

Contestation of EU Climate Policy in Poland: Civil Society and Politics of National Interest¹

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Research on EU environmental and climate policy in CEEC has concentrated mainly on questions of norm diffusion and Europeanization, while trying to explain why CEEC and Poland in particular oppose an ambitious EU climate agenda. It was argued that political parties were uniform in opposition and relied exclusively on arguments provided by energy-intensive industry, while neglecting input from civil society. However, these accounts provide only a partial picture of civil society narrative as they focus mostly on international environmental NGOs that largely support EU policies. This paper takes a different approach and looks at contestation of EU climate policy through the lenses of a cos-

mopolitanism – nationalism cleavage. It provides illustration of civil society-based Euroscepticism, where contestation of EU at the policy level is used to voice opposition to European integration project in general (system level). Empirically, the objective of the paper is twofold: to identify the content of the narrative with particular focus on system-level contestation (Euroscepticism); and to provide explanations for the limited mobilization of these actors at the EU-level.

Key words: European Union, Poland, climate policy, civil society, Euroscepticism

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Introduction

When analyzing interest groups and civil society mobilization with regard to EU environmental policy authors often reproduce a simple distinction between civil society actors that support EU policies and business groups that oppose it. Accordingly, if EU climate policy is contested by environmental NGOs it is for its lack of ambition and subjecting long-term environmental goals to short-term business concerns. This simplification relates both to analyses of the EU level² and national level policy making. For example, while examining adoption of EU climate norms in East-Central Europe, Mats Braun distinguished between norm entrepreneurs and norm opponents. Whereas norm entrepreneurs are to be found among ENGOs, „norm opponents are found primarily within the energy producing sector”³. Consequently, civil society actors, including grassroots NGOs, think-tanks and wider issue networks featuring (internet) media and opinion leaders who oppose EU climate policy (on various grounds, including ideological, social, consumer, environmental and economic concerns) are systematically neglected in the literature.

Over the years Poland has been labelled as the main opponent of ambitious climate policy and emission reduction targets. Other Central and Eastern European countries (CEEC) have supported its tough stance on numerous occasions. Typical answers to be found in the literature to the question of why CEEC might have different perspective on EU environment/ climate policy relate to: 1) high short term adaptation costs; 2) EU being very restrictive in granting exceptions as it wants to avoid environmental dumping; 3) lower levels of affluence in comparison with Western Europe, whereas preferences on climate action depend on level of economic and ecological mod-

² T. Delreux, S. Happaerts, *Environmental Policy and Politics in the European Union*, Palgrave, London & New York 2016, p. 124.

³ M. Braun, *EU Climate Norms in East-Central Europe*, „Journal of Common Market Studies” 52:3, 2014, p. 455.

ernization⁴; 4) lower levels of awareness about EU environmental policy and differences in perception of climate change phenomenon; 5) low level of development of ENGOs and very weak support for Green parties. Greens enjoyed only sporadic parliamentary representation in CEEC – in Czech Republic, Estonia and Hungary⁵, but in not Poland. In the 2004 European elections Greens obtained only 0.7% of votes in CEEC, compared to 7.4% in the EU15⁶. Moreover, after EU accession all Polish governments have been „remarkably uniform in their rejection of a more ambitious climate policy”⁷.

Although accurate in general, existing research on Europeanization and contestation of EU climate policy in Poland (and CEEC more broadly) neglects important political processes underway. First of all, civil society contestation of EU climate policy can serve a wider purpose of contestation of EU, at institutional and systemic levels. This means that we should recognize the presence of civil-society based Euroscepticism⁸. Secondly, contestation of EU climate policy in Poland reflects a new cleavage along the cosmopolitanism – nationalism (or integration – demarcation) axis as originally suggested by Kriesi et al. with regard to political conflicts in Western Europe⁹. In the Polish case this cleavage is visible both with regard to party competition and civil society actors. Indeed, the climate agenda accentuates the division lines between environmental NGOs (ENGOs) that are often antennae of international organizations fur-

⁴ J. Gerhards, H. Lengfeld, *Support for European Union Environmental Policy by citizens of EU member and accession states*, „Comparative Sociology”, 7:1, 2008, pp. 1–27.

⁵ N. Carter, *Greening the mainstream: party politics and the environment*, „Environmental Politics”, 22:1, 2013, pp. 73–94.

⁶ H. Schmitt, J. Thomassen, *The EU Party System after Eastern Enlargement*, Institute for Advanced Studies, Vienna 2005.

⁷ K. Marcinkiewicz, J. Tosun, *Contesting climate change: mapping the political debate in Poland*, „East European Politics”, 31:2, 2015, p. 201.

⁸ J. Fitzgibbon, *Citizens against Europe? Civil Society and Eurosceptic Protest in Ireland, the United Kingdom and Denmark*, „Journal of Common Market Studies”, 51:1, 2013, p. 105.

⁹ H. Kriesi et al., *Political Conflict in Western Europe*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2012.

thering supranational solutions and civil society actors that favour a national/ local perspective. A closer look at positions of political parties also shows that their alleged uniformity in opposition to EU climate is based on completely different assumptions and visions of European integration. Thirdly, a more encompassing approach to civil society is needed. We need to look at issue networks that comprise a variety of actors – organized and non-organized – sharing a multi-dimensional, yet relatively coherent narrative that positions them on the demarcation/ nationalist side of the cleavage.

