



Norwegian University of  
Science and Technology



Norwegian Centre for Energy  
Transition Strategies

# Research directions bridging people, place and policy for widespread societal change

Postdoc project: “Innovation, contestation and social change: Exploring radical ideas in the Norwegian energy transition” (RA1)



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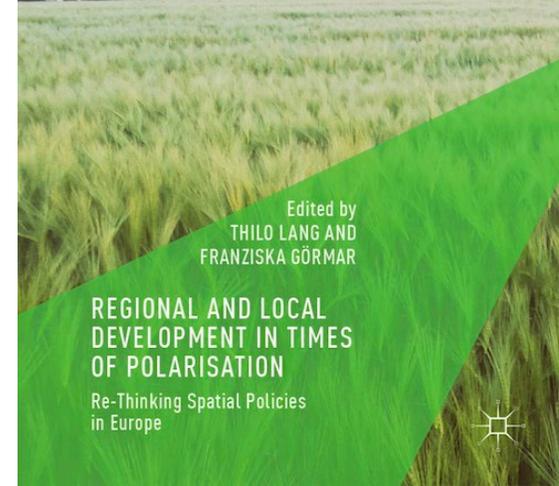
# Approach to the Research Topic

*“Innovation, contestation and social change: Exploring radical ideas in the Norwegian energy transition”*

- **Transition as an interdisciplinary concept** – socio-technical, socio-ecological, economic, political, etc.
- **Research background** – evolutionary economic geography (RIS) and political economy (institutional change, comparative capitalism)
- **Multi-faceted research approach** – System level change, socio-technical regime shift, applying neo-institutionalist approach to ‘socio-technical transformation’ with focus on:
  - Radical vs. incremental transformation, critical junctures and “critical transformations” (Henderson & Jepsen, 2018)
  - Actors and power relations; market and non-market (Sotarauta, 2016; Isaksen & Jakobsen, 2017)
  - Spatial perspective, geography of innovation (Coenen et al., 2012)
  - Apply Varieties of Capitalism (Hall & Soskice, 2001) in international comparison

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Towards territorial cohesion?  
Path dependence and path innovation of  
regional policy in Central and  
Eastern Europe



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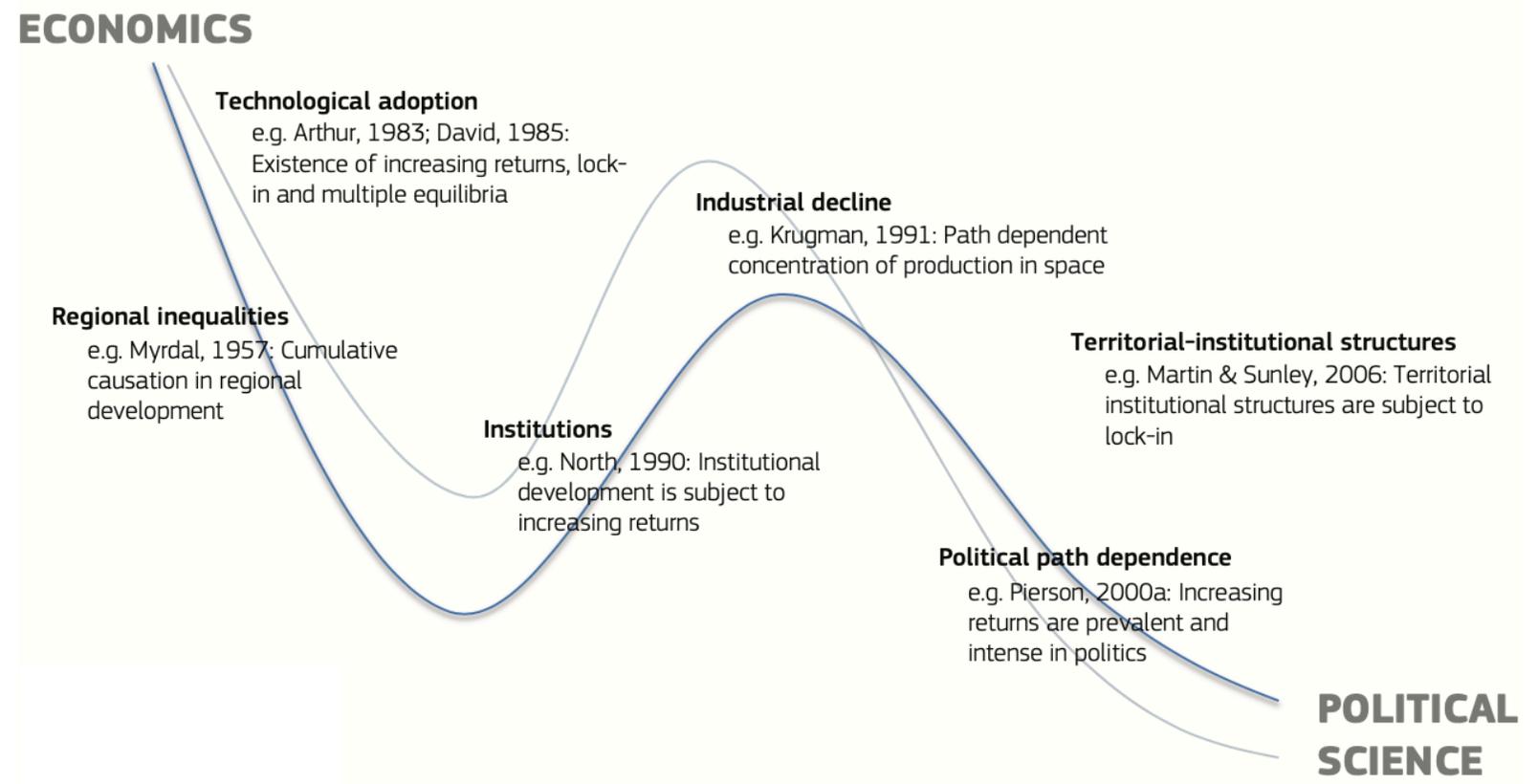
REGIONAL AND LOCAL  
DEVELOPMENT IN TIMES  
OF POLARISATION

