prioritises technological deployment and economic opportunity; the other calls for more systemic change, focusing on reduced consumption,

democratic control, and broader justice considerations. This suggests that even with improved planning and engagement, social resistance may persist—not due to information deficits, but due to fundamentally different worldviews**.**

6.1.1 Research Robustness and Future Research

While the qualitative approach provides rich insights, the study does not capture the full diversity of the socio-political dimension. Findings reflect the views of a relatively small group of stakeholders and are shaped by their professional and personal experiences. Future research could build on this by incorporating large-scale surveys that account for differing worldviews, or longitudinal studies that track how perceptions shift over time and across demographic groups. In addition, the role of nuclear power in Norway's evolving energy discourse warrants further examination—especially in relation to offshore wind. I cannot conclude based on my research the extent these emerging views on nuclear power are representative of the wider public.

6.1.2 Implications for Policymaking

These findings carry several implications for energy policymakers and developers. First, strategies for offshore wind must acknowledge and address the strong societal preference for national control, especially in light of increasing international involvement. Specifically, this research suggests greater emphasis placed on transparent, neutral communication around ownership structures, tax mechanisms, and electricity exports. This to allow the public to navigate the complex energy sphere in an informed manner.

However, the legitimacy of resistance must be recognised. The findings of this research point to deep distinctions of perceptions which imply that resistance would remain despite enhanced public communication. Thus, offshore wind planning should reflect the reality that social conflict is not a barrier to be overcome, but a natural and necessary part of democratic energy transitions (Cuppen, 2018; Pesch et al., 2017). Engaging with opposition respectfully—especially when rooted in legitimate ontological concerns—can help avoid polarisation and foster more robust, socially grounded energy policy. As Korsnes et al. (2023) and my findings point to; attention should also be directed at reducing energy consumption - to connect the green energy transition to our ambitious yet necessary climate commitments.

6.1.3 Concluding remarks

The green energy transition does not merely entail deploying renewables at scale—it is also a political and social challenge that requires critical reflection on the broader systems in place. While reducing emissions, avoiding polarisation, and building public trust remain essential, we must also acknowledge that energy conflicts are inevitable. This research points to energy conflicts rooted in divergent and deeply held views of what a just and sustainable future should look like. Recognising and engaging with these divides is crucial for developing energy systems that are not only low carbon, but that are also legitimate in relation to the overarching reasons for why we are pursuing the green energy transition in the first place.

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Appendix 1 – Interview Guide

Sosio-politisk aksept av norsk havvind – hvordan påvirker samfunnsmessige faktorer offentlighetens og aktører sitt syn på norsk havvind?

1 Uformell prat og introduksjon

Jeg ønsker velkommen og takker for deltakelse.

Jeg forteller om meg.

Respondent forteller mer om sin rolle og stilling.

2 Informasjon om forskningsprosjektet

Hva skal intervjuet brukes til, informasjon om taushetsplikt, anonymitet og andre pålagte rettigheter (repetisjon fra informasjonsskriv respondent har mottatt).

- ***Sikt-rutiner.***
- ***Anonymitet.***
- ***Kun jeg som har tilgang på rådataen.***
- ***Du kan trekke deg uten grunn før masteren er levert.***
- ***All data vil bli lagret på sikkert sted.***
- ***Konfidensialitet.***
- ***Må ikke svare på alle spørsmål.***
- ***Ønskes sitatsjekk? Ja/nei***
- ***45-90 minutter, tatt opp og transkribert i sanntid.***

Respondent skriver under på informasjonsskriv.

Jeg spør om det er OK å ta opp intervjuet.

Bakgrunn, kontekst, formål:

- ***Havvind på norsk agenda.***
- ***Vindkraft er kontroversielt i Norge.***
- ***Havvind bringer nye dimensjoner inn i debatten – eksport og internasjonale eiere.***
- ***Flere og flere har meninger om havvind – ref debatten.***

- ***To surveys i 2020 og 2023 – kartla betalingsvillighet til Nordmenn for forandringer i eierskap, plassering og bruk av strøm.***

3 Hoveddel

Jeg har fire overordnende temaer jeg vil inn på med tilhørende spørsmål, men det er ikke viktig å følge den. Jeg ønsker mest at dette blir en naturlig samtale.
Jeg lurer først på hvordan du står i debatten om havvind? Hva med arbeidsgiveren din? Hvordan har du jobbet med havvind i din stilling?

