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Pipe Dreams and Power Struggles

A Case Study of Political Discourse and First-Hand Experiences of the Baltic Pipe
Project in Denmark

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Abstract:

At this pivotal point in history where we must drastically cut global green house gas emissions to curb the brunt of the climate crisis, fossil fuel infrastructure expansion continues to be prioritized by industry and governing institutions. This study examines one such initiative, namely the Baltic Pipe Project, which will transport natural gas from Norway, through Denmark to Poland. Situated in a predominantly Danish context, this qualitative case study engages a political ecology lens to focus on arguments for the project by former Minister of Climate, Energy, and Utilities Lars Christian Lilleholt, as well as semi-structured interviews with Danes who are locally affected by the construction of the pipeline. After a critical discourse analysis and critical thematic analysis of the two bodies of data, respectively, I have problematized the incentive and consequences of Baltic Pipe by identifying Lilleholt's discursive naturalization of gas as a bridging fuel, his dehumanization of Poland and Danish locals' roles, and use of temporal scales to subsume environment into a capitalist economic agenda. These critiques are supplemented by the interviewees' accounts of the project developer's disproportionate focus on economic gains and competition, and their unfair treatment and compensation. These findings indicate that the Baltic Pipe Project is based on and will further perpetuate a system of fossil capitalism and carbon lock-in.

Keywords: The Baltic Pipe Project, carbon lock-in, gas lock-in, fossil fuels, scalar politics, political ecology, fossil capitalism, energy politics, bridging fuels, the green transition.

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Abbreviations

BP – Baltic Pipe
BPNT! – Baltic Pipe Nej Tak!
BPP – Baltic Pipe Project
CDA – Critical Discourse Analysis
CTA – Critical Thematic Analysis
DA – Discourse Analysis
EA – Energy Agency
EPA – Environmental Protection Agency
IPCC – Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
MCEU – Minister of Climate, Energy and Utilities
Nimby – Not in my back yard
PCI – Projects of Common Interest
TA – Thematic Analysis

1. Introduction

My speech for you today is a speech about democracy—or rather the lack of democratic approach in the Baltic Pipe Project. I am speaking here as a landowner and as a Danish citizen feeling run over by 179 politicians, who in my opinion have grotesquely twisted the Danish constitution (Jesper Sanden, “Baltic Pipe Nej Tak!” demonstration, March 7th 2020, my translation).

Approximately 120 people huddled around the small, improvised podium constructed on the trailer of a tractor, clutching banners and signs that protested the Baltic Pipe Project, the object of this demonstration. Speakers and onlookers comprised an unusual representative of the Danish demographic, mainly consisting of younger, urban climate activists and older, rural landowners and farmers. I attended this demonstration to experience first-hand one of several initiatives by locals, activists, and wider movements to show resistance against the Baltic Pipe Project in hopes of halting it, even as developers cut the first sod.

The Baltic Pipe Project (hereafter BPP or, simply, BP) is managed by the Danish government-owned gas and electricity transmission systems operator Energinet and Polish GAZ-SYSTEM and will extend a natural gas pipeline from the North Sea west of Jutland, through Denmark and the Baltic Sea to Poland (Baltic Pipe Project, n.d., a), as seen in Figure 1.

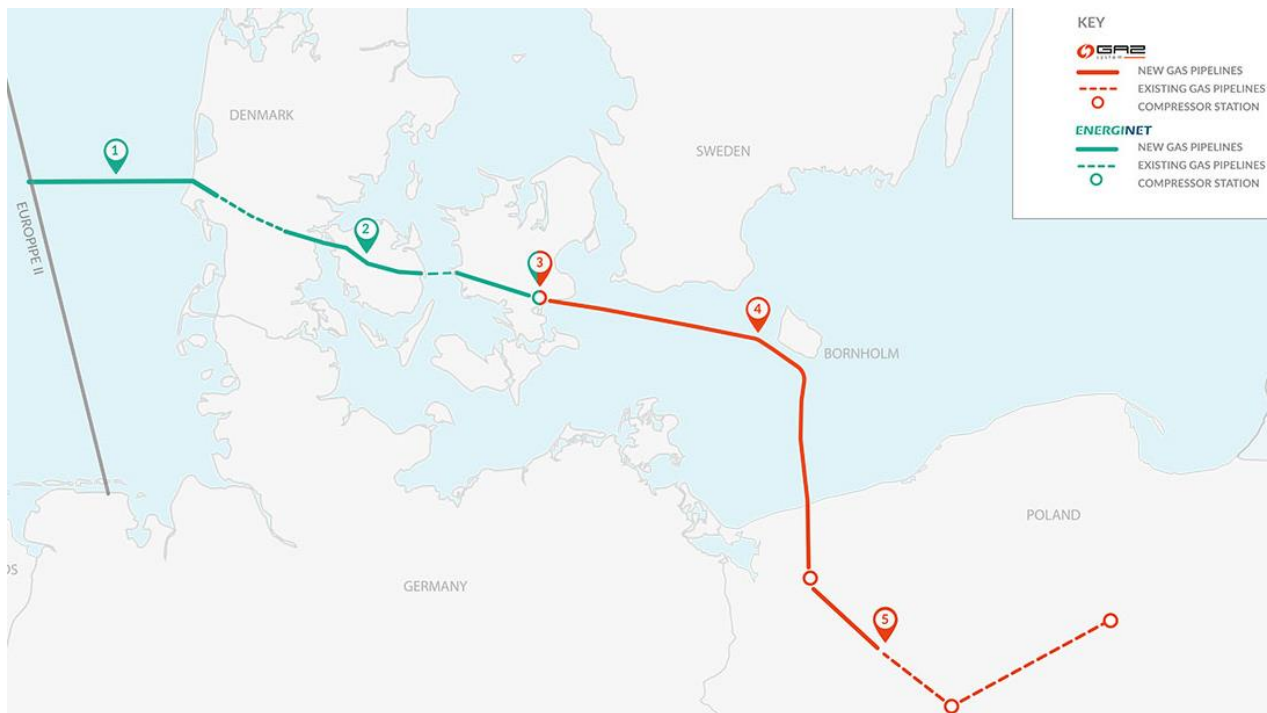


Figure 1: The BP route; legs of the project numbered (Baltic Pipe Project, n.d., b).

Having already obtained support from both the former and current Danish Minister for Climate, Energy, and Utilities (hereafter MCEU) (Energinet 2019b), the project received its final approvals from the Danish Energy Agency (EA) and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in the fall of

2019 (Miljøstyrelsen 2019). The pipeline is set to be completed in October 2022 and will annually transport 10 billion cubic meters of Norwegian natural gas, that is, fossil gas to Poland for 30-50 years (Energinet, n.d.; Baltic Pipe Project 2019). The project is presented as an environmentally conscious decision, as natural gas is less pollutant than other fossil fuels on which the Polish energy consumption currently relies heavily (Energinet, n.d.; Baltic Pipe Project, n.d., c). Socioeconomic benefits and increased energy security are likewise highlighted as interests (Energinet n.d.; Baltic Pipe Project n.d., c), and the project has been featured as one of the EU's Projects of Common Interest (PCI), providing grants and extensive international recognition (Baltic Pipe Project, n.d., b).

Approximately 500 landowners across Denmark face forced expropriation of their land, and oppositions of the project criticize it as a breach of the Paris Agreement and Danish climate laws and goals, as being irresponsible and unacceptable in an age of climate crises, as a violation of the Danish constitution, as undemocratic, and as economically risky (e.g. Arbejderen 2019; NOAH 2019a; NOAH 2019b).

According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, IPCC, (2014), the present is a time of immense climate insecurity, where drastic measures to cut emissions become necessary to avoid unprecedented and irreversible climate disasters. I therefore intend to uncover some of the main complexities and drivers of such a fossil fuel intensive project as BP, by conducting two analyses of separate bodies of data: firstly, a critical discourse analysis (CDA) of two parliament debates with the former MCEU, Lars Christian Lilleholt—who initially gave this project the “green” light—and, secondly, a critical thematic analysis (CTA) of interviews with local Danish citizens who oppose the project. The two analyses will in combination provide a more nuanced assessment of the underlying mechanisms and societal structures from which this case arose and may further perpetuate. This thesis focuses on arguments, underpinnings and injustices through a qualitative case study with the intention to tie this specific phenomenon to larger currents in energy and climate justice.

1.1 Aim and Research Questions

The aim of this thesis is to uncover what underlying assumptions and influences are engaged to discursively defend the BPP, as well as how the project is experienced by those directly affected here in Denmark. Ideologies and discourses by decision makers in combination with the experiences of affected locals, may show how conceptions of energy resources, climate change, sustainability, and human rights perspectives influence choices that have real material consequences. As the need to cut back on global emissions, and doing so fairly, only increases with time, cases of fossil fuel initiatives and the resistance hereof likewise only become increasingly relevant.

Specifically, I will narrow my focus to the following research questions:

- What characterizes former Minister Lars Christian Lilleholt's discourse regarding the Baltic Pipe Project?
- How is the Baltic Pipe Project experienced by local individuals who resist the project?

- How are environmental, social and industrial interests characterized in Lilleholt's argumentation as well as locals' descriptions?
- What structural underpinnings can be identified as sustaining the Baltic Pipe Project?

1.2 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis will firstly provide background information on the details and geopolitical context of this case to outline its relevance and ties to different international interests in section (2.). Hereafter, theoretical and analytical frameworks and supporting literature are reviewed (3.), including concepts of carbon lock-in, hegemony and scale, as well as the critical realist, qualitative case study and political ecology approach. The methods chapter (4.) comprises sampling and gathering of the two bodies of empirical data used for this thesis, namely two parliament debates and interviews with local Danes, as well as the two methods of analyses: CDA and CTA, respectively. The main body of the thesis contains two separate findings sections (5.) before dovetailing the two tracks in a common discussion of the overall results (6.).

2. Background: The Baltic Pipe Project

2.1 International Contexts, Politics, and Interests

In hopes of meeting the Paris Agreement of remaining below a global 2°C warming, the current Danish government declared a new climate law in December 2019 that will seek to reduce national emissions by 70% by 2030 (Folketinget 2020). It may therefore seem contradictory that a DKK 12 – 16 billion fossil fuel project (Energinet, n.d.) such as BP has received support from both the current and former government administrations and relevant Ministers.

Energinet presents the project as socio-economically beneficial for Denmark, as Danish gas consumers will be able to enjoy cheaper gas (appr. DKK 100–125 less annually per household) from the tariffs paid for transporting foreign gas through the country (Energinet, n.d.). It is also argued that once the pipeline has served its purpose of transporting gas, it may be converted to facilitate the distribution of, for example, biofuel instead, promising the possibility of greener infrastructure in the future (Energinet, n.d.). However, researchers both within and outside environmental movements claim that there is no guarantee that an additional source of energy for Poland will lead to a cutback in emissions, as it may just replace Russian gas instead of coal and exclude other alternative options (NOAH 2019a). The promised economic benefit for the Danes is criticized as minuscule in comparison to the environmental and personal expense it comes at. Even more so, others question who will pay for the cost of the project, should Denmark, Poland, or the EU decide to cut off gas sources to enforce emission cutbacks before it has paid itself back—which is, of course, ultimately desired (Berg 2018).

