

## FRAGMENTED AUTHORITY AND DEFERRED ACTION: DECONSTRUCTING ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE UNDER THE EUROPEAN GREEN DEAL IN LITHUANIA

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**Abstract.** This study critically examines the evolving landscape of environmental governance in Lithuania within the context of the European Green Deal, drawing on three semi-structured interviews with executive, academic, and legislative stakeholders. Using a two-phase methodology that combines thematic coding analysis with Jacques Derrida's deconstruction, the research reveals the epistemic tensions, institutional contradictions, and normative ambivalences shaping Lithuania's green transition. The findings challenge the linear narrative of policy implementation and instead expose a fragmented field governed by binary logics, such as compliance versus conviction, center versus periphery, and participation versus performance. While official strategies emphasize legal alignment and technocratic execution, they often operate through temporal deferral, symbolic participation, and structural dependency on supranational resources. The analysis highlights the performative nature of law, the influence of post-socialist path dependencies, and the failure of procedural participation to generate democratic legitimacy. Through deconstruction, the research reframes crisis not as a catalyst for coherence, but as a condition that reveals the fragility of sustainability discourses. Ultimately, this work argues for a more reflexive, dialogic, and ethically grounded approach to environmental governance, one that recognizes contradiction not as failure, but as the very terrain of democratic transformation.

**Keywords:** European Green Deal, environmental governance, Lithuania, deconstruction, sustainability policy.

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### 1. Introduction

In an era where even the air we breathe has become politicized, and the energy that heats our homes is tied to the delicate threads of global tensions, Lithuania's, and with it the European Union's (EU), transition to sustainable energy is no longer merely a hope for the future; it is the name of a historical process currently unfolding. The long-term pressure of climate change, the war in Ukraine, and the COVID-19 pandemic are testing not only the resilience of energy infrastructures but also the limits of democracy and the idea of the "public good." This study aims to critically examine the transformation of Lithuania's environmental and energy policies within the framework of the European Green Deal (EGD), in the context of these multiple crises, as a governance area where internal socio-political dynamics intersect with external geopolitical pressures.

The central argument of this article is that the change in energy and environmental policies cannot be explained solely by new regulations, incentives, or market

adjustments. Lithuania's green transition is much more than a series of "interventions and deregulations"; it should be understood as a regime of politics, culture, and behavior woven through values, institutions, habits, and narratives of crisis. As a post-Soviet EU member, Lithuania is both a fragile and instructive example, struggling to cope with structural dependencies, social insecurity, and security concerns while simultaneously attempting to align itself with the normative discourse of the Green Deal.

The European Commission's (2019) Green Deal Communication emphasizes that this transformation must be "people-centered" and "fair and inclusive". This formulation broadens sustainability from a technical carbon reduction problem to a question of justice and participation. However, in contexts historically marked by unequal socio-economic structures and distrust of the state, the meaning of a "fair" and "inclusive" transition remains open and debatable. Lithuania's Soviet legacy, its rapidly Europeanizing institutional framework, and its recent disconnection from the Russian electricity grid and connection to

the European network (European Commission, 2025) make it an extremely suitable example for observing tensions along the energy-identity-sovereignty axis.

In this context, the aim of this study is to decipher Lithuania's environmental and energy governance by focusing on the search for balance between energy security and climate goals, the temporal construct established through crisis narratives, and the fragility of the relationship between social trust and institutional legitimacy. More concretely, the general aim of the article can be formulated as follows:

To critically analyze the transformation of environmental and energy policy in Lithuania within the framework of the European Green Deal through the epistemic tensions between energy security, social values, and democratic legitimacy.

In line with this objective, the study seeks to answer the following research questions:

- 1. How is the balance between environmental goals and energy security established?** Particularly in the context of Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the "de-Russification" of Lithuania's energy infrastructure, how do environmental policy actors define the "balance" between environmental goals and supply security through which discourses, which priority rankings, and which institutional tools? Here, "balance" is understood not merely as a balance at the level of indicators, but as a political reconfiguration of which risks are considered tolerable and which are considered intolerable in the eyes of the actors.
- 2. How do public attitudes and behaviors relate to the state's climate and energy goals?** In Lithuania, where do social attitudes toward the environment and energy and actual behaviors (energy conservation, orientation toward renewable technologies, consumption patterns) coincide with the government's climate goals, and where do they diverge? Is this relationship interpreted solely as a matter of "lack of information" or "insufficient awareness," or does it reveal a more complex structure intertwined with perceptions of institutional trust and justice?
- 3. Where should we look for deep structural transformation: in democratic foresight or in responses to crises?** To what extent do Lithuanian policy actors base the evolution of the green transition into a deeper, structural transformation on democratic, deliberative, and foresighted institutional designs; and to what extent on rapid, response-oriented interventions to crises (war, pandemic, price shocks)? In other words, is the vision of transformation based on the axis of "democratic foresight and institutional consistency" or on the axis of "crisis and urgency"?

These questions aim to operationalize concepts such as "balance," "consistency," and "profound transformation." This clarifies the analytical focus of the study and makes it clearer which conceptual problems the qualitative methods used in the rest of the article are intended to illuminate.

The thesis defended in the article is positioned on two levels while attempting to answer these questions. First, it is the assumption that the green policy shift in Lithuania is essentially based on the internal harmony between public values and institutional trust; crises (authoritarian rifts such as the war in Ukraine and COVID-19) act as shocks that accelerate or slow down this harmony. Second, it argues that neither technological optimism, narratives that delegate all responsibility to innovation, nor crisis-centered models constructed solely around fear and urgency are sufficient to explain behavioral change and democratic legitimacy on their own. Within this framework, ecological governance is conceptualized not as a "balanced system" but as a persistent practice of imbalance, constantly oscillating between trust and urgency; hierarchy and legitimacy; harmony and dissent.

The methodological approach of the study is also designed to support this critical perspective. In the first phase, scientific and policy documents related to energy transition, environmental behavior, and the European Green Deal literature concerning Lithuania and the Baltic region are comprehensively synthesized. This review aims to trace the intellectual and empirical history of environmental governance in Lithuania by bringing together peer-reviewed articles published in fields such as energy economics, political science, sociology, and environmental psychology, as well as EU communications and evaluation reports. In the second phase, three semi-structured interviews with national policymakers, academics, and institutional actors are "conversed" with the picture presented by this literature. Thus, the official narratives in the documents are juxtaposed with field experiences and interpretations; common themes and breaking points are revealed.

This qualitative design aims not so much to pursue a straightforward "objective reality" as to make visible how different actors interpret the same transition process, what concepts they use to talk about it, and what silences they speak through. Epistemologically, the work is both critical and reconstructive: it takes the Hobbesian logic of power and the Rousseauian idea of collective will seriously; however, it goes beyond this framework, accepting complexity, contradiction, and contextuality as constitutional assumptions. Machiavelli's figure of the "prince," who must act in constantly changing conditions, reminds us that today's policymakers also need not a fixed dogma but a pluralistic and flexible ethic; an administrative intuition that recognizes the price of immobility but does not surrender to "easy authoritarian solutions."

Ultimately, this article is not merely a case study focused on Lithuania's environmental policies; rather, it is an invitation to reflect on how "small" states can redefine sustainability. Here, sustainability is neither an administrative procedure reduced to a technocratic checklist nor a reflexive panic regime activated in every crisis. Instead, it is conceptualized as a *political art* in which the quest for trust, justice, and democratic renewal are intertwined. As Europe prepares for new upheavals, the Lithuanian

example serves as both a mirror and a compass: reflecting shared vulnerabilities while also pointing the way toward which questions need to be asked for a more flexible and equitable transition.

Within this framework, the next section details the theoretical and empirical groundwork of the study by systematically reviewing the literature on environmental and energy transition in Lithuania and the broader Central and Eastern European context at the macro, meso, and micro levels.

## 2. Literature review

This study re-examines the literature at three levels to understand Lithuania's green transition in the context of the European Green Deal (EGD): (i) at the macro level: energy security, economic growth, and EU integration; (ii) at the meso level, sectoral and institutional governance; (iii) at the micro level, values, attitudes, and perceptions of crisis. The studies examined consist of empirical and conceptual research published in peer-reviewed journals covering the post-EU accession period, as well as EU and national policy documents. Keyword combinations such as "Lithuania," "energy transition," "European Green Deal," "governance," "public attitudes," and "renewable energy" were used; studies directly addressing Lithuania and the Baltic region were prioritized. Thus, the literature is synthesized not merely as a descriptive inventory, but within a framework that establishes relationships between macro, meso, and micro levels and makes institutional, social, and epistemic tensions visible.