As a result, the aim of this paper is twofold: 1) to map civil society producers of narratives contesting EU climate policy in Poland and to show how issue-level (policy) contestation is used to oppose the EU as a whole, the way its institutions work and decisions are made; 2) to explain why EU-level mobilization is of limited importance to these actors. In order to achieve these goals, the article proceeds as follows: firstly, I provide theoretical framework by linking various strands of literature on Europeanization, political conflict, Euroscepticism and civil society. Secondly, I attempt to contextualize civil society contestation of EU climate policy in Poland by outlining main patterns of the political debate between major parties as well as public opinion orientations on climate change and their evolution since 1990s. Thirdly, civil society actors and their contesting narrative are examined in order to show how policy contestation is linked to systemic contestation. Fourthly, I argue that limited mobilization at the EU level could be explained with political opportunity structure (perceived lack of responsiveness of EU institutions) and strategic preferences of these organizations/ networks. Finally, I conclude.

1. Citizens against Europe: Europeanization and Eurosceptic backlash

Literature on environmental and climate change policy in Central and Eastern European countries (new Member States²) in general and Poland in particular has focused on questions of norm diffu-

sion and Europeanization. The main question asked by scholars was whether CEEC would act as brakes for further development of an ambitious EU environmental and climate policies or whether they would be progressively socialized to EU normative environment¹⁰. Europeanization approach implied a top-down perspective, where local branches of transnational norm entrepreneurs supported externally introduced climate agenda, whereas local state and business veto players opposed the ecological modernization agenda. This paper argues that climate politics both in Poland and in the EU is more complex and contested and should be conceptualized as part of a fundamental transformation of cleavages that has been caused by processes of societal de-nationalization¹¹. In fact, globalization and Europeanization (in CEEC they have been intertwined with processes of democratic and economic transformation to market economy) gave rise to new disparities and new forms of competition that created (actual or potential) winners and losers that, in turn, constitute political potential for articulation of conflicting interests and demands by political parties, interest groups and social movements.

In Western Europe authors identified 3 dimensions of conflict that contribute to the formation of winners and losers: economic competition, cultural diversity and political integration. Winners are those who enjoy economic security due to a privileged position in the transnational economic competition, which also makes them open to cultural diversity as a source of innovation and creativity and not economic and existential risk. As a result, they favour supranational solutions and political integration in the EU. The picture looks different for (potential) losers and there are also key differences between Western and Eastern European perspectives.

¹⁰ M. Braun, *Europeanization of Environmental Policy in the New Europe: beyond Conditionality*, Ashgate, Farnham & Burlington 2014, pp. 2–6.

¹¹ E. Grande, H. Kriesi, *The restructuring of political conflict in Europe...*, op. cit., p. 193–194; M. Zürn, *Politicization of World Politics and its Effects: Eight Propositions*, „European Political Science Review”, 6:1, 2014, pp. 47–71.

Whereas many West European countries favoured EU social and environmental regulation, as they were afraid of social dumping, environmental race to the bottom and de-location to Eastern Europe, CEEC regard climate policy as a threat to their competitiveness. In Poland and other CEEC EU climate policy is heavily criticized on economic grounds but from two distinct positions. On one hand, the cosmopolitan narrative refers to serious risk to EU global competitiveness and need for proportional burden sharing among EU members. On the other hand, the nationalist argument refers to intra-EU power relations, where biggest Member States aggressively pursue their national interests at the expense of weaker CEEC economies, while framing their policies within the „save the planet” rhetoric. In this zero sum game perspective, every move from European institutions towards „more ambitious climate targets’ is seen as a threat to national interest.

The climate change debate in Poland is necessarily Europeanized since it is an externally introduced issue¹². Polish decision makers, political parties and civil society are reactive towards the proposals that come from the EU level. At the same time, nationalist/ demarcation type of contestation of the EU climate policy has an important transnational/ European dimension. Contesting arguments that are used in other EU Member States are reproduced and adapted to the local context. Also, speakers from other EU countries are extensively cited thus linking Polish contestation with contestation emanating from other European public spheres¹³. But is this contestation merely a sign of criticism of a given policy area or is it a reflex of systemic opposition towards European integration project in general? Can we talk about ‚civil-society based Euroscepticism’¹⁴ in Poland?

As Thomas Risse pointed out, Euroscepticism is not just any sign of criticism or contestation of the EU on specific issues – this is

¹² K. Marcinkiewicz, J. Tosun, *Contesting climate change...*, p. 190.

¹³ See T. Risse, *Introduction* in: T. Risse (ed.), *European Public Spheres: Politics is Back*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2015, op. cit., p. 13.

¹⁴ J. Fitzgibbon, *Citizens against Europe...*, op. cit.

actually politicization. Controversies about specific policies are part and parcel of normal life of a polity and a subject of politics; thus we should not expect the EU to be much different¹⁵. Euroscepticism is about principled opposition towards European Union as a regime and political community. However, contestation of specific EU policies or pieces of legislation can be also strategically used by various actors in order to de-legitimize the entire European integration project. Thus policy-level contestation (‘critical Europeanism’) can be used to further political objectives of system-level contestation (‘Euroscepticism’). In particular, actors voicing contesting claims and narratives can also shift from critical Europeanism towards Euroscepticism, while, for example, giving up a strategy of engagement and moving back to national and local level. One of the factors determining such shift is lack of responsiveness from EU institutions to criticism stemming from civil society actors who progressively become disillusioned with EU supposedly participatory governance arrangements¹⁶.