3.1 Engasjement havvind versus landvind

«Citizens are on average willing to pay almost NOK 240 extra per month to move this development from onshore to offshore locations" (Survey 1 - 2020).

Hvorfor tror du vi er mer engasjerte for havvind enn landvind?
Opplever du en forskjell mellom befolkning og industrien i engasjement?
Opplever du at det engasjementet gjelder når havvind er satt opp mot landvind eller er Nordmenn mer engasjert for havvind sammenlignet med andre fornybare teknologier på land også (solenergi, vannkraft, opprustning vannkraft, bioenergi)
Norsk/lokalt eierskap var aspektet Nordmenn brydde seg mest om uavhengig av plassering av turbinene (høyest betalingsvillighet). Til hvilken grad og hvorfor mener du eierskap også for havvind påvirker aksepten?
For havvind nært kysten brydde vi oss både om norsk eierskap og norsk bruk av strømmen, på et mye større plan enn forfatterne forventet. Har du noen tanker om hvorfor?
For havvind langt ute på kysten brydde vi oss mindre om eksport. Hva tenker du om dette?

3.2 Forandring i engasjement for norsk havvind

«The enthusiasm for offshore wind is reduced. On average, the willingness to pay for offshore instead of onshore locations of future wind power development is reduced by 60%, from 19.02 EU/month to 7.57 EU/month. (Survey 2, 2023)"

Dette er et forholdstall, hva som gir utslag blir umulig å forstå slik at forfatterne kan ikke konkludere med hvorfor dette engasjementet har gått ned. Ser du at engasjementet er redusert?
Hvilke faktorer spiller inn på engasjementet?

Er engasjementet fortsatt høyt i [arbeidsgiver] tross høye kostnadsprediksjoner?

Til hvilken grad tror du landvindebatten påvirker havvindsdebatten?
Vi er litt mindre skeptiske til utenlandske eiere og investorer nå enn i 2020. Har du noen tanker om hvorfor?

3.3 Hvorfor er norsk havvind nødvendig?

Hvorfor mener dere i [arbeidsgiver] at vi skal satse på norsk havvind?

- **Trenger vi mer strøm grunnet økende kraftbehov?**
- **Del av internasjonalt samarbeid for læring (kostnadsreduksjon)?**
- **Innovasjon og industrieventyr?**
- **Norsk erfaring med offshore?**

Synes du og dere i [arbeidsgiver] at regjeringens forslag og plan for havvind er gjennomførbart og ønsket velkommen av industrien? Kritikk?

- **Tidsramme = 3GW innen 2040. Differansekontrakter / subsidier. Plassering i første omgang Utsira Nord og Sørlige Nordsjø II. Konsekvensutredning på samme tid som utbygging for effektivitet?**

I 2022 skrev regjeringen.no «vi legger til rette for et nytt industrieventyr innen havvind», og mye tyder på at dette narrative er meget utbredt i næringen. Til hvilken grad er du enig?
Er dette det eneste narrative du opplever, eller er det andre grunner til å satse på norsk havvind?
Tror du denne argumentasjonen appellerer til befolkningen? Hvilken argumentasjon kan vi evt. bruke for å appellere til befolkningen? (Skattepenger)
Dersom nevner lavere engasjement, hvorfor opplever ikke vi en ny innovasjonsbølge slik som vi så på 70-tallet i lyset av oljekrisen?

3.4 Tiltak for å øke / opprettholde samfunnsaksept for norsk havvind?

Surveyene tyder på at Nordmenn mest av alt er opptatt av å opprettholde eierskap over egne naturressurser. Dette er vanskelig dersom havvind får internasjonale eiere og eksporterer strøm.
For landvind har vi vetorett, grunnrenteskatt, eiendomskatt osv. For vannkraft har vi enda flere ordninger og aspekter som konsesjonskraft og at de er eid av kommunene.

