FRAMING THE GREEN TRANSITION

A comparative frame analysis of government communication on the green transition in Norway and the United Kingdom.

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Abstract

As public engagement with climate action becomes increasingly vital, the role of government communication in shaping public understanding of environmental efforts is gaining attention. This thesis studies how state-level institutions in Norway and the United Kingdom frame the green transition, and whether these communicative strategies suggest a risk of greenwashing. While greenwashing has traditionally been associated with the private sector, particularly in marketing contexts, this study applies the concept to public institutions to assess the transparency, credibility, and framing of governmental climate narratives.

The theoretical foundation draws on framing theory as well as greenwashing literature, including the Seven Sins of Greenwashing and recent regulatory developments such as the EU directive on green claims. Trust and democratic responsibility serve as an underlying basis, guiding the analysis of how state institutions frame themselves as credible and responsible actors in the green transition.

A qualitative comparative analysis of seven press releases, three from Norway and four from the UK, serves as the empirical foundation for the study of how different frames are used to present the green transition through national and global climate actions. The UK government emphasizes centralized leadership, performance metrics and international status, while Norway highlights local initiatives, collaborative governance and technological development.

Despite these differences, both countries present the green transition as an achievable and positive societal transformation, closely aligned with values such as innovation, job creation, and economic growth. However, some communicative strategies risk oversimplifying complex policy challenges or overstating national progress.

Although none of the press releases analyzed constitute greenwashing in a legal or regulatory sense, the findings suggest that certain framing practices may unintentionally mislead important dimensions of climate policy. These include the use of vague language, selective emphasis on achievement, and forward-looking claims without sufficient detail. From a regulatory perspective, such practices would most likely require greater transparency and balance if used in commercial contexts.

By analyzing these framing choices, the thesis underscores how public institutions, particularly governments, need to uphold the same standards of transparency and

accountability as expected of private actors. It is crucial to evaluate public climate communication with the same critical lens applied to corporate messaging to maintain democratic legitimacy.

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1.Introduction and Problem formulation

In this thesis I will analyze how the green transition is communicated by state-level actors in Norway and the United Kingdom (UK) to the public through press releases.

The green transition is a term that has been increasingly used in recent years to describe efforts aimed at reducing environmental impact, mitigating climate changes and promote sustainable development. Within the European Union (EU), the overarching goal for the green transition is to make Europe climate neutral by the year 2050, while simultaneously boosting the economy through more sustainable technology, industry and transport systems (European Commission, n.d.). A key element of this transition involves transforming national energy systems from being primarily based on fossil fuels, such as oil and gas, to relying largely on renewable energy sources, such as wind power.

Yet, concerns regarding the green transition, especially in the energy market, has become evident in countries such as Norway and UK, which rely on national income from fossil fuel production. The two countries extract oil and gas from opposite sides of the North Sea's continental shelf. In the financial year 2022-2023, the UK government's total revenues from oil and gas production were £9.0 billion (€10.7 billion) (HM Revenue and Customs, 2024). Meanwhile, the Norwegian government had a revenue of NOK 829 billion (€71.0 billion)[1] from petroleum activities in 2023 (Borgås, 2024). Even though the Norwegian revenue is significantly higher, the numbers still highlight the benefits both countries derive from fossil fuel production.

In the UK climate change and nature loss have become increasingly prominent political issues, often linked to other major topics such as the cost of living and health policy. (Aylett & Harwatt, 2024). The balance between maintaining value creation and economic benefits from fossil fuels production while simultaneously promoting an ambitious environmental policy may seem both contradictory and difficult to achieve. Norway exemplifies this tension, aiming to cut emissions by 55 percent by 2030 (Honningsøy et.al., 2022), while continuing to issue new production licenses for oil and gas on the Norwegian continental shelf (Ministry of

[1] Both exchange rates are based on the European Central Bank reference rates for 2023: https://www.ecb.europa.eu/stats/policy_and_exchange_rates/euro_reference_exchange_rates/html/eurofxref-graph-gbp.en.html

Energy, 2025). This tension raises important questions about how governments communicate their environmental and climate ambitions and how they navigate their nation toward the green transition

As these concerns emerge, the discussion about “Greenwashing" has become increasingly prominent. The term broadly refers to practices that make something appear more environmentally friendly than it actually is, potentially misleading the public to make misguided decisions about climate or environmental issues. This is viewed as problematic in relation to consumers’ rights to make informed and conscious choices based on their values and preferences (de Freitas Netto et.al., 2020, p. 12). Alongside the rise of the term Greenwashing, similar concepts have gained attention. One such term is sportswashing, which refers to the use of sports or sporting events by states, corporations, or organizations to improve their public image domestically and internationally. The term gained widespread use during the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar, where the country was accused of using the tournament to deflect attention from its human rights violations. (Amnesty International, n.d.). In essence, both terms involve diverting attention away from the negative aspects of a product, action or event by emphasizing its more appealing or socially acceptable sides.

In October 2023, the Norwegian government decided to rename the ministries and other public institutions which contained the words "oil" or "petroleum" (Ministry of Energy, 2023). This sparked a debate about whether such actions are a form of misleading communication, especially since the Norwegian language council warned the government that these name changes may be perceived as greenwashing (Helledal & Knežević, 2025).

This decision and the following debate inspired the focus of this thesis: how the green transition is communicated at state level, and how oil-rich nations balance their messaging at the intersection of continued oil production and climate ambitions. The objective is to conduct a comparative study of official press releases from both countries to identify differences and similarities in their communication strategies. In doing so, the study aims to contribute to a better understanding of how potentially misleading green claims may be framed by state-level actors.

As mentioned, the UK and Norway are both major oil-producing nations extracting oil and gas on their respective sides of the continental shelf of the North Sea. As of January 1, 2024, the official name of Norway's Ministry of Petroleum and Energy was changed to the Ministry

of Energy (Ministry of Energy, 2023). Similarly, the UK department responsible for oil policy is called Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (Government of the United Kingdom, n.d.). Understanding the motivations and strategies for governments and other state-level actors is important to evaluate the transparency and the credibility of democratic governments in their political communication, particularly regarding environmental policies at a time when global warming and climate changes are crucial political issues both internationally and within the nations studied.

Other oil-rich nations such as USA or Saudi Arabia would be natural choices to include in this thesis. Especially regarding today's political tension with President Trump's decision to withdraw USA from the Paris Agreement (McGrath, 2025), or Saudi Arabia's "Vision 2030" where one of the national goals is to reduce the carbon emissions with 278 million ton by 2030 (Vision 2023, n.d.).

Yet, the choice of Norway and the UK for this comparative study is based on their similar geographical positions, political systems, and shared democratic values. Nordic countries, including Norway, are often perceived as models of democratic governance, characterized by high levels of social trust, transparency, and political engagement (Skogerbø et al., 2021, p. 14). This is reflected in the strong trust in political institutions and the media across Norway and other Nordic nations (Skogerbø et al., 2021, p. 17). While recent studies show that public trust in the UK government has declined in recent years (National Centre for Social Research, 2024), the public satisfaction in key institutions remains relatively high (OECD, 2024). Thus, the comparison remains valid, grounded in democratic foundations and sustained levels of social trust. This type of trust exists in other forms and is often linked to relatively high levels of economic equality and a broadly shared belief in equal opportunities (Llewellyn et al., 2013, p. 4).

Trust is particularly relevant when evaluating government communication about climate policies and sustainability goals. Public trust may influence how citizens interpret official messaging, whether they view green efforts as credible, and how critically they evaluate potential greenwashing. In countries with high levels of institutional trust, such as Norway and to some extent the UK, the government's framing of environmental and climate policies may carry significant weight in shaping public perception.

Additionally, the two nations are also strong allies in matters of security, trade and shipping. (Utenriksdepartementet, 2002, p. 1). The UK is one of Norway's biggest trade partners, where a great deal of the Norwegian oil is exported through the UK (Utenriksdepartementet, 2002, p. 17).

Another reason for this comparison is the parallel decisions made at the state level regarding name changes in the oil and gas sector. As mentioned, there is a notable similarity in the names of government departments, but an additional example is the UK Oil and Gas Authority's 2022 name change to the North Sea Transition Authority (NSTA) (North Sea Transition Authority, 2022). This authority is an executive non-departmental public body sponsored by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, which regulates and influences the oil and gas, offshore hydrogen, and carbon storage industries (North Sea Transition Authority, 2022). Similar, with the official name changes in Norway, the Norwegian Petroleum Directorate (Oljedirektoratet) changed name to The Norwegian Offshore Directorate (Sokkeldirektoratet) (Ministry of Energy, 2023).

To understand how the green transition is communicated across national contexts, this thesis adopts a comparative research approach, which highlights both similarities and differences in institutional strategies (Hantrais, 1996; Bryman, 2016, p. 65). By comparing Norway and the UK, the thesis aims to study how these countries communicate the green transition and provide insights into how state-level political communication shapes public perceptions.

Based on this, the problem formulation is:

How do state-level institutions in Norway and the United Kingdom frame the green transition? How might these frames suggest a concern for greenwashing?

To address this problem formulation, a qualitative framing analysis is applied to a selection of press releases from both countries. Drawing on these sources, the study aims to identify recurring themes, narrative patterns and strategies used to frame the green transition in official communication.

2. Literature review

This chapter reviews existing literature on political communication and greenwashing. Section 2.1 focuses on political communication, particularly related to trust, credibility, and legitimacy. Section 2.2 provides an overview of the concept of greenwashing, a term that is often associated with corporate marketing, but also relevant to the study of communication at a governmental level. This is because rhetorical patterns commonly found in the private sector may also appear in state-level communication, particularly in the context of the green transition.

2.1 Political communication

Political communication plays a crucial role in shaping public trust and credibility in government institutions, particularly in democratic societies such as Norway and the UK. Skogerbø, Ihlen, Nørgaard and Nord (2021) examine in *Power, Communication and politics in the Nordic* countries how political communication in the Nordic countries is evolving under increasing pressures, particularly in response to changes in media landscape and public expectations. While this anthology primarily focuses on the role of media in political communication in the Nordic countries, their discussion on the broader model of governance provides an important insight for understanding political communication on several levels in both Norway and the UK. They define political communication broadly as "the governance of society and the handling of cooperation and conflicts, values and interests. Any use of symbols and any attempts at influencing the outcome of political processes, we will call political communication" (Skogerbø et al., 2021, 18). This definition highlights the role of power and influence in shaping political discourse, even in contexts where political rhetoric and public perception management are at play.

One of the key trends in modern political communication is the increasing professionalization of governmental and political party communication. Skogerbø and Karlsen (2021) argue that political messaging is becoming more strategically framed, with parties and governments actively shaping how policies are perceived rather than simply reacting to media coverage (Skogerbø & Karlsen, 2021, 101). Political rhetoric and credibility have become central themes in political communication studies, particularly in relation to how politicians and governments construct trustworthy narratives (Skogerbø & Karlsen, 2021, 10). Another significant development in recent years has been the expansion of direct communication

channels for political actors. Politicians and government agencies no longer only rely on traditional media, but will publish their own messages through various platforms, negotiate media appearances, and exert more control over how their policies are framed (Skogerbø & Karlsen, 2021, 104). This shift is relevant to the discussion of state-led communication on the green transition, where state actors seek to frame their policies and actions, such as name changes of ministries, in ways that maintain public trust and credibility.

While much of the literature focuses on elected politicians, Figenschou et al. (2021) argue that public bureaucracies also play an important role in modern political communication (2021, 325), especially in countries like Norway and the UK, where ministries are closely tied up to political leadership through the principle of minister rule (Figenschou et al., 2021, 328). Public bureaucracies, traditionally seen as neutral and technical, do operate in the background of media-oriented politicians and government leaders, thus increasingly participate in shaping the public messaging of reforms, contributing to the strategic framing such as the green transition (Figenschou et al., 2021, 326).

The effectiveness of such communication strategies ultimately depends on trust and credibility. This discussion of trust and credibility in government communication can be further understood through Michal Koreh & Ronen Mandelkern's (2024) argument that governments must balance two types of credibility (2024, 3540): S*ocial credibility*, rooted in citizens trust in governments' commitment to long-term social policies, such as the green transition (Koreh and Maedlkern 2024, 354), and *marked credibility institutions*, aimed at reassuring investors and financial institutions for economic stability (Koreh and Maedlkern 2024, 3544). These different types of credibility can sometimes conflict, forcing governments to make trade-offs between economic priorities and public trust.

Public trust is a central concern in the study of political communication and is considered a vital component of functioning democratic societies. Llewellyn, Brookes and Mahon (2013), describe the growing 'crisis of trust' and 'the loss of trust' as a core challenge in modern governance, where citizens increasingly question whether governments are acting ethically, competently and in their best interest (Llewellyn et.al., 2013, p. 2).

Trust, broadly understood, reflects citizens' expectations that governments and public officials will behave ethically, fulfill promises and be honest and competent (Llewellyn et.al.,

p. 2). Trust, they argue, is rooted in shared values, such as honesty and transparency and is reinforced through institutional performances and citizen experience (Llewellyn et.al., p.2). Trust is thus generally viewed as positive because it encourages civic cooperation, increases participation, and strengthens the social contract between governments and citizens (Llewellyn et.al., p. 5). However, trust is inherently risky. Placing trust in institutions can result in vulnerability if that trust is misplaced or abused (O'Neill, 2002, p. 25; Llewellyn et al., 2013, p. 5). Therefore, trust must be both earned and monitored, especially in democratic systems, where power is practiced on behalf of citizens.

Lucie Cerna (2014) further underscores that trust is also essential for social and economic relations, especially during times of reforms. As states implement complex and often transformative reforms, such as those associated with the green transition, there is increasing pressure to maintain or rebuild public trust. Citizens increasingly demand not only action, but also credible and transparent communication from public actors (Cerna, 2014, p. 9).