Euroscepticism is also more typical for actors that seek to engage in contentious interaction, thus producing critique of Europeanization¹⁷, rather than only in routine transactions and service provision to EU institutions. Existing literature shows that national-level issue networks engage citizens more richly than EU level-issue networks¹⁸. Thus in order to adequately grasp contesting European and national narratives of EU policies and integration project itself, it is worth looking into diverse forms of digital communication (web-

¹⁵ T. Risse, *Introduction*, op. cit., p. 15.

¹⁶ D. della Porta, L. Parks, *Europeanization and Social Movements: Before and After the Great Recession* in: S. Boerner, M. Eigmüller (eds.), *European Integration, Processes of Change and National Experience*, Palgrave Studies in European Political Sociology, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke & New York, 2015, p. 257.

¹⁷ C. Bee, R. Guerrina, *Participation, Dialogue, and Civic Engagement: Understanding the Role of Organized Civil Society in Promoting Active Citizenship in the European Union*, „Journal of Civil Society”, 10:1, 2014, p. 35.

¹⁸ W.L. Bennett, S. Lang, A. Segerberg, *European issue publics online: the cases of climate change and fair trade* in: T. Risse (ed.), *European Public Spheres...*, op. cit., p. 110.

sites, blogs, social media), while focusing not so much on CSOs, but wider issue networks that can actively shape both public opinion orientations and decision-making process.

This is all the more important as literature usually focuses on EU-level mobilization of organized civil society in formalized consultation process, thus a priori excluding alternative forms of EU-related civil society mobilization and contestation at the European, transnational and national level. Initially, many scholars were quite enthusiastic about prospects of ‚participatory governance‘ at the EU level. But measured by the high political and theoretical expectations, actual achievements have been disappointing and “the promise of ‘involving civil society’ has not bridged the gap between Europe and the people, but rather sponsored a Brussels-based CSO elite working in the interest of deeper integration”¹⁹. Moreover, despite „high potential” of the consultation instrument, so far the biases in representation are not changed but reproduced in the online consultations²⁰. This is not surprising as the function of „civil society participation” in the decision-making process is above all about securing legitimacy for institutions that are engaging in dialogue²¹. For instance, introduction of online consultations was based on the assumption that by intensifying exchange between European Commission and CSOs, the latter would serve as a transmission belt between EU and citizens and thus enhance the overall legitimacy of the policymaking process.

This paper builds on the above analysis and argues that in order to adequately grasp the nature of civil society contestation of the EU, we need to: 1) look beyond institutionalized arrangements at

¹⁹ B. Kohler-Koch, *Civil society and the European Union*, in: H. K. Anheier and S. Toepler (eds.), *International Encyclopedia of Civil Society*, New York: Springer, 2010, p. 335.

²⁰ E.G. Heidbreder, *Governance in the European Union: A Policy Analysis of the Attempts to Raise Legitimacy through Civil Society Participation*, „Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis: Research and Practice”, 17:4, 2015, p. 374.

²¹ D. Lane, *Civil Society in the Old and New Member States*, „European Societies”, 12:3, 2010, p. 294.

the EU level and to wider issue networks at the national (and trans-national) level; 2) examine issue networks that consist of various actors – local grass-roots NGOs, trade-unions, think-tanks, bloggers and opinion leaders – and engage in contentious interaction along cosmopolitanism – nationalism cleavage; 3) focus on civil society actors that do not only provide technical input to the depoliticized decision-making process in the framework of „participatory governance”, but actively voice contesting arguments in the public sphere²²; 4) examine how policy-level contestation interacts with system-level contestation. Empirically, this paper looks at a case study of civil society contestation of EU climate policy within the Polish national arena.

2. Against EU climate policy: political debate and public opinion in Poland

Before turning to civil society narratives and narrative producers it is important to outline the national context, both in terms of political debate between major partisan actors and public opinion orientations towards the phenomenon of the climate change on one hand and EU policy response on the other. In the literature Poland is considered to be the leader in the opposition against more stringent EU climate policy, acting as brake for further development of an ambitious European policy. Whereas initially there was no negative impact visible, analyses of voting behaviour in the Council showed growing Polish opposition to new initiatives²³. Poland repeatedly blocked post-2020 targets, including low carbon roadmap in 2011 and EU energy roadmap in 2012, while other CEEC usually joined in opposition. Whereas CEEC were not able to veto

²² See: J. Greenwood, K. Tuokko, *The European Citizens' Initiative: the territorial extension of a European political public sphere?*, „European Politics and Society”, 2017, p. 3.

²³ O.M. Hosli, M. Matilla, M. Uriot, *Voting in the Council of the European Union after 2004 enlargement: a comparison of old and new Member States*, „Journal of Common Market Studies”, 49:6, 2011, pp. 1249–70.

the policy altogether, they nevertheless obtained important concessions. For example, the December 2008 agreement on European Trading Scheme (ETS) granted derogations from auctioning system for energy producing sector and provided for additional 2% allowances to countries that reduced emissions by at least 20% in 2005 compared to 1990 levels (all CEEC qualified)²⁴. Poland is also among the notorious laggards in terms of implementation of European environmental legislation. There were 60 infringement proceedings opened against Poland by the Commission in the years 2011–2013, with only 3 countries – Italy, Spain and Greece – scoring even worse. Less than 30 proceedings were opened against Netherlands, Luxembourg, Denmark, Finland, Germany, but also Hungary and the Baltic states²⁵.