Below, macro studies focusing on energy security and sustainability are discussed first, followed by meso-level literature centering on governance and policy tools, and finally micro studies focusing on behavioral and normative dimensions. In the last section, these three levels are linked to present a comprehensive picture of Lithuania's green transition.

### 2.1. Macro level: energy security, sustainability, and growth

The transformation of energy policies in Lithuania and other Baltic countries has primarily been approached as a long-term story of shifting from energy dependence to energy sustainability. Štreimikienė et al. (2016a) examine this transition experienced by the Baltic States after joining the EU in detail, defining energy security not only as a technical supply issue but as a prerequisite for regional sustainable development (Štreimikienė et al., 2016a). Estonia's relative success in renewable energy and energy efficiency demonstrates that EU integration is an external driver of market restructuring and policy coordination. However, this approach risks equating institutional compliance with normative internalization, often leaving discussions of democratic legitimacy, participation, and justice in the background.

Sinevičienė et al. (2017), examining the determinants of energy efficiency in post-communist Eastern European

economies, show that growth creates a dual dynamic that increases energy efficiency while also fueling consumption; structural factors (industrial composition, per capita CO<sub>2</sub> emissions) deepen this paradox, while EU membership points to a positive effect and EBRD institutional reform indices indicate limited transformation (Sinevičienė et al., 2017). Similarly, Marinaş et al. (2018) find a two-way causality between renewable energy consumption and economic growth for Central and Eastern Europe, reinforcing the "green growth" narrative, but also implying that growth-oriented policies may reproduce a consumption-driven development model (Marinaş et al., 2018).

Kédaitienė and Klyvienė (2020), examining the relationship between macro-level growth, emissions, and efficiency in the context of the Eurozone, emphasize that despite improvements in energy efficiency, a real decoupling from carbon emissions has not yet occurred, and that a need for fundamental structural reform persists, particularly in energy-intensive economies (Kédaitienė & Klyvienė, 2020). Nagaj et al. (2024), examining the effects of deep decarbonization strategies in the EU, show that the strongest determinants of emission reductions are energy efficiency and an increase in the share of renewables; merely curbing fossil fuels has limited impact without systemic transformation (Nagaj et al., 2024). Thus, while the macro literature produces a "win-win" narrative based on technical and economic indicators, it often pushes unequal starting conditions and differences in institutional capacity into the background.

The reflection of macro policy frameworks at the Lithuanian level can be traced through national strategy documents. Lithuania's 2021–2030 National Energy and Climate Action Plan (NECP) concretizes compliance with the EU climate regime with targets such as a 90% share of renewables in district heating, a 45% share of renewables in final energy consumption, and 30% of electricity consumption met through self-consumption (Government of Lithuania, 2021). This plan brings together energy efficiency, market integration, and innovation under a single framework, while also explicitly acknowledging that it faces historical structural problems such as outdated infrastructure, regional inequalities, and energy poverty (Government of Lithuania, 2021). This macro vision is also intertwined with discussions on the use of EU recovery funds. Kotseva-Tikova and Dvorak (2022), evaluating Lithuania's National Recovery and Resilience Plan in the context of the European Green Deal, point out that despite significant resources being allocated to green investments, there are shortcomings in governance capacity, implementation, and cross-cutting coordination (Kotseva-Tikova & Dvorak, 2022). Thus, it becomes clear that national plans must be considered not only in terms of budget allocations but also in terms of administrative capacity and institutional learning.

In terms of energy security, Gorton et al. (2005), who examine the historical legacy of the pre-accession period, show that pre-EU Europeanization in the field of agricultural pollution and environmental policy in Lithuania,

Poland, and Slovakia functioned as an external “conditionality regime” that transformed domestic policy networks and administrative relationships (Gorton et al., 2005). This historical institutionalist perspective implies that the European Green Deal later functioned as a similar normative and institutional rescaling mechanism.

At the macro level, the sectoral energy transition literature focuses particularly on heating, electricity, and transportation. Kveselis et al. (2017), who detail the role of district heating systems, emphasize that well-functioning centralized heating systems in Lithuania, through life cycle analysis, hold significant potential for urban sustainability thanks to biomass-based solutions, but that this role has been pushed into the background within the NECP framework (Kveselis et al., 2017). In the transportation sector, Petrauskienė et al. (2021), who compare electric, hybrid, and internal combustion vehicles in terms of their environmental and economic impacts, show that the environmental and financial superiority of battery electric vehicles (BEVs) will become even more pronounced with the transition to a renewable-dominated electricity mix, thus demonstrating that decarbonization in the transport sector is technically feasible and economically rational (Petrauskienė et al., 2021). Lithuania-specific evidence further shows that rising motorization rates intensify transport-related emissions, making technological transition in mobility not merely optional but structurally necessary for climate policy effectiveness (Peyravi et al., 2022).

In terms of electricity generation and the renewable energy mix, Gaigalis and Katinas (2019) show that wind power generation increased 2.5-fold and biogas consumption 2.8-fold between 2013 and 2018, with the share of renewables rising from 21% to over 30%, arguing that despite significant progress, Lithuania remains trapped in a narrow conversion pathway that is overly dependent on biomass (Gaigalis & Katinas, 2019). In a study examining heat pumps within the context of EU regulations, the same authors argue that these technologies are critical for low-carbon heating; but their adoption is slow due to high initial costs, financing issues, and limited technological knowledge (Gaigalis et al., 2016). These findings point to the paradox of “technological democratization,” where technological options are formally available but not effectively accessible due to socio-economic barriers. In terms of land use and ecosystem services, Gomes et al. (2021) model the effects of different scenarios of urban expansion and agricultural intensification on habitat quality, showing that the tension between policy objectives and land pressures is progressing at the expense of reduced ecosystem services (Gomes et al., 2021). This highlights the need to redesign climate and energy policies in a way that is compatible with biodiversity and ecosystem integrity. Comparative studies that place Lithuania in different clusters in EU-level macro discussions add to this picture.

Miłek et al. (2022), while clustering EU member states in terms of renewable energy share, reveal that the greatest inequalities arise due to structural and technological lock-ins, particularly in the transport sector, and that CEE

countries, including Lithuania, lag behind Western Europe (Miłek et al., 2022). Pakulska (2021) conceptualizes renewable energy growth in the CEE region as “new forms of old problems,” arguing that faulty grids, intermittent production risks, and externally dependent technology transfer create new types of vulnerabilities (Pakulska, 2021). Simionescu et al. (2020) find a positive relationship between renewable energy consumption and growth, but show that this relationship does not automatically resolve debates on social justice and structural transformation (Simionescu et al., 2020). The tax and fiscal policy literature adds another layer to this macro picture. Štreimikienė et al. (2018) examine the impact of environmental taxes on energy consumption efficiency in the Baltic region, emphasizing that monetizing externalities can transform market behavior but also carries the risk of creating additional burdens for low-income households (Štreimikienė et al., 2018). Stankevičienė et al. (2020) present a multi-criteria assessment model that addresses green investment, eco-innovation, and technological development within a comprehensive framework in the Baltic Sea Region, positioning Lithuania as a “testing ground” where environmental and economic goals are tested in an integrated manner (Stankevičienė et al., 2020). More broadly, feasibility-oriented decision-support frameworks are frequently used to evaluate sustainable energy options (Bhowmik et al., 2020). These studies reveal that financial instruments must be carefully designed not only for emission reduction but also in terms of distributive justice and socio-economic vulnerability.

In the agricultural dimension, Kowalska and Bieniek (2022) examine the EU’s goal of increasing organic farming and argue that the Green Deal’s food system objectives will be undermined unless subsidies, land use incentives, and rural development policies are redesigned (Kowalska & Bieniek, 2022). This finding is particularly important for Lithuania, which has extensive agricultural land. Štreimikienė et al.’s (2016b), which compares Lithuania’s sustainable energy development with that of the Czech Republic and Slovakia, highlights that despite the country’s significant progress in terms of energy efficiency, emission levels, and energy indicators used in transportation, decoupling energy consumption from economic growth remains an unresolved issue (Štreimikienė et al., 2016b). Thus, the macro literature depicts Lithuania not as an obvious “laggard” or an undisputed “pioneer,” but as a microcosm of thought surrounded by infrastructural inadequacies, dependency relationships, and socio-cultural complexities, while also fueled by political foresight and international alignment.