Hardin (1998) makes an important distinction from a political theory perspective: Modern societies are not only dependent on trust from its citizens, but a good governance enables citizens to make conscious decisions based on normative commitments and results (Hardin 1998, p. 10). He also emphasizes that trust in political institutions often fluctuates with economic performance and policy outcomes, but that high levels of trust in government are generally linked to increased political engagement and electoral support. (Hardin, 1998, p. 11).

Warren (2018) brings this into the democratic frame, where he presents trust as both a democratic resource and a democratic outcome (2018, p. 84). He emphasizes that democracies build on and contribute to trust because they give citizens the opportunity to pursue their interests through consideration, participation and representation. (Warren 2018, p. 78). Citizens pay attention to their representatives through transparency and public debate and make informed decisions about when and where to demonstrate or withdraw trust (Warren 2018, p.75). High citizen trust is therefore necessary in large, complex democracies, so they can use their participatory resources when distrust is needed. (Warren 2018, p.80). This means that democracies must not only highlight justified trust to public institutions, but also provide opportunities for "engaged distrust," which makes it possible for citizens to challenge and correct governmental decisions (Warren 2018, p. 92).

In summary, political communication is not just about transmitting policy, it is a mechanism for building or breaking trust. In the context of climate policy and the green transition, trust becomes even more essential. How governments communicate their environmental initiatives, whether through strategic messaging, symbolic language, or selective emphasis, may shape public perception of legitimacy. As will be discussed further in this thesis, framing strategies may also risk aligning with problematic forms of communication, including greenwashing.

2.2 Greenwashing

De Frietas et.al (2020) highlights that as environmental challenges have intensified, public awareness and stakeholder pressure on organizations to demonstrate environmental responsibility has increased (de Freitas et.al, 2020, p. 1). In industrial sectors, like energy, this has led to growing expectations from investors, governments, and consumers for cleaner production methods and transparent reporting (de Freitas et.al, 2020, p. 1). Consumers often express a willingness to pay more for environmentally friendly products, yet this is frequently tempered by skepticism due to the difficulty of verifying the credibility of green claims (de Freitas et al., 2020, p. 2). This tension underscores the implication of environmental communication and the relevance of studying greenwashing, as it becomes essential to distinguish between genuine sustainability efforts and potentially misleading portrayals.

Much of the existing research on greenwashing has focused on how private companies use strategic communication to present themselves as more environmentally responsible than they are in reality (de Freitas et.al, 2020, p. 7). While this thesis focuses on public communication at the state level, reviewing corporate greenwashing literature is essential for establishing a conceptual foundation of the term.

In his PhD dissertation, Eric Jenner (2005) examines greenwashing in the context of visual communication and political influence in environmental policymaking. He focuses on how interest groups construct environmental problems and influence how these issues are managed by governments (Jenner, 2005, iv). Even though this dissertation is 20 years old and primarily focused on private interests and public opinion, his insights remain relevant, particularly its exploration of how greenwashing interacts with political power and public trust. Jenner draws on Sharon Beder's (2002) work, which defines greenwashing as: "[…] public relations effort to present a corporate persona aimed at diverting demands for more

substantial policymaking changes at the governmental level" (Beder 2002; Jenner 2005, 9). In this definition, greenwashing is more than just misleading marketing; it also becomes a political tool to manage perception and reduce pressure for real environmental change.

Beder's later work (2014) expands this argument by including the term *Climatewash* to describe how fossil fuel industries use strategic messaging to appear environmentally engaged while continuing harmful practices (Beder, 2014, 6). Beder argues how this industry creates doubt and confusion to undermine climate actions, thus misleading both the public and policymakers (Beder, 204, p.1). *Climatewash* refers specifically to practices that mask the environmental harm of carbon-intensive industries, such oil and coal, as under the cover of climate concerns (Beder, 2014, 6).

While Beder and Jenner focus largely on the why's of greenwashing, Delmass and Burano discuss how and under what conditions greenwashing occurs. In *The drivers of greenwashing* (2011), they define the practice as "[..]the act of misleading consumers regarding the environmental practices of a company (firm-level greenwashing) or the environmental benefits of a product or service (product-level greenwashing)" (Delmas & Burbano, 2011, s. 66). Although they focus on U.S.-based firms, their framework provides useful tools for understanding communication practices at the state level. For example, they identify a dual pattern of greenwashing in organizations: poor environmental performance paired with positive, image-enhancing communication efforts. (Delmas & Burbano, 2011, p. 67). Another example is their categorization or "brown" (those with poor performance who greenwash) and "green" firms (those with strong environmental records who communicate transparently) (Delmas & Burbano, 2011, p. 67). This classification also helps highlight how entities may *appear* environmentally responsible while avoiding more difficult structural reforms.

These strategies are illustrated through notable examples. A widely cited greenwashing scandal occurred in 2015, when Volkswagen admitted to manipulating emission tests (Plungis, 2015), highlighting how public environmental claims can be misleading. Similarly, major fashion companies such as H&M have been accused of overstating their environmental claims. When launching its "Conscious" line in 2019, H&M claimed to use organic cotton and recycled polyester, but provided insufficient information to validate these sustainability claims (Robinson, 2022).

Examples are also found in the petroleum industry. Particularly in British Petroleum's (BP) rebranding campaign as "Beyond Petroleum" in 2000, and the Norwegian company Statoil's rebranding to Equinor in 2018. These shifts were designed to reposition fossil fuel companies as broad energy providers (Equinor 2018), while maintaining core business operations (Jenner, 2005, p. 9). As Jenner notes, such campaigns typically occur when public concern about environmental issues is rising, suggesting that greenwashing also may function as a tool to maintain legitimacy rather than signal real transformation (Jenner, 2005, 12).

However, as environmental awareness has increased in the population, companies in the oil industry have had to change how they are perceived in order to maintain legitimacy and public trust (Jenner, 2005, p. 13). This growing awareness is forcing companies to engage more actively and to portray themselves as more environmentally responsible than they necessarily are. In addition to changes in public concern, Jenner argues that greenwashing is a response to broader political and regulatory trends. This may be seen in the fact that advertising patterns often reflect the political climate: When governments signal increased environmental regulation, the incidence of greenwashing increases accordingly. Conversely, when governments take a stand against environmental protection, greenwashing tends to decrease (Jenner, 2005, p. 17).

While this thesis focuses on communication at state-level, it is relevant to reflect on changes made by companies like BP and Equinor, along with the criticism these rebranding efforts have received. By drawing parallels and identifying differences between corporate and governmental communication strategies, we can gain a broader understanding of how messaging may shape public interpretation of the green transition.

Moreover, scholars such as Beder, Jenner and Delmas and Burbano, have raised concerns about misleading climate communication. These critiques have contributed to growing push for regulatory framework addressing greenwashing, such as EU' directive on climate claims (European Parliament, 2024). However, these efforts largely focus on private sector, highlighting a significant gap in examining greenwashing in state-level communication. This gap underscores the importance of analyzing how governments present their climate policies and environmental commitments. A detailed presentation on greenwashing regulations is provided in Section 3.2 - The Concept of Greenwashing.

From these literature review, three recuring themes emerges:

First, greenwashing is broadly defined as the act of presenting something as more environmentally friendly than it truly is, or creating a misleading impression of environmental responsibility. This definition is consistent across academic literature.

Second, much of the greenwashing literature focuses on the private sector, typically discussing greenwashing in relation to products and corporate marketing strategies. There is far less attention given to public institutions or the role of political framing in shaping perceptions of environmental responsibility.

Third, the primary concern surrounding greenwashing is consumer protection. While this is often linked to enabling informed decision-making, there is little discussion about broader implications, particularly how greenwashing may influence state-level communication on climate policy. Based on the literature reviewed for this study, this dimension appears to be overlooked

3. Theoretical framework

This chapter presents the theoretical framework for this thesis, focusing on Framing theory and Greenwashing. These theories will serve as the foundation for analyzing the selected press releases and for discussing the findings later in the study. The first section about framing and frame analysis is based on Jenny Kitzinger's research article *Framing and Frame Analysis* (2007), Robert Entman's research article *Framing: Toward clarification of a Fractured Paradigm* (1993), and Dennis Chong & James Druckmann's research article *Framing Theory* (2007). Each article offers different perspectives on how framing shapes public understanding and discourse. The second section includes a comparison of greenwashing regulations in Norway, the United Kingdom (UK), and the European Union (EU). This comparison forms the basis of a comparative regulatory framework that will be used in the discussion to evaluate whether these regulations could also cover the communication of government institutions in Norway and the UK.

3.1 Framing theory

Kitzinger (2007) notes that while there is no single agreed definition of framing in communication studies, there is a shared recognition that the concept remains relatively vague (2007, p. 138). Nevertheless, several similar definitions deal with how we as humans categorize and create meaning based on information we receive from the world around us. Any representation of reality will thus involve framing because we select our focus and decide what to have in the foreground and background in our mind (Kitzinger, 2007, p. 135).

Erving Goffman is often credited with popularizing the concept by applying it to social interaction and everyday cognitive structures. He introduced the concept of frames as he moved beyond his earlier focus on interactional practices, aiming to explore how individuals interpret and organize any given strip of activity (Smith 2006, p.56). This refers to a discrete segment of social experience that people seek to understand within a particular context (Smith 2006, p.57). In this context, framing refers to "[...] systems of classification that make us locate, perceive, identify and label the diverse phenomena we encounter through the course of our lives" (Goffman 1974, p. 21 in Kitzinger 2007, p. 135).

Other definitions operate in the similar field, where framing is defined as tactic theories about what exists, happens and matters, and how we frame reality to negotiate and comprehend it, or as cognitive windows or maps that help us to navigate through a forest of multiple realities

(Kitzinger 2007, p. 136). Chong & Druckman (2007) presents framing theory as an issue that may be viewed from a variety of perspectives. They define framing as "[…] the process by which people develop a particular conceptualization of an issue or reorient their thinking about an issue." (Chong & Druckman 2007, p. 104). Similarly, Entman (1993) argues that framing is about selecting some aspects of a perceived reality and making them more salient to promote a particular problem definition (Entman 1993, p. 52).

Framing theory is a central concept in media and communication studies, and often used in mass media research, because it offers insight into how messages are produced and shaped information is presented, interpreted and influences public perception (Kitzinger 2007, p. 136). Kitzinger highlights how journalists and PR workers help control and shape the supply of information, while they also select highlights and direct attention to some aspects and not others (Kitzinger 2007, p. 134). Chong & Druckman, on the other hand, refers to framing in a more broadly way: "Framing effects often occurs when (often small) changes in the representation of an issue or an event produce (sometimes large) changes of opinion" (Chong & Druckman 2007, p. 104). Thus, even minor differences in phrasing may change how people perceive an issue, demonstrating the power of framing in shaping public attitudes.

Overall, framing is a broad concept which focuses on how events and information turn into stories or social issues, and how we as people define, organize and understand reality through these factors. Frames guide, but do not necessarily determine, our interpretations of the world, making them a valuable tool for analyzing how particular understandings emerge. (Kitzinger 2007, p. 156- 157).

3.1.1 Different Ways of Framing

Politicians often adopt frames used by other politicians or the mass media, and similarly, the media may adopt frames introduced by political actors. This mutual communication among the elites, in this context referring to politicians and media, may influence the public attitudes, a dynamic referred to as *frame effect*. (Chong & Druckman, 2007, p. 109). Despite different studies and the different focus, research on framing in political communication is mostly based on the same idea: Framing influences attitudes by shaping what people focus on when forming opinions, which is the core of how frame effects operate in political communication (Chong & Druckman 2007, p. 110). Entman similarly argues that frames

determine not only whether people notice an issue but also how they understand, remember, evaluate, and ultimately act upon it (Entman 1993, p. 54).

However, for a frame effect to take place, a certain understanding must be stored in memory to be available to recall and use (Entman 1993, p. 54). For example, if a person does not understand what the green transition entails in relation to environmental or climate policies, then this concept will not be an available consideration when forming opinions on related issues. They will thus not be influenced by a green transition frame in political or media discussion.

Additionally, for a consideration to shape judgment, it must be accessible and reach a sufficient level in memory to be retrieved when needed (Chong & Druckman, 2007, p. 110). The accuracy of these considerations increases through regular or recent exposure to a communication frame that highlights them, making them more accessible through a passive and often unconscious process (Chong & Druckman, 2007, p. 110). A person who follows the news or engages in political debates regularly is likely to be exposed to communication frames emphasizing the green transition, either directly or through discussions of related topics like energy transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy.

The opinions we form are based on the set of available beliefs we have stored in our memory. However, only some beliefs become accessible at a given moment, and from those, only some are strong enough to be deemed relevant or applicable to a particular issue (Chong & Druckman, 2007, p. 111). According to Chong and Druckman, framing can influence opinion formation at several levels by promoting certain beliefs, making them appear more applicable to a given issue. These are referred to as *strong frames* (Chong & Druckman, 2007, p. 111). Strong frames emerge from public discussion as the most compelling justification for opposing positions on an issue (Chong & Druckman, 2007, p. 116). These strong frames often rely on symbols and endorsements tied to partisanship and ideology and can be effective in shaping opinions through simplified reasoning rather than direct information about the substance of the policy. Their effectiveness depends on factors such as repetition, competitive narratives, and individual predispositions (Chong & Druckman, 2007, p. 111).