The original praise for Kyoto Protocol and overall support for strict environmental policies²⁶ gradually changed into an almost unanimous critique of EU climate policy coming from all parties across the political spectrum. Polish governments were committed to climate action as long as it entailed low economic costs. Examination of parliamentary speeches related to environmental and climate policies showed that Kyoto Protocol (discussed by the *Sejm* in 2002) was perceived as a good opportunity for Poland to capitalize on the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions caused by the economic crisis and de-industrialization in the early 1990s. With growing level of ambition (and perceived costs for Poland) of subsequent EU packages and roadmaps, Polish MPs almost uniformly criticized EU policy. The main opposition party in the years 2007–2015, Law and Justice, became progressively more interested in EU climate policy as a resource to contest the government²⁷, while demanding

²⁴ M. Braun, *EU Climate Norms...*, op. cit., p. 451.

²⁵ T. Delreux, S. Happaerts, *Environmental Policy...*, op. cit., p. 119.

²⁶ L.B. Andonova, *The Europeanization of environmental policy in Central and Eastern Europe* in: *The Europeanization of Central and Eastern Europe*, eds. F. Schimmelfennig, U. Sedelmeier, Cornell University Press, 2005, p. 135–155

²⁷ K. Marcinkiewicz, J. Tosun, *Contesting climate change...*, op. cit., p. 197.

an even stricter approach in defence of Poland's international competitiveness and against excessive economic burden put on Poland and subduing national interest to the interests of other EU Member States. Thus opposition towards climate action from the Civic Platform (CP) conservative-liberal government in the years 2007–2015 was replaced by an even more principled rejection strategy when in October 2015 Law and Justice (LJ) took power (the party promised renegotiation of Polish obligations under EU climate policy in its electoral manifesto).

However, it would be a mistake to see positions of previous Civic Platform and current Law and Justice governments as similar. They both objected EU climate policy yet the arguments they used were different and reflected the above-mentioned cosmopolitanism – nationalism cleavage. In fact, this cleavage is perfectly reflected in the main party competition between Civic Platform and Law and Justice. It was very much evident from the argumentation contesting EU climate policy, coming from former Civic Platform environment minister Marcin Korolec and current Law and Justice minister Jan Szyszko. Reflecting a neoliberal cosmopolitan orientation, Korolec pointed to „asymmetry between EU climate policy and policies of other major emissions producers”, while underlining that „Europe's share in global emissions was too small to produce change”. He stressed the need to focus on „how to reduce emissions without reducing competitiveness” and make sure „burden share is proportional to national economies' capacities”²⁸. Meanwhile, nationalist – interventionist narrative of Szyszko was quite different. According to him, Commission's proposal that Poland should cut emissions by 7% by 2030 in non-ETS sectors was „unfair and detrimental to Poland's national interests and clearly favours interests of some other Member States”. He also accused previous gov-

²⁸ Korolec: *Nie sztuką jest zredukowanie emisji. Problem w tym, jak zrobić to bez utraty konkurencyjności*, „Biznes Alert”, 18.11.2014, <http://biznesalert.pl/korolec-nie-sztuka-jest-zredukowanie-emisji-problem-w-tym-jak-zrobic-to-bez-utraty-konkurencyjnosci/>.

ernment of buying expansive imported technologies, instead of investing in locally produced renewable energy. This policy resulted in Poland „subsidizing” foreign companies, mainly German and French, instead of supporting Polish ones²⁹.

Opinion polls show that Poles are reluctant to see climate change as major problem their country and the world is facing. They have sceptical not to say negative perception of EU climate policy, which is seen as a result of lobbying by powerful interest groups. In 2015 Special Eurobarometer only 11% of Poles agreed that climate change was a single most serious problem facing the world as a whole, compared to 37% of Swedes, 26% of Germans and 18% of French (Poland ranked 20 out of EU28). When asked whether climate change was a very serious problem (other options: fairly serious, not serious), 56% Poles agreed, compared to 69% EU28 average. Only in 3 EU countries (Estonia, Latvia and UK) there were less respondents who thought climate change was a very serious problem. Between 2013 and 2015 the number of those who thought it was very serious fell most significantly in Central Europe, notably in Slovakia (by 12 percentage points), Austria, Slovenia, Hungary and Poland (by 7 percentage points). Only 7% of Polish respondents (lowest level in the EU together with Bulgaria) considered that it was everybody’s personal responsibility to tackle climate change (43% in Netherlands)³⁰.

How have the attitudes towards environmental protection and climate change evolved in Poland since 1990s? Whereas concerns for the state of environment are growing with regard to the world as a whole, they are decreasing with regard to Poland. The state of environment in Poland was a matter of big concern to 71% Poles in

²⁹ Szyszko: *propozycje Brukseli ws. redukcji emisji CO2 są szkodliwe dla Polski*, „Biznes Alert”, 01.08.2016, <http://biznesalert.pl/szyszko-propozycje-brukseli-ws-redukcji-emisji-co2-sa-szkodliwe-dla-polski>.

³⁰ European Commission, *Special Eurobarometer 435: Climate Change*, Report, May-June 2015, <http://ec.europa.eu/COMMFrontOffice/PublicOpinion/index.cfm/Survey/getSurvey-Detail/instruments/SPECIAL/surveyKy/2060> [08.08.2016].

1997, 50% in 2009 and 45% in 2016. This is due to the catastrophic state of environment under communism³¹ and strict legislation that was implemented in the years 1990s–2000s. With regard to climate change, in 2016 27% of Poles (34% in 2009) agreed that 'it is not certain whether climate changes at all', whereas 40% (44% in 2009) – that 'scientists do not agree whether human activities have impact on climate'. Most importantly, 42% (45% in 2009) agreed that 'global warming is about business and lobbyists earning money by making people feel afraid and guilty' (equally 42% disagreed)³². Polish society is very divided on core assumptions behind EU climate action.