## 2.2. Meso level: governance, institutional capacity, and sectoral transformation

Beyond macro indicators, a significant portion of the literature discusses energy and environmental transformation in Lithuania at the level of institutions, sectors, and policy instruments, i.e., at the meso level. These studies show that

the European Green Deal is not only a set of numerical targets but also a “political narrative” that produces narratives, identities, and styles of governance. Domorenok and Graziano (2023), analyzing the European Green Deal through a narrative policy framework, argue that the EGD goes beyond being a strategy document and presents an inclusive story that reestablishes the EU as a climate leader (Domorenok & Graziano, 2023). Maris and Flouros (2021), using Börzel’s typology of Europeanization, argue that Lithuania has moved from a “fence-sitter” position to a “pace-setter” role in the context of its National Energy and Climate Plan; explaining this transition not only through legal compliance but also through increasing alignment in domestic policy and societal acceptance of the low-carbon transition (Maris & Flouros, 2021). However, Brukas (2015) shows that this alignment is not evenly distributed across sectors and is overshadowed by counter-hegemonic resistance in forestry, for example. Brukas (2015) argues that Lithuanian forestry governance, despite sustainability pressures from the EU and civil society, is locked into a corporatist model based on the “normal forest” theory, and that no real structural transformation has taken place (Brukas, 2015). This example leaves open the question of the extent to which the EGD narrative produces “performance” at the sectoral level and creates meaningful transformation. In the agricultural sector, Dabkiene et al. (2021) measure the ecological performance of different farm types in Lithuania using the Agri-Environmental Footprint Index (AFI) they developed using FADN data; showing that medium-scale, field and pasture-intensive farms exhibit the best profile, while large-scale and horticulture-focused farms lag behind (Dabkiene et al., 2021). This finding highlights the tense relationship between scale and sustainability and the need for contextualized policy against the homogenizing tendencies of the Common Agricultural Policy. Šneiderienė and Ruginė (2019), who examine the technological and institutional boundaries of sectoral transformation, reveal that despite the increase in the adoption of renewable energy and related technologies in Lithuania during the 2008–2017 period, insufficient R&D funding, weak institutional support, and small businesses’ problems accessing finance hindered the scaling up of green innovation (Šneiderienė & Ruginė, 2019). Šneiderienė et al. (2020) developed a Green Growth Index to measure “green growth” within the EU, showing that while Lithuania excels in some environmental indicators, it lags behind, particularly in technological innovation and social inclusion (Šneiderienė et al., 2020). These two studies indicate that designing economic policy and environmental policy separately can produce a structure that socializes the risks of green entrepreneurship while privatizing its benefits. This institutional fragility is consistent with expert-based findings showing that eco-innovation in circular transitions is primarily driven by regulatory orientation, market demand, and organizational capacities rather than by technological availability alone (Peyravi & Jakubavičius, 2022).

Addressing the intersection of energy security and governance, Grigoryev and Medzhidova (2022) discuss the

role of liquefied natural gas (LNG) in the Baltic Sea Region, emphasizing that the Klaipėda LNG terminal in Lithuania is a dual-purpose tool that is critical for short-term energy security but has the potential to delay the long-term renewable transition (Grigoryev & Medzhidova, 2022). This dual character is a concrete example of the tension between energy sovereignty and climate commitments. Meso-level literature also shows how EU and national-level policy instruments intersect with institutional capacity. Sapir et al. (2022) argue that green public procurement (GPP) is underutilized in the EGD toolbox, with regulatory and capacity gaps limiting its transformative potential, particularly in areas where public spending shapes the market (Sapir et al., 2022). Siksneliūtė-Butkiene et al. (2022) evaluate the climate and energy targets of the Europe 2020 Strategy using a multi-criteria approach, revealing that while Lithuania leads in some indicators, its vulnerability is exposed by shocks such as COVID-19 and Russia’s invasion of Ukraine (Siksneliūtė-Butkiene et al., 2022). These findings highlight the interdependencies between energy, economic, and environmental policies in times of crisis.

Vienāžindienė et al. (2021), who examine transformation at the logistics and business levels, show that eco-driving, route optimization, and sustainable waste management are prominent among green logistics practices in Lithuanian companies, with legal obligations and top management commitment being the main drivers (Vienāžindienė et al., 2021). Tutak et al. (2021) rank EU member states in terms of energy and climate sustainability using the COPRAS method, revealing that Lithuania shows “promising but fragile” progress when economic, environmental, and social indicators are considered together (Tutak et al., 2021). In the field of transportation and electromobility, Raslavičius et al. (2014) show that the technical infrastructure and regulatory framework for the transition to electric vehicles are partially in place, but adoption is progressing slowly due to high costs and limited social awareness (Raslavičius et al., 2014). These period-to-period comparisons reveal that legal compliance with the LNGs does not, on its own, produce meaningful transformation without implementation and social ownership. Addressing the digital transformation dimension, Bahn-Walkowiak et al. (2020), in their reports on eco-innovation and digitalization, position Lithuania as a rising actor in the field of resource circularity and waste management, while also drawing attention to the risks of digital transformation, such as increased energy consumption and technology lock-in (Bahn-Walkowiak et al., 2020). Thus, digital tools emerge as ambiguous tools that are compatible with the objectives of the Green Deal, but can also threaten them.

Finally, Geels and Turnheim (2022), who bring multi-level governance discussions into the LNG context, address the Green Deal within a multi-level perspective (MLP) framework, arguing that the success of the LNGs as a “landscape” pressure depends on progress in regime-level reforms and niche innovations (Geels & Turnheim, 2022). Andrijevskaia et al. (2022), comparing decarbonization

efforts in the Baltic states, describe Lithuania as a pioneer in regulatory innovation but a laggard in practical implementation, particularly in transport and heavy industry (Andrijevskaia et al., 2022). These meso-level studies conceptualize Lithuania's relationship with the EGD not merely as a "compliant" actor, but also as a tense interface shaped by institutional capacity, cross-sectoral coordination, and regional inequalities.

### 2.3. Micro level: values, behaviors, and consumption patterns

Macro goals and meso-level institutional mechanisms remain abstract unless they find resonance in daily life. Therefore, studies at the micro level on values, attitudes, and behaviors reveal the normative and psychological dimensions of the green transition in Lithuania.

Tsagarakis et al. (2018), who examined perceptions of renewable energy among school-age children, show that students in Lithuania, Latvia, and Romania have conceptions of "green" and "clean" energy that starkly diverge from expert discourse and that different age groups assign different meanings to renewable energy (Tsagarakis et al., 2018). This semiotic divergence indicates that cultural and intergenerational worlds of meaning must be taken into account in public energy education. Krajnc et al. (2022), who examined young people's views on the circular economy and Green Deal targets, reveal that despite generally high conceptual support and social responsibility awareness, the tools and entrepreneurial capacity to translate knowledge into concrete initiatives are weak (Krajnc et al., 2022). This highlights the gap between "cognitive support" and "practical application."

Studies centered on behavioral psychology detail the disconnects between values, identity, and action. Balundé et al. (2019) examined the relationship between biospheric values, environmental identity, and pro-environmental behaviors in Lithuania, showing that internal environmental concern predicted actions such as recycling and environmental activism, but the same effect was not seen in infrastructure-dependent areas such as transportation (Balundé et al., 2019). This suggests that infrastructure and cultural practices limit the impact of value-based interventions. Applying value-based norms (VBN) theory to the Lithuanian case, Liobikienė and Juknys (2015) find that individuals with self-transcendence values focused on social and ecological goals have high levels of environmental risk perception and responsibility, but that behaviors do not always reflect this awareness (Liobikienė & Juknys, 2015). Evaluating practices at the university level, Dagiliūtė and Liobikienė (2015) show that, despite students' high interest in sustainability at Vytautas Magnus University, institutional green policies often remain superficial and do not produce lasting organizational change (Dagiliūtė & Liobikienė, 2015). When read together, these two studies reveal a normative configuration in Lithuania that is "environmentally friendly in discourse, but hesitant in practice."

In consumption-focused studies, Liobikienė and Dagiliūtė (2016) evaluate the EU's Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) policies and show that, although production-based carbon footprints have partially decoupled from growth, consumption-based emissions in many countries – including Lithuania – have caught up with or surpassed production-based emissions (Liobikienė & Dagiliūtė, 2016). These findings highlight the risk that climate policies limited to industry-focused regulations may overlook imported emissions and everyday consumption practices. Liobikienė et al. (2019), who examined the relationship between materialistic values and environmental behavior, found that materialistic values have a limited effect on environmental concern; behaviors can be shaped by sometimes "protective" and sometimes "hedonistic" motivations (Liobikienė et al., 2019). This complex pattern suggests that value change alone may be insufficient as an environmental policy tool. Liobikienė et al. (2016), who examined green consumption behaviors by comparing Austria and Lithuania, show that social norms are decisive in purchasing green products in both countries, but that price stands out as a strong deterrent in Lithuania (Liobikienė et al., 2016). Liobikienė and Butkus (2017) find that, in the context of the Europe 2020 and Paris Agreement targets, the increase in the share of renewable energy reduces greenhouse gas concentrations; however, economic growth and the increase in primary energy consumption partially offset these gains (Liobikienė & Butkus, 2017). Thus, a complex field emerges where micro-level consumption preferences and macro-level energy mix mutually shape each other.