Importantly, strong frames are not the same as intellectually or morally superior arguments, because strong frames can be based on exaggerations or direct lies that exploit the audiences' fear or prejudices (Chong & Druckman, 2007, p. 111). A typical political strategy involves

linking a proposal to a widely accepted value within the population and thereby increasing the positive feedback. However, not all frames resonate in this manner. For instance, argue Chong and Druckman that the environmental frame tends to be strong in local debates, but holds a weaker influence in presidential elections, where broader issues might overshadow it (Chong & Druckman, 2007, p. 116). This shows how strong frames also can carry great social power when it is used in a widely recognized term. Once a term has become commonly accepted, using a different term to describe the same concept may cause the audience to think about something completely different. In this way, Entman argues that the power of a frame can be as strong as the power of the language used to define and shape the meaning of an issue itself (Entman 1993, p. 55).

Even with strong and powerful frames, there are limitations to frame effects. One of the clearest limitations is an individual's predisposition, referring to those with strong preconceptions are less responsive to framing (Chong & Druckman, 2007, p. 112). However, when a new issue is presented and lacks a settled interpretation, people are more open to framing effects. People will react differently to different frames because some frames draw attention to some aspects of reality while others are more hidden while other factors may include source credibility and cultural resonance (Entman 1993, p.55).

These frames are *competition frames*, where people, in many political contexts, are being exposed to competing frames of an issue (Chong & Druckman, 2007, p. 112). When exposed to different perspectives of an issue, people tend to choose the alternative that is consistent with their values or principles, reinforcing consistency in policy decisions, this is also known as confirmation bias (Chong & Druckman, 2007, p. 112). For example, in debates about phasing out oil production, one frame may emphasize environmental responsibility and long-term climate benefits, while another highlights the preservation of jobs and regional economic stability. Citizens may align with the frame that best reflects their core values, whether environmental protection or economic security. Nevertheless, when new issues arise without clear value connections, people become unsure and struggle to determine which frames align with their values (Chong & Druckman, 2007, p. 113). It is in this sense that frames play an important role in political power, because politicians are competing with each and the media about the right perspective and the right frame of an issue (Entman 1993, p.55).

Framing effects are not necessarily the only concept that will influence people's opinion or view, but they can be confused with other related concepts. To clarify these confusions, Chong and Druckman distinguish between equivalency (valence) framing and emphasis (issue) framing (Chong & Druckman, 2007, p. 114):

Equivalency (valence) frames occur when logically identical information is presented, leading people to change their minds. The logic behind is that preferences are influenced by how information is framed emotionally and not just by raw facts. For example: "90% employment" versus "10% unemployment". These statements describe the same reality, but people react differently based on whether the framing is positive or negative (Chong & Druckman, 2007, p.114).

Emphasis (issue) framing happens when different aspects of an issue are highlighted, people shift focus and shape their opinions. Unlike the equivalency frames, the presentation of the issue is not only presented with different wording, but with qualitatively different considerations (Chong & Druckman, 2007, 114). Emphasis framing influences how people prioritize competing values by highlighting one aspect of an issue over another. For example, in debates about climate polices, framing climate change as a threat to future generations may lead people to support stricter environmental regulations. In contrast, if the emphasis is on potential job losses and economic disruption, individuals may become more resistant to climate action. The way an issue is framed shapes which values are brought to the front and, ultimately, how individuals form their opinions (Chong & Druckman, 2007, p. 114).

Both equality and emphasis framing show that the concept of framing consistently offers ways to describe the power of a communicating text (Entman 1993, p. 51). Equivalency framing influences preferences by altering the emotional impacts of logically identical information, demonstrating how people's reaction depend on whether an issue is framed positively or negatively. Emphasis framing, on the other hand, shapes opinions by directing attention to specific aspects of an issue, guiding individuals to prioritize certain values over others. This distinction highlights how framing is not just about wording, but about influencing the way people perceive and weigh different considerations.

A third related concept related to framing is *priming*. Both framing and priming influence how people perceive and evaluate information, but can operate in different ways. Jenner (2005) defines priming as a psychological concept that makes certain issues more prominent

in peoples' mind, shaping their priorities when making evaluations (Jenner 2005, p. 43). While priming simply makes an issue more salient, framing goes further by shaping how people evaluate the specific issue (Jenner 2005, p. 44). In contrast, Entman argues that salience is the main function in frames, by making certain pieces of information more noticeable, meaningful, or memorable to the audience (Entman, 1993, p. 53).

Jenner and Chong and Druckman agree that the media does not necessarily tell people what to think, but influences what they think about (Chong & Druckman, 2007, 115). Political influence often shifts how people evaluate public issues, rather than convincing them of a specific stance (Jenner 2005, 44). However, there is a distinction in how framing and priming are conceptualized. Jenner views them as distinct psychological processes, with priming being a short-term subconscious effect (Jenner, 2005, p. 43). Meanwhile, Chong and Druckman argue that priming shares key mechanisms with framing, suggesting the two terms can be used interchangeably (Chong & Druckman, 2007, p. 115). This perspective aligns with Entman's view that both priming and framing shape how people prioritize information. Based on Entman and Chong and Druckman's argument, this study focuses on framing rather than priming.

Framing can thus lead to both positive and negative outcomes. It can serve as a manipulative tool to steer individuals in a particular direction, or it can function more neutrally as a learning process that fosters shared understandings of issues. Chong and Druckman argue that political communication research tends to focus on the former, as it highlights the instability of public opinion and the ways in which political elites can manipulate popular preferences for their own gain (Chong & Druckman, 2007, 120). As a result, much of the discussion has centered on how to limit framing effects, even though framing is an inherent part of opinion formation in society. As discussed, public opinion is shaped through both the acceptance and rejection of competing frames that present different perspectives on an issue (Chong & Druckman, 2007, 120).

Framing is only considered problematic when individuals struggle to differentiate between competing frames and remain highly vulnerable to shifting representations of issues. Similarly, resistance to framing can be a challenge if it prevents individuals from acknowledging and accepting well-founded arguments that contradict their existing beliefs (Chong & Druckman, 2007, 121). In a democratic society, transparency about conflicting

perspectives is essential and should be actively encouraged. Citizens who seek information that aligns with their core values, are less vulnerable to framing effects, but this can come at the cost of rigidity, making them more resistant to new information (Chong & Druckman, 2007, 121).

In sum, framing theory offers a valuable framework for understanding how meanings are constructed and communicated in the public sphere. While definitions and emphases vary across scholars, framing consistently highlights the selective nature of communication and its power to shape perception, understanding, and public opinion. This makes it relevant in the context of political communication and greenwashing, where strategic framing may guide attention, evoke values, and influence how policy is interpreted by the public. Framing analysis is further elaborated in section *4.4. - Method of analysis.*

3.2 The Concept of Greenwashing

This section outlines and compares regulatory frameworks addressing greenwashing in Norway, the United Kingdom (UK) and the European Union (EU). The aim is to gather these frameworks into one comparative overview that will later be used in the discussion. This framework helps to understand how consumer protection regulations might also be relevant to the way public authorities and governments communicate about the green transition.

The inclusion of EU regulations is particularly relevant as they have gained importance in recent years. Moreover, both Norwegian and UK frameworks have historically aligned with EU directives, although in different ways after Brexit, as will be evident in the following section.

The following regulations form the foundation for this framework:

- EU: The *Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council (2023) to amend Directives 2005/29/EC and 2011/83/EU for empowering consumers in the green transition.*
- Norway: The Norwegian Consumer Authority's *Guidelines for companies using green claims in marketing* (2023).
- UK: *The Financial Conduct Authority's Anti-Greenwashing Rule: Non-handbook guidance* (2024).

3.2.1 Regulatory Framework in Norway, UK and EU

In 2022, the European Commission proposed an update to EU consumer protection rules aimed at supporting the green transition. This led to interinstitutional negotiations between the European Parliament and the Council, resulting in a provisional agreement in 2023. The agreement was based on a proposal from the Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection, which sought to change directives regarding unfair commercial practices and consumer rights information to include regulations on greenwashing (European Parliament, 2024). The revised directive was formally approved by the European Parliament in January 2024 and by the Council in February 2024. Aimed to empower consumers as active citizens in the green transition, the directive strengthens protections against unfair practices and improving access to reliable sustainability information (European Parliament, 2024). EU member states, as well as EEA and EFTA countries, are required to incorporate the directive into their national legislation by January 2026 (European Parliament, 2024).

The Norwegian Consumer Authority (NCA) has developed a set of guidelines for companies using green claims in marketing directed at Norwegian consumer. The guidelines are not only directed at single products, but also apply to business in general. The primary purpose is to prevent costumers from being misled, while also helping companies comply with the rules on consumer marketing in the Norwegian Consumer Market Act (MCA) (Forbrukertilsynet, 2023). The NCA highlights that these guidelines are not regulations or laws, and thus do not provide exacts definition, but rather uses examples as an illustration to different stands (Forbrukertilsynet, 2023). The guidelines are based on MCA, which implements several EU directives. As Norway is not a member of the EU, it is necessary to briefly explain why some EU directives are implemented in Norwegian legislations.

Norway is part of the European Economic Area (EEA) Agreement. This agreement grants Norwegian businesses and citizens the same rights and obligations as EU countries, including access to trade, investment and the right to live, work and study across EEA member states (Ministry of Foregin Affairs, 2021).The main purpose of the EEA Agreement is to integrate the EEA EFTA states, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein, into EU's internal market. This market compromises the 27 EU member states along with the three EEA countries (Ministry of Foregin Affairs, 2021). A central aspect of the agreement is the adoption of common rules, intended to ensure equal conditions of competition within the internal market. As a result, the EEA/EFTA states are required to continuously incorporate relevant parts of EU legislation

into their national framework as the EU regulatory landscape (Ministry of Foregin Affairs, 2021). Consequently, the NCA's guidelines reflect the implementation of several EU directives, in line with the requirements of the EEA Agreement.

On the other hand, The UK's The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) published its own Handbook Guidance on the Anti-Greenwashing Rule in 2024 (Financial Conduct Authority, 2024). Like the Norwegian guidelines, The UK guidance is intended to help firms understand and comply with rules designed to prevent greenwashing and protect costumers. However, the regulatory context has some differences. These are explicit laws that firms are to follow from May 31, 2024, (Financial Conduct Authority, 2024).

Unlike Norway, which complies with EU directives as a part of the EEA, the UK now develops its own laws following Brexit (EU legislation and UK law, n.d.). As of December 31, 2020, EU laws that were in effect became part of the UK's national legislation as so-called "retained EU law." However, any EU laws or directives enacted after that date, such as the 2023 EU directive on greenwashing, do not automatically apply in the UK (EU legislation and UK law, n.d.).

In short, Norwegian regulations are strongly influenced by EU directives, including the recent ones concerning greenwashing. In contrast, the UK's regulations are not directly tied to these newer EU rules. However, it is reasonable to assume that many of the UK's legislation are based on similar principles and ideas, particularly given that earlier EU directives on consumer rights have been retained in UK national legislation. This assumption will be explored further in the next section, where the three regulatory frameworks are compared in more detail.

3.2.2 Greenwashing Regulations

In the proposal,[2] the EU emphasizes that to have progress in the green transition, a well-functioning internal market requires consumers to be able to make informed choices that support more sustainable consumer patterns. It is particularly stressed that the responsibility lies with traders to provide clear, relevant and reliable information (European Parliament 2023, p.2). Ensuring that the environmental claims are fair, understandable and trustworthy, does not only empowers consumers to identify genuinely sustainable products, but encourages competition (European Parliament 2023, p.3). Both the Norwegian and UK guidelines reflect this emphasis, with the protection of consumers rights to make well-informed choices as central aim (Forbrukertilsynet, 2023) The UK guidelines explicitly highlight the growing consumer interest in sustainable products, and, like the EU, underscore the importance of fostering a market in which firms offering genuinely sustainable alternatives are visible and competitive: "If stakeholders trust the sustainability-related claims firms are making about their products and services, this may increase confidence in markets and the flow of capital into these products" (Financial Conduct Authority, 2024, p. 3).

However, even with the argument that this may lead to positive market changes, it can also cause consumers to be misled by the way a products environmental characteristics are presented (European Parliament, 2023, p.3) Empowering consumers to make better-informed decisions, this requires accurate and transparent information, and the claims must be fair and not misleading (Financial Conduct Authority, 2024, p. 3).

Environmental claims, particularly those related to climate, often focus on future performance, such as a company's goal to achieve carbon or climate neutrality by a specific date (European Parliament, 2023, p. 4). These forward-looking statements may create the impression that purchasing certain products directly contributes to the transition toward a low-carbon economy (European Parliament, 2023, p. 4). To ensure the fairness and credibility of environmental messaging, the proposal explicitly calls for a ban on such claims unless they are backed by clear, verifiable commitments and evidence. Furthermore, sustainability claims must be accurate, transparent, and free from misleading or blended

2 As mentioned, the proposal referred to here has already been adopted and is being implemented. Nevertheless, the word *"proposal"* is used in this context because the text referred to is the actual proposal that was presented.

messages. Claims that are false or contain incorrect information, should be considered untrue and misleading (Forbrukertilsynet, 2023). An example of misleading marketing would be calling an electricity contract “CO2-free”, when the contract has no other environmental advantages than other electricity contracts (Forbrukertilsynet, 2023).

Such misleading practices, particularly in communication and marketing, are a recurring concern throughout the proposal and the guidelines. Marketing should not be deceptive, whether by presenting false information or leaves out relevant details (European Parliament, 2023, p. 5). A claim is misleading if it omits essential information or presents it in a way that is unclear, ambiguous, or difficult to understand. Businesses are obligated to ensure that consumers have a correct impression of the offer, meaning no incomplete or misleading information should be provided (Forbrukertilsynet, 2023). The FCA highlights that exaggerations, as well as conflicting or contradictory information, fall under the definition of misleading (Financial Conduct Authority, 2024, p. 8). Additionally, the EU directive suggests that consumers should be provided with clear information about the methods used for such comparisons (European Parliament, 2023, p. 5).