The BPP emerged from Poland's wish to become less dependent on Russian gas supplies (Energinet 2019b), and the EU has condoned this by placing the project on the PCI list, which encourages improvements of European energy security (Baltic Pipe Project, n.d., a). Although the grants following the nomination were not decisive for the outcome of the project, being featured on the PCI list has made the BPP internationally recognized and legitimized (Baltic Pipe Project, n.d., a).

Proponent stakeholders of the BPP argue that gas will function as an important stepping-stone for Poland, and that the nation currently does not have the financial means and infrastructure to support renewable energy alternatives (Brabo 2020). Therefore, natural gas is meant to simultaneously provide a lower emissions alternative to coal and remove dependency on Russian gas at a manageable cost. Proponents criticize the opposition for focusing too narrowly on the purely environmental aspects or individual experiences of the case and failing to regard the bigger picture of international interests, socio-economic benefits, and energy needs (ibid.). Polish ministers and other officials have been paying increasingly frequent visits to Denmark in the beginning of 2020 (e.g. Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of Poland 2020), and articles proclaim that a "Four-decade border dispute [has been] resolved by gas pipe" (Dowell 2018) between Denmark and Poland, putting even more pressure on the international diplomacy of this project. Even US President Donald Trump has commented approvingly of the project, as it distances the EU from Russia (Anonymous 2018), indicating that the geopolitics of the BPP surpass mere Denmark-Poland relations to include Russia-USA. Given the incredible financial implications of the project as well as the large-scale geopolitics at stake, cancelling it at this advanced stage would have far-reaching consequences.

2.2 Process of Approval, Energinet and Government Agencies

Energy infrastructure projects of the enormity of the BP are only occasionally found in Denmark, and being of this scale, the implementation process is legally lengthy and complicated, and pleasing everyone involved becomes exceedingly difficult. Energinet is, as previously mentioned, a government-owned, independent company, and as such they adhere to the competition of the private market economy. They have monopoly on the Danish market for energy transmission systems operators and were therefore required to explore the feasibility of the BPP. Per laws and regulations that govern Energinet, the company's main functions are to provide Danish consumers with affordable energy sources, to increase Danish energy security, and to be competitive on the energy market (Retsinformation 2020). They are, however, not required by law to strive for any specific climate goals, and their structure therefore naturally prioritizes economic rather than environmental interests. Energinet answers primarily to the functioning MCEU, who has the final decision-making power. The first approval of the project came from the previous Minister Lars Christian Lilleholt, and the current Minister Dan Jørgensen has also condoned the project. BP appears to be a political hot potato, and therefore the only statements on the topic from political decision-makers are two open parliament counsels, where Lilleholt answered questions and explained his arguments for the project in the summer of 2018.

Following the political decision to pursue the project, the Danish EPA and EA oversee that all rules and regulations are abided by on land and ocean territory, respectively (Miljøstyrelsen 2019). Their main function is, in *collaboration with the developer* (here Energinet) to implement the project with as much regard for local nature and population as possible and reach a final Environmental Impact Assessment and approval of the project, meaning that they rarely actively work to prevent such initiatives (Retsinformation 2018). As such, the scope of the agencies focuses solely on *local* environmental considerations, while considerations for the *global*, long-term climate effects are deemed purely political and within the jurisdiction of the aforementioned Minister.

2.3 Resistance against Baltic Pipe and Other Natural Gas Projects

In order to implement the pipeline, approximately 200 km of Danish soil must be dug up in a 30 m radius, cutting through the properties of more than 500 landowners. The pipe must navigate a minefield of environmentally protected Natura 2000 areas, towns, businesses, and homes, and the land needed for the project is forcefully expropriated by the Danish state in exchange for a fixed compensation.

There are concrete regulations regarding how, when and how much locally affected citizens must be included in this process. Even so, there are many local accounts of affected citizens feeling ignored, “in the way”, under-compensated, rudely treated, etc., and several groups have been formed to strengthen their forces, such as the Stenderup Initiative with a collective legal approach (Christensen 2019), and Baltic Pipe Nej Tak! (in English Baltic Pipe No Thanks!, hereafter BPNT!), an activist movement that arranges demonstrations and actions of civil disobedience (Baltic Pipe Nej Tak! n.d).



Figure 2a and 2b: BPNT! demonstration, Odense, March 7th, 2020 (photos by the author).

While Danish locals do face land rights struggles, the situation is not as severe here as in other places, and those resisting pipelines in for instance Greece and Azerbaijan face “increasing violence from a militarised police” and are even incarcerated (Corporate Europe Observatory 2017, 16). In contrast to the situation in Denmark, it is important to note that locally affected communities in similar cases

fight for their livelihoods or even lives. The resources, power and platforms available to those affected by these projects vary greatly and has a big influence on their prospects and degree of violation. There are, however, examples of local victories, and Corporate Europe Observatory (2017) describes the MidCat project to bring Algerian gas to Catalonia. This was also met with strong civil resistance both in the region of extraction and along the planned pipeline. The project had already begun in 2011 when it was halted by local opposition, and after a long struggle, the project has still not commenced (ibid. 23-24). Similarly, a gas terminal in Göteborg, Sweden, was terminated following local protest in 2019 (NOAH 2019), and both this project and MidCat being overcome despite their spot on the PCI list creates hope among local landowners and environmentalists that it may not yet be too late to stop the BPP.

3. Theoretical and Analytical Framework

In this section I outline the main theories that I lean upon throughout this thesis, key studies and publications that are relevant in approaching this topic of research, and the methodological lenses engaged. These approaches shed light on power dynamics, socio-spatial relations, and energy resource use in ways that allow underlying assumptions, worldviews, and systems to emerge. These frameworks include carbon lock-in, scalar politics and, very briefly, hegemony, as well as critical realism, a qualitative case study, and political ecology and environmental justice.

3.1 Theories

3.1.1 Carbon lock-in

An extensive and growing body of publications address European dependency on gas and its role as a popularly proclaimed “bridging fuel”, as well as its relation to what is termed “carbon lock-in”. The critical voices in literature on carbon and gas lock-in are based on research of multiple interdisciplinary aspects of society, such as large-scale industry lobbying (Corporate Europe Observatory 2017), systematic and economic barriers embedded into institutional and technological trajectories (Seto et al. 2016; Unruh 2000 and 2002), actors, networks and politics (Fitzgerald et al. 2019), and, finally, discourse (Buschmann and Oels 2018). These structural patterns are identified as locking in a dependence on fossil fuels in societies despite the apparent and increasing need to diminish these industries.

Pérez (2018) has described this global gas lock-in, and although gas is often highlighted by proponents as the least polluting fossil fuel, Pérez underscores that “natural gas is composed mainly of methane and this has a global warming potential 86 times greater than CO₂ in the first 20 years” (ibid. 76)—and that the industry is not accident or leak-free. Taking into account that coal generally emits 214 – 229 pounds of CO₂ per million British thermal units (BTU) of energy, whereas natural gas only emits around 117 pounds of CO₂ per million BTUs (EIA 2020), gas does provide a more sustainable option (methane leaks aside), although, critically, is not sustainable *enough* to meet the

necessary emissions cutbacks. By comparing current emissions from the gas industry and the EU's planned expansion hereof to predict future repercussions of the current trajectory, Pérez (2018) finds that "the results are more than alarming" (ibid. 79). Pérez' findings show how geopolitics and economic and financial interests prove to be the over-arching motives behind decision-making processes in the energy sector—including natural gas—and that these factors further entrench the growing gas lock-in. He elaborates that

... the arguments of the official discourse on gas are about imposing a global consensus on the necessity of its extensive and intensive use. A critical analysis of these arguments reveals biased interpretations, contradictions and unresolved doubts (ibid. 83).

Categories that Pérez has found to be of far less importance include those based in human or environmental interests, such as climate change, rights of consumers, energy poverty, and renewable energy. To this he concludes that

... even biophysical limits are subordinate and are only considered if they harmonise with the upper layers (...) climate change will be fought if it does not interfere with the accumulation of capital (ibid. 84).

Furthermore, Buschmann and Oels' (2018) research of the German energy industry shows how discourse also instigates carbon lock-in. They argue that a discourse lock-in is just as salient as other barriers to a just transition to renewable alternatives, and they show that the ways in which we frame and assign power to certain concepts help entrench their hegemony, holding that the "common role for actors is that of reproducing dominant discourses in everyday behaviour, thereby reinforcing existing lock-ins" (ibid. 11).

3.1.2 *Scale and hegemony*

Scale in social sciences is divided within spatial, temporal and social dimensions. Rangan and Kull (2009) underline the connection between biophysical scales and socio-spatial scales in political ecology, emphasizing that

... scale is produced to explain, or argue for or against, the processes and outcomes of ecological change in different realms of politics and policy discourse. Scale is the means by which ecology is made 'political' (ibid. 37).

Scale as an analytical tool is used as "a dynamic concept, a social construct, and as a subject or object of politics" (ibid. 28), meaning that definitions of scale are determined relative to the direction of analysis and can draw on varying degrees of ecological and social aspects of a given case. Viewing scales as processual assumes their ability to change, as well as an expectation for them to do so, and as such problematizes the social underpinnings that support them. Scales help tie biophysical and geographical components to human organization and understanding of the natural world, as it reflects

how we conceptualize space and time and to what we assign power. As Meadowcroft (2002) points out, “environmental disturbances are only defined as ‘problems’ because they are experienced as problematic by humans” (Meadowcroft 2002, 172). Temporal scale is also central to the BPP, as the longevity hereof seems contradictory to the imminent “deadline” for necessary cutbacks in emissions, and he adds that “[t]here is widespread criticism of the ‘short-termism’ built into contemporary politics (...) and that “‘the scale’ of the political response to environmental dilemmas is inadequate (too small or too slow)” (ibid. 169).

Nyberg et al. (2018) assess the ways in which scale is engaged to argue for and against hydraulic fracturing (fracking) in the UK. Their analysis reviews data from public inquiry meetings with opponents and proponents of the UK gas industry, and by identifying patterns of associating or disassociating certain groups and interests in the arguments presented, they showed that the dominant institutional representatives

... rather than connecting their interests with particular groups of actors, [claim] to simultaneously represent local, national, and global interests. This scaling of interests allows the hegemonic project to discursively support the development of fossil fuels *and* appear to address climate change (ibid. 247, emphasis in original).

Their study therefore showed that the already dominant proponent narrative gained support through discursively arguing on and justifying all relevant scalar levels, while the opponents of the industry were limited to appealing to fewer areas of interest and scales (ibid. 250). This perspective of Gramscian hegemony studies “domination across economic, political, cultural and ideological domains of society,” or “power over society” as put by Fairclough (1995, 76). Gramsci criticizes the capitalist state for winning consent for rule over classes both coercively and through the naturalization of ideology (Gramsci 1971, 325-6), and the goal of dominant, hegemonic discourses is therefore to win consent of subordinate classes through “cultural and ethical engineering” or “reshaping [of] subjectivities” (ibid. 93).