Re-Thinking Spatial Policies  
in Europe



# Path dependence concept evolution

- Sequence of transition matters in user cases
- From economics, political science and regional development, to socio-technical systems
- Path innovation
  - Future oriented
  - RIS - New path creation
  - Elaborate mechanisms of change on the societal level
- Impact of green taxonomy?



Source: Loewen, 2018

# Agency, Discourse and Narrative

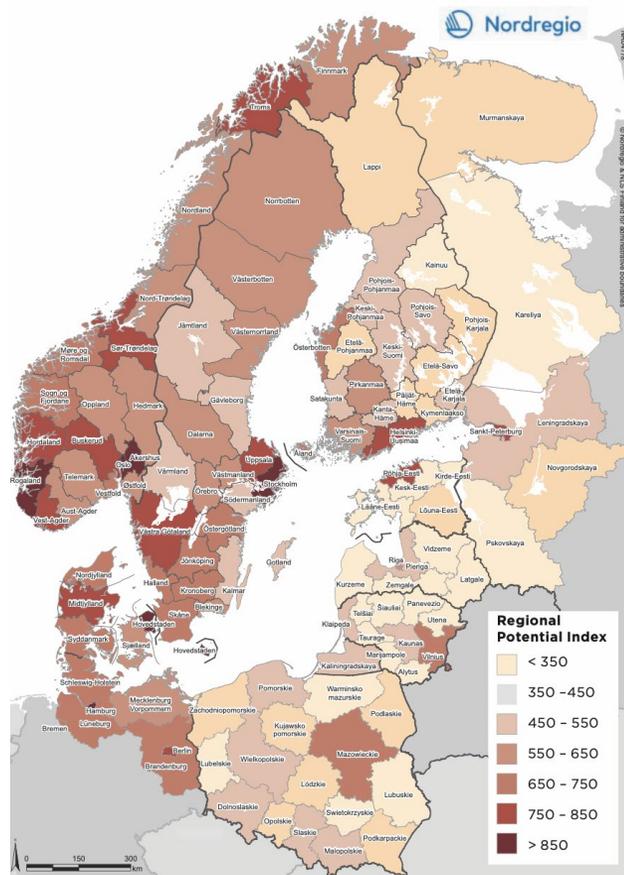
## Social Science approach to the path dependency questions

- Shifting scale from institutions to actors
- Who shapes the discourse on sustainability transitions?
  - Discursive Institutionalism (Schmidt, 2008) built on Historical Institutionalism (Thelen, 1999); politics of transition (Smith & Stirling, 2010)
  - Multi-actor perspective (Avelino & Wittmayer, 2016)
- Contestation – whose sustainability gets prioritized?
- Transition agents – agency in RIS, especially non-market, institutional and peripheral actors
- Methods
  - Process tracing
  - Stakeholder analysis
  - Comparative case studies – **USER CASES**



Multi-actor Perspective (MaP) model of sectors  
(Avelino & Wittmayer, 2016)

# Place – the Geographical Dimension



## Places, innovation and transition

- Develop the case(s) in Norwegian regional innovation systems, connecting to geographies of innovation and core-periphery relations
  - Policy mix, positions in Global Production Networks, related variety, etc.
- Interest in non-core, peripheral locations
  - What seeds of radical change sprout in the peripheries? By whom? How are they nurtured or quashed?
- Explore the potential of green niches to support regional development
  - Connect to NTRANS user case(s), Norwegian and international comparators
  - New societal configurations, institutions, networks – Energy hubs?
  - e.g. creating green energy demand → new local value added activities

# Workflow – Next Steps

- Connect and prioritize theoretical strands (Literature review and Theoretical work) (Yr1)
- Explore actor roles in regime change (multi-actor perspective) (Theoretical) (Yr1)
- Case development (Empirical work) (Yr1-2)
  - Situate Norway (cases) in map of political economy and transition approaches
  - Analyze actor groups/roles for deep decarbonization
  - Extend to international comparative cases (e.g. British Columbia, Canada)
- Connect actor groups/roles and agency with regional development for a model of sustainable transition (Theoretical and Empirical work) (Yr3)
  - Which actor groups have the highest potential for widespread societal impact?



# Thank you



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