Ser du at vi kommer til å trenge å iverksette politiske rammeverk og økonomiske ordninger (skatter og avgifter) for å opprettholde/etablere samfunnsaksept av havvind?
Hva slags tiltak kan være aktuelle?
Er det noe vi kan lære av problematikken som oppsto rundt norsk landvind? (top-down, technocratic approach)
Forandring i narrativ? Feilinformasjon i befolkningen?

4 Oppsummering og avslutning

Er det noe annet du tenker på som vi ikke har snakket om?
Spør om noe er uklart og eventuelle andre spørsmål
Oppsummer hva vi har snakket om i intervjuet
Sammenfatt det respondenten har sagt: har jeg forstått deg riktig hvis jeg sier ...?
Er det noen andre du mener det kan være lurt for meg å intervjue?
Videre for meg: hvem andre skal jeg intervjue, hvordan skal jeg analysere transkriberingene.
Tusen takk for at du tok deg tid til å ta del i dette forskningsprosjektet. Ved ytterligere spørsmål eller ønske om å trekke besvarelsen ta kontakt på følgende mail:
ina.gundersen.sommarset@nmbu.no

Appendix 2 – Participation Request Email

Hei *navn*,

Jeg heter Ina Gundersen Sommarset og er masterstudent ved NMBU på masterprogrammet Fornybar energi. Jeg skriver min masteroppgave (30 stp) om samfunnspolitisk aksept av norsk havvind, og jeg ønsker å invitere deg til å delta i et intervju som del av min datainnsamling. Jeg ønsker å intervjue samtlige aktører innenfor fornybar energi bransjen, og jeg tror du, med din rolle i [*arbeidsgiver*], kan bidra med svært relevant innsikt, kunnskap og erfaring med tanke på mitt tema.

Min veileder er Kristin Linnerud, professor i fornybar energi ved NMBU. Målet med oppgaven er å utforske hvordan og hvorfor ulike samfunnsmessige faktorer påvirker den sosiale aksepten for etablering av havvind på norsk sokkel. Bakgrunnen og inspirasjonen for forskningsprosjektet er to kvantitative analyser gjennomført bl.a av min veileder. De etablerte hvordan eierskap og bruk av produsert strøm påvirker betalingsvilligheten til nordmenn for norsk vindkraft, både på land og til havs. Med min masteroppgave skal jeg gå kvalitativt til verks for å utforske denne tematikken samt andre faktorer nærmere.

Er dette noe du kunne tenke deg å delta på? Eller om du eventuelt kjenner noen andre i din virksomhet som er gode kandidater til mitt forskningsprosjekt?

Mer detaljert informasjonsskriv oversendes hvis dette er interessant og du kan tenke deg å delta.

Hvis du har spørsmål, kan du kontakte meg på ina.gundersen.sommarset@nmbu.no eller på telefon xxx xx xxx. Jeg ser frem til å høre fra deg.

Vennlig hilsen,
Ina Gundersen Sommarset

Her er en kortversjon av informasjonsskrivet:

Intervjuet vil vare omtrent 45-90 min og gjennomføres digitalt. Prosjektet vil utforske befolkningens og industriens engasjement for teknologien, begrunnelser og narrativ for å satse/ikke satse på norsk havvind, samt hvordan energikrisen, eierskap, bruk av produsert strøm og andre samfunnsmessige faktorer påvirker oppfatningene om havvind i Norge. Jeg

vil sørge for at all informasjon behandles konfidensielt, og din deltakelse vil anonymiseres i oppgaven. Du vil stå fritt til å trekke deg fra studien når som helst uten å oppgi en grunn. Studien vil bli registrert og godkjent via Sikt-meldeskjema, i tråd med kravene i Norge for forskning som involverer persondata.

Appendix 3 – Participation Information Sheet and Consent Form

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Vil du delta i forskningsprosjektet:

Sosio-politisk aksept av norsk havvind – hvordan påvirker samfunnsmessige faktorer aktører og offentlighetens syn på norsk havvind?