3.2 Methodological Approach

3.2.1 The ontological and epistemic lens of critical realism

I rest my approach to this thesis topic on the ontology and epistemology of critical realism. Addressing ontology and epistemology explains what is assumed about what exists in the world, as well as what and how we can know about it, and it therefore shapes the underlying assumptions and approaches to a study. The ontological structure of critical realism comprises the stratification of reality, which divides the existing world into three separate strata: the *empirical*, the *actual*, and the *real*. In this division the *empirical* constitutes that which we are able to observe through our experiences, the *actual* being events that occur as a result of underlying mechanisms, or, the *real* (Bhaskar 1998, 41). This implies that there are currents of structural forces that become visible and measurable to us through events in the actual. However, that is not the same as claiming that we can

observe these phenomena in their entirety, because the fact that we also exist in the world as an observer renders it impossible for us to view something with complete objectivity as it exists independently of our experience of it. Our possible knowledge production is therefore limited by our own interference in what we are studying (ibid. 41-42). I will therefore refrain from assuming that the opinions expressed in the statements used for analysis reflect reality, but will instead focus on how these instances relate to underlying mechanisms of social power relations and political interests. Critical realism forefronts a social sciences approach to ecological issues, and in combination with political ecology it helps “highlight how scientific explanations of environmental change provide only partial insights into complex biophysical processes, and that existing models of explanation reflect the agendas of the societies that created them” (Forsyth 2001, 146).

3.2.2 *Qualitative case study*

Yin (2018) identifies a case study as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the “case”) in depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident” (ibid. 15). I similarly wish to untangle the connections between the case of the BPP and its socio-ecological context. As opposed to a purely positivist approach, where one wishes to increase distance to the object of study in order to obtain objectivity and academic rigor, Burawoy (1998) has discussed the benefits and flaws of the qualitative case study method as a reflexive model of science, where explicit immersion and engagement of the researcher is viewed as an asset. The incorporation of the researcher into research is described by Burawoy as “[thematizing] our participation in the world we study. We keep ourselves steady by rooting ourselves in theory that guides our dialogue with participants” (ibid. 5). His focus is on extended, long-term inclusion of the researcher into everyday life of a chosen local context, and therefore it differs from this thesis project, where I use a more targeted case study approach to relate the local to the global.

3.2.3 *Political ecology and environmental justice*

While *human* ecology encompasses the field of human interaction with natural, built and social environments, *political* ecology emphasizes the problematization and politicization of environmental issues. By situating this thesis within political ecology, I recognize that environmental conflict is inherently of a political nature, which enables me to highlight power disparity, structural injustice and worldviews, providing a critical view of the conventions and incentives of those in power (cf. Robbins 2012, 13). In researching the BPP, political ecology helps problematize the taken for granted assumptions and conceptions of gas, energy, and the environment that may be politically and culturally naturalized, while focusing on the relations between and consequences for the different social groups involved. Political ecology aspires to draw out the consequences of power hierarchies, accepting that resources, profits, and scarcities are often distributed unevenly (ibid.).

Treating an environmental conflict as symptomatic of larger systemic patterns is another aim of political ecology, by building on contextual circumstances to explain a particular phenomenon—and vice versa. In other words: “any tug on the strands of the global web of human-environment linkages reverberates throughout the system as a whole” (ibid. 13). BP is part of a system that connects countless similar resource struggles to a long history of fossil fuel use and a present that decides the trajectory of our common ecological future. Voices in environmental justice scholarship and activism similarly view the climate crisis as as much of a human rights crisis as an ecological one, and Orange (2017) asserts that the core of climate justice constitutes sufficiently lowering emissions—in a matter that restores social justice to the world’s most vulnerable (ibid. 22). Drawing on political ecology and environmental justice perspectives allows me to consider aspects of the BPP beyond the biophysical and technical emissions rates to include the effects of social organization.

4. Research Methods

This thesis is twofold, and the methods therefore comprise two distinct processes for collection and analysis of empirical data. I will firstly describe the methods used regarding the political statements by Lars Christian Lilleholt and the CDA approach, followed by the methods for the qualitative interviews of locally affected Danes and the CTA approach.

4.1 Open Councils in the Danish Parliament

To analyze the motives behind and characteristics of the BPP, I looked for statements and material from the main decision-makers of this project. The results are two open councils in the Danish Parliament in 2018 regarding the BPP with the MCEU of the time, Lars Christian Lilleholt. As previously mentioned, statements regarding the project are very scarce, and the current Minister, Dan Jørgensen has given no substantial comments on the matter. The specific details of the data are described in Table 1, and I will for ease of reference hereafter refer to them as the “parliament debates.”

Table 1: Details of the open councils.

Open consultation regarding the Baltic Pipe Project 30 th of August 2018, 1.30 – 2.30 pm	Question Time in the Parliament 16 th of April 2019 1.15 – 1.35 pm
The Climate, Energy and Utilities Committee requested an open consultation with the Minister Lars Christian Lilleholt to answer, “how Baltic Pipe will contribute to the stability and energy security in the Danish energy system.” Available at < https://www.ft.dk/udvalg/tidligere-udvalg/EFK/kalender/38904/samraad.htm >	Two other parliament members requested that the Minister Lars Christian Lilleholt discuss “whether building the Baltic Pipe contributes to climate efforts.” Available at < https://www.ft.dk/samling/20181/almdel/efk/spm/90/index.htm >

The two transcriptions combined comprise 24 pages, and I did not omit any markers of spoken language in order to obtain as accurate a linguistic analysis of the arguments as possible (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009, 203). Quotes from all the data in this study (including the interviews) have been translated into English for the thesis by myself with the second opinion of another student. In the debates, other politicians—predominantly from left-wing parties—present Lilleholt with critical questions, including concerns regarding environmental aspects and climate goals, the risk of locking both Poland and Denmark into a gas trajectory, economic risks, the robustness of the business case, treatment of local Danes, etc.

4.1.1 Delimitation and data for background information

For this part of the thesis I considered using a myriad of other documents central to the project, such as Facebook posts and comments, researchers' articles, project websites and documents from the EPA and the EA, the Environmental Assessment Law, Energinet's laws and regulations, public enquiry responses, etc. Ultimately, they were deselected due to their format, content or incompatibility with other documents for analysis, as well as to narrow the scope of this study. Therefore, these sources instead comprise the vast number of references for background knowledge and will thus support the analysis of the main material in this study.

4.1.2 Critical discourse analysis

I will use the framework of CDA to analyse the parliament debates, as this approach allows me to link the linguistic structures of Lilleholt's discourse to relevant underlying social relations that drive the BPP. DA recognizes that the ways in which we discursively construct concepts have real material consequences, meaning that the linguistic is based in and mutually related to the social, as put by Jørgensen and Phillips (2002):

[L]anguage is structured according to different patterns that people's utterances follow when they take part in different domains of social life (...) 'Discourse analysis' is the analysis of these patterns (ibid. 1).

DA assumes that language plays an active part in the social construction of the world (ibid. 4), and reveals how the ways in which we use language frame our acceptance and expression of reality. More specifically, CDA as theorized by Norman Fairclough (1995; 1992) foregrounds how language use is linked to larger social structures of power, ideology, and injustice. The main goal of CDA

... sets out to make visible through analysis, and to criticize, connections between properties of texts and social processes and relations (ideologies, power relations) which are generally not obvious to people who produce and interpret those texts, and whose effectiveness depends upon this opacity (Fairclough 1995, 96-97).

In this view of DA lies the idea of a dialectical relationship between discourse and social structures, in that “discourse is shaped and constrained by social structures”, while “discourse is also socially constitutive” (Fairclough 1992, 64). As such, discourse is socially situated and is based on pre-existing social relations, hegemony and ideologies, while maintaining the power to further perpetuate or *transform* these pre-existing structures.

Central to Fairclough’s approach to CDA is his three-dimensional model for the main constituents of the discursive dimensions, namely *text*, *discourse* and *social practice*, as depicted in Figure 3.

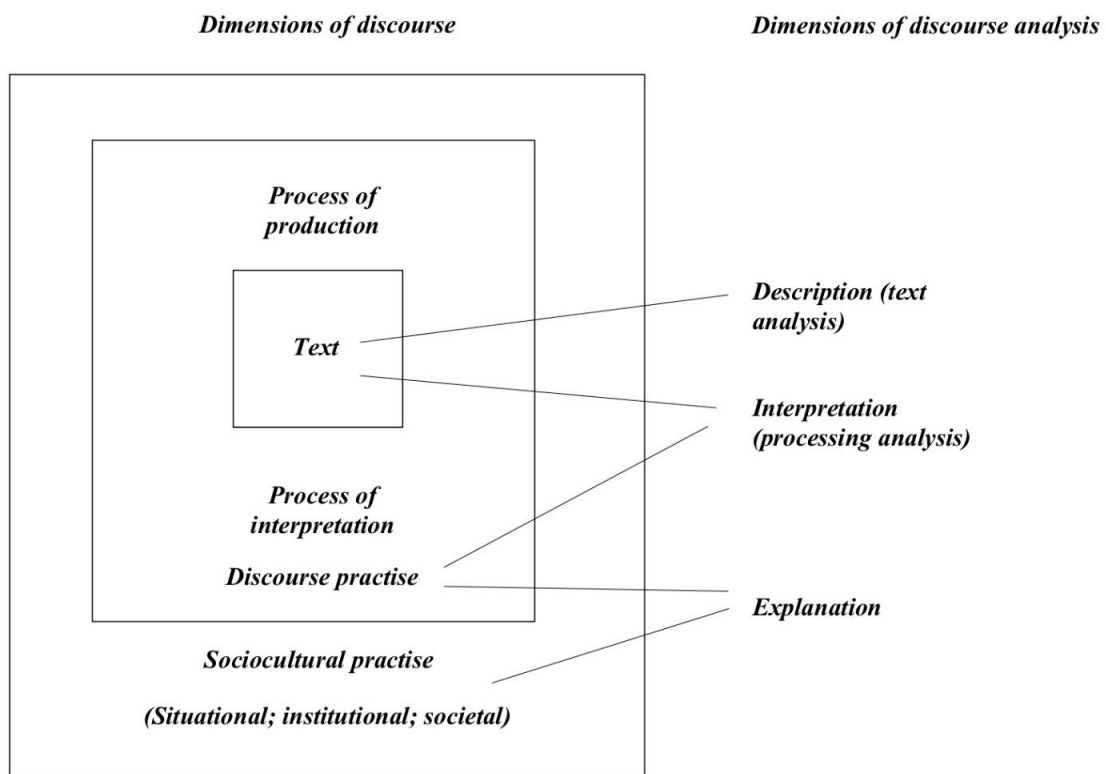


Figure 3: The three dimensions of discourse analysis (adapted by the author from Fairclough 1995, 98).

The figure illustrates how any discursive event simultaneously consists of both physical text (oral or written), a discursive practice (processes of production, consumption and distribution), as well as a sociocultural practice, where social relations are both referenced and reinforced or challenged.