Examining preferences for micro-production technologies, Su et al. (2018) reveal that Lithuanian households show a strong preference for solar technologies over other options; the symbolic meanings of the technologies (modernity, independence) and affordability are decisive in this preference (Su et al., 2018). However, the low appeal of collective models (shared systems, cooperatives) suggests that they may pose a cultural barrier to the widespread adoption of energy communities. Offering a broader knowledge-community perspective, Sotnyk et al. (2023) bibliometrically scan the global literature on household-level energy efficiency and renewable energy, pointing to growing interest in high-emission activities such as heating and transportation, as well as prosumer interventions (Sotnyk et al., 2023). This trend allows the Lithuanian experience to be positioned within a global epistemic community, linking behavioral findings in the country to a broader field of research. Addressing the dimension of social awareness and knowledge gaps, Chomać-Pierzecka et al. (2022) link the development of the renewable energy sources (RES) market in Poland and Lithuania to public awareness and behavior, showing that information gaps, particularly regarding the long-term economic benefits of RES, slow down market growth (Chomać-Pierzecka et al., 2022). This study reveals that without building knowledge and trust at the micro level, macro goals may lack public support.

Finally, focusing on the behavioral impact of crises, Liobikienė et al. (2023) examine the effect of multiple crisis perceptions, such as war, pandemic, and climate crisis, on energy-saving behaviors in Lithuania. They find that although the war in Ukraine is perceived as the most intense crisis, the greatest impact on environmental attitudes comes from the COVID-19 pandemic, while the war primarily influences energy-saving behaviors (Liobikienė et al., 2023). This finding shows that the cognitive and behavioral effects of crises do not necessarily overlap; feelings of fear, anxiety, and urgency can both encourage and hinder sustainable action.

## 2.4. Crisis, geopolitics, and energy transition: Reframing the EGD

Studies that approach energy transition not merely as a technical reorganization process but as a political re-framing process intertwined with crises, security discourses, and sovereignty pursuits are becoming increasingly visible in Lithuanian literature. Sattich et al. (2022) evaluate the transition to renewable energy within the framework of the revised Copenhagen School's securitization theory, arguing that Lithuania's shift from nuclear to renewable energy was possible not in response to increasing energy security threats, but during a period when this threat perception had relatively subsided (Sattich et al., 2022). The authors conceptualize "de-securitization" as a precondition for the green transition, arguing that ecological visions can only emerge in a context where existential threats have partially receded.

Khan et al. (2020) discuss renewable energy in Lithuania through eco-logistics and sustainable economic planning, not only as a means of decarbonization but also as a tool of "economic diplomacy" that strengthens national image, brand, and export potential (Khan et al., 2020). Nguyen et al. (2022) examine the relationship between policy trust, perceptions of justice, and the effectiveness of environmental policies across the EU, showing that citizens' loyalty to the governance system and perceptions of justice determine environmental participation (Nguyen et al., 2022). In contexts such as Lithuania, where institutional trust fluctuates, this finding further highlights the need for participatory governance and transparency. Addressing energy communities, Bürger and Hammer (2022) argue that energy communities, which emerged in Eastern Europe in response to climate and energy security crises, offer a new form of governance that challenges centralized energy systems and weakens public service monopolies, even though they are still in their early stages in Lithuania (Bürger & Hammer, 2022). Such initiatives have the potential to materialize the Constitutional Court's promise of "involving citizens in the process" by producing local autonomy and common ownership practices.

Discussing the tension between legal certainty and adaptability, Ntona and Holtermann (2023) argue that, in the context of environmental law and energy governance, regimes based on rigid rules have become problematic in

the face of rapidly changing climate risks and energy markets; while adaptable legal regimes can prevent countries that have experienced institutional and political volatility, such as Lithuania, from being caught between stagnation and excess (Ntona & Holtermann, 2023). When this crisis and governance literature is read together, Lithuania's green transition is seen as a multi-layered political field caught between EU targets, regional security concerns, local values, and institutional capacities. The Constitutional Court does not reduce this field to a one-dimensional transformation narrative; instead, it reframes it through motifs of conflict, contradiction, and deferred action.

## 2.5. Integrative assessment: the intersection of macro, meso, and micro levels

The literature summarized above shows that studies operating at different scales actually converge around similar epistemic questions: Which historical dependencies do energy and climate policies perpetuate, and which do they transform? To what extent do institutional alignment, democratic legitimacy, and participation overlap? How do values, identities, and perceptions of crisis engage in dialogue with policy texts? Macro-level studies (e.g., Štreimikienė et al., 2016b; Sinevičienė et al., 2017; Marinas et al., 2018; Simionescu et al., 2020; Nagaj et al., 2024; Kowalska & Bieniek, 2022) often read Lithuania as a field of "structural alignment" shaped by EU integration, while meso-level literature (Domorenok & Graziano, 2023; Maris & Flouros, 2021; Brukas, 2015; Dabkiene et al., 2021; Šneiderienė & Ruginė, 2019; Šneiderienė et al., 2020; Grigoryev & Medzhidova, 2022; Sapir et al., 2022; Siksnyte-Butkiene et al., 2022; Vienāžindienė et al., 2021; Tutak et al., 2021; Raslavicius et al., 2014; Bahn-Walkowiak et al., 2020; Geels & Turnheim, 2022; Andrijevskaia et al., 2022) highlight the fragility of this alignment through sectoral asymmetry and institutional capacity limitations. Micro-level studies (Tsagarakis et al., 2018; Krajnc et al., 2022; Balundė et al., 2019; Liobikienė & Juknys, 2015; Dagiliūtė & Liobikienė, 2015; Liobikienė & Dagiliūtė, 2016; Liobikienė et al., 2019; Liobikienė et al., 2016; Liobikienė & Butkus, 2017; Su et al., 2018; Sotnyk et al., 2023; Chomać-Pierzecka et al., 2022; Liobikienė et al., 2023) reveal the disconnections between values, identity, and behaviors, as well as the multiple effects of crises.

The studies listed in the Table 1 are not isolated pieces of literature but are read as part of a fragmented epistemic field that this article attempts to analyze. As shown in recent energy justice research, economic concerns regarding renewable energy investments and calls for rational investment strategies are closely linked to both macro growth targets and perceptions of justice at the micro level (Jenkins et al., 2016).

Consequently, while the literature offers a rich accumulation that mostly describes Lithuania's green transition through technical indicators, institutional alignment, and behavioral tendencies, it only indirectly reveals epistemic tensions, deferred forms of action, and performative

**Table 1.** Main thematic clusters of Lithuania's green transition literature (source: created by Author)

Level / Theme	Focus	Case studies
Macro: energy security and growth	Energy dependency, sustainability indicators, growth–emission relationship, NECP and EU targets	Štreimikienė et al. (2016a); Sinevičienė et al. (2017); Marinaš et al. (2018); Simionescu et al. (2020); Nagaj et al. (2024); Government of Lithuania (2021); Štreimikienė et al. (2016b)
Meso: governance and sectoral transformation	EGD narrative, NECP compliance, agriculture, forestry, logistics, tax and innovation policies, digitalization	Domorenok and Graziano (2023); Maris and Flouros (2021); Brukas (2015); Dabkiene et al. (2021); Šneiderienė and Ruginė (2019); Šneiderienė et al. (2020); Grigoryev and Medzhidova (2022); Sapir et al. (2022); Siksnelyte-Butkiene et al. (2022); Vienazindienė et al. (2021); Tutak et al. (2021); Raslavicius et al. (2014); Bahn-Walkowiak et al. (2020); Kotseva-Tikova and Dvorak (2022); Kveselis et al. (2017); Gaigalis and Katinas (2019); Gaigalis et al. (2016); Gomes et al. (2021); Kowalska and Bieniek (2022); Štreimikienė et al. (2021); Stankevičienė et al. (2020); Pakulskas (2021); Miłek et al. (2022); Andrijevskaia et al. (2022); Geels and Turnheim (2022)
Micro: values and behaviors	Environmental values, identity, consumption and micro-production preferences, crisis perceptions, education	Tsagarakis et al. (2018); Krajnc et al. (2022); Balundė et al. (2019); Liobikienė and Juknys (2015); Dagiliūtė and Liobikienė (2015); Liobikienė and Dagiliūtė (2016); Liobikienė et al. (2019); Liobikienė et al. (2016); Liobikienė and Butkus (2017); Su et al. (2018); Sotnyk et al. (2023); Chomać-Pierzecka et al. (2022); Liobikienė et al. (2023)
Crisis and multi-level governance	Securitization/de-securitization, institutional trust, energy communities, adaptive law	Sattich et al. (2022); Khan et al. (2020); Nguyen et al. (2022); Bürger and Hammer (2022); Ntona and Holtermann's (2023); Jenkins et al. (2016)

participation practices in governance. This article does not merely use this body of work as a "background", but aims to reveal the conflicts and contradictions implied by this literature through Derridean deconstruction and critical policy analysis; thus, it aims to rethink environmental governance in Lithuania not only on the axis of success–failure, but on the ground of constant tension and deferred promises.