Misleading practices may also involve presenting claims in an unclear or confusing manner. Firms should therefore consider whether the terms used in their marketing is understandable to the intended audience. (Financial Conduct Authority, 2024, p.9). This issue may arise, for example, when environmental claims are made about an entire product or company, even though the claim only concerns a specific aspect of the product or a particular activity (European Parliament 2023, p. 8). The NCA emphasizes the importance of clearly distinguishing between information about a specific product and general information about the company as a whole. If these are too heavily intertwined, it may create a misleading impression that the product is more environmentally or ethically beneficial than it actually is. (Forbrukertilsynet, 2023).

To avoid mislead consumers with vague claims, it is important to avoid using overly generic terms and instead strive for precision and balance. Claims should not highlight only the positive sustainability impacts if doing so disguises negative aspects that may also be present (Financial Conduct Authority, 2024, p. 11). Terms such as “environmentally friendly”, “sustainable” or “ethical” are often too general and may give consumers an overly positive association of a product (Forbrukertilsynet, 2023). According to the EU proposal, such

generic environmental claims may only be used if they are clearly supported by existing EU criteria. Products or services that do not meet these criteria, are suggested being prohibited for using such claims (European Parliament 2023, p. 9).

Lastly, it is important that the consumer is able to form an accurate overall impression of a product or business, including how it is visually and contextually presented. The FCA highlights that elements such as images, logos and colors are important components of a product's overall presentation (Financial Conduct Authority 2024, p.11) Similarly, the NCA emphasizes that this also applies to a company's environmental or ethical profile, particularly when slogans or corporate visions are used. An interesting remark states: "Claims that are factually correct may thus be misleading based on the context in which they are presented" (Forbrukertilsynet, 2023). This condition therefore sets requirements for both the content and design of marketing. In other words, even if a claim is factually accurate in isolation, it can still be considered misleading depending on how and where it is presented.

Across all three frameworks, a clear theme emerges: consumers must have access to accurate, transparent and comprehensive information about the products and services they purchase. In the context of the green transition, where sustainability claims occur, greenwashing can take many forms, from exaggerated claims to vague language or omitted critical details, all of which risk misleading consumers and distorting their decision-making. Whether it is overstating a product's environmental benefits or using generic terms, such practices may lead consumers to make choices that do not align with the true environmental impact of a product. These regulations are designed to address these issues by ensuring transparency, truthfulness and accountability in environmental marketing. The goal is to protect consumers from misinformation and empower them to make informed, sustainable choices, fostering trust in the market and encouraging companies to genuinely uphold their environmental commitments.

To better understand the nature of misleading environmental marketing practices, it is useful to refer to established conceptual frameworks that predate current regulatory efforts. One such framework is *The Seven Sins of Greenwashing*, which systematically categorizes the most common forms of deceptive environmental claims.

3.2.3 The Seven Sins of Greenwashing

Before formal regulations addressing greenwashing were introduced in the EU or other jurisdictions, various guidelines were developed to help consumers identify potential misleading environmental claims. One widely cited framework *The Seven Sins of Greenwashing* by TerraChoice Environmental Marketing (now UL Solutions) in 2007 (TerraChoice, 2010, p. 5). These "sins" outlines seven common rhetorical strategies found among companies to present their products or actions as more environmentally friendly than they truly are.

The seven sins are illustrated in Figure 1 below and further elaborated:

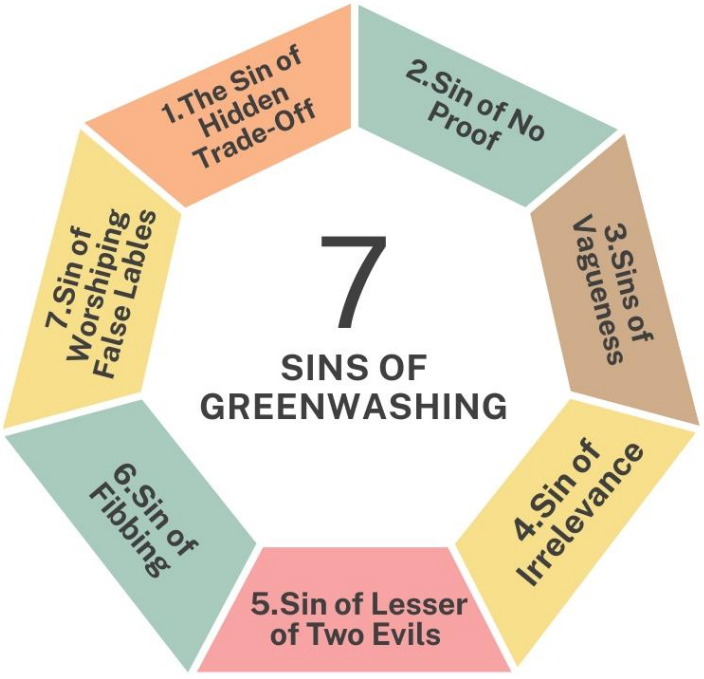

Figure 1: Seven Sins of Greenwashing (TerraChoice, 2010, p.10)

1. Sin of the Hidden Trade-Off

Occurs when a product is marked as environmentally friendly based on a single attribute, such as made from recycled materials, while ignoring other significant environmental impacts such as energy use, emissions or product processes.

2. Sin of No Proof

This refers to the environmental claims without easily accessible supporting evidence or reliable third-party certification.

3. Sins of Vagueness

Involves using poorly defined or broad terms that are likely to be misunderstood, such as “all-natural” or “eco-friendly”.

4. Sin of Irrelevance

Entails making an environmental claim that is truthful but not important or helpful for the consumer. This can be done by claiming a product is free of substance that is already banned by law.

5. Sin of Lesser of Two Evils

Describing claims that may be accurate within a narrow context, but distract from the broader environmental harm of an entire product category.

6. Sin of Fibbing

Involves making outright false environmental claims that have no basis in fact.

7. Sin of Worshiping False Labels

Occurs when products falsely imply endorsement by third parties through fabricated labels or misleading images, giving the impression of official clarification where none exists.

While originally designed for evaluating environmental claims on products in the private sector, this framework works a theoretical foundation for analyzing and discussing the credibility and transparency of environmental messaging more broadly. As such, the Seven Sins framework serve as a complementary lens to the formal regulations when studying how environmental claims are communicated from a state-level perspective, particularly in contexts of framing.

The practical use of this framework is underscored by findings from TerraChoice’s 2010 report, which revealed that 95% of products with green claims in the US and Canada committed at least one of the Seven Sins (TerraChoice, 2010, p. 6). This highlights the extent of problematic environmental communication, while at the same time emphasizing the relevance of evaluating narratives outside of commercial contexts, such as at governmental levels.

This framework will be further discussed and applied in section 6.2 - Indications of Greenwashing in The Press Releases?

4. Methodology

This chapter outlines the methodological framework for this study. Section 4.1 presents the philosophical foundation, focusing on an interpretivist paradigm, align with its ontology and epistemology. Section 4.2 details the qualitative research design and the data collection. Section 4.3 provides an overview of the empirical data itself. Section 4.4 introduces Framing analysis as the chosen method of analysis. Finally, section 4.5 discusses the ethical considerations relevant to this study.

4.1 Philosophy of science

This section presents the philosophical foundation of the study, which is rooted in interpretivism. The study adopts a social constructivist ontology and an interpretivist epistemology, which together guide the research design, data interpretation, and methodological choices.

4.1.1 Ontology

The ontological stand of this study is social constructivism, which holds that reality is not an objective phenomenon independent of human perception or experience. Instead, reality is continuously constructed through language, concepts, discourses, and social interactions (Porta & Keating, 2008, p. 24)

Both social constructivism and interpretivism emphasize a subjective view of the world, where social structures gain meaning through repeated social patterns and interaction and individual interpretation (Porta & Keating, 2008, p. 24) A central principle of this is the Thomas theorem: "If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences" (Thomas & Thomas, 1928, Andersen et al., 1997 p. 289). This implies that people's interpretation of situations, rather than objective conditions alone, shape social actions and outcomes.

This perspective also highlights how institutions exercise power through meaning. Institutions and state policies are not fixed realities, but discursive constructions, shaped by the meanings attributed to them (Andersen et al., 1997 p. 289). As such, initiatives such as the green transition are treated not as neutral or self-evident processes, but as political and communicative constructions grounded in language, discourse, and historical context.

4.1.2 Epistemology

This thesis is based on an interpretivist epistemology, which assumes that knowledge about the social world is produced through language, interaction, and shared meanings (Porta & Keating, 2008, p. 27). Rather than seeking objective truths, this approach aims to understand how political actors' construct meaning through communication, specifically press releases, to frame and give meaning to the green transition. Frame analysis, as used in this study, aligns with interpretivism because it explores the interpretive processes through which political messages are constructed and communicated.

Within interpretivism, knowledge and truth are considered subjective and are seen as culturally and historically situated (Porta & Keating, 2008, p. 25). Consequently, researchers can never be completely separated from their own values and assumptions, which inevitably influence the choice of problem formulation, data collection and data analysis (Porta & Keating, 2008, p. 27). These considerations are further discussed in section 4.5 – Ethics.

Through the use of framing, word choice and narrative structures, state-level actors shape how the green transition is perceived. These frames reflect the underlying intentions, values, and assumptions of the institutions involved. This reflects an interpretivist concern with subjective meaning-making and the role of language in shaping the discussion about the green transition.

4.2 Qualitative Research Design

The following section addresses the qualitative research design used in this study, including the rationale for choosing press releases as the primary data source and the overall comparative strategy.

This thesis uses a qualitative research approach to gain a broader understanding of how the green transition is framed in government communication. The objective is to study how state-level actors in Norway and the UK frame and legitimize their policies regarding to the green transition. To achieve this, the empirical material consists of press releases published between January and December of 2024.

To follow Bryman's (2016) classification, these are classified as official documents, thus material produced by government bodies intended for public distribution (2016, p. 546). Such documents are valuable forms of qualitative data, as they offer insight into how governments

present policies and strategies (Bryman 2016, p.552). Although documents, particularly press releases, may carry institutional bias, this bias is itself analytically useful, as it reveals political intentions and strategic frames (Bryman 2016, p. 553).

This thesis follows a comparative research approach, which is particularly well-suited for studying how the same phenomena, in this case the green transition, is presented in different national contexts (Bryman 2016, p. 65). Comparative research contributes to the theory building by identifying both similarities and differences between cases (Bryman 2016, p. 67). By comparing Norway and the UK, we can better understand the conditions under which governmental framing practices operate, and how these might influence the publics interpretation of climate policies and the green transition.

This study follows a deductive approach as it is based on a predefined theoretical framework of political communication, framing theory and greenwashing. These frameworks form the basis for the interpretation of the data. The aim is to assess how these theoretical perspectives translate to real-world government communication and to identify any frameworks or rhetorical strategies that recur in the discussion regarding the green transition (Bryman, 2016, p. 21).

4.2. Official Documents in Qualitative Research

The state is a rich source when it comes to publicly accessible textual material, while it is also often used for strategic communication. In this thesis press releases are not seen as natural reflections of reality, but interpreted as rhetorically constructed texts with clear communicative purposes (Bryman 2016, p. 552). Following Atkinson and Coffey's perspective (Bryman, 2016, p. 560), documents are treated as constructed representations shaped by the institutional settings in which they are produced and the audiences they are intended to influence. In this study, I acknowledge that government documents are often strategic and shaped by a political agenda with an institutional goal and with an intended public image.

The documents analyzed in this thesis are considered non-reactive data sources, meaning they were not created in response to this research project (Bryman 2016. 553). This minimizes the risk of reactivity, but at the same time introduces some limitation related to the interpretation of politically motivated content. Since the press releases were not intended for academic analysis, issues such as credibility, bias, and selective emphasis must be critically evaluated,

and is further elaborated in section 4.5 – ethics. Nevertheless, these texts offer valuable insights into how governments shape narratives regarding the green transition.

4.2.1 National Contexts and Climate Frameworks

To contextualize the empirical material, it is necessary to briefly outline the political leadership and climate policy frameworks in Norway and UK during the 2024 data collection period.

Both Norway and the UK are constitutional monarchies where the formal head of state is the king, but where the executive power rests with the government and legislative authority with the parliament (United Nations Association Of Norway, 2024). In the UK, Rishi Sunak served as Prime Minister until a general election in July 2024 led to the Labour Party, under Keir Starmer, forming a new government (Cabinet Office, n.d.). In Norway, the Labour Party (Arbeiderpartiet), led by Jonas Gahr Støre, remained in power in coalition with the Centre Party throughout 2024 (Regjeringen.no, 2021).

The change in government in the UK is important for this study, as it may affect communication and frames related to the green transition. Differences in communication before and after the government change will be addressed in section 4.3 – Data, and further elaborated in the analysis and discussion.

Norway's climate target under the Paris Agreement is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030 compared to 1990 levels. This target is legally established through Norway's Climate Act (Klimaloven) (Ministry of Climate and Enviorment, 2024, p. 4). In addition, Norway has committed to become a 'low-emission society' by 2050, defined as: "[…] a society where greenhouse gas emissions are reduced to counteract the harmful effects of global warming" (Ministry of Climate and Enviorment, 2024, pp. 6, own translation)

The UK is committed to reaching 'net zero' by 2050, which means that "[…] the total greenhouse gas emissions would be equal to the emissions removed from the atmosphere […]" (House of Commons Library, 2024, p. 4). This goal, aimed at limiting global warming and the impacts of climate change, is also established in legislation. As part of its obligations under the Paris Agreement, the UK has also committed to reduce emissions by 68% by 2030 compared to 1990 levels (House of Commons Library, 2024, p. 4).