Formålet med prosjektet

Dette er en forespørsel om din deltakelse i et forskningsprosjekt som en del av emnet «M30-FORNY Masteroppgave» ved Norges miljø og biovitenskapelige universitet, NMBU.

Prosjektet har som formål å kartlegge og etablere dybdeforståelse rundt den sosio-politiske aksepten for regjeringens forslag om utbygging av havvind på norsk sokkel. Med sosio-politisk aksept menes forståelse av hvordan teknologien og de foreslåtte politiske veikartene mottas og oppfattes av interessenter, aktører og befolkningen – det vil si, samfunnsaksept på et overordnet nivå. Hovedfokuset for prosjektet er å utforske hvilke sosiale, økonomiske og politiske (samfunnsmessige) faktorer som gir utslag på samfunnsaksept og engasjement for havvind. Oppgaven vil utforske befolkningens og industriens engasjement for teknologien, begrunnelser og narrativ for å satse/ikke satse på norsk havvind, samt hvordan energikrisen, eierskap, bruk av produsert strøm og andre faktorer påvirker oppfatningene om havvind i Norge.

For å oppnå denne dybdeforståelse vil metodikken for oppgaven være personlige intervjuer. Av denne grunn sendes dette informasjonsskrivet ut, for å informere om prosjektet samt gjøre respondenter oppmerksomme på prosjektets handtering av data og deres rettigheter.

Dette er et masterprosjekt i regi av NMBU. Selve oppgaven vil utarbeides og skrives av Ina Gundersen Sommarset, som er masterstudent (5-året) i fornybar energi ved fakultetet for miljøvitenskap og naturforvaltning, MINA. Oppgaven vil utarbeides i samarbeid med veileder Kristin Linnerud, professor og forsker innen økonomi, finans og bærekraftig utvikling ved MINA.

Personopplysninger som kommer fram i forskningsprosjektet vil kun bli brukt i masteroppgaven, og har ingen andre formål.

Hvorfor får du spørsmål om å delta?

Du får denne forespørselen fordi du er i en posisjon hvor du både har kunnskap og erfaring med fornybar energi og/eller havvind, og har en forståelse av den norske energimiksen og hvordan samfunnsaksept spiller inn som en faktor i norsk fornybar-utbygning.

Du er valgt ut basert på søk fra ansvarlig masterstudent og veileder sine nettverk. Kontaktinformasjon er hentet ut fra din arbeidsgiver sine nettsider. Det er mellom 15-20 andre personer som får samme henvendelse som deg.

Hvem er ansvarlig for forskningsprosjektet?

Det er NMBU som fasiliterer for dette prosjektet i form av emne «M30-FORNY Masteroppgave», og er av den grunn behandlingsansvarlig. Professor og veileder ved MINA-fakultetet, Kristin Linnerud, er prosjektansvarlig. Det er student Ina Gundersen Sommarset som vil holde intervjuer, analysere data og skrive selve masteroppgaven. Prosjektet forekommer ikke i samarbeid med andre institusjoner eller noen eksterne arbeidsgivere, og er av den grunn nøytral.

Det er frivillig å delta

Det er frivillig å delta i prosjektet. Det vil ikke ha noen negative konsekvenser for deg hvis du ikke vil delta, eller hvis du senere velger å be om å få dine opplysninger slettet.

Hva innebærer det for deg å delta?

Prosjektet vil innhente data fra 8–10 semi-strukturerte dybdeintervjuer som gjennomføres digitalt, og gjennom dette skrivet forespørres din deltakelse i et slikt intervju. Du vil få spørsmål knyttet til dine refleksjoner rundt norsk havvind fra ulike aspekter. Du må ikke svare på alle spørsmålene. Intervjuene vil vare mellom 30-90 minutter, avhengig av respondent.

Arbeidet er som nevnt del av emne «M30-FORNY Masteroppgave» ved NMBU, og har ikke større omfang. Under og i forkant av intervjuene vil det samles inn noe demografiske data. Dette inkluderer navn, alder, stilling, utdanning, tidligere erfaringer og arbeidsgiver. For å sikre konfidensialitet vil respondentene bli fullstendig anonymisert forløpende og ikke gjenkjennbare i endelig oppgave.