### 3. Methodology

This study is based on an interpretive research design that approaches Lithuania's energy and environmental transition not as a singular "case" within the European context, but rather as a field of interpretation where tensions between crises, institutions, and citizenship intensify. The methodological approach draws on critical policy analysis and political ecology; it understands energy transition not merely as a matter of technical and numerical indicators, but also as a governance problem intertwined with discourses, power relations, and debates on democratic legitimacy. Therefore, the study prioritizes contextual depth, conceptual clarity, and the visibility of normative tensions over quantitative generalizability.

Within this framework, the research is structured around two main components that are interconnected. The first component is a comprehensive synthesis of literature and documents that brings together scientific studies on environmental and energy governance in Lithuania and the Baltic region with EU and national policy documents. This synthesis scans a broad corpus of both empirical and theoretical studies around sub-themes such as energy security, green growth, public attitudes, environmental behavior, and the European Green Deal. The texts included

in the review consist of peer-reviewed journal articles, national strategy documents, and EU communications covering the post-EU accession period and, in particular, the recent years shaped by the Green Deal. The literature is treated not merely as a descriptive section providing "background", but as part of the institutional discourse to be analyzed itself; thus, continuities and discontinuities between policy texts and academic commentary can be traced.

The second component consists of semi-structured expert interviews that "engage" with this textual universe. The study conducted a total of three interviews representing three critical institutional levels of environmental and energy governance in Lithuania: a high-level official representing the ministry bureaucracy responsible for environmental policies at the executive level; an academic working at the intersection of environment, energy, and democracy; and a member of parliament involved in the parliament's work on the environment/climate. Thus, three different "institutional perspectives" on the same transition process – executive, intellectual critique, and legislative/oversight – were deliberately brought together.

The sampling strategy is purposeful: the researcher focused on actors who both generate discourse and are directly involved in decision-making processes in the areas of the Green Deal, energy security, and climate policy; he selected these three individuals from a pool of experts visible in the literature and national debates. While the three interviews do not claim to be "representative" in quantitative terms, they offer a concentrated field of knowledge in terms of the theoretical focus of the study. In other words, the aim is not to sample the entire Lithuanian society, but to reveal how tensions (energy security/environmental goals, compliance/persuasion, participation/performance,

etc.) placed at the center of the research are constructed and discussed among the main institutional positions shaping environmental governance.

The interviews were conducted using a semi-structured question guide guided by the researcher, in accordance with the participants' institutional calendar and confidentiality conditions. The question guide was constructed around three main axes that emerged from the literature synthesis: (i) the search for balance between energy security and environmental goals and how this balance is constructed alongside crisis narratives; (ii) how policymakers perceive public attitudes and behaviors and how this perception shapes their understanding of legitimacy; (iii) whether deep transformation is expected through democratic foresight and institutional consistency or through reactive decisions made in times of crisis. The flow of the interview was flexibly adapted to each participant's area of expertise; thus, the same themes were explored in depth at different levels (law, policy design, implementation, public relations).

The interviews were recorded with the participants' consent and then transcribed in detail. The analysis process is based on a thematic coding approach that avoids imposing predefined categories by the researcher, but does not completely lose the sensitivities derived from the literature. In the first stage, each interview transcript was read line by line to extract "open codes"; in particular, crisis and time framing, legitimacy language, forms of participation, center/periphery relations, narratives of conformity/deviation, and statements about the function of law were marked. These codes were then grouped according to their conceptual proximity and transformed into higher-level themes that were also used in the findings section of the study (e.g., "the performativity of law", "conformity becoming strategy", "deferred action", "ostentatious participation").

In the second stage, this thematic skeleton was revisited through a deconstructive reading. The aim here was to reveal not only "what was said," but also through which dichotomies it was said and what remained silent. Therefore, each theme was re-examined with a sensitivity borrowed from Jacques Derrida's deconstructionist approach – for example, how oppositions such as harmony/persuasion, center/periphery, participation/performance, crisis/foresight are constructed, how one side is made privileged and the other secondary, and which meanings are constantly deferred. This second reading aims to reveal the breaking points and internal contradictions within the text that were not apparent in the initial thematic coding phase; thus, the findings section maps not only the "common points" but also the narratives that disrupt and question each other.

The relationship between the literature review and the interviews is also structured according to this two-stage analytical logic. The literature is not treated as an external criterion used to "verify" or "disprove" the interview data; rather, it is considered a second discursive field on the same plane as the actors' discourses. Therefore, the coding and deconstruction processes were carried out in parallel

on both interview transcripts and policy documents and scientific studies; the themes that emerged were continuously re-examined in a dialogue that constantly moved between these two text universes. Thus, for example, bureaucratic bottlenecks expressed at the ministerial level, narratives of legal uncertainty at the parliamentary level, and discussions of "conformity but not internalization" in the academic literature could be read not as isolated cases but as different facets of a common epistemic tension.

The small and purposeful sample of the study, of course, brings its own limitations. Three expert interviews do not claim to represent all views in Lithuanian society; however, by examining in depth three "concentrated perspectives" from different institutional positions, it aims to show how fundamental dichotomies and deferred forms of action are produced in the field of environmental governance. Therefore, the "generalizability" of the study is analytical rather than statistical: it is assumed that the conceptual framework presented in the article and the tensions it reveals can be applied to the experiences of other small EU countries with similar institutional configurations.

Validity and reliability are addressed through "triangulation" strategies based on transparency, thick description, and multiple perspectives, rather than classical measurement logic. First, the methodological flow – literature selection, sampling logic, coding stages, and interpretation principles – is clearly presented; in the findings section, direct quotations and tabulated code summaries are used as much as possible to enable the reader to follow the interpretation. Second, points of consistency and inconsistency between the literature, policy documents, and interviews from three different institutional positions are consciously tracked, thus demonstrating the existence of multiple narratives that question each other rather than a single dominant narrative. Finally, the study adopts a reflexive stance that considers the impact of the researcher's own normative position – their sensitivity to the ideals of democracy, justice, and sustainability – on the analysis from start to finish; therefore, the results claim to be a critical but self-conscious reading rather than an "objective outside view."

This methodological framework makes it possible to conceptualize environmental governance in Lithuania as a constantly self-reproducing field of tension rather than placing it within ready-made categories. In the following section, the coding and deconstruction findings produced within this framework, together with their analytical implications and conclusions, are discussed through the narratives of executive, academic, and legislative actors.

## 4. Results

### Coding Analysis of Interview 1: Ministry-Level Environmental Perspective

The first interview conveys the formal perspective of the environmental governance system in the Lithuanian executive branch, capturing the operational, managerial, and organizational aspects of the Europe's Green Deal's

**Table 2.** Coding summary – Ministry-level perspective (source: created by Author)

Theme	Codes	Scholarly Context
Policy Implementation	NECP, resource scarcity, bureaucratic delays	Börzel (2002); Knill and Lenschow (2005)
Inter-institutional Gaps	Ministry coordination, multi-level misalignment	Hooghe and Marks (2001)
Socioeconomic Resistance	Industrial lobbying, energy price backlash	Lockwood (2021); Liobikienė and Dagiliūtė (2016)
EU Funding Inefficiencies	Delayed disbursement, technical support mismatch	Domorenok and Graziano (2023)
Limited Public Participation	One-way communication, information seminars	Habermas (1996)

implementation Lithuania. The respondent keeps framing environmental policy through an overtly legalistic lens, underscoring documents like the National Energy and Climate Action Plan (NECP), which is presented as the primary mechanism and the centerpiece of Lithuania's environmental policies within the EU's climate policy framework. The focus on compliance and legal frameworks tend to show more fundamental structural problems at the same time.