The first dimension of discourse as text addresses analysis on the linguistic level. Fairclough maintains that both *form* and *meaning* of a text are important for analysis of social structures, as the ways in which meaning is presented formally also contains detectable information on underlying attitudes and presuppositions through “‘traces’ in text surface features” (Fairclough 1995, 97). Therefore, this dimension of analysis includes regard for vocabulary, grammar, cohesion, and overall text structure (ibid. 75).

The dimension of discursive practice and appertaining analysis, moving from the descriptive to the interpretive before arriving at the final explanatory stage, involves the processes of text production,

distribution and consumption. Fairclough highlights that production and interpretation of text is socially restricted based in “available members’ resources – internalized social structures, norms, conventions, including order of discourse” (ibid. 79). Finally, discourse as a social practice arrives at the explanatory stage of sociocultural practice at both the situational, institutional and societal levels, emerging from the more local and specific to global and systemic, a final stage at which the researcher arrives after alternating between the different levels continuously.

Specific to the *critical* and *social* aspects of Fairclough’s CDA is the focus on the dynamics of hegemony and ideologies, strongly inspired by Gramscian and Foucauldian concepts hereof. Using hegemony as a theoretical and analytical tool provides the explanatory link between social practices and discursive practices, and places “discourse within a view of power as hegemony” (Fairclough 1992, 86). Ideology is here treated as significations and constructions of reality that rest in institutional and discursive practices (ibid. 87).

In analyzing the questions and answers in the parliament debates, I primarily focused on the answers provided by Lilleholt, but also kept in mind that the nature of the interaction as well as the questions asked by other politicians are important in understanding Lilleholt’s statements. Working with the transcripts, I initially read and re-read them, marking down salient themes and statements. From this I have chosen specific questions as focus for my analysis based on my reflections on the text and research questions. These are as follows:

- How are gas and the BPP characterized?
- How is climate change, environment, and sustainability characterized?
- How are the Danish and Polish nations and people addressed?
- What socio-spatial and temporal scales are engaged and how?
- What and whose interests are prioritized over others?
- What benefits and disadvantages are stressed?

Throughout the analysis I paid special attention to grammatical constructions of sentences, word choice, repetition, as well as the interaction between questions and answers. From this, the overall trends emerged that are described in more detail in the analysis and discussion.

4.2 Gathering Field Work Data

The second part of the empirical data was collected to provide qualitative personal accounts and insights by Danes directly affected by the BPP who resists the project.

4.2.1 Sampling

Finding participants for interviews began as a wish to learn more about the BPP and speak to different actors involved. Selecting key organizations or individuals to contact was therefore a result of purposeful sampling, as well as opportunistically following new leads (Miles and Huber 1994, 28).

My initial points of contact were with persons from Energinet, the EA, EPA, BPNT!, and environmental organisation NOAH. From those, I used the snowball method (ibid.) to contact founders of the Stenderup Initiative, and I also reached out to a golf club, which had been mentioned to me in several other interviews as having fought against their expropriation. I naturally encountered locals who are very engaged in the topic, and it is therefore not my intention to have a complete view of the general attitudes among those affected by the project.

4.2.2 Participant observation

In addition to interviews with individuals, I wished to gather first-hand data by participating in any relevant events regarding the project (Bryman 2012, 493). Already being well past the period for public hearings and information meetings, and with the COVID-19 outbreak occurring halfway through my thesis semester, I attended one demonstration by BPNT! in Odense on March 7th, 2020. From the data gathered at the demonstration I have included one speech by soon-to-be expropriated landowner Jesper Sanden in the analysis. I took extensive notes of protesters and onlookers, slogans, banners and signs, songs, etc., and took pictures. This provided me with more insight into the movement as collectively experienced and expressed.

4.2.3 Preparing and conducting interviews

I conducted nine interviews with a total of 10 persons, an overview of which is presented in Table 2. Hereof, interviews with the six local Danes were selected for analysis.

Table 2: Conducted interviews.

Participant	Type/place of interview	Date of interview	Relation to BP	Interview length in ca. minutes	Use of interview
Jacob Sørensen	Phone interview	04/03/20	Researcher from NOAH	40	Background knowledge
Stig Selby	Personal interview on his property	06/03/20	Impending expropriation	90	Analysis
Anonymous	Personal interview at workplace	09/03/20	Representative of proponent organization	60	Background information
Anonymous	Phone interview	12/03/20	Representative of proponent organization	40	Background information
Anonymous	Phone interview	12/03/20	Representative of proponent organization	50	Background information
Nils Rasmussen	Phone interview	23/03/20	Impending expropriation	30	Analysis
Tina Bjerregaard Jensen	Phone interview	23/03/20	Local citizen, BPNT!	20	Analysis
Jørgen Jæger Pedersen	Phone interview	24/03/20	Former Chairman at Golfklubben Lillebælt. Impending expropriation	30	Analysis
Anker Bruhn, Christian Bramsen	Group phone interview	24/03/20	Impending expropriation, Stenderup Initiative	90	Analysis

A semi-structured approach was chosen for the interviews in this study, and I maintained an informal format that would both allow spontaneity and flexibility, while covering key topics for later analysis (Bryman 2012, 471). The interviews were simultaneously exploratory, where the researcher “introduces an issue, an area to be charted or a problem complex to be uncovered, follows up on the subject’s answers, and seeks new information about and new angles on the topic” (Kvale 2007, 40). The overall goal of the study guided me in shaping topics to uncover in the interviews, and I was especially interested in the interactions between the different actors and how my interviewees experienced and characterised these. Drawing on methods from Kvale (2007), Turner (2010), and Bryman (2012), the interview guide contained strategically formulated questions based on my research questions and a collection of possible theoretical frameworks that I expected to be helpful and relevant in explaining this phenomenon. For interviews with local residents, the topics I wished to cover included:

- How this project began for this person, and how it progressed
- Whether/how they have actively fought this case
- Why they might have chosen to engage in this case
- What kind of opposition they and their community may have met
 - Have their voices been heard? How? How not?
- Their general opinions of the case
- Their expectations and hopes for the case’s further development
- Opinions, experiences, themes they seem to bring to the forefront themselves

The interview guides for the researcher or institutional representatives were tailored to their specific relation to the case and what insights and information they were able to provide.

When conducting the interviews, I led with a short briefing (Kvale 2007, 56) describing what I study, what the focus of my project is, asking for consent to record and cite, and explaining why it was important to speak to that particular person. All of the interviews but one were recorded, and I took extensive notes during all to underline salient themes or new ideas. While nudging the interviewee through my predetermined topics during the interviews, I mainly let them guide the conversation, which lead to unexpected insights and perspectives. The specific questions in my interview guide helped me remember beneficial sentence structures to keep the conversation dynamic and provide clear, unambiguous questions.

For the only interview for analysis that took place in person, I visited Stig’s premises, and he showed me where on his property the pipeline is planned to run (as seen in Figure 4), an experience that provided deeper insight and understanding, as “walking with interviewees generates more place-specific data than sedentary interviews (...) engaging to a greater extent with features in the area under study” (Evans and Jones 2011, 857).



Figure 4: Red flags outline the future path of the pipeline near Stig's residence. Photo by the author.

The majority of the other interviews were conducted over the phone, which Bryman (2012, 488) describes can both improve or impair the quality of the interview. The one group phone interview I had was very successful, as the interviewees knew each other and frequently touched in with me to ensure that they were still on track. After each interview, I finished our conversation with a debriefing (Kvale 2011, 57), again thanking for their help and asking whether they had anything else relevant to add. All the interviews were conducted in Danish, and quotes for this thesis were translated by myself. Although ultimately deselected for analysis, the interviews with institutional representatives proved to be very valuable in understanding the circumstances, processes and practicalities that help clarify the case.

The interviews for analysis were all transcribed and constitute 60 pages of written text. The transcriptions were not exact replicas of the spoken dialogue but were adequately “translated” from spontaneous speech into written language, as the subsequent analysis focuses on the content rather than form (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009, 203). The transcripts were checked for quality several times, and an evaluation of the interviews showed that useful themes and perspectives for analysis were indeed present.

4.2.4 *Critical thematic analysis*

I have chosen CTA for the analysis of the interviews and demonstration speech, as this will bring forth the most salient themes in my interviews and link these to larger social structures that tie this particular collection of experiences to a wider context. TA has been chosen for this body of empirical

data in order to stay close to the data while guided by the direction in the research questions (Kuckartz 2013). It is a common analytical tool for qualitative interviews, and Lawless and Chen (2018) propose including a critical lens in the process to combine specific observations with larger societal currents or struggles: “Our analysis presents itself not as a summary of participants’ experiences, but instead moves to a macro-level analysis that links everyday discourse to larger ideologies” (ibid. 12). In analysing my interview transcripts, I maintained a continual process between integrating the material and research questions, reading and re-reading the transcripts to familiarize myself (Kuckartz 2013, 71). I followed the two-step format by Lawless and Chen (2018), which contains the “open-coding” phase of determining themes and coding relevant fragments of text accordingly, and “closed-coding”, where the gathered themes and codes are considered in relation to overarching ideologies, power structures, and social relations (ibid. 7).

The themes in the open-coding phase are listed below, and the results of the second phase are reviewed in the analyses and discussion sections.

- Framing of the BPP and gas as an energy source
- Framing of environment, climate and sustainability
- Presented priorities, interests and responsibility—both own and others’
- Framing of international relations and social groups

In the initial phase of identifying relevant and dominant themes, guidelines set forth by Ryan and Bernard (2003) aided the search. This included looking for markers such as: repetitions, local typologies or categories, metaphors or analogies, transitions from topic to topic, similarities, differences, linguistic connectors, missing data, and theory-related material (ibid.).

4.3 Limitations, Positionality, and Ethics

To adjust the scope of this thesis I have chosen to focus on the case of the BPP in a Danish perspective, although its interests and consequences far exceed these borders. This decision was based on convenience as much as the added value in myself being immersed in the socio-cultural context of the study, allowing me to understand and explore it in a deeper way than I might in a situation that is foreign to me. I recognize my positionality in this case as both a Danish person, but also a human ecology student that is naturally very skeptical and critical of fossil fuel initiatives. Even so I have openly and fairly listened to the different views in this case, and I have let the chosen theories and analytical approaches guide me in my interactions with interviewees and analyses of empirical data.

I remain aware that I as a researcher intervene in the participant’s world in accordance with Burawoy’s observation of the interview situation (Burawoy 1998, 14), extracting their knowledge and experiences and that this output is affected by my own presence. Although the topics in this thesis are not as personal and sensitive as others might be, I was conscious that I in asking for someone’s insight invade their world and gain something from them, and I have in my transcriptions, analyses and writing process strived to remain respectful and true to their voices. When I spoke to locals who

expressed hope that my thesis might help the cause I explained that this is generally unlikely, but that it may be publicly available online once finished.

The national lockdown following the COVID-19 outbreak March 2020 resulted in the majority of my interviews being over the phone instead of in person, and this has in some instances resulted in shorter and less in-depth interviews.