Intervjuene vil bli tatt opp gjennom video og samtidig transkribert. All data (video og lyd, transkriberinger, personopplysninger) lagres trygt på en privat, elektronisk disk og vil bli slettet etter at oppgaven er fullført. Det er kun informasjon som kommer frem under intervjuene som vil utgjøre datagrunnlaget for analysen i prosjektet; ingen ytterligere data vil hentes inn fra andre kilder.

Kort om personvern

Vi vil bare bruke opplysningene om deg til formålene vi har beskrevet i dette skrivet. Vi behandler personopplysningene konfidensielt, i samsvar med personvernregelverket og NMBU sine retningslinjer for håndtering av forskningsdata. Du kan lese mer utfyllende om personvern på neste side, samt skrive under på samtykkeskjema for å delta i prosjektet.

Med vennlig hilsen,

Ina Gundersen Sommarset
Student

Kristin Linnerud

Professor og veileder

Utdypende om personvern – hvordan vi oppbevarer og bruker dine opplysninger

Det er kun student Ina Gundersen Sommarset som vil ha tilgang til personopplysningene som oppgis. For å sikre at ingen uvedkommende får tilgang til personopplysningene dine vil navn og kontaktopplysninger bli erstattet med koder fortløpende hvor originale opplysninger lagres på adskilt liste fra øvrige data. All data vil være lagret på tildelt server gitt av NMBU for lagring og behandling av data. Både autentiseringsverktøy i form av flerfaktorautentisering og personlig passord er nødvendig for innlogging og tilgang. Ingen andre enn masterstudent Ina Gundersen Sommarset har tilgang til dette området. Respondenter vil ikke være gjenkjennbare i endelig publikasjon. Navn vil bli anonymisert via. pseudonymer/koder. Det legges til rette for sitatsjekk ved forespørsel.

Hva gir oss rett til å behandle personopplysninger om deg?

Vi behandler opplysningene om deg basert på ditt samtykke. Samtykket demonstreres i form av din elektroniske underskrift (se nedenfor). Du kan trekke ditt samtykke på hvilke som helst tidspunkt før 1. mai 2025 (frist for innlevering av oppgaven er 15. mai 2025). Dersom dette er tilfelle, vil ikke dataen du har bidratt med under intervjuet være inkludert i oppgaven.

På oppdrag fra Norges miljø- og biovitenskapelige universitet, NMBU, har personverntjenestene ved Sikt – Kunnskapssektorens tjenesteleverandør, vurdert at behandlingen av personopplysninger i dette prosjektet er i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

Hva skjer med personopplysningene dine når forskningsprosjektet avsluttes?

Prosjektet vil avsluttes etter oppgaven er levert og godkjent tidlig i juni. Alle personopplysninger vil da slettes.

Dine rettigheter

Så lenge du kan identifiseres i datamaterialet, har du rett til å be om innsyn i dataene vi behandler om deg og be om at dataene blir rettet eller slettet. Hvis du kontakter oss for å utøve dine rettigheter, vil du høre fra oss innen en måned. Vi vil gi en forklaring hvis vi ikke kan identifisere deg eller hvis dine rettigheter ikke kan utøves. Du har også rett til å klage til Datatilsynet om hvordan vi behandler dine data.

Hvis du har spørsmål eller vil utøve dine rettigheter, ta kontakt med:

- **Prosjektansvarlig: Kristin Linnerud, tlf. xxx xx xxx mail: kristin.linnerud@nmbu.no**
- **Masterstudent: Ina Gundersen Sommarset, tlf. xxx xx xxx, mail: ina.gundersen.sommarset@nmbu.no**
- **NMBU sitt personvernombud: Hanne Pernille Gulbrandsen, tlf. 40281558, mail: personvernombud@nmbu.no**

Hvis du har spørsmål knyttet til Sikts vurdering av prosjektet, kan du ta kontakt på epost: personverntjenester@sikt.no, eller på telefon: 73 98 40 40.