A key issue is whether citizens give precedence to environmental protection over economic growth. In 1999 60% of respondents in EU15 and only 48% in CEEC gave precedence to environmental protection³³ – despite huge environmental challenges inherited from the communist times. In this context interesting insights are provided by December 2015 opinion poll conducted in Poland on the future of coal industry, which is both highly polluting and not always economically viable. On one hand, 30% of respondents stated that 'energy production in Poland should be based mainly on domestic coal resources'. On the other, 41% considered that 'coal mines should not be closed even if not profitable'. Importantly, the ruling Law and Justice supporters were more in favour of energy production based mainly on domestic coal resources (41%) and against closing unprofitable mines (46%) than supporters of any other political party³⁴.

³¹ Z. Bochniarz, G.B. Cohen, *The Environment and Sustainable Development in the New Central Europe*, Berghahn Books, New York and Oxford, 2006.

³² Centrum Badań Opinii Społecznej (CBOS), *Stan środowiska i zmiany klimatu*, komunikat z badań nr 39/2016, 03.2016.

³³ M. Braun, *Europeanization of Environmental Policy in the New Europe...*, op. cit., pp. 64–65.

³⁴ Centrum Badań Opinii Społecznej (CBOS), *Co dalej z polskim górnictwem węgla kamiennego?*, komunikat z badań nr 167/2015, 12.2015.

3. Contesting climate policy, contesting EU: actors and their narrative

3.1. Actors

In this section I map 3 groups of actors that are involved in producing narratives about EU climate policy in Poland: a) business actors that produce contesting narratives (table 1); b) civil society actors that produce supporting narratives (table 2) and c) civil society actors that produce contesting narratives (table 3). Relevant actors were identified in 2 steps. Firstly, I identified Polish actors that participated in European Commission consultations on climate policy in the years 2013–2015 and those actors that took part in public hearings on environmental and climate policies in the Polish parliament in the years 2011–2016. Secondly, I examined websites and social media profiles of those actors and used snow ball technique in order to identify other relevant actors active in the public sphere, connections between actors, as well as those actors who were most active across different forums (institutions and media). Actors included in the tables below are those who are most active and well networked within the respective groups.

Table 1. Producers of contesting narratives: business

Type of actor	Examples of actors
Business associations	PKEE (Polish Electricity Association) www.pkee.pl Confederation Lewiatan www.konfederacjalewiatan.pl PIPC (Polish Chamber of Chemical Industry) www.pipc.org.pl
Companies	Tauron Polska Energia www.tauron-pe.pl PGNiG Group www.pgnig.pl

Table 2. Producers of supporting narratives: civil society

Type of actor	Examples of actors
ENGOS	Climate Coalition (CC) www.koalicjaklimatyczna.org . Institute for Eco-Development (CC member) http://www.ine-isd.org.pl/ WWF Poland (CC member) www.wwf.pl Green Mazovia (CC Member) http://www.zm.org.pl/
Internet portals	Chrońmy Klimat www.chronmyklimat.pl
Opinion leaders/ bloggers	Agnieszka Grzybek http://zieloni2004.pl/Agnieszka-Grzybek-56.htm

Table 3. Producers of contesting narratives: civil society

Type of actor/ member of issue network	Examples of actors in issue network
Grass-roots associations	Polish Association Positive Energy (PAPE) www.stopwiatrakom.eu EcoProBono – Foundation for Constructive Ecology www.ecoprobono.eu Our Land Association http://naszaziemia.org
Trade unions	NSZZ Solidarność www.solidarnosc.org.pl
Think-tanks	Jagiellonian Institute www.jagiellonski.pl FIBRE (Foundation Security-Development-Energy) www.fibre.org.pl
Internet portals	Biznes Alert www.biznesalert.pl
Opinion leaders/ bloggers	Konrad Świrski (Warsaw University of Technology) http://konradswirski.blog.tt.com.pl

3 points need to be made with regard to the 3 groups of actors identified. Firstly, majority of actors identified at the EU-level (Commission consultations) were business organisations and individual companies. Considerably fewer contributions were made by trade unions (to contest EU climate policy) and ENGOS coalition (to support EU climate policy). Interestingly, Polish contributions constituted the biggest share of the „citizens’ individual contributions” category, with the vast majority opposing EU climate policy. Meanwhile, civil society actors that contest EU climate policy were very

active at the national level (parliamentary hearings) and in the national public sphere, but not at the EU level. Secondly, civil society producers of contesting narrative should not be seen as isolated organizations and activists, but rather as an issue network. Not only do the individual messages form a relatively coherent narrative, but also multiple links and forms of cooperation exist, especially with regard to narrative diffusion via internet websites. Thirdly, presence in the social media is rather weak for both groups of civil society narrative producers. This reflects low level of interest of Polish general public in the environmental issues. However, a number of key people involved in the contesting network are university professors with strong presence in traditional media. Moreover, some actors (small foundations) are very active at the local and regional level, maintaining strong ties with local authorities and being regular speakers at various events on local and regional development, especially in rural areas.