An escape from policy intent throughout the interview was a predominant issue under constrained institutional settings. Implementation gaps, as in the case of NECP, building renovation schemes, or subsidizing renewable energy, result from scarce resources and administrative bottlenecks. This is what Börzel (2002) seems to describe as the confined space generated by a split between *de jure* and *de facto* workings, most applicable to newer EU member states that have not fully matured their institutional ecosystems. Procedures followed point to a lack of human resources and too many steps creating a process gridlock, suggesting that while Lithuania has systematically transposed EU directives into domestic legislation, the gap in practical execution is very wide. This institutional bottleneck is exacerbated by horizontal fragmentation. The interviewee discusses inconsistent inter-ministerial coordination, especially regarding the Environment and Energy ministries. This serves as an example of a pervasive problem in multi-level governance systems, the presence of overlapping functions often results in conflict instead of collaboration (Hooghe & Marks, 2001). Though there are inter-ministerial working groups, these tend to lack integrative strategic frameworks, especially in highly complicated cross-cutting areas like the green transition. The interview further captures socio-political opposition from industrial stakeholders and the populace. The respondent notes industrial lobbying as a constant barrier, particularly for fossil fuel-dependent industries. Public discourse seems to center around the sustainable energy technologies' price point, especially with heightened energy inflation adding to cost transition concerns. Such anxieties are consistent with Lockwood's (2021) study that highlighted how climate policy becomes politically vulnerable when perceived unjust economic consequences, especially punitive costs, drag lower-income households into the mix. Another very important area deals with the spending of EU funds. While European structural and investment funds are considered important aids of green transition, the respondent voices dissatisfaction with the rate and intricacy of the financing workflow. This criticism parallels that of

Domorenok and Graziano (2023), who demonstrate how environmental structural funds are often laden in the Eastern European setting with administrative hurdles that slow down fast grant utilization. The outcome corresponds to a legal-institutional paradox: supportive documentation exists, but realization is postponed because of procedural opacity and bureaucratic complexity. This crisis-induced implementation gap mirrors evidence from Lithuania during the Russia–Ukraine conflict, where external shocks exposed structural constraints in policy capacity and widened the distance between regulatory commitments and practical execution (Uygur & Peyravi, 2025).

Last, the interview focuses on public engagement practices, which the respondents outline in very instrumental ways. Seminars, consultations, and information campaigns are designed for public engagement, but the engagement is predominantly passive. To use the terminology of Habermas (1996), public participation that is not accompanied with reciprocal dialogue lacks the ability to produce legitimacy. Here, participation is configured as an opportunity to fulfill a regulatory requirement instead of a space for genuinely collaborative policy development. Based on the coding process, the central themes, empirical codes, and their corresponding theoretical references are systematized in Table 2.

### Coding Analysis of Interview 2: Academic Expert Perspective

The second interview offers a richly theoretical perspective, manifesting a critical distance from the policy implementation discourse that is characteristic of a minister's day-to-day activities. Instead of concentrating on practical or operational challenges, this examination explores the Lithuania environmental governance archetype through its conceptual, normative, as well as historical aspects. The academic approach is most useful in illustrating the nation's place in more universal post-socialist transition, European integration, and ecological modernization dynamics.

What stands out in this interview is the notion that Lithuania's adherence to the European Green Deal is primarily a matter of strategic alignment rather than an internalized norm of sustainability at the operational level within the country. This perspective draws from Radaeli's (2003) Europeanization interpretation where it is seen as a continuum and some states, for instance, Lithuania, engage in instrumental adaptation and obfuscate deeper structural changes at the preferences, and political culture

level. The interviewee's position is that Lithuania tries to appear as progressive in its governance framework and reporting mechanisms but fails to conceal the historical developmental model ambivalence towards ecological values rooted in the absence of the country's historical development paradigm.

The participant is particularly sensitive to the history of the Soviet energy and industrial system and its legacy on infrastructure design, political inclinations, and the prevailing economic paradigm. This seems to illustrate what Pierson (2000) refers to as path dependency – past frameworks or institutional arrangements continue, in some form, to determine future options, even in the presence of more recent legal or normative frameworks. The continuing hegemony of carbon-dependent industries and the lack of diversification in technological fields is a classic case of this inertia. The analysis also foregrounds the restraining structural economic factors. Although the shift to renewable energy is desirable, the absence of a local manufacturing base, a dismal innovation ecosystem, and powerless connections between academia, the business world, and the government pose significant challenges. These obstacles are consistent with Rodrik's (2007) premise that emerging economies need more creative approaches to sustainable development directed through institutionally cross-sectoral collaboration. In their absence, well financed environmental reforms are unlikely to achieve intended outcomes. The analysis, as with every other case, has Cultural dimensions as its core pillar. The interviewee points out that environmental awareness is distributed unevenly by age and social strata. The older part of the population, shaped by historical deprivation and economic insecurity, tends to be more skeptical. In contrast, younger people demonstrate higher awareness and are more engaged with these issues. This gap between generations adds some dimension to democratic legitimacy, suggesting that environmental policy is much more complex than matters of legislation and economics; it also involves a matrix of values, identity, and trust.

Finally, the interview also emphasizes the role of scholarly institutions in creating discourses on sustainability. Universities are not viewed only as places of training, but as epistemic agents informing policy through research, teaching, and public advocacy. This aligns with Nowotny et al.'s (2001) concept of socially distributed knowledge in which universities mediate science, politics, and society. Table 3 systematizes the central themes and codes emerging from the academic expert interview, together with their positioning in the relevant scholarly literature.

**Table 3.** Coding summary – academic expert (source: created by Author)

Theme	Codes	Scholarly Context
Strategic Europeanization	Compliance without normative internalization	Radaelli (2003); Börzel (2002)
Historical Legacy	Soviet industrial infrastructure, carbon path dependence	Pierson (2000); Sattich et al. (2022)
Economic Structure	Innovation gaps, weak state-market-academia links	Rodrik (2007); Sinevičienė et al. (2017)
Cultural Variation	Intergenerational environmental attitudes	Liobikienė et al. (2019); Lockwood (2021)
Role of Academia	Research mediation, public education, epistemic authority	Nowotny et al. (2001)

### Coding Analysis of Interview 3: Legislative Perspective from Environmental Committee

The third interview offers a legislative and oversight-oriented view for analysis concentrating on monitoring policy-level enforcement, regional equity, as well as the gap between legalistic mandates and actual workings on the ground. This does not appear to be the proceduralism of ministries or the academic reflective critique; rather, this interview is practical, judicial, and concerning with the bounds of parliamentary oversight.

The interview starts with outlining important gaps in institutional oversight. There are environmental laws and programs, but their implementation suffers from the lack of consistent monitoring. There is not enough capacity to evaluate compliance with procedures in real time, and there is a lack of enforcement for non-compliance. This mirrors what Dimitrova (2010) describes as rule transfer without rule adoption – the legal dictates exist in norm form but operationally, critical processes are absent.

A considerable part of analysis is devoted to gaps in spatial equity. The respondent observes a distinct urban-rural disparity in environmental governance. Municipalities have differing administrative and financial capacities to implement national or EU-mandated programs. This undermines the constitutional principle of equality before the law and results in incipient environmental injustice. Cowell (2020) on spatial justice in regional planning as well as regional equity highlights this. The interview describes traditional industries' resistance to change policies. These actors illustrate a governance model that is dominated by ecological cleansing as opposed to economic inclusion. Exclusion remains a danger, as Sovacool et al. (2021) point out, arguing that such gaps in governance will still result in disproportionate development and increased inequality and polarization if reluctant actors are not incorporated. From the perspective of legal frameworks, the respondent underscores the absence of vigorous models for public-private partnership (PPP) in green infrastructure. European law (for instance, COM(2021) 662 final) supports PPPs as engines for resilience. Yet in Lithuania, these structures remain concealed because there is no legal framework supportive of cooperative investment towards sustainability.

Finally, the respondent critiques the communicative attitude toward government policy. Public awareness campaigns center on and frame the initiative in a paternalistic approach. Engaging is less emphasized than informing, meaning citizens are treated as passive individuals who

**Table 4.** Coding summary – parliamentary perspective (source: created by Author)

Theme	Codes	Scholarly Context
Weak Policy Enforcement	Missing compliance tracking, unenforced penalties	Dimitrova (2010); Radaelli (2003)
Territorial Inequality	Municipal fragmentation, rural capacity gaps	Cowell (2020); Rawls (1971)
Just Transition Challenges	Industry exclusion, resistant economic sectors	Sovacool et al. (2021)
Legal Framework Gaps	Underdeveloped PPP models, fragmented incentives	European Commission (2021)
Communicative Deficit	Top-down awareness campaigns, lack of deliberative input	Habermas (1996); Liobikienė and Dagiliūtė (2016)

need to receive information. This disconnect between policy intent and societal uptake reflects a broader micro-meso gap, where organizational and leadership practices play a decisive role in translating sustainability norms into everyday behavior, rather than policy design alone (Abiodun & Uygar, 2025). As Habermas (1996) and Liobikienė and Dagiliūtė (2016) illustrate, legitimacy rests on the balance between supply and demand, thus one way messaging is insufficient. Table 4 presents a structured overview of the key themes and codes derived from the parliamentary interview, together with their theoretical grounding.