In addition to these targets, the UK follows a legally binding system of carbon budgets established by the Climate Change Act of 2008. These budgets act as ceilings on the total amount of greenhouse gases the UK is allowed to emit over five-year periods and must be set 12 years in advance. The system spans from 2008 to 2050 and provides a structured framework for achieving long-term emissions reductions (House of Commons Library, 2024, p. 8). At the time of this study, the UK is operating under its fourth carbon budget (House of Commons Library, 2024, p. 4). These carbon budgets serve as strategic tools to ensure that the UK remains on track toward its net zero commitment.

Norway does not operate with a comparable carbon budget system. However, the Climate Act (Klimaloven), adopted in 2018, imposes several legally binding obligations. These include annual reporting to the Parliament on progress toward climate targets, updates to the National Climate Strategy at least every five years, and regular reporting on sector-specific measures to achieve national goals (Climate Change Act, 2017). Norway also closely operates with the EU to meet its 2030 target, and shares commitments under the EU's broader Climate Policy Framework (Ministry of Climate and Enviorment, 2024, p. 14).

4.3 Data

The empirical material consists of seven press releases published between January 1st and December 31st, 2024: three from the Norwegian Ministry of Energy and four from the UK Department for Energy Security and Net Zero. To ensure relevance to the green transition, the press releases were selected through thematic filters related to climate, environmental, and energy policy on the ministries' official websites. Full versions of the selected documents are included in Appendix 1 (Norway) and Appendix 2 (UK).

Where Norwegian press releases were available in English, those versions were used. For documents only available in Norwegian, translations were carried out using the translation tool DeepL, with additional manual checks to ensure consistency and accuracy in terminology. Further evaluation of the ethical consideration regarding the selection and translation process is addressed in Section 4.5 – Ethics.

Table 1, below, provides an overview of the selected dataset, including publication dates, document titles, and publication site:

Country	Date	Title	Links to Publication Site
UK	28.03.2024	UK halfway to net zero	https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-half-way-to-net-zero
UK	21.05.2024	UK overachieves another carbon emissions target and rejects rollover	https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-overachieves-another-carbon-emissions-target-and-rejects-rollover
		Note: New government elected in the UK.	
UK	29.08.2024	Certainty for oil and gas industry in light of landmark ruling	https://www.gov.uk/government/news/certainty-for-oil-and-gas-industry-in-light-of-landmark-ruling
UK	10.10.2024	UK climate finance helps reduce more than 105 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions globally	https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-climate-finance-helps-reduce-more-than-105-million-tonnes-of-greenhouse-gas-emissions-globally
Norway	26.09.2024	A Historic Breakthrough for CO2 Management	https://www.regjeringen.no/en/aktuelt/et-historisk-

			gjennombrudd-for-co2-handtering/id3054757/
Norway	18.12.2024	New Enova agreement: The government wants to cut emissions and speed up the energy transition	https://www.regjeringen.no/no/aktuelt/ny-enova-avtale-regjeringen-vil-kutte-utslipp-og-fa-fart-pa-energiomstillingen/id3079872/
Norway	20.12.2024	Greener local societies and more efficient energy use	https://www.regjeringen.no/no/aktuelt/gronare-lokalsamfunn-og-meir-effektiv-energiforbruk/id3080279/

Table 1: Collection of datasets.

4.4 Method of Analysis – Framing Analysis

This section outlines framing analysis based on the methodological framework developed by Kitzinger (2007). The aim is to study how state-level actors in Norway and the UK frame the green transition in official press releases. Framing analysis allows for an in-depth study of how meanings, values and problem definitions are constructed and communicated through language (Kitzinger, 2007, p. 138). This is particularly relevant for understanding how political actors seek legitimacy and trust when addressing complex issues such as the green transition.

Kitzinger outlines four key questions to guide a framing analysis (Kitzinger 2007, p. 139):

1. How is the problem defined?	2. How are key players portrayed?
3. Who is presented as responsible?	4. What solutions are proposed?

Table 2: Four key questions for framing analysis (Kitzinger, 2007, p. 139).

These questions offer a structured approach for identifying some of the core components of frames: how issues are problematized, how actors are characterized, how responsibility is assigned, and which solutions are legitimized. While originally used to analyze media production, this framework is also relevant to the study of government communication as press releases and regulatory structures (Kitzinger 2007, p. 138).

As Kitzinger notes: “Frames rarely, in any case, exists in their ‘pure’ form” (Kitzinger 2007, p. 140), rather, they emerge through interactions between language, power and priorities, as elaborated in the theory chapter. Applying this framework to analyze government communication can contribute to an understanding of how policies are constructed, justified, and positioned in relation to public values such as trust, innovation or national identity.

The four questions will be used in the analysis as follow:

Step 1: Identify the problem. This involves analyzing how the green transition is described, what challenges are emphasized, and which social risks or values are being addressed. In this study, a problem is not necessarily explicitly labeled but can be presented as a problem field consisting of several implicit issues or challenges.

Step 2: Identifying key players. This step focuses on how actors, such as the government, industries or other stakeholders, are being presented. Focus on descriptive and evaluative language is emphasized to understand how legitimacy or authority is assigned.

Step 3: Assigning responsibility. It is important to note that responsibility in this context not necessarily imply blame, but rather refers to who is presented as in charge of managing or solving the problem. This focus often overlaps with the portrayal of key players, as those who are framed as key players may also appear as responsible actors.

Step 4: Analyze proposed solutions. This includes identifying which policy measures, technologies or action being promoted, and how these are framed as appropriate responses to the identified problem. These solutions are discussed in relation to the actors identified as key players and responsible stakeholders.

Finally, a comparative discussion is carried out to identify similarities and differences between the Norwegian and UK press releases. This is done through the theoretical lens of Framing Theory and in relation to greenwashing risks, as outlined in the framework of The Seven Sins of Greenwashing. This discussion is presented in Chapter 6 – Discussion.

By applying Kitzinger's model, this thesis aims to analyze not only what is communicated in the press releases, but how problems and solutions are proposed and legitimized. This approach enables a critical analysis of government communication in the context of the green transition, trust building, and transparency.

4.5 Ethics

Since this study is rooted in an interpretive epistemology, the thesis emphasizes that knowledge and social reality are not objective or value-neutral, but are shaped by language, discourse and context. Thus, through the use of publicly available government press releases, standard ethical considerations such as informed consent and protection of personal data do not apply (Bryman, 2016, p. 553). Rather, interpreting such texts requires recognizing their rhetorical nature and potential biases (Bryman, 2016, p. 552).

I recognize that my own views and perspectives on environmental and climate policy may influence both the selection and interpretation of the press releases. Throughout the research process, I have attempted to maintain reflexivity by being conscious of how my personal values may influence analytical decisions. Transparency about this is essential to ensure the validity and credibility of the study (Bryman 2016, p. 41).

A further ethical issue relates to language and translation. Some Norwegian press releases were translated using the DeepL tool. While care was taken to ensure terminological consistency and accuracy, there remains a potential risk of overlooking cultural or political nuances in the original language (Bryman, 2016, p. 65). This challenge is particularly relevant in cross-national comparisons, where specific concepts and political framing may not always translate directly or carry the same connotations in both contexts.

Lastly, while the selection of press releases is guided by the thematical relevance of the green transition, the process itself is selective. I am thus aware of the risk of over-representing certain types of messages or missing certain aspects. This reinforces the need for transparency about how data is selected and presented, as well as a critical awareness of the limitations of document-based research.

Overall, ethical considerations in this study are grounded in the principles of transparency, reflexivity, and critical engagement with sources. These principles guide both the interpretation of the material and the presentation of the findings.

5. Frame Analysis of Press Releases

The following chapter presents the findings from the framing analysis of the seven selected press releases, three form Norway and four from the UK. These documents are analyzed to identify how the green transition is framed by state-level institutions in both countries. Each text is labeled with the date, title and links to the publication site in Appendix 1 (Norway) and Appendix 2 (UK).

The analysis follows Kitzinger's (2007) four-question framing model, as outlined in Section 4.4 – Framing Analysis. These questions guide the identification of how problems are defined, how actors are portrayed, who is presented as responsible, and what kinds of solutions are proposed. As described in the method section, problem definitions may be implicit, key actors and responsible stakeholders may overlap, and solutions are interpreted within these frames.

To ensure a systematic analysis, each press release is color-coded according to the four key questions. An overview of the color-coding system is illustrated in figure 2 below, which illustrates how each question is categorized by color.

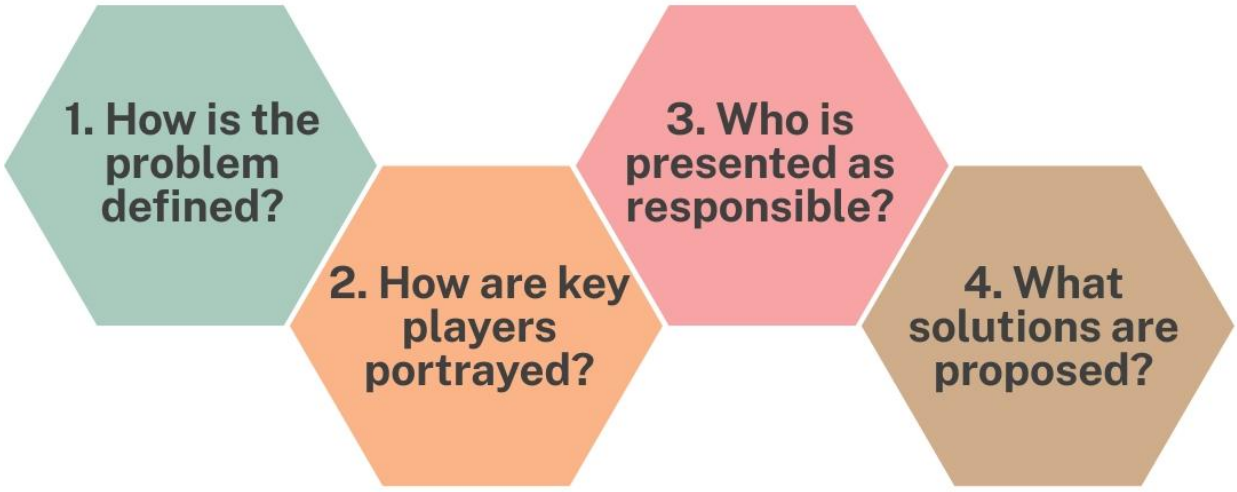

Figure 2: Color categorization of Kitzinger's four key questions for frame analysis

5.1 Analysis of Press Releases Form the Norwegian Government

5.1.1 Press Release A

In press release A - "*A Historic Breakthrough for CO2 Management*" the **problem is** not framed in terms of ongoing environmental damage, but rather as a technological challenge that requires innovation. The Minister for Energy, Terje Aasland states: "We must cut emissions to meet our commitments under the Paris Agreement – both domestically and globally" (Appendix 1 A, p. 2). This quote follows the launch of Northern Light's project Longship, presented as the world's first commercial facility for CO2 transport and storage (Appendix 1 A, p. 1). The press release situates the problem within the domain of international obligation and technological innovation, rather than a political conflict or systemic causes of emissions, the framing leads the attention towards Norway's ability to deliver solutions. Through this structure, the problem is framed as an issue of both national and international responsibility and technical solvability, while also acknowledging obligations to the Paris Agreement.

The framing of the problem lays the foundation for identifying **key players** involved, where the private company Northen Lights is portrayed as an important actor. Through the press release, the company's facility to capture and storage CO2 is highlighted as a milestone and an important innovation towards the green transition, as stated by Minister Aasland: "This is a historic moment, not only for Northern Lights and Øygarden, but also for Norway as a nation and for the world in terms of the development of carbon capture, transport, and storage" (Appendix 2 A, p.1). Through this formulation Northern Lights is portrayed as a global pioneer and a key player in the development of green technologies and solutions. Simultaneously, the state is portrayed as a proactive and supportive contributor as the press release highlights the government's financial investments: "The costs have been shared between the state and the companies […]" (Appendix 2 A, p. 1). By emphasizing the government's contribution to the facility, the state frames itself as innovative and committed to invest in new green technology. This dual presentation of key players also highlights a narrative of public-private partnership as essential to achieve climate goals, and gives Norwegian climate policy an important status through technological leadership.

This framing of key players also sets the stage for how **responsibility** is framed. The press release presents Northen Lights as the operational leader, the actor directly implementing

climate solutions, while the state is positioned as an enabling force that legitimizes and supports innovation through financial investments (Appendix 1 A p.1). This builds further on the focus on partnership between the private and public sector, where technological development lies within the company, while political commitment and strategic vision is state domain. The responsibility is thus framed as shared, but not presented as diffuse or ambiguous for either of the actor. Rather, it is presented as a clearly structured and coordinated national effort and highlighted by Minister Aasland as: "[…] a concrete solution to a concrete problem […]" (Appendix 1 A, p.2). The emphasis on being "[…] the world's first […]" (Appendix 1 A, p.1), underscores how this shared responsibility moves from a national initiative to an action of global significance, strengthening both actors' credibility towards the green transition. This promotes a positive framing of the government as collaborative and forward-looking, where responsibility is viewed as a shared and beneficial effort rather than a burden.

The way responsibility is constructed also shapes how the **proposed solution** is legitimized. The opening of Northen Lights' facility is framed not just as a response, but as a breakthrough in the global development of carbon capture and storage technology (Appendix A 1, p.1). The press release highlights the facility's broader climate significant by stating "[…] this facility will have a lasting positive impact on the climate […]" (Appendix 1 A, p. 1), which elevates the facility not only as national achievement, but as a global contribution to the challenge of emission. The emphasis on the 'lasting positive impact' frames the solution as not something symbolic or temporary, but stable and transformative. This frame is further reinforced by the notion that the CO2 will be stored both permanently and safely beneath the seabed (Appendix 1 A, p.1). This permanent focus underscores how the technology is legitimized as a credible solution to a global problem. In this way, the press release frames cross-sector cooperation and technological advancement as essential tools towards the green transition. Even though it is not explicitly stated, the mentioned expansion of the facility (Appendix A 1, p. 1) also implies potential for job creation and value production within the green technology.