Although I believe to have chosen the most suitable methods for analysis for the types of data in this study, both CDA and CTA have their limitations. A central criticism of CDA relate to the empirically vague delimitation of what practically constitutes the discursive dimension, and Jørgensen and Phillips (2002) suggest that this issue be improved by treating “it as an analytical distinction rather than an empirical one” (ibid. 89). Breeze (2011) compiles the over-arching criticisms of CDA, including the lack of focus on the specific small-scale social contexts of the discursive act, the often-negative underpinning of the critical lens, the political direction of the analysis, and lack of rigorous linguistic analysis (ibid. 502-17). I have in line with the criticism chosen to refrain from thoroughly addressing the social arena in which the parliament debates take place in order to narrow my scope. In my political ecology approach, I have explicitly stated my position through the theories and frameworks I have chosen—which are naturally critical towards the fossil fuel industry and seek to identify the dangers hereof. Finally, with a BA in linguistics, I have been exceedingly thorough in my text analysis of the parliament debates.

A weakness of CTA, on the other hand, is that TA is often described and defined very differently, and Bryman (2012) notes that “although qualitative researchers often claim to have employed TA, it is not an identifiable approach” (ibid. 578), and it is therefore important to clearly state which of many approaches is taken. Nowell et al. (2017) similarly emphasize how TA bears the risk of inconsistency and they note that it becomes imperative to be methodological and rigorous in this approach: “While thematic analysis is flexible, this flexibility can lead to inconsistency and a lack of coherence” (ibid. 2). I have on this basis aimed to remain transparent in my analytical process.

5. Analyses

The findings from the analyses have been divided into two sections, Part I for the CDA of the political debates and Part II for the CTA of interview transcripts and demonstration speech. The findings will hereafter be related to their structural and ideological underpinnings in the discussion.

5.1 Findings Part I: Out of the Ground?

As I will demonstrate throughout this chapter, the previous MCEU Lars Christian Lilleholt’s discursive defense of the BPP is characterized by giving prioritization to industrial and economic interests, subsequently shaping the conceptualization of what he refers to as “the green transition”, as well as framing the BPP as a humanitarian endeavor and dehumanizing the Polish and Danish

populations. The discursive tools that enable these arguments in the debates are described in the subsections below, tying detail-oriented linguistic text analysis to larger, structural sociocultural currents.

5.1.1 *Naturalization of gas as a bridging fuel and conceptualization of the “green transition”*

The gas itself that will run through the BP is strongly debated and is alternately referred to as “natural gas”, “fossil gas” or, simply, “gas”. Opponent politicians critical to the project refer to gas as “natural” 10 times, while they much more frequently either refer to it as “fossil gas” or include it under umbrella terms such as “fossil fuels” or “fossil energy”. In comparison, Lilleholt attributes gas with the term “natural” a full 48 times. Deeming the gas either *natural* or *fossil* leaves vastly different connotations, the former sounding much more positive than the latter.

Apart from what the energy source itself is explicitly called, the way it is described and what it is (dis)associated with also provides insight into underlying presuppositions about its nature. Lilleholt creates a very strong dichotomy between gas and coal by reiterating countless times the environmental incentive to reduce Poland’s dependency on coal, and he very insistently contrasts the two energy sources’ potency:

You have to find an alternative that’s stable. And there you could say that natural gas is an alternative, and that it has a CO₂ emission that’s almost half that of coal.

Poland is today very dependent on old-fashioned and pollutive coal power, and the country is the 10th largest consumer of coal in the world. Natural gas is less CO₂ pollutant and a more flexible fuel that interacts very well with sun and wind energy.

Lilleholt often refers to gas as an *alternative* to coal, a term usually used for renewable sources, repeatedly creating an association hereto. Other positive words are also used to emphasize gas several times, such as *flexible*, *stable*, and *a good and realistic step* towards sustainability. Gas and coal are constantly compared in isolation as opposites, nudging gas closer to the category of more sustainable fuel types—however Lilleholt does explicitly admit that there is no guarantee that coal will be substituted for gas.

The relationships between the different energy sources discussed are also influenced by the nominalization of “the green transition”, to which Lilleholt frequently refers as his approach to climate change mitigation. According to Fairclough (1992, 179), the nominalization of such a vast and complex process serves the function of turning the concrete into more abstract terms, removing actors and agents and thereby responsibility and tangible consequences. The term “green transition” in itself rewards no information on distribution of power and resources, time restraints, goals or any other variables. However, the sentences that the concept appears in shed light on expectations and implicit attitudes about what it entails, as seen in Lilleholt’s arguments below.

Of course, Poland isn't in any way in the same gear as us when it comes to the green transition. It is not realistic that Poland from one day to the other just changes their entire energy supply to sun and wind. There is a long, long road ahead. By providing this opportunity to be able to draw on natural gas from the North Sea, Poland actually gets the opportunity to speed up the green transition, as the case is that natural gas, as we know, emits about half as much CO₂ as coal.

One could wish, of course, that Poland took the step from dependence on coal and directly on to renewable energy such as sun and wind. Unfortunately, I must say that this is not realistic. Poland has a completely different energy mix than we have in Denmark. Gas via Baltic Pipe is therefore a good and fast steppingstone in Poland's green transition.

A recurrent theme in both these quotes and the debates in general is using a metaphor for the *green transition* as a path, road or a journey. This can be derived from wordings such as *in the same gear*, having a *long road ahead*, taking *steps*, and using gas as a *steppingstone*. Other examples especially include referring to Poland's current energy situation as being in *a whole other place* than a Danish "we"—a formulation where Lilleholt alludes to the fact that Poland is metaphorically behind Denmark without saying it explicitly.

Lilleholt emphasizes this need for gas as a segue to greener alternatives with several discursive tools. In the first quote, different grammatical markers indicate his level of affiliation with the statements he makes, or modality (Fairclough 1992, 158), and adverbial clauses acting as modal adverbs such as *of course* and *actually* are repeated several times to cement his statements as facts. Especially the Danish word *jo* (*of course*) implies that the claim is common knowledge or self-evident. Furthermore, Lilleholt expresses objective modality, meaning that he excludes indications that the statements presented are his personal opinions, allowing him to appear assertive and use discourse to shape reality according to his agenda.

In the second sentence of the first quote, distance is created to the idea of Poland switching to renewable energy sources directly from coal without stopping for gas on the way, as the first clause deems this scenario objectively unrealistic. Hereafter the wordings *from one day to another*, *just* and *entire* help paint this wish as something dramatically unobtainable and naïve, and *There is a long, long road ahead* further entrenches the sense of distance. Although the nominalization of the *green transition* renders is semantically vague in isolation, it becomes clear from this context as well as many other similar examples from the debates that Lilleholt applies this term to cover anything that leads to lower emissions, applying the ideology that any little improvement is a "step" in the right direction. In the second quote, a very hypothetical and fictional theme is introduced through the words *One could wish*. In this sentence Poland is granted agency (which Fairclough describes as neutral transitivity), but in a dire situation, where Denmark's help is needed to end its *dependence* on coal—the Danish word for which, *afhængighed*, can also mean "addiction", providing the connotation that Poland as a person is addicted to coal.

5.1.2 Poland as a humanitarian project and the dehumanization of local Danes

Describing societal changes or “development” as physical movement is extremely commonplace and becomes especially problematic when dictated for another party by an affluent, highly industrial nation. Authorities in the Global North have for centuries imagined the “development” of other communities and societies in their own image, and this typical Western/Eastern relationship also seems to permeate the constructed dichotomy between Poland’s victimization and Denmark’s heroism found in Lilleholt’s discourse. This notion of (lack of) development being in the way of the “green transition” is exemplified in Lilleholt’s comments on the incentive for growth in Poland:

With the economic growth there is in Poland at the moment—fortunately, it is very, very encouraging—there will of course also be an increased need for energy for Poland to maintain that growth.

Not only is growth framed extremely positively, but an increased energy consumption is actually encouraged in order to sustain economic growth as an end, subsuming the idea of energy “needs” into a capitalist economic agenda. This also implies that what are considered “needs” is wholly based on a society’s maximum capacity rather than minimum requirements—or ecological limits—and that economic growth is the sole means to achieving a societal standing that is acceptable by imposed Western European measurements.

When referencing Poland as a recipient of the benefits of this project, Lilleholt discursively creates a humanitarian agenda, as can be seen in the quote below:

I have usually had the experience that Enhedslisten is a solidary party that is engaged in solidarity, also across national borders.

In this quote, Lilleholt is responding to a statement where political member of the far left-wing party Enhedslisten, Søren Egge Rasmussen, is skeptical towards intentions and repercussions of the project, and Lilleholt responds by questioning the coherence between Rasmussen’s sentiment and the values for which his party is known. The accusation is indirect and initiated by explicitly subjective modality making the statement less harsh and implying that the BPP, as opposed to Rasmussen’s opinions, is indeed a solidary project. Poland is generally described as a passive and helpless *Polish* mass, without any distinction between internal communities, interests, or characteristics. In the larger context of this argument in the debates, by highlighting Polish misfortune, Lilleholt manages to portray the opposition as privileged, arrogant, and naïve.

Local Danes who are affected by the project are similarly dehumanized in Lilleholt’s discourse. In the following quote, Lilleholt praises Energinet for how their dialogue with local landowners has improved what he refers to as *nuisances for affected citizens*.

Then there is the question regarding nuisances for affected citizens. It is frequently on my mind that a project of this size unfortunately cannot avoid creating nuisance locally. I

have therefore continuously urged Energinet to create a dialogue, to show local consideration. (...) there have been minor adjustments to the route based on this dialogue.

It is clear from the quote that the goal of this collaboration between Energinet and locals are the *minor adjustments to the route* that he mentions, instead of addressing the question of whether this invasion into private properties and communities is even justified to begin with. Nominalization is also recurrent in this rhetoric, as terms such as *nuisances for affected citizens*, *creating nuisance locally*, *dialogue*, and *local consideration* muddle the focus of the conversation and in most cases removes an active agent and specific participants. It strips the concepts of qualitative characteristics and nuance and turns something that is otherwise inherently complicated and personal to those directly affected into a technical problem. The formulation of Lilleholt's message to Energinet is also quite unclear in the following quote, as both *sending a very clear signal* and *listen as best possible* are simultaneously very strong wordings yet practically vague and uncommitted.

I am sending a very clear signal to Energinet to listen as best possible. To go out into the field—I had nearly said—meet with landowners. That's why I'm also satisfied that Energinet has succeeded in—with 500—to hold 7 public meetings. You see, it is absolutely crucial that there is a strong local dialogue.

Inciting Energinet to *go out into the field* may sound condescending to locals while at the same time avoids mentioning them directly and thereby dehumanizing them. Lilleholt tries to take the phrase back, which is one several instances of “hedging” in this example, a term for indications of uncertainty or caution (Fairclough 1992, 159). His strong use of words emphasizes his conviction that individual and public meetings are what constitute the praised *strong local dialogue*, another nominalization that avoids providing any concrete promises, but clearly evokes a notion of satisfactory two-way communication.