### Deconstruction of Interview 1: Executive Government Perspective

The first interview centered on administrative execution and legal compliance gives the impression of an orderly institutional narrative on Lithuania's environmental policy. In this case, the management structure is hierarchical, the NECP is strategically positioned as Lithuania's chief headway in satisfying EU requirements, and the overarching tone is practical, all steeped in the governing rhetoric of rationality. But as Derrida teaches us, the most coherent-sounding discourses often harbor their most profound contradictions in the very way they are expressed (Derrida, 1976). Here, the neat split between policy and implementation serves as an optimal battleground for deconstructive analysis.

The interview situates the NECP as Lithuania's primary achievement in fulfilling its obligations toward the EU. However, the plan is repeatedly described as plagued by bureaucratic inefficiency and a lack of administrative capacity. These characterize an internal contradiction: action mechanisms are operating within a bounded timeframe. What is labeled as policy implementation is in truth an exercise in compliance, having procedures entrenched solely to follow rather than to achieve intended objectives. This resonates with Radaelli's (2003) observation that Europeanization tends to give rise to institutional imitation instead of real change. Here, in legal-political terms, applies the *différance* of Derrida's deferment and difference of meaning at the same time. The NECP, a document meant to coordinate action, perpetually defers action to the next cycle, the next funding period, the next phase of administrative review... Thus, its power flows not from what it accomplishes, but what it holds the potential to deliver. The policy document does not become an apparatus of

governance; rather, it becomes a governance apparatus in stasis, the place where governance is suspended, postponed.

The focus is further sharpened regarding framing public participation. The seminar interviews recount public seminars and information campaigns as instances of inclusiveness. In any case, the structure is one-way. The government speaks; the subject is silent. As Habermas (1996) argued, this type of instrumental participation is devoid of what ought to be considered deliberative legitimacy, that is, mutual engagement and equality in discourse. The stark contrast between informing and engaging disappears, suggesting that participation is simply a euphemism for administrative engagement, conditional dialogue where dissent is not permitted. In addition, the inconsistency stemming from crisis rhetoric and slow procedure is self-evident throughout the interview. Both the climate emergency and energy crisis are referenced as justifications for transition, yet the slow pace of the bureaucracy is accepted as a given. Derrida would say that this form of temporal interplay is not coincidence but part of the architecture of modern governance. The urgency of the policy Green Deal justifies its existence, but the policy apparatus exists in order to defer its urgency into plans and strategies. The schedule here is not progressive but recursive. Policy is simultaneously acceleration and delay.

In short, the ministry storyline, while legally and managerially grounded, self-contradicts rationally. Action requires delay; participation is performance; and the future is a memory invoked to justify the inaction of the present. This is a governance problem and not a failure of governance, revealing that the Green Deal operates, in this bureaucratic mode, less as a political shift and more as a regime of governance of time and semantics.

### Deconstruction of Interview 2: Academic Perspective

The second interview as developed through theoretical critique and reflective distance appears to be a more self-contained and seamless narrative. Still, coherence is inadequate in applying deconstruction because there are always disregarded binaries, ignored tensions, and suppressed axioms which shape even the most critical discourses.

In this interview, the most poignant is the opposition between strategic compliance and normative conviction. The scholar situates Lithuania within the framework of

Europeanization as something that a country does out of necessity, not out of belief. This stance appears, at least on the surface, to be analytically coherent. What this view overlooks, however, is that the argument also more implicitly relies on a binary construction of a hierarchy: conviction equals good, in compliance is weak.

When described in this way, compliance is viewed as less, deterritorialized Europe engagement. What if compliance is the only viable form of integration for a post-socialist state trying to carve out its position in a neoliberal Europe? What if the ability to claim conviction is precisely a luxury that only Western states with entrenched institutional trust and cultural capital can afford? In arguing for conviction predominately, the critique risks reproducing the very Western normativity it sets out to challenge. Lithuania's so-called failure to adopt internalized sustainability values may indicate structural in recognition rather than a moral deficiency.

In the same way, invoking the notion of path dependency, the Soviet-era infrastructures and mindsets that inhibit transition, is another case of historical determinism. Path dependency has its merits of usefulness and coherence (Pierson, 2000) but is tempered by the reminder from deconstruction that history is not about destiny. The scholar's account, albeit harsh about infrastructure inertia, seems to fall into the assumption of underdevelopment claiming description as a prophecy. In turn, these risks solidifying Lithuania's marginality within the European project instead of confronting it.

The self-described role of the interviewee characterized the academic moment as rationally certain. Lithuanian higher education institutions are seen as holders and purveyors of public truth, policy expertise, and citizenship education. But this positioning relies upon a split between rational science and politically contingent science. Derrida would insist that, too, is a discourse; it is dominated by exclusion, presuppositions, and institutional power. The statement that academia, as an active participant, is outside the policy world as an inactive observer absents claims authority from policy, and in itself is a political statement. It conceals the assumption whose consequence endangers the critical exposure of the role of expertise within constitutionalized technocratic power (Nowotny et al., 2001).

The generational age divides older people as skeptical and youth as progressive is also open to deconstructive critique. While some observations may hold statistical validity, they reinforce a linear progressive temporal narrative where the future generation somehow redeems the present one. This logic, while appealing, can shift towards a form of kindness disguised as hostility. It puts the prior generation in the problematic position of being a residual gift or burden slowing down the modernizing zeal of the young. It is this binary that loses sight of the possibility for intergenerational dialogue, solidarity not grounded in age, but in ethical commitments shared across generations.

The academic narrative, in its most critically articulated form, is not free from the logics it seeks to expose, thus placing a certain value on narratives of conviction, youth,

expertise at the expense of strategic adaptation, historical trauma, and lay skepticism. The deconstruction of this narrative does not erase its worth but rather shifts the framing of it: not outside the criticism but as someone in the same performative field they seek to analyze.

### Deconstruction of Interview 3: Legislative Perspective

The third interview, which focused on legislative function and oversight responsibility, seems the most practical. Its discourse, however, is no less influenced by oppositions that invite deconstruction: law versus enforcement, center versus periphery, inclusion versus exclusion. Each category unravels to expose paradoxes that, together, complicate the account of democratic environmental governance.

The most immediate binary opposition is between law and practice. The respondent underscores the existence of legal instruments for climate transition while simultaneously criticizing their implementation. At face value, his statement represents a commonplace critique of governance: rules are in place, but they are not enforced. In a deconstructive view, such enforcement positioned outside law is not externally accessible. Derridean assume: the performative power of law approaches. If enforcement fails, it is not because there is no law; it is because enactment fails to materialize. Law, therefore, is not simply a norm lacking governance; it becomes a reality dependent norm, structured institution requires bodies, budgets, and bureaucracies.

A tertiary duality arises between urban and rural, or center and periphery. The respondent highlights the inequities within municipalities in regard to the green initiatives. Urban areas are self-sustaining while rural ones are stagnant. This spatial injustice is, in Rawls's (1971) words, a breach of the difference principle, "where inequality is permissible only if it advantages the most disadvantaged." Here, the environmental policy spatially reproduces inequality instead of reversing it. But even more, the binary assumes a normative superiority, urban as progressive, rural as primitive.

Derrida asks us to see the rural not as void, but as alterity, a lack of something yet articulated in terms of life, society, and governance. What if the problem is framed not as rural backwardness, but as urban-normative policy design? The unscrambling of spatial binaries, in this sense, provides a more profound critique: the Green Deal is not failing because resistance comes from rural actors but because it does not align with their realities, rhythms, and socio-economic dynamics.

The interview underscores a gap of cooperation and collaboration between state institutions and the private sector. However, this gap is intentionally constructed. Under neoliberal governance, the public service and private interest functions are unlike anything seen before, for the majority of sustainability projects, public-private collaborations, or sponsors, are required (European Commission, 2021). The deconstruction here shows that the absence of

private sector engagement is not a question of the legal absence of engagement frameworks, but rather a clash of narratives: the state seeks partnership without relinquishing control, whereas industry desires profit without accountability. Again, the gap between communication and participation arises. Campaigns are conducted to raise awareness of the issue at hand, yet they remain passive. Like in the first interview, this shows us the limits of technocratic legitimacy information. There is no agreement; consultation does not equal deliberation. What is seen as a failure of execution is truly a failure of imagination.

In this last deconstruction, we experience an attempt at a legislative narrative that seeks equity but is ensnared within cul-de-sacs that reproduce exclusion. The discourse laments the chasm between law and life, yet does not still imagine legal frameworks as being dynamic, participatory, and reflexive. Unresolved contradiction between oversight and empowerment is not an individual failing, and not an individual concern, but rather a consequence of the failure of the representational paradigm itself.