5.1.2 Press Release B

In press release B – *"New Enova agreement: The government wants to cut emissions and speed up the energy transition"*, the **problem** is explicitly defined as greenhouse gas emissions, but broadly framed as the structural challenge of transforming the Norwegian

economy into a low-emission society (Appendix 1 B, p. 2). Enova, a state-owned enterprise under the Ministry of Climate and Environment, is introduced as a central tool and collaboration partner for delivering effective climate and energy solutions (Ministry of Climate and Environment, n.d.). The framing of the problem is thus not rooted in the urgency of handling emissions alone, but in the economic and infrastructural transformation needed to meet the county's climate targets. This emphasis is underlined by the Minister of Climate and Environment, Tore O. Sandvik, who states: "We urgently need to get effective climate and energy solutions onto the market […]" (Appendix 1 B, p. 2). Here, the problem is framed as both a matter of innovation and as of marketization, understood as the process of moving technologies from the research and development phase into widespread commercial circulation. This framing emphasizes urgency and practicality, suggesting that solving the climate crisis requires scaling up tested solutions and embedding them in everyday markets.

Within this framing, Enova is positioned as central **key player**. The company is described as: "[…] one of the governments' most important tools […]" (Appendix 1 B, p. 2), which signals its significant role in achieving the country's climate targets. The government also plays an important role as the initiator of the new management agreement with Enova and provider of a "[…] record high grant […]" (Appendix 1 B, p. 2). However, the emphasis is more heavily placed on Enova's operational role, particularly on its mandate to scale up climate innovations and bring progress toward the green transition (Appendix 1 B, p. 3). By strengthening the company's mandate and long-term strategy, the government emphasizes Enova's status a leading institutional actor within Norwegian climate policy. This portrayal mirrors press release A, where effective climate governance is rooted in collaboration between different actors.

This construction of key actors naturally extends into the framing of **responsible actors**. Enova is held directly responsible for implementing and delivering the policy goals of the agreement, particularly the transition to a low-emission society by 2050. Minister Sandvik explicitly states that Enova must "[…] have 2050 on the horizon and support innovation and transition that can take us all the way to a low-emission society" (Appendix 1 B, p. 2), which underscores the company's long-term responsibility. At the same time the ministries of Energy and Climate and Environment, are presented as politically responsible for initiating the agreement and ensuring its long-term implementation (Appendix 1 B, p. 3). Thus, responsibility is again distributed: Enova is responsible for the implementation, while the

government provides oversight and direction. This clear separation frames the government as structured, proactive and future oriented with institutional trust in Enova as a competent actor.

The management agreement itself is framed as the primary **solution proposed** in the press release. Within this, several sub-solutions are embedded, including a proposed investment of over NOK 9 billion for 2025 (Appendix 1 B, p. 2). These figures not only serves as financial metrics, but also as legitimizing tools: they construct the agreement as credible, ambitious and action oriented. Through the financial investments and the reinforcement of Enova's role, the government frames this solution as not only a short-term plan, but an integral strategy to Norway's long-term climate strategy.

This framing is further reinforced through integration of energy and climate policy, where reliable power balance and an efficient energy system are emphasized essential to the green transition (Appendix 1, p. 2). The inclusion of earmarked investments for household energy efficiency, such as solar power (Appendix 1 B, p. 3), broadens the focus beyond state institutions and market actors to include individual citizens. This focus underscores the governments framing of the green transition as a shared societal responsibility. Moreover, the focus on maintaining a secure power balance further reinforces the government's forward-looking and pragmatic approach by reframing the green transition as not only an environmental necessity, but as a strategic policy of national infrastructure and stability.

5.1.3 Press Release C

In press release C - *"Greener local societies and more efficient energy use",* the core **problem is defined** as the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, improve energy efficiency and flexibility, and prevent biodiversity loss. These interconnected challenges are framed as issues requiring action through strengthened local planning and policy at a municipal level (Appendix 1 C, p. 3). Minister of Climate and Environment, Tore O. Sandvik, reinforces this framing by highlighting the threat of land degradation: "The sum of the bit-by-bit degradation of nature is a problem that we must take seriously […] the municipalities must avoid decommissioning carbon-rich areas as far as possible" (Appendix 1 C, p. 4). This statement reflects a clear concern with balancing environmental protection and development needs across Norway's geographically diverse municipalities.

In response to these challenges, municipalities are framed as empowered, knowledgeable and responsive **key players**. The introduction of updated state planning guidelines underscores the importance of local adaptation, portraying municipalities as both capable and essential in implementing climate and energy initiatives (Appendix 1 C, p. 3). This decentralized approach is positively reinforced by several ministers, who highlight the value of local contextual knowledges. As stated by the minster of Local Government and Regional Development, Erling Sande: "Municipalities play a key role in the climate transition. They know best what initiatives are most relevant to them." (Appendix 1 C, p. 4). Similarly, the Minister of Energy underlines their role in renewable energy development by noting that the municipalities "[…] are more in touch, and they know where the needs and solutions are […]" (Appendix 1 C, p. 5).

At the same time, the state is again positioned as a supportive facilitator, providing tools, knowledge and strategic guidance to enable local action. This mirrors the framing in press release A and B, where the state partners with stakeholders like Northern Lights and Enova to promote national climate targets. Across all three press releases, the government is consistently portrayed as a collaborative facilitator, while non-state actors, whether municipalities or private companies, are framed as competent and crucial to the success of national and international climate policy.

Accordingly, **responsibility** is shared. The state is framed as a responsible actor by designing and delivering planning guidelines that support municipal implementation (Appendix 1 C, p. 4). Meanwhile, municipalities are portrayed as having deep local insight and described as essential to achieving national climate goals. As Minister Sande emphasizes: "Municipalities plays a crucial role in the climate transition […] We are building on the good experiences of municipalities, creating local plans within the national framework" (Appendix 1 D, p. 4). This dual framing position the municipalities as co-responsible actors, while the government is portrayed as responsive and participatory by developing tools based on local needs. Further, municipalities are ultimately expected to implement the guidelines in their local planning, which positions them as primary agents of practical execution (Appendix 1 C, p. 4).

The updated guidelines are thus presented as the central **solution**. They are framed as a decentralized governance strategy that empowers municipalities to make climate-conscious

decisions about land use, renewable energy production and circular economy initiatives (Appendix 1 C, p. 5). The guidelines are also framed as a product of collaborative policymaking and a necessary update to older frameworks from 2009, ensuring greater alignment with today's climate challenges and planning practices (Appendix 1 C, p. 5).

An additional **solution** is proposed to the challenge of environmental degradation. Rather than viewing land use changes purely as a threat, Minister Sandvik reframes some forms of degradation as necessary trade-offs: "[...] we must recognize that degradation can have many good purposes, such as land use changes for hospitals, kindergartens and schools" (Appendix 1 C, p. 4). This statement reflects a pragmatic policy stance that aims to reconcile environmental goals with local development needs, framing sustainability as compatible with social infrastructure.

5.2 Analysis of Press Releases From the UK Government

5.2.1 Press Release D

In press release D, "*Half way to net zero",* the **problem** is implicitly defined as a challenge already being successfully managed. The issue is presented as one steadily resolved through existing policies, positioning the UK government's net zero strategy as a proven success. This framing is reinforced by statements like: "UK territorial greenhouse gas emissions fell further across several key sectors between 2022 and 2023" (Appendix 2 D, p. 1), suggesting that the emission reduction is a direct result of targeted government policy and portraying the government as a proactive leader.

The government is thus framed as a **key player** and portrayed as competent, pragmatic, and internationally responsible. The press release highlights how emissions have been reduced by 53% since 1990, and that this has been achieved while growing the economy (Appendix 2D, p. 2). This dual focus positions the government as successful in both environmental and economic terms, emphasized by Energy Security Secretary Clair Coutinho: "[…] We have done all this whilst growing our economy by 80% and shielding families from unnecessary costs." (Appendix 2 D, p. 2). The government is thus portrayed as ambitious in climate policy, but also socially and economically protective.

At the same time, the term "the UK" is frequently used in the place of "the government", creating the impression that the entire country, including businesses, institutions, and the public, is part of the success story. Phrases like "The UK continues to lead the way in cutting

emissions "(Appendix 2 D, p.1) and "[…] the UK is making continued, significant progress towards net zero" (Appendix 2 D, p. 2), transform government-led achievements into a collective national narrative. While this implies broad support and participation, the credit remains in context of government policy success, as stated by Secretary Coutinho: "Having cut emissions faster than any other major economy over the last decade, the UK government is committed to reaching its climate targets in a realistic way, while securing more clean energy investment" (Appendix 1 D, p. 2).

The **responsibility** for the ongoing green transition is primarily attributed to the government, but framed as collective national achievement. Rather than explicitly stating "the government" as the primary agent, the press release repeatedly uses the phrase "the UK", such as "The UK has done this while taking a pragmatic approach to net zero […]" (Appendix 2 D, p. 2) and "The UK continues to lead the way in cutting emissions […]" (Appendix 2 D, p. 1). This rhetorical choice blurs institutional lines by spreading credit across the society, while strengthening trust in the government's leadership. Statements such as "The UK has done this while taking a pragmatic approach to net zero, supporting families to make positive changes, without saddling them with extra financial burdens" (Appendix 2 D, p. 2), further amplifies this national framing, while implicitly placing the government in the position of facilitator and protector.

Private companies are briefly mentioned, notably by the reference to the £24 billion of new low carbon investments (Appendix 2 D, p.2), but their role is limited to reinforcing the credibility of the UK's strategy rather than assuming direct responsibility. The government thus remains the architect of the transition, with other actors folded into a unified narrative of national progress. This framing subtly centralizes responsibility in state policy while dispersing success.

The **proposed solution** is the continuation of a pragmatic, stable and effective climate strategy. By presenting the UK as 'halfway to net zero', the press release positions current policy as not only effective, but exemplary. This is reinforced through a comparative framing, such as the claim that the UK had reduced more emissions than "[…] the US, Canada, France, Italy and Japan combined" (Appendix 2 D, p. 2). Rather than introducing new initiatives, the solution lies in staying in the current course: maintain progress while also encouraging further low-carbon investment and reinforcing public trust. This framing takes

the UK from being a national actor to a global climate leader, with the strategy presented as a model for others to follow.

5.2.2 Press Release E

Press release E *"UK overachieves another carbon emission target and rejects rollover"* **defines the problem** primarily in relation to the management of the national carbon budget. The press release addresses the issue of surplus carbon savings from the UK's third carbon budget and frames the decision not to carry forward this surplus into future budgets as a strategic and responsible act (Appendix 2 F, p.3). The problem is not framed as underperformance or policy failure, but as a question of how to strategically manage overachievement. The statement that "[…]15% emissions surplus from the third carbon budget will not be carried forward […]" (Appendix 2 E, p. 3) positions the government's decision in a matter of responsible climate governance. While the surplus could be seen as an opportunity to ease future obligations, the government frames the decision as a way to maintain pressure for continued action.

Unlike press release D, this release introduces a forward-looking dimension by including a statement from the independent Climate Change Committee: "The next big challenge is to hit the UK's 20230 target […]" (Appendix 2 E, p.4). This focus is thus not only on the current achievements, but also on future challenges. Notably, this acknowledgement does not come directly from the government, but from Professor Piers Forster, interim Chair of the Climate Change Committee. This use of external authority reinforces the government's decision as not only politically calculated, but also scientifically grounded and validated.

Thus, both the government and the Climate change committee are portrayed as **key players** in this press release. The government is again portrayed as the main key player with pragmatic ambitions, as seen in statements from Energy Security and Net Zero Minister Justin Tomlinson: "By deciding not to carry forward our over-performance from the third carbon budget, we are doubling down on our commitment to reach net zero" (Appendix 2 E, p. 3), underscores the government's role in maintaining strong climate leadership. As in press release D, the government highlights its international credibility by stating that the UK's targets are among the most ambitious globally, and that it continues to "lead from the front" in climate policy (Appendix 2 E, p. 4).

Meanwhile, the Climate Chance Committee is presented as a supportive actor, yet in a more indirect role. Rather than shaping the policy, the committee lends credibility to the government's decision by publicly supporting them. This is particularly clear in Professor Forster's statement: "[…] it shows an understanding of both the climate science and the very real need to accelerate progress on emissions reduction." (Appendix 2 E, p. 4). The committee thus act as an expert validator, reinforcing the legitimacy and responsibility of the government's policy choices.

This underscores the framing of the government as the **responsible actor**. While phrases such as "UK is on track to meet 2050 net zero […]" (Appendix 2 E, p. 3) again emphasizes the national unity, specific formulations like "The government decision not to carry forward the surplus keeps the UK within its ambitious target […]" (Appendix 2 E, p. 3), clearly attributes responsibility to the government and affirms its role as the primary actor guiding the UK's path to the green transition.

This framing is echoed by the statement from the Climate Change Committee, which explicitly credits the government for the progress: "The Committee congratulates the government on its decision not to carry forward any surplus from the Third Carbon Budget […] The government has made a sensible decision, in line with our advice." (Appendix 2 E, p. 4). The last part of this statement highlights how the committee works as a key player in the governments climate policy without taking the direct responsibility for the positive outcomes.