5.1.3 *Collapsing environmental concern into industrial needs*

The politicians in opposition to the project often turn the conversation to the timeline hereof and how quickly the disputed “green transition” ought to proceed. They are worried that gas from the BP will not function as a bridging fuel as Lilleholt argues, as the pipeline has a lifespan of approximately 40 years. Søren Egge Rasmussen voices his concern that

We must attempt to keep the temperature on the planet from rising more than 1.5 degrees. That is really not achieved through cementing the dependence on fossil energy.

He forefronts the biophysical reality that cutting emissions must be set by factors that are external to societal needs or perceived capability, and he presupposes that the BPP will *cement* fossil fuel dependence. This concrete concern about the time frame of the project is brought up many, many times, a question which Lilleholt consistently either provides a rather vague answer to or disregards entirely. According to Fairclough (1992, 154-57), this asymmetry in controlling the topic or

continuously actively avoiding an issue can also speak volumes in a discourse. Lilleholt is, however, keen on discussing a still rather vague time horizon for both Denmark's and Poland's energy needs and the latter's societal capabilities to navigate the path of the green transition. He mentions several times that there will be a "need" for gas in both countries, "some years into the future", "in the long run" or throughout a "transitional phase that could be relatively long," and uses this to explain why it is not realistic that renewables will take over within the next decade, although "one can of course dream about it in the short term." The opposition's concern for the time frame is epitomized in the exchange between Lilleholt and Christian Poll from the environmental party Alternativet in the following example.

Poll: We will be in a situation, where we with this Baltic Pipe have, as [fellow enquirer] Øjvind Vilsholm has also underlined, helped the Polish create a lock-in—that is locking into receiving a bunch of natural gas in a future where they actually should rather skip the natural gas and go straight to renewable energy.

Lilleholt: There will with the information there is and the assessments there are of the energy situation in Poland—the assessment is that there many years ahead will be a need for natural gas (...) [we can] contribute to giving Poland some good thoughts and ideas and inspiration regarding a green transition.

Lilleholt ignores the concern that a gas lock-in can be dangerous or undesirable and instead reiterates that the energy *needs* of Poland have first priority, and his hedging in his reply may indicate that he is aware that he does not address the question directly. In this answer as well as the rest of Lilleholt's discourse it becomes clear that industry *needs* take a strong precedence over environmental goals, which are in this example reduced to *some good thoughts and ideas and inspiration*, and this tendency for climate concerns to be subsumed into or even serving an industrial agenda is very much present in the ways in which time scales are conceptualized and presented by Lilleholt.

His focus on industry over environment also appears in his constant emphasis on the interests of the Danish gas consumer. In his initial opening argument, this is the first stakeholder he mentions, and there are a myriad of examples of Lilleholt introducing the Danish gas consumers rather unprompted. He often mentions them instead of referring to the Danish population as a whole:

First of all, the project is beneficial for the Danish gas consumers.

There are therefore also many other benefits for Danish gas consumers and the Danish society, otherwise we of course would not have considered continuing with the project.

It has been a clear Danish condition that this must not end up costing the Danish gas consumers' money. On the contrary.

The monetary benefit for the Danish gas consumer is the cornerstone of Lilleholt's argumentation that the BPP is indeed in a Danish interest. The first quote clearly states his prioritization with the theme *first of all*, and the second quote juxtaposes gas consumers with the rest of the Danish society—

in that order. By stating in the third quote that *It has been a clear Danish condition*, he legitimizes his attention to this specific interest without explicitly stating who is backing him up.

Highlighting a group of people by their role in a market relationship is also an example of what Fairclough terms “re-wording” (Fairclough 1992, 194), as it reconceptualizes the properties of an entity to fit the characteristics of a given trope—which in this case sees people, who themselves have not voiced their opinions on this matter, labeled as consumers first and foremost, instead of, perhaps, humans that also face the potential consequences of dangerous climate change. This tendency to view important processes and components in society and nature by their properties in capitalist market relations is a key characteristic of the permeation of neoliberal structures into society and thought. It frequently occurs in the debates, and Mikkel Dencker from conservative right-wing Dansk Folkeparti—the only enquirer who explicitly agrees with Lilleholt—also praises the increased competition in the gas market and lower prices for gas consumers to which Lilleholt iteratively returns. Correspondingly, subsuming an environmental concern into the imperative towards economic growth serves as another instance of this neoliberal trend, a structure that famously disregards biophysical limits and constraints.

5.2 Findings Part II: On the ground

The interview participants express concerns and opinions about many layers and aspects of the project and the parties involved, and their accounts of their interaction with developers and ministries, their own interests and values, and the overall nature of the project shed light on both their own priorities, key elements of the structures they are up against, as well as their conceptualization of natural gas as an energy source, environmental concerns, and relationships to different communities. Three overarching themes—human, environmental, and industrial—can be gathered from the interviews and are discussed and valued differently.

5.2.1 Human: “*This is a free society*”

From the viewpoint of my interviewees, there seems to be more of a theme of distance and division rather than solidarity and alliances across national borders. It is clear from the interviews that the main issue of this case for the participants is one of human rights—and specifically the rights of *Danish* humans. Stig underscores that

Everyone that is affected by this project is having it forced upon them, we have no interest in this whatsoever. We have *no* interest. In this case you could say that if Denmark had an interest in it, then it would be more understandable (*italics for emphasis*).

This Poland/Denmark divide is often highlighted to question whether the project has legally viable grounds for expropriation:

Christian: The common good—well is this good for everyone in Denmark, “yes” or “no”?

Anker: This is based on the gas supply law and in it says that it has to be for the benefit of Danes. You might be able to argue that it is, but it's a very small economic benefit then.

My interviewees found it difficult to follow the logic of the larger international, geopolitical motivations for this project, calling it paradoxical and counterintuitive. Although they are not certain whether this project is truly beneficial for Poland, this seems to be overshadowed by the notion that helping the Polish population happens at the expense of the Danish. The separation and prioritization of Danish versus Polish interests is woven into their accounts, and the word “Danish” frequently appears in the interview transcripts. Although some do directly say that it is not fair to compromise Danish standards or rights in favor of the Polish, most make this point apparent indirectly by referring to themselves as Danish, as Jesper does in his speech:

I am speaking here as a landowner and as a Danish citizen feeling run over by 179 politicians, who in my opinion have grotesquely twisted the Danish constitution.

Our Danishness is almost used to defend our rights on its own, and several interviewees express their disdain that this process of the project is occurring in a Danish context—we are usually supposed to be better than that, as Anker puts it: “These are basic things in a Western society (...) this is a free society”. It is often noted that should the project fail, we Danes will be the ones to pay the damages, and the bigger picture of climate and human rights overall are often overshadowed by the nationalist divide of “us versus them.”

5.2.2 *Environmental: “You start to get the feeling that little toads and frogs are more important than us”*

The interviewees’ relationships to and opinions of nature and the environment vary greatly on different socio-spatial scales, and some of these conceptualizations can be linked to the characteristics of BPP. On the very local scale, we see residents and local nature (namely Natura 2000 areas) pitched against each other. Some locals would prefer the pipe to cut through local nature reserves, arguing that Energinet themselves claim that they do everything they can to leave an area how they found it, in which case it could just as well be through a reserve as someone’s property. A few participants comment that Energinet has not wished to even explore this as an option, and that cutting through local residents’ land and lives follows the path of least resistance. As mentioned in the background section, the Danish EPA’s role is to collaborate with the project developer to plan and implement the project with the most consideration for local nature—not to judge whether the overall imperative and consequences of the project in its entirety are sustainable or environmentally favorable. Locals feel betrayed that natural areas are valued higher than their businesses and homes, and environment is prioritized due to logistics and applicable laws and regulations:

‘Why don’t you dig through that Natura 2000 area?’ That was because it would delay the project with a year. It’s more complicated to cut through nature reserves, so the

rehabilitation itself was irrelevant. And that shows completely grotesquely that they dig through suburbs and everything just to advance the process (Nils).

At the same time, however, the pipeline also poses as the antithesis of local nature and pristineness, implying that nature's value exceeds material needs and biodiversity and also serves to improve human wellbeing and tranquility—something that seems irrevocably lost at the expense of the project:

And then we stood there, hit by a punch in the gut—an enormous fossil infrastructure on our little, idyllic farm. The farm that we had bought to be closer to nature. (...) Close your eyes and imagine your favorite place in nature. Try to enjoy the peace and calm there... then imagine that suddenly a bulldozer zooms by where you're standing and scrapes up a 30-meter-wide belt, as far as the eye can see (Jesper).

In this view, local people and local nature are not on opposing sides, but face the common threat of industrial development—however with the important distinction that this is nature to be experienced and enjoyed by humans, prioritized because of its usefulness, and not with regard to saving species, biodiversity and larger environmental issues. The concern for nature appears in contexts where the overall implementation of BPP is contested, while those who are more than willing to sacrifice natural reserves have accepted the pipeline's reality, encouraging them to deflect the enormous consequences of this project onto something or someone else.

As opposed to local concerns about nature, the larger issues of environment and climate were not spontaneously mentioned often. Some did introduce the topic, usually referencing climate concerns shortly, and most also refrained from asserting their own opinion of environmental matters, but merely pointed out the contradictive political imperatives and initiatives on climate and environmental policy. While none seemed to be under the impression that gas is a climate friendly bridging fuel, it was clear that local concerns of nature were more tangible than international, abstract climate issues.

When it comes to natural gas as an energy source, all of the interview participants described it as something harmful, dangerous and unnecessary. Several pointed out the imminent need to phase out the use of natural gas and the therefore illogical move of implementing a gargantuan gas infrastructure. Gas is described in detail by Stig as a fossil energy source with an enormous pollution potential, and the others seem to share the same perception. Gas is furthermore described as something potentially very dangerous, as the risk of explosions along the length of the pipeline has been expressed as a concern by some. It is claimed that Energinet has used a type of pipe with a thinner wall to save money, and Anker fears an accident:

Then there's over-pressure because of an explosion somewhere, and then it says 'boom' here in Sønder Stenderup. This might be a bit figuratively described, but as I mentioned—they've put a price on us.

5.2.3 *Industrial: “A progressive monster process”*

It is clear from the interviews that the participants all have strong emotions connected to their experiences with the BPP, and by far the most comments made by the participants regarding the project were directed at Energinet’s behavior and their interactions. They describe their feelings with very colorful phrases and make use of analogies such as being run over by a train, punched in the stomach, being “in the way”, having chills down their spines, having a trigger pulled, etc. The main problems they expressed revolved around the issue of compensation paid for the damages created by the project, as well as other monetary considerations. The participants provided a long list of instances and examples of how Energinet go to almost extreme lengths to save money along the path of the pipeline. The most highlighted example hereof includes disputes over how much Energinet takes care of the soil that they operate on during the project. This is a big theme for many farmers, as it is critical to the fertility of the soil surrounding the pipeline after it has been laid down, and evidence that previous projects have irreparably damaged arable land was presented to me by Stig. Small adjustments to the manner and timing of the digging have been suggested to minimize damages, but these requests have not been met, and presentations and queries for Energinet regarding these concerns have not even been responded to, leaving locals feeling severely ignored.