A powerful example of grass-roots civil society organization, particularly active in rural areas and small local communities, is Polish Association Positive Energy (PAPE). It is an issue organization that mobilizes citizens to protest against wind farms and sees EU climate policy as responsible for their expansion. In recent years hundreds of small local protest actions took place around Poland to oppose local authorities that accepted wind farm investors. As part of a pan-European network (EPAW: European Platform Against Wind Farms) PAPE is a very active narrative producer at the national level, relying in its argumentation both on Polish experience and information gathered from other member organizations throughout Europe. PAPE concentrates on national and local level mobilization and narrative production, whereas EU-level action is left to EPAW – a network founded in 2008 and consisting of 1250 member organizations in 31 countries³⁵.

³⁵ European Platform against Wind Farms, *EPAW's Objectives*, http://www.epaw.org/about_us.php?lang=en.

3.2. Narrative

Following Miskimmon et al. I assume that narrative is a framework that allows to link apparently unconnected phenomena around a causal transformation, thus giving determined meaning to past, present and future³⁶. The narrative outlines actors, events and problems, while discursively imposing a given interpretation of the past (causes of the problems and role of particular actors) and the future (solutions to the problems and role of particular actors). The choice of components of the narrative as well as framing of connections between them depend on strategic preferences of the narrative producer but also on the constraints the producer is facing. Thus insights into how a given narrative is constructed would increase our understanding of strategies that civil society actors are using in order to articulate and legitimize their claims and achieve political objectives. Analysis of actors' contesting arguments aims at identifying main components of the narrative, as well as the nature of connections between them (how these connections or links are framed).

There are 5 key components of civil society narrative that contests EU climate policy. Accordingly, the policy in its current shape endangers: 1) competitiveness of the economy, 2) human health (noise), 3) environmental protection (birds and landscape), 4) consumer protection (energy poverty); 5) constitutes a geostrategic threat (Russia). Seen in this way, not only is EU climate policy ineffective, but it is also extremely harmful. The narrative needs to provide explanations as to why the European Union pursues such a policy despite 'evident' inefficiency and rising opposition. In this context, 5 components of the civil society narrative contesting European integration – and put forward more or less explicitly – were identified. Importantly, all these arguments have the effect of de-legitimizing European Union, its institutions and the way it

³⁶ A. Miskimmon, B. O'Loughlin, L. Roselle, *Strategic narratives: communication and the new world order*, New York & London: Routledge 2013, p. 4.

functions. They present EU as: a) dominated by Germany and its aggressively pursued interests, b) dominated by powerful business lobbyists, c) dominated by ideological green lobbyists, d) undemocratic and detached from average citizens' concerns, e) dominated by unaccountable elites that take irrational and harmful decisions. The components of the narrative as well as connections made between them were identified on the basis of actors' websites as well as contributions submitted in the EU-level consultation process.

EU climate policy promotes growing share of renewable energy in the European energy mix. Unfortunately, instead of supporting „real” green energy (small local producers and prosumers movement), the EU supports – according to the narrative – big corporations who lobby for subsidies to construct wind, PV and biogas plants. Consequently, huge amounts of European tax payers money are invested in wind farm installations that do not provide stable energy supplies (dependence on weather conditions), but are also extremely harmful to both humans and the environment. On one hand, they produce noise that has detrimental effect to human health and quality of life of people living in the neighbourhood. On the other hand, they have nothing to do with environmental protection as they destroy natural habitats, kill birds (numerous cases of species that are under legal protection in Poland are regularly reported) and negatively affect rural landscape.

However, EU climate policy has above all a very negative impact on the economy of many Member States, especially Poland, and on EU global competitiveness. According to trade union representatives, under climate policy European Commission enforces mechanisms that favour only some EU Member States, and interestingly – the richest ones, while producing unfavourable results for the poor ones, especially for Poland³⁷. Commission proposals on CO2

³⁷ Komisja Krajowa NSZZ Solidarność, *Polska powinna prowadzić własną politykę energetyczną i klimatyczną*, 26.05.2015, <http://www.solidarnosc.org.pl>.

reductions in non-ETS sectors are in the interest of those Member States that are major producers of renewable energy infrastructure and thus lobby for „green energy” to extract subsidies. Moreover, „Brussels” does not accept any proposals that could change the established model of supporting particular technologies produced in the „old” Member States. This is – according to the narrative – a solid proof that EU institutions do not care about air quality, but about financial records of politically influential business sectors. For example, EU ignores the role of forests in CO₂ emissions absorption. Paradoxically, this is because forests are cheap and they do not need subsidies³⁸.

The narrative stipulates that the idea of „EU global leadership” in climate action is a mistake, EU already suffers from carbon leakage and if the policy is continued, it will bury any chances of re-industrialization in Europe. However, the puzzle of why EU insisted on „leading by example”, thus risking further loss of competitive advantage as a bloc, is explained in the narrative with the pursuit of German national interest. Germany, an export-driven economy, was interested in exporting its „green” technologies beyond the EU market. Closing a global deal and ensuring greater financial assistance for emission reductions in developing countries means that they will need to buy renewable technologies – notably in Germany³⁹. German government has also managed to persuade its own citizens that they should carry the burden of subsidizing expansive renewable energy and accept much higher energy bills. In this way, German industry did not suffer and remained competitive on the global market. As a result, „German society subsidizes big corporations and German export”⁴⁰. The problem for Polish economy is

³⁸ Jadwiga Wiśniewska o skutkach rezolucji Parlamentu Europejskiego w sprawie sprawozdania z postępów w dziedzinie energii odnawialnej oraz spraw rozwoju OZE, 06.07.2015, www.sto-pwiatrakom.eu.

³⁹ <http://biznesalert.pl/page/3/?s=pakiet+klimatyczny>.