The **solution proposed** in this press release is the decision to not carry forward the surplus from the third carbon budget. This is framed as a responsible and forward-looking measure to maintain progress in the emission reductions. The press release highlights this with statements such as: "[…] the government is expected to over-deliver once again in the fourth carbon budget" (Appendix 2 E, p.3), positioning the UK as not only maintaining, but also increasing its climate commitments. Further emphasis on the framing of UK' climate leadership is presented as a part of the solution itself, with references to the "UK's success of becoming the first major economy to halve emissions since 1990" (Appendix 2 E, p.3). Thus, the solution is framed not only as a domestic policy decision, but as a demonstration of global climate responsibility.

5.2.3 Press Release F

In press release F – *"Certainty for oil and gas industry in light of landmark ruling"*, a shift in communication tone is evident after with the new Labour government. Here, the **problem** is defined more explicitly than in previous releases. The government identifies a central challenge in managing the transition away from fossil fuels in the North Sea, while safeguarding energy security, job protection and continued economic growth (Appendix 2 F, p. 4). The issue is directly linked to a recent Supreme Court ruling, which requires the regulators to consider the climate impact of oil and gas in new projects (Appendix 2 F, p. 5). This ruling introduces a level of legal uncertainty, particularly for ongoing and future investments in the petroleum sector.

This legal development is implicitly presented as a source of concern for the sector, which the government responds to by reaffirming its recognition of the petroleum industry's legacy and workforce: "The government recognises the proud history of the UK offshore industry and the brilliance of its workforce […]" (Appendix 2 F, p. 5). This acknowledgement, together with a statement from the Minister of Energy, Michael Shanks: "While we make that transition the oil and gas industry will play an important role in the economy for decades to come" (Appendix 2 F, p. 6), frames the problem not as a conflict between oil and gas and the green transition, but more of a way to balance climate obligations and economic continuity.

In terms of **key players,** the government is portrayed as a central and proactive actor. However, unlike the tone of self-congratulation found in earlier press releases, the new government presents itself more as action-oriented and forward-looking. With statements such as "[…] the government is acting immediately" (Appendix 2, F p. 5), the government is aligns itself with legal oversight and democratic principles, framing itself as a responsible key player, while also showing confidence and proactive leadership through statements like: "As we support the North Sea's clean energy future, this government is committed to protecting current and future generations of good jobs as we do so." (Appendix 2 F, p. 6). This is a theme that runs through the other UK releases but is now sharpened through Labour's explicit focus on job protection and clarity. Furthermore, the phrase: "[…] with number one mission of growth and wealth creation, ministers' sleeves are rolled up" (Appendix 2 F, p. 5) portrays a government that are more focused on future challenges than previous success. However, the focus on UK as a global responsible leader in climate policy and the green transition, is still a central recurring theme in the press releases, as seen in Minister Shanks' statemen: "This

government is committed to making Britain a clean energy superpower […]" (Appendix 2 F, p. 5).

Despite the change in leadership, the government is consistently framed as the **responsible actor,** balancing climate, legal and economic priorities. By ensuring that new environmental guidelines are issued without undermining employment or industrial certainty in the North Sea (Appendix 2 F, p. 5), the government emphasizing the need to secure clean energy from North Sea production while maintaining stability in the sector and continued economic growth, highlighted by Minister Shank: "We were elected with a mandate to deliver stability, certainty and growth. Every action we take will be in pursuit of that." (Appendix 2 F, p. 6).

Although the UK Supreme Court is not a policy-making actor, it is presented as a significant institutional responsible actor. Its ruling sets the framework for governmental action, making it a background authority shaping the direction of environmental governance. However, the government retains the primary responsibility in this narrative by responding with new environmental guidance and reinforcing its mandate to deliver stability and clarity (Appendix 2 F, p. 5).

The **solution presented** in this press release revolves around the environmental guidelines and are framed as a part of a dual strategy: enabling cleaner energy production and maintain sector stability. This balance between environmental and economic concerns is emphasized throughout the press release, particularly through references to energy security and continued economic growth. A central component of this strategy is the establishment of Great British Energy (Appendix 2 F, p. 5), a state-owned company tasked with investing in renewable energy technologies such as offshore wind and solar power (Great British Energy, n.d.).

Through the statement "Engagement with industry, workers, trade unions, and civil society will provide clarity and certainty for the industry and ensure a fair, orderly and prosperous transition in the North Sea in line with our climate and legal obligations" (Appendix 2 F, p. 5), the forthcoming guidelines are framed as a strategic solution to bring regulatory clarity and investor confidence to a sector critical to the UK's current energy mix.

Additionally, the government signals strong support for offshore workers and outlines a vision in which they play a leading role in the green transition, stating*:* "The government believes that offshore workers will lead the world in the industries of the future" (Appendix 2 F, p. 5). This frames the workforce not as outdated, but as essential to the green transition.

Further investments in carbon capture and storage, hydrogen, and other emerging sectors (Appendix 2 F, p. 6), supports this narrative of inclusive, forward-looking industrial transformation.

5.2.4 Press Release G

In press release G - *"UK climate finance helps reduce emissions globally"*, the **problem** is primarily framed through a global lens. The main issue is defined as how climate changes highly impact developing countries and the need for effective support in both mitigation and adaption efforts (Appendix 2 G, p. 7). Implicit within this problem is an acknowledgment of global inequality, as the government frames climate change as a challenge demanding both financial and moral responsibility from wealthier nations, like the UK. Climate Minister Kerry McCarthy underscores this by stating that "But there is more work to do […]" (Appendix 2 G, p. 8), emphasizing that while progress has been made, urgent threats remain. The press release links these threats to biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation as interconnected challenge to climate change, as noted by Minister for Nature, Mary Creagh: "[…] Our climate programmes play a vital role in protecting and restoring nature and supporting the communities most affected by this crisis." (Appendix 2 G, p. 8).

The tone reflects a more transparent and long-term framing of the climate crisis compared to previous press releases under the Conservative administration, where progress and achievement were more heavily emphasized. Nonetheless, the press release maintains a broadly optimistic tone by highlighting the UK's significant financial contributions and measurable impact: "The results published today demonstrate the transformational impact of the UK's International Climate Finance from 2011 […]" (Appendix 2 G, p. 6).

The UK government, through the ICF, is presented as the **key player** in this global effort. It is presented as a proactive and responsible international actor that is both capable of and committed to supporting vulnerable populations. The ICF is credited with helping 110 million people adapt to climate change and reducing or avoiding more than 105 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions (Appendix 2 G, p. 6). In this context, the ICF is portrayed as a strategic key player for delivering global climate solutions, reinforcing the UK's self-image as a climate leader and enabler of sustainable development, highlighted by Minister for International Development, Anneliese Dodds: "International climate finance is at the heart of

our climate and development objectives and our mission to be a clean energy superpower." (Appendix 2 G, p. 8).

While the ICF is the operational body delivering climate finance programs, the government is ultimately portrayed as the **responsible actor**. This is underscored by the statements of government ministers who frame the UK's climate finance as part of a broader international mission. For example, Climate Minister Kerry McCarthy states: "The UK has played a key role in supporting the most vulnerable communities across the globe in tackling climate change while alleviating poverty and improving access to cleaner energy sources." (Appendix 2 G, p.8). Thus, the UK government is portrayed as both nationally and globally responsible, using its financial capacity and development policies to make a positive difference in the global fight against climate change. This aligns with the broader frame of the UK as a climate diplomat, as it prepares to "lead from the front" at COP29 by "[…] pushing for an ambitious finance goal for climate aid […]" (Appendix 2 G, p. 8).

The UK's International Climate Finance (ICF) is thus the **solution proposed** in this press release. The climate finance is framed as a central tool for achieving global emission reductions and climate adaption, where specific solutions such as supporting access to clean energy and developing green infrastructure are highlighted (Appendix 2 G, p. 7). Concrete examples of this strategy include the UK's support for sustainable management of forests in Madagascar and Indonesia, which the press release states have "[…] helped protect 58,000 hectares of forest and reduce emissions by approximately 660,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide savings" (Appendix 2 G, p. 7). These solutions are framed as effective and mutually beneficial, promoting both environmental protection and economic development in vulnerable regions. In doing so, the UK continues to position itself as a global leader not only in emissions reductions at home, but also in international solidarity and climate diplomacy. Minister for International Development, Anneliese Dodds emphasizes this in the following quote: "Our programmes are making a positive difference to people's lives and helping to build a liveable planet for all, now and in the future" (Appendix 2 G, p. 8).

This analysis has shown how both the UK and Norwegian governments uses frames to shape their communication on the green transition. The UK press releases often emphasize statistical benchmarks, national achievements and global positioning, while Norway tends to highlight local empowerment, institutional tools, and shared responsibility. Despite these differences, both approaches present the green transition as a process which is both achievable and ongoing. These patterns illustrate different ways governments communicate environmental commitments, setting the stage for further discussion on how such framings may intersect with issues of transparency and public interpretation, including concerns about greenwashing.

6. Discussion

Building on the analysis of how the green transition is framed in the Norwegian and the UK press releases, this chapter compare and discusses similarities and differences through the lens of Framing Theory and greenwashing regulations.

Section 6.1 applies Framing Theory to interpret the findings, drawing on the different forms of framing outlined in Chapter 3.1. Section 6.2 discusses how the communication strategies align with greenwashing regulations introduced in Chapter 3.2 and evaluates whether elements of the press releases reflect any of the Seven Sins of Greenwashing, as outlined in section 3.2.3.

6.1 Framing Effects in the Press Releases

From an interpretive perspective this thesis does not aim to evaluate the objective success, failure, or truth of governments' climate strategies towards the green transition. Instead, it discusses how meaning is constructed, communicated and interpreted through official press releases. These texts are not neutral reflections of policy outcomes, but discursive tools that use language to frame the process of the green transition.

Across both the UK and Norway press releases consistently deploy strong frames, which align climate action with broadly accepted societal values such as employment, innovation, and economic stability. As outlined by Chong and Druckman, these frames do not necessarily depend on being more truthful or morally superior, but rather on their ability to align with widely shared beliefs (2007, p. 116). While this thesis analyzes government communication rather than public discourse, these frames are still relevant for understanding how political meaning is shaped and made salient in public memory (Entman, 1993, p. 53).

One prominent example of strong frames in both countries is the portrayal of large-scale technological innovations as key solutions to the climate crisis and the green transition. In Norway, the Northern Lights' CO2 storage facility is described as a "[…] a historic moment for both Norway and the world in the development of carbon capture and storage" (Appendix 1 A, p. 1). These descriptions are based on strong frames by using emotionally charged symbols as 'historic moment' to legitimate the technological development. Such framing may activate specific beliefs or values, such as national pride or technological optimism, which are already stored in public memory (Chong & Druckman 2007 p. 110). When Energy

Minister Aasland emphasizes that the facility is a: "[…] concrete solution to a concrete problem […]" (Appendix 1 A, p. 2), he simultaneously uses a straightforward and pragmatic language by simplifying a complex political statement rather than going into detailed information about the content (Chong & Druckman 2007, p. 111). Similarly, in the UK, Great British Energy is framed not only as a new energy provider but also as a symbol of state leadership and industrial renewal.

Beyond the symbolism of innovation, employment is another central value through which strong frames are constructed. This is especially evident in the UK Labour government's communication. Press release F highlights the governments' support for North Sea offshore workers, stating: "The government recognises the proud history of the UK offshore industry and the brilliance of its workforce […]" (Appendix 2 F, p. 5). This use of national heritage and positive endorsement seeks to reassure working-class and industrial communities that the green transition will preserve jobs and uphold economic stability. This is reinforced by Minister Shanks statement: "While we make that transition the oil and gas industry will play an important role in the economy for decades to come" (Appendix 2 F, p. 6). Here the green transition is not framed as a breaking point, but as a positive evolution of the petroleum sector.

These strategies illustrate the power of strong frames: linking proposals to public values increases their legitimacy (Chong & Druckman, 2007, p. 111). By aligning the green transition with innovation, technological progress, job creation and economic opportunity, both governments create a narrative in which climate action becomes not a sacrifice, but a source of future growth.

However, Chong and Druckman notes that the strength of a frame often depends on context, where environmental and climate frames tend to be more powerful in local than national settings (Chong & Druckman 2007, p. 116). A notion that may suggest that these concerns resonate more when they are perceived as closer to people's everyday lives. This is reflected in Norway's approach which emphasizes collaboration with local municipalities. In press release C, municipalities are framed as essential actors: "Municipalities play a key role in the climate transition. They know best what initiatives are most relevant to them. […]" (Appendix 1 C, p. 4). The state here presents itself as a facilitator with guidance and tools, but reframes climate policies and the green transition to a local stage.

In contrast, the UK press releases often emphasize national and global leadership. Through statements as: "[…] Having cut emissions faster than any other major economy over the last decade, the UK government is committed to reaching its climate targets" (Appendix 2 D p. 2), the government portrays itself and the nation as a climate leader on the world stage. A strategy which resonates with the concepts of strong frames by focusing on the repetition of the same narrative (Chong & Druckman, 2007, p. 114), but at the same time might be less effective since broader international issue may be overshadowed by more immediate and local concerns (Chong & Druckman 2007, p. 116).

Another key difference lies within the framing techniques. The UK rely heavily on *equivalency (valence) framing*, presenting logically identical facts in more emotionally appealing light (Chong & Druckman, 2007, p. 114). For instance, by frequently emphasize that the UK has reduced greenhouse gas emission by 53% while growing the economy by 80% (Appendix 2 D, p. 1-2), the government evokes a positive emotional response to the issue in which climate action and economic growth are compatible. An alternative framing, such as highlighting that 47% of emissions still need to be reduced by 2050, would shift the tone toward remaining challenges. These presentations describe the same reality, but differ in how the topic is framed, which may influence people's interpretation of the issue (Chong & Druckman, 2007, p. 114). Nevertheless, this selective framing reinforces the positive narrative of national progress.