Especially interviewee and farmer Anker marks these behaviors as being truly symptomatic of Energinet as a company, and further links it to other examples of how Energinet has attempted to cut corners. Many other interviewees agree and mention how it is required by policy to publish an official country-wide agreement of terms and compensation for the project between relevant parties, but that Energinet have instead published a simple brochure (“Folderen” (Energinet 2019a)). Christian laments these attempts from Energinet to force through their interests, and calls BPP a stingy, detail-obsessed project, where profits and shortcuts are squeezed out of locals. Christian further ties this to Energinet’s very top-down approach to expenses of the project, where they estimate a budget (based on outdated rates) regardless of the reality that they meet when the project actually starts.

There are countless other examples of insufficient consideration for local interests, and in one, Anker claims that Energinet illegally and intentionally chose to withhold access to information about the project. This includes a comprehensive list of affected landowners, impeding their attempts to organize themselves—something Anker claims they have done before: “that means they knew that it was illegal, they were just obstructing us.” He and other interviewees claim that the pipe has been laid through their properties because rural communities make up the path of least resistance for such projects. All interviewees unanimously describe how Energinet fulfills absolute minimum requirements at the expense of locals. In fact, several describe how Energinet sent out an external consultant to gather statements and complaints, who subsequently disappeared without any follow-up or reactions to their conversations of any kind, rendering it “a complete play for the gallery” as Anker put it. Hereto, multiple interviewees describe Energinet’s representatives as arrogant and knowing that they hold the power, and that they “didn’t touch the ground”, as Anker says. Nils expresses the same experience of Energinet at information meetings: “you show up and get scolded

a bit, then you go back and keep digging”, and Stig referred to it as a “road show” that was a complete waste of time: “you might as well have been reading a book.”

All interviewees demand a higher degree of transparency from Energinet, explaining that they only learned about the project very late in the process after most of the important decisions were already cemented and the existence of the pipeline “was already a matter of fact by that point” as put by Jørgen. He elaborates:

I can’t find a better word than “bestilt arbejde¹.” It has been the intention that it was under the radar for a period, that’s my very clear opinion, and I know that I share it with many others.

All interviewees describe their initial contact regarding the project as late, unclear and decidedly not a case of two-way communication. Transparency is also demanded when it comes to the question of why the pipeline was not placed in the ocean instead of through the middle of most the Danish mainland. The explanations from Energinet that this option is more expensive and time-consuming has not been accepted by my interviewees, as these claims have not been supported by the calculations to show it.

The issues presented above concern the details of implementing the pipeline rather than questioning its very existence, as locals say that they feel as though they are up against a large, unstoppable force. The project is often animated in the interviews, described as having a life of its own, as Stig mentions: “that process... it’s like a progressive monster process.” It was reiterated several times in the interviews that the start date of operation of the pipeline is set in stone, meaning that all other considerations come second, because as Christian relays: “as said before, the faucet opens in 2022”. This unmovable deadline has also meant that expropriations have been pushed through even during the COVID-19 crisis, and Anker explains how Energinet’s representatives tried to work around the ban on gathering in groups in a way that both weakened the locals’ position in the negotiations and was unsafe: “apparently it has far-reaching consequences if that expropriation was not pushed through. And so, they again put a price on our lives”.

Energinet’s position and approach has been shaped by the system that supports the project, and this has also been heavily criticized by my interviewees. The criticism of Energinet and their behavior is both targeted at the policies by which they abide, and the way that these requirements have been pushed to the absolute minimum, and the issue is therefore both the system and the way that the system has been used. They describe Energinet as “the messenger”, as a pawn in a larger problematic system, aware that they are just doing their job: “it’s just really hard because they have backing—they have the political decision behind them, so now the train is rolling”, says Anker. Other governmental actors such as the expropriation committee and the EPA also seem to act in the interest of industry rather than the people. It is described how this case is pushed through with very general,

¹ The Danish term “bestilt arbejde,” directly translates into “ordered job” and means asking someone to perform a job or a study with a specific outcome in mind, regardless of other alternatives or obstacles along the way.

one-size-fits-all guidelines and that this is a slippery slope to this corporate and policy culture that they criticize.

Comparing this project to other infrastructure and industrial development projects that affect local communities also reveal some interesting ties and paradoxes. The BPP and other industrial projects such as building roads, wind turbines, and laying down other pipes and wires that require expropriation are often grouped in as being driven by the same force, or at least planned by the same people. When relating a previous project that caused damages to the soil to the project at hand, Christian asked: “Haven’t they learned from their previous mistakes?”, without specifying who “they” are, but implying that the projects are all connected. However, most interviewees also express that they would be much more cooperative about the project if they truly believed that it was for the good of the Danish population, such as a road, which is something that is much more common, showing that it is not necessarily all forms of development that are lamented, as long as they are perceived as actually beneficial and useful. Yet at the same time, some participants explain that infrastructure and energy projects are generally protested locally, and they admit to a certain degree of nimbyism (“Not in my back yard”-ism).

6. Discussion

I will here draw in the two tracks of this thesis by showing how they in combination attach this specific case to larger structures. While the parliament debates clearly showcase the leading political discourse in favor of the BPP, the interviews reflect the oppositional voices based on direct experiences of the project. The findings from these bodies of data will be discussed in relation to merging environmental and economic interests, lock-in and fossil fuel hegemony, as well as people and power.

6.1.1 Dovetailing environmental and economic interests

Through CDA, a clear correlation between Lilleholt’s arguments in the parliament debates and actual motives and concrete plans for the project cannot ultimately be proven, and the contradictive accounts of the “cooperation” between project officials and locals serve as a testament that the case is not that black and white. However, Lilleholt’s rhetoric is in line with that of other proponents involved in the project, and Fairclough (1992) holds that this ideology as “significations/constructions of reality” (ibid., 87) has “material existence in the practices of institutions” (ibid, 87) and that “[n]aturalized discourse conventions are a most effective mechanism for sustaining and reproducing cultural and ideological dimensions of hegemony” (Fairclough 1995, 94). The parliament debates are a powerful platform, and acting as a spokesperson for BP in that type of arena distributes this discourse to a large amount of people from a position of power.

In the findings, I reviewed how Lilleholt’s discourse manages to argue on all conceptual scales by collapsing environmental concerns into an industrial agenda. The conceptualization of needs and what is realistic are measured by societal, industrial and political parameters, rather than granting biophysical realities precedence. This is in accordance with the findings of Perez et al. (2018), who also found the prioritization of geopolitics and economic and financial interests superseded that of the “softer” pillars of e.g. climate change and human rights as a wider trend in the European gas industry. The incompatibility between Lilleholt’s framing of the necessary time scale of a “green transition” and what is objectively needed to meet both the Paris Agreement and goals advocated by the IPCC shows how he discursively manipulates and blurs timeframes to fit within a fossil fuel friendly context. On the other hand, time scales and deadlines are anything but blurred when it comes to the progress of the project. Lilleholt repeatedly returns to the topic of financial benefit for Denmark and frames geopolitics and Polish economic concerns as a humanitarian endeavor, and the interview participants clearly describe a prioritization of monetary concerns over all else. However much one might want to subsume climate concerns into a preferred economic and “developmental” agenda, IPCC warns that we must stay beneath a 2-degree Celsius global warming (IPCC 2014), which makes massive fossil fuel investments seem counter intuitive. Topics in sustainable development are often contextualized using a figure that shows environment, society, and economy in three embedded spheres, highlighting that anything human exists within the environmental, and anything economic (or industrial) within both of these. As opposed to placing the three spheres side by side, embedding them implies that economy is wholly based in society, which is in turn dependent on the well-being of the environment, as seen in Figure 5. Therefore, environmental constraints and needs precede those of the smaller spheres (for more, see Jönsson and Andersson 2017, 95).

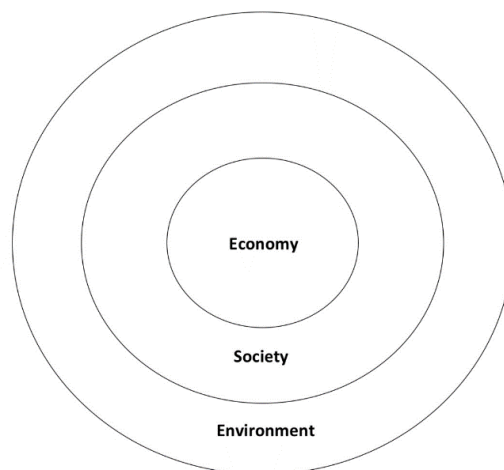


Figure 5: The three pillars of sustainable development embedded within each other. By the author.

In addition, Meadowcroft (2002) highlights how abiding by specific political interests of certain regions obscures the fight against climate change as “there are obvious spatial disjunctures: environmental problems do not respect political boundaries, instead they cut across established jurisdictions or link discontinuous regions” (ibid. 169). Although Lilleholt continuously assures that

he has environmental interests at heart, his discourse shows that he molds these to fit an economic paradigm that is largely incompatible with necessary climate measures.

6.1.2 *Gas lock-in and fossil fuel hegemony*

One of the main common denominators in the results from the two analyses are the indicators that the incentive and operation of the BPP rests on a foundation of business-as-usual, fossil capitalism. Although Energinet's mission statement clearly notes that growth is not an explicit goal of theirs (Energinet, n.d., b), it is a goal of the industries it sustains, and interviewees paint a picture of a corporation that favors monetary and industrial aspects over human and environmental values. These characteristics do not only apply to Energinet according to the interviewees, but also involved agencies, the expropriation committee, and politicians. Using a state-owned company that must conform to a competitive market economy promotes these tendencies, and making it answerable to a single minister vastly reduces democracy.

As suspected in the introduction of this thesis, the nature of the structures surrounding this project seem to create the perfect conditions for it to be implemented. As interviewee Jakob from NOAH said to me: "there is nothing in Energinet's mission statement about lowering emissions." Lilleholt and the developers of the project's rhetoric seems to attempt to depoliticize the topic by framing it as a merely technical and practical endeavor, and Swyngedouw (2015) notes that: "In the current depoliticizing neoliberal climate, the public management of things and people is hegemonically articulated around a naturalization of the need for **economic growth**" (ibid. 118, emphasis in original). Claiming that the actions of the surrounding structures of the project as well as the project itself is devoid of political drivers and responsibility becomes possible by pinning the over-arching political decision on the shoulders of the MCEU.