A common thread emerges among all three interviews, executive, scholarly, and legislative. Each discourse operates within structural binaries: policy and practice, center and periphery, knowledge and belief, urgency and delay. Each seeks to impose stability within a fragmented field. However, with Derridean deconstruction, all of these binaries simultaneously implode upon each other, revealing a less governance field defined by certainty, but rather, by productive instability. What deconstruction reveals is not a failure case of Lithuania's environmental transition, but its ontological complexity instead. Law is not command; it is performance. Compliance is not weakness, it is strategy. Resistance is not an obstruction, but rather discourse. Participation is not outreach, but rather active co-creation. This phase invites us to embrace fragmentation, not as something to worry about, rather the landscape for democratic, reflexive, and inclusive sustainable governance. The deconstructive reading does not oppose policy, it radicalizes it. It is not only asking what governance is, but what it could become if it were willing to live in contradiction, willing to speak with instead of to its citizens, and willing to reimagine change as not a linear progress, but an ethical, dialogical, and plural transformation.

## Synthesis and Conclusion: Between Transition and Tension

The interplay of executive, academic, and legislative lenses on the governance of the environment in Lithuania brings vanishing borders into focus suggesting a greater degree of epistemic uncertainty, contradiction, and contention than constructive frameworks. It would be a miscalculation to assume that Lithuania, interwoven in the dynamics of the European Green Deal, is simply a matter of policy compliance with climate milestones. The enduring motifs of law, history, crisis, and the overarching expectation of democracy automatically trigger meaning-making struggles at the very least. Analysis and deconstruction of the

obtained interviews for this research revealed a peculiar self-sustaining circle characterized by binary extremes, act or defer, centralize or decentralize, engage or exercise protective oversight, all of which hide more fundamental conflicts that disrupt dominant paradigms of sustainable governance.

Sustainability at the executive level is pledges compliance with progress articulated through the National Energy and Climate Action Plan (NECP) and other legal frameworks. However, as the coding revealed and deconstruction confirmed, these frameworks largely operate within a deferred temporality, wherein their worth lies not in their performative outcomes, but rather in their hypothetical promises. They serve as legalistic placeholders within an abstract order where governance is equated with empty formalism. It is far more politically convenient to appear to make progress than to actually make progress. This is where one can observe, in policy form, Derrida's (1976) notion of *différance*, deferring and differing. The NECP does not "act" in the now; it maintains its legitimacy in the present by deferring action into the future. This self-reinforcing delay is, in fact, a characteristic, not an aberration, of governance in our age of technocratic modernity.

Within the soviet context, the governance problem is recast as an issue of historical legacies and normative ambivalence. It depicts Lithuania's sustainability regime as an example of strategic Europeanization, surface compliance with more profound infrastructural and cultural resistance beneath. This view adds to the analysis by highlighting the historical sedimentation of the Soviet industrial paradigm and its persistence in contemporary policy. Heeding Pierson's (2000) path dependency theory, we are reminded that institutions are not contemporary views but complex remnants of previous policies, decisions, and ideological frameworks. Critically, as the deconstructive analysis shows, this stance risks Lithuanianizing stasis by framing Lithuania's structural constraints as an enduring condition, thereby shaping how the EU perceives its institutional deficit. It is a case where the language of underdevelopment, even when well-intentioned, serves as a constraining narrative.

In addition, the academic prose emphasizes the role of epistemic institutions like universities as active agents in the transformation towards sustainability. This is reminiscent of Nowotny et al. (2001), who warned of a gap in the "socially robust knowledge society" wherein science and society jointly produce truth and legitimacy. But this construction also rests on a problematic binary between rational, defended expertise, and its inverted counterpart, political populism. Derrida would ask, "Isn't expertise itself already bound to the power relations it seeks to critique?" The authority of science is not without consequence; it performs. It not only speaks to power but from power, shaping the narrative empowered. Therefore, we do not seek to remove terms of politics, but rather, defend democracy, open the doors to, and dismantle diluted systems of public expertise. End expose structure while understanding how it criticizes cultivated systems.

In the story of legislation, attention turns to the monitoring and policing, the How of the rules application within regions and industries. The interview speaks to the spatial aspect of this dimension of environmental justice, in this case, the rural-urban divide as a structural schism. From a Rawlsian take (1971), this is an unfair sustainability gap violation, an inequity of gap initiated where some regions receive more resources while others receive less. The gaps in rural access to the same legal and financial resources as urban centers endowed during the legislating stage offer inequitable intermunicipal relations. This jeopardizes the EU framework on environmental justice equal access principle. The deconstruction, however, illustrates that even this intended environmental control is placed upon insufficient scaffolding. There is recourse to legislation as a controlling mechanism, but it is a controlling mechanism that is capriciously implemented. What the legislature requires is more than responsibility; presence, a physical presence of a legal system externalized into action as practice devoid of institutional aloofness. The law yet again reminding us through Derrida (1990) is not a structure but action; a performative, necessarily cited action that must take place. When the faultlines of agency, thin budgets, ambiguous operational guidelines, bureaucratic stagnation, (where agency is) rend the illusion of the thick jurisdiction where law becomes unliveable not because it is absent, but because the ability to enact it, to perform it, has vanished. Participatory Citizenship in Policy Making involves a paradox in all three categories of analysis. All actors mention participation; however, each case is viewed through the framework of management and not assembly. From the executive's perspective, it is framed as outreach; from the academic perspective, it is framed as a deficit in understanding; and from the legislative perspective, it is treated as a failure in communication. Not one of them sufficiently describes the joint determination of the political will, the space where citizens are not just spectators of the Green Deal but in fact co-creators of the Green Deal. As Habermas (1996) argues, legitimacy resting in consultation as cursorily offered in public discourse fails at the test of democracy unless there exists a provision of disempowerment of all participants. The legal frameworks in Lithuania based on EU directives allow for public participation through public hearings and environmental impact assessments. However, these mechanisms, in practice, tend to be empty gestures devoid of meaningful influence. This is what Fraser (2009) refers to as participatory parity without transformative agency. Lithuanians, as citizens, are allowed to express their opinions but these opinions do not necessarily lead to changes. The idea of public participation is reduced to a legal requirement stripped of its democratic substance. Connecting all these thoughts is the question of sovereignty, not in the restrictive nationalist sense of withdrawal but as the ability of a polity to self-determine its ecological future. The shift of Lithuania from being reliant on Russian

energy towards being integrated into the European energy grid marks this new sovereignty. However, it comes at a cost. What was once a geopolitical aspiration, energy independence, is now situated within multi-national dependencies on EU financing, Western technologies, and climate diplomacy. Sovereignty, in this instance, is not autonomy, but a contradiction of tangled obligations and co-dependencies that blur the coherency of national environmental policies. The synthesis of policy documents encourages us to reconsider the spelling out of transition. The dominant lingo of policy, compliance, implementation, outreach, alignment, masks the fact that sustainability is not a goal, but rather a political space in conflict. It has a geography that is shaped by collective historical amnesia, institutional memory, legal language, and philosophy. Each actor is positioned within these frameworks and, in trying to change them, reproduces them.

For Lithuania, or the broader EU for that matter, the challenge articulated demands a different level of governance strategy reflexivity. This entails accepting contradiction as inherent rather than an exception. It accepts paradox where law is not only prescriptive but can also be seen as poetic energizing narratives, identities, and imaginations. It also describes the need to regard policy not as by design, in technical terms, but rather as a framing question in ethical terms of what it means to choose a subsidy, grant access to the grid, or set emission ceilings in relation to belonging, voice, and injustice.

This implies a number of concrete actions that can be synthesized into several propositions. First, institutional change must be based on vertical capacity building, but equally on horizontal collaboration, fostering active dialogue among different levels of government, including ministries, municipalities, and civic actors. Second, legal frameworks should evolve beyond safeguarding procedural rights towards supporting deliberative democracy. Third, public communication should reframe from top down messaging to listening designed not to persuade, but to engage co-creation with the participants. As it has been mentioned before, perhaps the most fundamental moves that must be made is for academic, executive, and legislative actors to articulate the instability of their own categories. For example, expertise needs to reflect on its positionality. Administration needs to interrogate its rituals. Legislation needs to reconsider its constituencies. Only by incurring the most destructive forms of governance, one begins to construct more inclusive, equitable, and resilient systems in the world.

As is often the case, the Lithuanian example illustrates the point, does not provide easy answers, but it does offer a vital insight: The green transition is not only about energy or carbon. It is about meaning – who defines it, who disputes it, and who is allowed to occupy it. That contest is not an indicator of flaw.

It is the essence of democracy.

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