⁴⁰ FIBRE, *Konkurencyjny przemysł koszmarem konsumenta*, 22.10.2015, <http://www.fibre.org.pl/post/konkurencyjny-przemysl-kosztem-konsumenta/>

that society will not be able to subsidize industry in a similar way. According to Federation of Consumers, Polish households already spend ca. 15% of their revenues on electricity, water and heating bills. Thus Polish industry – already struggling to be competitive – will become even less competitive in foreign markets.

Another important element of the narrative, being raised by cement industry trade unions, is that the EU climate policy leads to a situation, where „EU officials destroy European industry by administratively raising energy prices for the energy-intensive industry”, but at the same time EU imports products from countries „where the climate tax does not exist”. This reduces EU emissions but not global emissions (these actually rise), which is completely counterproductive from the point of view of addressing a global problem of climate change. Moreover, giving preference to imports it destroys its own industry and guarantees market opportunities for biggest polluters, such as China. This of course is against common sense, but EU makes decisions under influence of powerful business lobbyists on one hand and „international green ideologists” or „international ecology corporations” on the other.

Growth in energy prices for individual consumers is a key component of the narrative, extensively used to criticize EU institutions and especially European Commission. Activists pointed out in the Polish media that the latter refuses to publish information on impact of climate policy on energy prices and to include this issue in its impact assessments. It also refuses to provide information on costs of the policy for each Member State individually. The Commission pretends to consult stakeholders and citizens, but in reality the process is biased, undemocratic and it does not take into account concerns that citizens expressed⁴¹.

Finally, the narrative revolves around „de-carbonization”, a phenomenon that is particularly dangerous for Poland, which produces over 85% of its electricity from coal. Depriving Poland of effective

⁴¹ <http://www.ecoprobono.eu/blog>.

usage of its biggest natural energy resource is not only deeply unfair, but also – according to many vocal experts – against EU treaties. Moreover, the policy of de-carbonization effectively means greater reliance on Russian gas, which constitutes a challenge to Polish energy security and puts the country at geostrategic disadvantage.

To sum up, the narrative is highly politicized and clearly favours argumentation coming from one side of the political spectrum, that is the currently ruling Law and Justice. It fits very well into the demarcation/ nationalist side of the cleavage, where cosmopolitan institutions and elites act against interests of citizens, as well as weaker and poorer countries. The „irrationality” of „Brussels” that sticks to its ineffective and harmful climate policy is explained in three ways and each of them provides for a telling frame, which is typical for the anti-integration/ anti-cosmopolitan narrative. Firstly, it is explained with a quasi-imperial argument of German economic interests dominating over interests of other (smaller and less powerful) EU members. Secondly, it is explained with overwhelming impact on EU institutions and decision-making exerted by international, cosmopolitan ‚de-nationalized’ elites - either business or NGO – that serve either capital and corporations or radical ideology that is – supposedly – alien to an average citizen. Thirdly, EU (in particular European Commission) elites themselves are detached from citizens’ concerns and not seriously taking into account any outsider views. Thus the narrative comfortably aligns with a repertoire of classic Eurosceptic arguments voiced by political parties.

4. Disillusioned or disinterested?

This final section is dedicated to consideration of reasons for limited mobilization at the EU level of civil society actors that produce narratives of contestation of EU climate policy. Two explanations are suggested: one focuses on political opportunity structure at the

EU level and the other one on strategic preferences of organisations and issue networks acting at the national level. I present them briefly below, while reflecting how the discussed case of EU climate policy contestation in Poland fits into this framework.

Literature shows that mobilization of civil society organizations depends on the institutional setup, namely open access to multiple policy-making venues⁴². Development of open online consultations and introduction of the European citizens' initiative (ECI) was welcomed by many as an opportunity and incentive for national and outsider actors to engage more at the EU-level. Whereas indeed more actors participate, the bias is still in favour of business interests and organizations from Northern Europe⁴³. The logic of consultations is also about Commission obtaining detailed and technical input in reply to concrete questions and not about deliberation on policy directions. Moreover, there is no supranational public sphere, where narratives of contestation could be voiced, so actors have to rely on transnational communication across national public spheres if they wish to go beyond their national arena⁴⁴. Finally, even though new paths of political opportunities are being created, such as ECI, they are effectively closed. European Commission has consistently refused to propose legislation even in cases, where citizens gathered almost twice as much signatures as required (case of Right2Water initiative).

This has led scholars to conclude that lack of responsiveness on the part of EU has resulted in diminished trust in EU institutions, disengagement of civil society activists, as well as considerable increase in the number of citizens who view EU negatively (for example, in early 2015 41% of citizens had a positive image of EU

⁴² L. Bouza Garcia, *Participatory Democracy and civil society in the EU: agenda-setting and institutionalization*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.

⁴³ C. Quittkat, *The European Commission's Online Consultations: A Success Story?* „Journal of Common Market Studies” 49:3, 2011, pp. 653–674.

⁴⁴ T. Risse, *Introduction...*, op .cit., p. 3.

and 19% – negative; in early 2016 it was 34 and 27% respectively⁴⁵). Crucially, a shift from critical Europeanism towards Euroscepticism was observed among left-wing cosmopolitan activists of global justice movements⁴⁶. Their proposals for alternative Social Europe have been progressively replaced by calls for revival of national sovereignty, whereas strategies of engagement at the EU level lost ground in favour of national and local activism.