Samtykkeerklæring

Jeg har mottatt og forstått informasjon om prosjektet «Sosio-politisk aksept av norsk havvind – hvordan påvirker samfunnsmessige faktorer aktører og offentlighetens syn på norsk havvind?», og har fått anledning til å stille spørsmål. Jeg samtykker til:

	Kryss av
Å delta i et dybdeintervju som vil bli tatt opp og transkribert i sanntid.	

At mine personopplysninger (navn, kontaktinformasjon, arbeidsgiver, rolle og tidligere erfaringer) behandles frem til prosjektet er avsluttet.	
At mine opplysninger om politisk oppfatning blir behandlet i prosjektet.	
Jeg bekrefter å ha lest dette informasjonsskrivet og er innforstått med innholdet.	

(Signert av prosjektdeltaker, dato)

Appendix 4 – Exhaustive list of codes and associated thematic findings

Code	Example quotation	Thematic finding
Acceptance is dynamic	*"We are often in favour of what cannot be built here and now."*	The enthusiasm for offshore wind wanes as one approaches realisation.
NIMBY	*"...people do not want onshore wind power in their hiking terrain"*	
Changing preference	*"But there was uniform support just a few years ago, whereas now it's getting closer to a 50-50 split."*	
Competition for areas	*"...of course it is busy at sea as well. There is competition for areas there as well."*	The onshore wind controversy has highlighted the importance of social acceptance in offshore wind development.
Early-stage support	*"So, it is important to us that we have a good interaction, a good dialogue and clear communication with other users of the sea."*	
Onshore pitfalls and responses	*"That has also been part of the criticism of onshore wind—that it has been built without listening to the local population, in a way."*	
Leave values behind	*"And there's one thing we've started with onshore wind that we've come to see as increasingly important: leaving more value locally, giving people control over local developments, and building grassroots support."*	
Stakeholder and early communication	*"But they're really pleased that there has been such early involvement—that*	

	they've been included throughout the entire process."	
Political measures	*"I think a natural resource tax could be relevant at some point…"*	
Foreign ownership as a barrier	*"And especially when the energy company isn't local but comes from outside to build, it's seen—quote unquote—as 'foreign powers'"*	
Misinformation	*"There is, to some extent, a lack of understanding of the power system and what causes what."*	Resistance does not stem from knowledge deficits, but rather ontological divides.
Trust and mistrust	*"You don't trust the authorities when it comes to onshore wind power—so will it really be any better with offshore wind?"*	
Variable energy source	*"Wind is variable, and if you want to regulate it you have to store it first"*	
Increasing energy demand	*"…we need more than 200 TWh in the future… where is it going to come from?"*	
Offshore competence and industrial adventure	*"We consider especially floating offshore wind a strategic investment for Norway."*	
The climate crisis argument	*"We need it to meet the climate targets."*	
Electricity price argument	*"I think the relation to electricity price is important. It hits straight into people's wallet."*	
Energy crisis and geopolitical tensions	*"…the entire geopolitical situation is affecting us as well, and makes it harder to build the technology we need."*	

The climate crisis argument	*"But both leans on the acceptance for the green energy transition. And that is a bit weakened right."*	Offshore wind is not a systemic solution to the green energy transition.
Variable energy source	*"And when it does not blow, then there is no electricity…"*	
Need for storage technologies	*"… in these sort of industries, you cannot have electricity that comes and goes…"*	
Not the answer to the energy transition	*"The kWh you do not use, is the best one."*	
Expensive as a barrier	*"…and the costs for offshore wind have gone up, and not come back down again like we hoped…"*	The persuasive strength of the industrial adventure narrative is weakened.
Export as a barrier	*"…We probably feel safer, when we know electricty comes to Norway."*	
Cannot replace fossil fuels	*"It is a type that could never replace fossil fuels. Never."*	
Short term versus long term perspective	*"Right now, there are still many people working in oil and gas. But you'll see a decline. The supply industry for oil and gas is already starting to notice it."*	
Nuclear power	*"If you really want to do something about climate change, it is hard to avoid huge contributions from nuclear power"*	Is nuclear power a better alternative than offshore wind?
Acceptance is dynamic	*"And then nuclear power is the next thing you move on to"*	
Mis-information	*"I think a lot of people are under the impression that it is cheap to develop nuclear power."*	