The "naturalization of the need for **economic growth**" as Swyngedouw puts it, is although rarely directly shown, at the core of the agenda behind the BPP. Intricately linked are the characteristics that the locals experience, Lilleholt's discourse of the project, carbon lock-in, fossil fuel hegemony and fossil capitalism. According to Malm's (2016) analysis of the inherent positive feedback between economic growth, increase in material throughput and thereby greenhouse gas emissions, more capital demands more energy, demands more capital, demands more energy to sustain increasing consumption rates (ibid. 288-92). This centering of monetary investments and returns is evident in the local's struggle for fair compensation, in the lack of cooperation, the lack of transparency, and the lack of a notion that there might be other factors against the project that outweigh the supposed economic benefits. This is evident in Lilleholt's gravitation towards economic growth, his emphasis on energy "needs", on *his* vision for what a better Poland would require, and in his iterative focus on costs. Having an entire society built on the principles of fossil capitalism, and having this determine what we view arbitrarily as our energy "needs" is a large factor within fossil fuel lock-in. Our neoliberalist era only sees this kind of marketization increased and infiltrated to most aspects of our lives, dehumanizing affected people as Lilleholt's discourse does, and planning and implementing

this pipeline is conceptually reduced to what Swyngedouw mentions as “public management of things and people”.

This intense focus on growth in a time where our consumption levels, in the Global North especially, exceed ecological capabilities is problematic in other ways as well. Proponents of the BPP argue that increased access to natural gas will supersede and best case replace coal (although it is explicitly admitted that this is not possible to concretely predict) as well as function as a bridging fuel for greener options in the future. However, scholars such as Zehner (2012) have implored that, empirically, gaining access to *more* energy sources of whatever kind only increases energy consumption and “needs”—of all energy sources. The new merely supplements the old, promotes increased usage, creates possibility for higher consumption, instigates an upward momentum that the industry hereafter must scramble to sustain. It is the Jevons paradox of energy supplies, and it is really quite simple: more breeds more. From Jevon’s paradox (Sorrell 2009) follows that improved efficiency counter-intuitively inspires increased consumption due to higher demands, meaning that optimizing and developing energy sources and systems does not equal less pollution without actively applying constraints.

The Polish government have made no concrete promises to decrease coal consumption, Denmark will gain access to a gas source with a capacity four times greater than the current national consumption, and once the pipe has been laid down, it must pump the promised 10 bn cubic meters of gas annually to avoid dire diplomatic and economic repercussions. A carbon or gas lock-in is extended through the longevity and point of no return that characterizes this project and is reflected in Lilleholt’s discourse. Fossil fuel hegemony is reached by the infrastructures tailored to accommodate it, and gas is made seem as a necessary vehicle to reach a future destination of net zero emissions. Through discourse, gas conceptually piggybacks on sustainable energy forms, and throughout Lilleholt’s arguments, sustainability is presented as a kind of promise land: desired, but unobtainable; eventually necessary, but still secondary to more pressing matters of an economic and industrial nature. Gas is cemented as the glue that holds together this distant dream and the complicated current reality, while putting gas on this pedestal is simultaneously what keeps greener options at bay. Assuming that the structures that the BP relies on will only instigate increased energy demands in an endlessly growing spiral, the BPP as a steppingstone to more sustainable alternatives seems to be a mere pipe dream.

Both throughout the interviews and the parliament debates, discussion around the execution of the pipeline either seems to question details of its implementation or the basis for its overall existence, and the distinction is not unimportant. Locals report that the underlying message they received from officials leaves the question of the pipe’s premise out of the discussion completely, and Jørgen repeatedly lamented that by the time they were contacted, “the pipeline was already an undisputable fact.” The enormity of the project has made locals fight the smaller battles of the conflict, and some of them admit to not know all that much about the larger context. In conducting and analyzing the interviews, I wondered whether there would have been any local uproar had Energinet, governmental agencies, and the expropriation committee done what was best for every individual 500 affected landowners. I wondered to what extent this may just have been a case of nimbyism. But it might not be that simple that the unwillingness to cooperate that locals report can be seamlessly separated from

a project whose very nature is based on principles that place monetary value above the human and environmental. The project might not have existed in the first place if those values were indeed prioritized systemically, and local struggles may more than anything be an indication of the overall lack of inclusion and community-focused initiatives in resource management. It is true that climate change mitigation and a complete transformation of the energy sector will not be a sacrifice-free process, but leaning on the same asymmetric power structures of oppression that precipitated this crisis in the first place will only entrench the social and ecological problems we already have.

6.1.3 *People and power*

Climate change and the BPP alike are human rights issues: *people* have created it with their capital, power, technical ingenuity, and ever-growing energy “demands”, and mainly *other* people will pay for it, with their money, their natural surroundings, their livelihoods, and their lives. Climate change and fossil fuel resource use is created and felt unequally. The processes detected in the BPP such as fossil capitalism, neoliberalism, and further entrenchment of fossil fuel hegemony are all instigators and perpetrators of the dehumanization and marketization of people, ignoring the plurality and validity of subjective human experience and reducing those involved to either consumers or obstacles. This is both how the local Danes I interviewed described their feelings, and how Lilleholt characterized them when he refers to their roles in this case as “gas consumers” or passive experiencers of “local nuisances”. This tendency for competition and dehumanization is similarly evident in how being pressured by this system pits local Danes against “competing” elements in this case, such as Poland or local nature reserves.

My interviewees expressed feeling more and more powerless in their right to their own land, and that these expropriation cases tend to be handled more and more poorly in their view, and especially Christian sees this as a continuous trend of the municipality and government’s infringement of private property. The lack of democracy in this and other similar cases in Denmark is a primary concern, to which proponents of the project object that there never has been and should not be more inclusion of landowners to complicate or inhibit industrial developments. Locals often assert that their Danishness entitles a certain high degree of freedom and democracy, and it becomes relevant to consider what this notion of freedom entails. Most of the critiques of Energinet and their support systems can be aligned with critiques of features of neoliberal fossil capitalism and privatization of public entities. However, some interviewees frame this in an anti-socialist perspective, implying that the intrusion that the pipe will make on their properties and their lives are attributed to the faults of a too-powerful governing state, and solutions to the problem are described as a need for increased freedom from the state to become sovereign of one’s own belongings and land—not, however, as a critique of free-market mechanisms that allow government-owned companies such as Energinet to take the shape and form of a capitalist corporation that puts profits and industry above people and environment.

It here becomes relevant to consider the distinction between freedom *from* and freedom *to*, how freedom is valued and who takes precedence. Amartya Sen (1999) discusses this difference as a key

component of human rights matters and underscores how he views freedom *from* harm to be superior to freedom *to* riches. However, sometimes this distinction becomes difficult: one could both argue that the local Danes wish to have freedom *to* roam over their own land by having freedom *from* being forcefully expropriated. Freedom to dig up, distribute, use, and profit from fossil fuels is often presented by proponents as their right in a free world with a free market, but it becomes tantamount to question whether freedom to enjoy boundless quantities of fossil energy on a planet with finite (and increasingly unevenly distributed) resources should have supremacy over the right to freedom *from* complete and utter climate disaster. Looking at the BPP and countless other examples, it seems more and more that the freedom to democratically decide our ecological future is diminishing.

Considering how Poland is addressed in this perspective becomes problematic for several reasons. In the analysis I touched upon how the reliance of economic growth to “develop” a country into an ideal state is derived from colonial remnants, but this statement demands that one break down the complexities that constitute Poland. In the interviews and in the debates, Poland as a whole is either portrayed as unanimously wanting the pipeline and everything that supposedly comes with it, or as passive and devoid of agency. To the Danish and Polish energy ministers, freedom from poverty and “underdevelopment” seems to be synonymous with or at least dependent on an expanding gas sector and economic growth, and claiming that increase of gas supply is what “Poland wants” means taking the word of a few political actors for that of a nation. Yet at the same time, I cannot declare to know what is best for the Polish people, and by speaking for them I would be making the same mistakes as those before me. It is important that the populations directly involved are regarded as complicated and varied demographics, but following the enormity of this project, these are not the only people who will ultimately be affected by subsequent emissions and perpetuated systems of oppression. While acknowledging that the consequences of the project are far-reaching, it is difficult to precisely pin down who and what they will alter. Following the Danish proverb that many small streams make a bigger river, not knowing which drop breaches the brim makes it exceedingly difficult to assign blame and responsibility.

7. Conclusion

Through a dual approach to this case study in a Danish context, I have shown how key motives behind the Baltic Pipe Project and local experiences hereof are linked to larger social structures of neoliberal, fossil fuel capitalism and hegemony, and how this is reflected in the different parties’ framing of environmental, social and economic interests. These processes have shown to dehumanize, villainize and create competition between those who are not in power (both human and non-human), as well as reconceptualize a green transition and, essentially, disregard planetary boundaries with a hyper-focus on capitalist economic interests.

Lars Christian Lilleholt’s discursive defense of the BPP contains clear indications of hegemonic favoring of fossil fuels and prioritization of capitalist economic interests, and he manages to

rhetorically interweave these with environmental and humanitarian arguments. Through a depoliticized “win-win-win” discourse, Lilleholt takes a business-as-usual approach to energy transitions, in which he converges economic, social, and environment interests on nearly all socio-spatial scales. His nominalization and metaphorization of the green transition and strategically engaging temporal scales related to emission cutbacks and the time horizon for the project, especially allow him to subsume environmental interests into a fossil capitalist agenda.

On the other hand, it was evident from the interviews that industrial interests were not highly prioritized by the local Danes I spoke to, and they characterized this project as an unstoppable force that is “running them over.” They expressed to their disdain that Energinet go to extreme lengths to save time and money at their expense and revoke their sense of freedom and rights to their own land. They described how the progress of the BPP took precedence over any other human or environmental concerns. Being obstacles of the BPP has also seen local resisters polarized against the interests of Poland, although this representation of the nation is very one-dimensional and generalized, and some interviewees have even felt pitted against local nature reserves.

Climate change is imminent and all-encompassing. It permeates and inextricably alters our collective world, and thereby so do the structural mechanisms that shape and sustain it. The results of this thesis connect the links between analyses of political statements to accounts from the ground, between this project and larger societal trends, and between industrial, human, and environmental interests. Specifically, I have through my approach to this topic shown how the BPP is contingent on and will further perpetuate systems of fossil capitalism and a fossil fuel lock-in through a hegemonic discourse. I have shown how hegemony and feelings of community collect and contrast groups through the discourse about Poland and Denmark, and I have shown that while Lilleholt presents BP as a win-win-win situation, the local voices and frameworks applied in this thesis help problematize the project. The focus of this study has been to contextualize the BPP, uncovering underlying systems of oppression and environmental degradation. The structures that sustain such a project inherently bring with it injustices and increased pollution, and it therefore follows that the consequences of stopping for gas on the way to a greener energy future may have long-term irreversible consequences that far outweigh any short term benefits. Crucially, the findings in this study are not unique. They are a part of a wider pattern, and it is this very multitude of such projects that render them ever so relevant. As urged by Oil Change International (2016): “If you’re in a hole, stop digging” (ibid. 3). We are in a hole, and yet we are still digging.

Through my methodological decisions and delimitations of the scope of this project I have provided insight into very specific aspects of this case, and many opportunities for future research are left uncovered. Although those who are aware of BPP are extremely passionate about it, it still remains fairly unnoticed and unresearched, and future exploration could elevate the scope to include a more international perspective on the politics, such as larger geopolitical effects on climate decisions, or explore the relationship between prevailing Danish climate politics as a contrast to fossil fuel projects.

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