If this is the case for civil society activists belonging to the cosmopolitan side of the cleavage, it should come as no surprise that EU-level opportunities are regarded with scepticism by nationalist actors. Polish political parties and trade unions engaged in EU-level mobilization by registering an ECI entitled „Suspension of the EU Climate and Energy Package” as early as mid-2012. The ECI committee benefited from funding granted by a eurosceptic EFD faction in the European Parliament. However, the ECI failed due to the inability to gather the required number of signatures within the 1-year time limit. Interestingly, there is no ECI on abolishing wind farms, although pan-European outreach of EPAW clearly facilitates collection of signatures. Although more research (interviews with EPAW leaders) would be needed to gain insights into their strategies and motives, it could be hypothesized – based on the content of their narrative – that the platform finds direct citizen mobilization at the national and local level more effective due to the perceived unresponsiveness of EU institutions.

Another possible explanation is related to actor-level factors. Literature points to the importance of various resources that actors need to have in order to mobilize at the EU level (expertise, organization, funding). CEEC organizations in particular struggle with insufficient resources⁴⁷. However, limited or lack of EU-level mobili-

⁴⁵ European Commission, *Public Opinion in the European Union: First Results*, Standard Eurobarometer 85, Spring 2016.

⁴⁶ D. della Porta, L. Parks, *Europeanization and Social Movements...*, op. cit., p. 255.

⁴⁷ A.K. Cianciara, *Polish Business Lobbying in the European Union 2004–2009: Examining the Patterns of Influence*, „Perspectives on European Politics and Society”, 14:1, 2013, pp. 63–79.

zation can also result from concrete strategies of actors in question. Thus they may not only be disillusioned with effectiveness of advocacy undertaken at the supranational level, but also disinterested in providing technical and de-politicized input to EU institutions. A nationalist perspective logically privileges the nation-state as locus of agency in defence of national interest. Eurosceptic civil society actors could be thus expected to concentrate on shaping public opinion at the national level in order to urge national governments to act and resist EU pressure within the legal framework available. This strategy may not re-shape EU climate policy but it could mitigate some of its effects that are considered most harmful. Indeed, in July 2016 a new legislation limiting expansion of wind farms in Poland entered into force.

Conclusion and scope for further research

The objective of this paper was to deepen our understanding of patterns of EU contestation in Central and Eastern Europe, while taking the example of Poland and EU climate policy. Firstly, I argued that EU climate policy is not only opposed by business interests, but also by civil society actors. Secondly, I tried to conceptualize climate politics within the cosmopolitanism – nationalism cleavage, while stressing the importance of recognition of civil society-based Euroscepticism. Thirdly, I argued that a parallel exists between partisan and non-partisan actors with regard to narratives of contestation they produce based either on cosmopolitan or nationalist assumptions. Main political parties in Poland may unite in opposition against ambitious EU climate agenda, but they contest it on different grounds and with different objectives in mind. Whereas the previous government relied on a neoliberal cosmopolitan narrative and limited itself to policy contestation, the current government produces an interventionist nationalist narrative and uses contestation at the policy level in order to contest EU at the systemic level.

Civil society actors that are producing narratives of contestation with regard to EU climate policy are active mostly at the national level although some organizations belong to pan-European issue platforms and rely on transnational communication to produce contesting arguments for domestic audience. The narrative reproduces classical eurosceptic arguments about national interest and sovereignty being threatened by egoistic pursuit of economic interest by bigger and more powerful EU Member States as well as by irresponsible policies of cosmopolitan EU elites dominated by international business interests and harmful ideologies.

Such narrative renders strategies of engagement with the EU less probable and seems to privilege action at the national level. Preference for engagement at the national level can be explained with both strategic preferences of eurosceptic actors and perception of opportunity structures at the EU level as closed and EU institutions as unresponsive to concerns voiced by citizens. However, more research (interviews) is needed in order to account for experience and motivation of individual actors who chose or do not chose to use channels of participation in the EU decision-making process.

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Streszczenie

Kontestacja unijnej polityki klimatycznej w Polsce: społeczeństwo obywatelskie i polityka interesu narodowego

Badania nad polityką ochrony środowiska i polityką klimatyczną UE w EŚW koncentrowały się dotąd na dyfuzji norm i procesie europeizacji, starając się wyjaśnić, dlaczego państwa EŚW, w szczególności Polska, sprzeciwiały się ambitnej unijnej agendzie klimatycznej. Wskazywano, że partie polityczne wyrażały jednogłośnie sprzeciw, używając argumentów dostarczanych przez energochłonny przemysł i ignorując głosy wspierających unijną politykę organizacji pozarządowych. Jednak istniejące opracowania tylko częściowo ukazują narrację organizacji społeczeństwa obywatelskiego, ponieważ odnoszą się głównie do międzynarodowych organizacji promujących ochronę środowiska. Podejście proponowane w niniejszym artykule jest inne: celem jest spojrzenie na kontestację unijnej polityki klimatycznej przez pryzmat podziału kosmopolityzm – nacjonalizm. W tekście ukazują eurosceptycyzm organizacji społeczeństwa obywatelskiego, które używają kontestacji UE na poziomie polityki do kontestowania projektu integracyjnego na poziomie systemowym.

Agnieszka K. Cianciara, Contestation of EU Climate Policy in Poland: Civil Society and Politics of National Interest

W wymiarze empirycznym identyfikuję treść narracji aktorów pozarządowych ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem kontestacji systemowej (eurosceptycyzmu) oraz staram się wyjaśnić ograniczoną mobilizację tych aktorów na poziomie unijnym.

Słowa kluczowe: Unia Europejska, Polska, polityka klimatyczna, społeczeństwo obywatelskie, eurosceptycyzm