Appendix 5 – SIKT Assessment of processing of personal data

Sikt

Vurdering av behandling av personopplysninger

Referansenummer	Vurderingstype	Dato
360553	Standard	30.01.2025

Tittel
Sosio-politisk aksept av norsk havvind – hvordan påvirker samfunnsmessige faktorer aktører og offentlighetens syn på norsk havvind?

Behandlingsansvarlig institusjon
Norges miljø- og biovitenskapelige universitet (NMBU) / Fakultet for miljøvitenskap og naturforvaltning

Prosjektansvarlig
Kristin Linnerud

Student
Ina Gundersen Sommarset

Behandlingsperiode
15.02.2025 – 15.06.2025

Kategorier personopplysninger
Alminnelige
Særlige

Lovlig grunnlag
Samtykke, jf. GDPR art. 6(1)(a)
Uttrykkelig samtykke, jf. GDPR art. 9(2)(a)

Behandlingen av personopplysningene er lovlig så fremt den gjennomføres som oppgitt i meldeskjemaet. Det lovlige grunnlaget gjelder til 15.06.2025.

Meldeskjema

Kommentar
OM VURDERINGEN
Sikt har en avtale med institusjonen du forsker eller studerer ved. Denne avtalen innebærer at vi skal gi deg råd slik at behandlingen av personopplysninger i prosjektet ditt er lovlig etter personvernregelverket. Vi har nå vurdert at du har lovlig grunnlag til å behandle personopplysningene.

TYPE PERSONOPPLYSNINGER
Prosjektet vil behandle særlige kategorier av personopplysninger om politisk oppfatning.

PUBLISERING AV PERSONOPPLYSNINGER
Hvis forskningsdeltagere kan kjennes igjen i publikasjoner (direkte eller indirekte), må de få tydelig informasjon om dette.

BEHANDLINGSGRUNNLAG
Lovlig grunnlag for behandlingen av personopplysninger vil være den registrertes samtykke, jf. personvernforordningen art. 6 nr. 1 a).

Den registrerte gir sitt uttrykkelige samtykke til behandlingen av særlige kategorier av personopplysninger. Dermed gjelder ikke forbudet i personvernforordningen art. 9 nr. 1, ettersom vilkår for unntaket i art. 9 nr. 2 a) er oppfylt.

FØLG DIN INSTITUSJONS RETNINGSLINJER
Det er institusjonen du er ansatt/student ved som avgjør hvordan du må lagre og sikre data i ditt prosjekt og hvilke databehandlere du kan bruke. Husk å bruke leverandører som din institusjon har avtale med (f.eks. ved skylagring, nettspørreskjema, videosamtale el.).

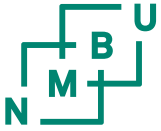
Personverntjenester legger til grunn at behandlingen oppfyller kravene i personvernforordningen om riktighet (art. 5.1 d), integritet og konfidensialitet (art. 5.1. f) og sikkerhet (art. 32).

MELD VESENTLIGE ENDRINGER
Dersom det skjer vesentlige endringer i behandlingen av personopplysninger, kan det være nødvendig å melde dette til oss ved å oppdatere meldeskjemaet. Se våre nettsider om hvilke endringer du må melde: https://sikt.no/melde-endringar-i-meldeskjema

OPPFØLGING AV PROSJEKTET

Vi vil følge opp ved planlagt avslutning for å avklare om behandlingen av personopplysningene er avsluttet. I langvarige prosjekter vil vi ta kontakt hvert annet år for å minne om at eventuelle endringer må meldes.

Lykke til med prosjektet!



Norges miljø- og biovitenskapelige universitet
Noregs miljø- og biovitenskapelege universitet
Norwegian University of Life Sciences

Postboks 5003
NO-1432 Ås
Norway