Equivalency framing is also to some degree evident in Labour's portrayal of the UK as a global leader. As seen in press release G, statements such as: "[…] supported over 82 million people with improved access to clean energy," (Appendix 2 G, p. 7) reinforces a perception of international success through quantifiable outcomes. However, the transition from the Conservative to the Labour government introduces a subtle shift in communication strategy. Labour places greater emphasis on long-term planning, institutional transparency, and legal accountability (Appendix 2 F, p. 5), suggesting a move toward *emphasis (issue) framing.*

This aligns closely with the approach taken by the Norwegian government, which draws focus to selected aspects of an issue by influencing the public to prioritize certain values over others (Chong & Druckman, 2007, p. 114). In the press releases the Norwegian government guides emphasize on local autonomy, innovation and sectoral collaboration. This is illustrated in press release C, where phrases such as: "Municipalities play a key role in the climate

transition. They know best what initiatives are most relevant to them. […]" (Appendix 1 C, p. 4). A statement which highlights local knowledge and empowerment, discreetly shifting the perception of responsibility from the central government to local authorities. In this way, the state appears more as a facilitator than as a primary executor of climate policy. Similar strategy is evident in press release B, where the government frames Enova an essential tool to reach the national climate goals (Appendix 1 B, p. 2). By directing public attention to the aspects of shared responsibility, the government makes the value of local empowerment and institutional trust more salient than centralized governance and thereby influencing which values are prioritized by the audience (Entman 1993, p. 52).

This focus on qualitative development and distributed responsibility stands in contrast to the UK's more centralized and quantitative style. However, both countries draw attention to selected aspects, such as measurable achievements or local empowerment, while downplaying potential trades-off or limitations. In doing so, both countries frame the green transition with optimistic future predictions. Thus, the power a text has on structure understandings and perception is illustrated through both equivalency and emphasis framing (Entman 1993, p. 51).

It is also important to note the absence of *Competing frames* within the press releases. As outlined by Chon & Druckman (2007, p. 112), competing frames introduce alternative narratives or critiques that challenge the dominant framing. In a broader public discourse, such frames might include resistance to green investments or arguments in favor of maintaining fossil fuel dependency. However, government communication is not designed to present alternative perspectives, but to promote and justify their political decisions. Thus, while such competing frames are essential in a democratic society for transparency and trust (Chong & Druckman, 2007, 120), they fall outside the focus of this thesis, which centers on how the governments frame the green transition.

This section has discussed how both the UK and Norwegian governments use strategic frames in their communication of climate, environmental and energy policies to shape public understanding of the green transition as a pragmatic and value-driven process. However, these frames also raise questions about the clarity and transparency of the claims being made. This is relevant when evaluating whether such communication meet the standards set by official marketing regulations and avoid contributing to greenwashing.

6.2 Indications of Greenwashing in Press Releases?

This section discusses the findings from the analysis based on the regulatory frameworks on greenwashing outlined in 3.2.2 and the Seven Sins of Greenwashing presented in 3.2.3. Although these regulatory frameworks were originally developed for corporate advertising and sustainability claims, they are still relevant for public communication. As the public's awareness of climate action increases, so does the need for rich and transparent communication. Thus, it is important to investigate whether the way the Norwegian and the UK authorities frame the green transition risks misleading the public, even if it is unintentional.

It is important to emphasize that governments differ fundamentally from private companies in terms of mandates, accountability, credibility and legal obligations. Nevertheless, the communication strategies they employ may lead to framing effects that obscure trade-offs, overstate success or selectively emphasize certain aspects of climate policy while excluding others. In this sense, not all of the seven sins are relevant to this discussion, but some of the patterns in the government press releases may be an echo of some of them.

A recurring concern is the use of vague or symbolic language that lacks operational clarity. Across both countries, phrases like ‘significant development’, ‘clean energy mission’ (Appendix 2 F, p. 5), or ‘clean energy superpower’ (Appendix 2 G, p. 7) are used without explaining what they mean in concrete policy terms. While rhetorically powerful, these claims are not tied to measurable indicators or timeframes, making them difficult to evaluate. In press release C, it is emphasized that “[…] there have been significant developments in the way municipalities work with climate, and knowledge about climate measures.” (Appendix 1 C, p. 3), but without any further references to what kind of development or knowledge this is.

A similar pattern is evident in the portrayal of Enova’s new mandate, which, while framed as a major strategic tool, remains only superficially defined. The agreement does mention specific areas of investment, such as earmarked funding for household energy efficiency and continued support for innovation in technologies like offshore wind and hydrogen (Appendix 1 B, p. 3). However, these references remain broad, with little detail about implementation timelines or accountability mechanisms. This framing aligns with the concerns emphasized by the Norwegian Consumer Authority, which highlights that claim is misleading if it omits

essential details, information is difficult to understand or presented in an unclear way (Forbrukertilsynet, 2023).

Similarly, phrases such as the UK's "pragmatic approach to net zero" are politically appealing, but offer little transparency into what this pragmatic approach entails in practice. Based on the EU Proposal, the Norwegian Consumer Authority, and the UK Financial Conduct Authority, such vague or generic climate claims risk misleading the public if not supported by verifiable information. In this way, all of these communication strategies risk aligning with the **Sin of Vagueness**, which involves using poorly defined or broad terms or may be misunderstood (TerraChoice, 2010, p. 10)

An additional rhetorical strategy in the UK communication is the delegation of future climate challenges to external voices, particularly the Climate Change Committee (Appendix 2 E, p. 4). This move may be interpreted within two functions: First, it allows the government to maintain a narrative focused on past achievements, while acknowledging future risks without owning them directly. Second, it functions as a liability disclaimer. Positioning responsibility for future outcomes with an advisory body may be understood as way for the government to distances itself from potential failure. Should targets be missed, accountability can be deflected onto the recommendations rather than on political commitment. This subtle distancing may undermine transparency and raise questions about how governmental accountability is perceived. Further concern is the UK's repeated framing of itself as a global climate leader. Phrases such as "[…] the UK continues to lead the way" or being "the first major economy to halve its emissions […]" (Appendix 2 D, p. 1), and ambitions to become a "clean energy superpower" (Appendix 2 G, p. 7), creates a powerful national narrative.

These portrayals also rely heavily on forward-looking language, such as ambitions to become a "clean energy superpower" or to achieve net zero by, without detailing what immediate actions verify those goals. As the EU proposal notes, climate-related claims often center on future performance, which may create the impression that current policies or investments directly drive a low-carbon transition, even when the link is indirect or uncertain (European Parliament, 2023, p. 4).

The leadership claims are furthermore rarely supported by clear criteria for what global leadership involves. These repeated portrayals of the UK as a climate leader on a global scale may for some be interpreted as exaggerations, something that the FCA underscores fall under

the definition of misleading (Financial Conduct Authority, 2024, p. 8). Similarly, the UK's promotion of Great British Energy and its investment in offshore wind and solar (Appendix 2 F, p. 5), positions the country as advancing rapidly toward clean energy, while continued support for oil and gas in the North Sea is downplayed. This leads to the Norwegian Consumer Authority warns against presenting general organizational goals as though they reflect the environmental performance of specific activities or policies (Forbrukertilsynet, 2023). These examples further illustrate the **Sin of Vagueness**, due to unclear leadership definitions and accountability deflection, but also the **Sin of Hidden Trade-Off**, where a single environmentally positive action is highlighted, while more complex or problematic aspects are left unaddressed (TerraChoice, 2010, p. 10).

Another recurrent pattern is the selective emphasis on policy initiatives that, while positive, represent only a fraction of what is needed to achieve national climate goals. For example, in press release C, the Norwegian government heavily emphasizes the municipalities as key actors in the green transition, presenting new guidelines as a central tool (Appendix 1 C, p. 3). While this highlights an important decentralization strategy where local involvement is often interpreted as valuable, the scale of these actions may be considered small in relation to national emissions from sectors like the petroleum industry, transportation or agriculture. The repeated framing of local authorities as climate leaders, without an attention to sector-wide national policies, may overstate the impact of municipal action. While not incorrect, such framing may reflect both the **Sin of Irrelevance** and the **Sin of Hidden Trade-Off.**

A similar tendency is present in the UK's portrayal of progress in the energy sector. Press release E highlights that renewable electricity production has grown by 50%, and that emissions have declined in selected sectors (Appendix 2 E, p. 1). However, the problem definition appears selective. There is no detail on how these results were achieved, where the remaining energy comes from, or what strategies are in place to sustain these improvements. This exclusive focus on positive outcomes, without acknowledging remaining challenges, mirrors **the Sin of Hidden Trade-Off** and reinforces a narrative of progress that may obscure structural gaps.

Similarly, the UK government emphasizes the reduction of territorial greenhouse gas emissions with: "[…] 428 MtCO2 between 1990 and 2023 […]" (Appendix 2 D, p. 2), and reinforces this achievement by comparing it to the combined emission reductions of several

other countries. While factually correct, the communication does not contextualize certain parts of the other countries' challenges or emission cut goals, which makes it difficult to fully interpret the relevance of the number. Additionally, the press releases do not provide any clear information about methods used for such comparison, a key element emphasized in the EU Directive to avoid misleading representation (European Parliament, 2023, p. 5). Without that context, such numbers may unintentionally confuse the public about the scale and scope of UK climate action, potentially falling under both the **Sin of Irrelevance** and the **Sin of the Hidden Trade-Off**.

Another framing that may fall under the latter sin, is the Norwegian governments endorsement of Northern Lights' CO2 capture and storage facility. The facility is described as a "historic moment" and "concrete solution" (Appendix 1 A, p. 2), but with no mention of energy costs or other limitations. The press release mentions the scalability of the facility, highlighting its ambition to extend the capacity due to customer demand (Appendix 1 A, p.1), but without demand expectations. As noted by the UK Financial Conduct Authority, claims should not only highlight the positive sustainability impacts if doing so disguises negative aspects that may also be present (Financial Conduct Authority, 2024, p. 11).

The framing of the green transition in both countries strongly appeals to economic opportunity and job creation. While this alignment with widely held public values, such as employment, is not inherently problematic, it can become so when such claims sidestep structural challenges or downplay policy costs. In such cases, the communication risks falling under what TerraChoice defines as the **Sin of the Lesser of Two Evils**. For instance, the UK Labour government emphasizes that offshore oil and gas production will continue "[…] for decades to come […] (Appendix 2 F, p. 6)", even while presenting the same sector as a pathway to clean energy leadership. This implies that fossil fuel extraction is acceptable, or even necessary, in comparison to alternative options. In the Norwegian context, the continued absence of any mention of the country's ongoing oil and gas production, in press releases otherwise focused on emission cuts and innovation, also contributes to a one-sided story. While these strategies may reflect real economic concerns, the framing arguably shifts attention away from the core environmental trade-offs and instead focuses on relative benefits, thereby downplaying the climate implications of ongoing fossil fuel support.

Taken together, these examples show how government communication, while not overtly deceptive, may fall into rhetorical patterns that mirror corporate greenwashing. By selectively emphasizing achievements, relying on vague or symbolic language, and downplaying structural trade-offs, both the UK and Norwegian governments shape a version of the green transition that highlights success, while sidestepping complexity. These framing risks overstating national progress and may mislead public perception, not just in terms of regulatory compliance, but also in shaping trust and expectations. As the green transition increasingly relies on public engagement and accountability, how governments communicate their environmental policies becomes a question of democratic responsibility, not merely political messaging.

7. Conclusion

In an era where public trust in climate action is crucial, ensuring that governmental communication is transparent and accountable is not only preferable, but necessary. Even well-intentioned narratives risk undermining public confidence and slowing the progress toward meaningful climate progress.

This thesis has studied how both the Norwegian and the UK governments frame the green transition as a positive and future-oriented goal, which is achievable but dependent on a wide set of policy initiatives, financial investments and technological innovation. The transition is framed not only as a national project tied to legal frameworks, budgets and domestic policy, but also as a global responsibility shaped by international commitments such as the Paris Agreement. In both cases governments align their communication with broader narratives of climate leadership and cooperation, emphasizing that success is possible, but requires continued innovation and cross-sectoral engagement.

These frames serve to legitimize national climate strategies by linking them to emotionally resonant themes. However, ways in which these frameworks are constructed, differs: The UK emphasizes centralized leadership, measurable progress and international accountability, often highlighting statistical success and competitiveness. In contrast, the Norwegian government stresses local empowerment, institutional collaboration and shared responsibility, framing the transition as a collective effort rooted in distributed action. These differences reflect not only different governance models, but also distinct communication strategies intended to generate public understanding and support for the green transition.

These findings suggest that framing strategies reflect broader governance models, but also serve specific communicative functions, such as building legitimacy, evoking trust, and aligning environmental goals with widely held societal values like innovation, job creation, and economic stability.

This thesis does not suggest that either governments is greenwashing in legal or intentional sense. However, by strategically emphasizing achievements, relying on emotionally resonant, yet vague language, or omitting key trade-offs, both governments risk communicating a simplified version of progress that could be misleading. While none of the analyzed press releases present greenwashing in an intentional or strict regulatory sense, some

communication strategies may reflect patterns similar to greenwashing. This involves symbolic framing, overemphasis on select success stories and lack of specificity, all of which may risk overselling progress or simplifying complexity. From a regulatory standpoint, such practices would likely require greater clarity, balance and specificity if applied in a commercial context.

Where the UK communications often rely on forward-looking statements without clearly defining the actions required to meet them, the Norwegian communication highlight local initiatives while downplaying larger national emissions sources such as the petroleum sector. These rhetorical choices do not fabricate success, but they may shape public perception in ways that can limit transparency and accountability.

These dynamics underscore the need for trust and credibility, as well as the importance of critically evaluate government communication in the same light as corporate marketing. Governments must, to a greater level than corporations, maintain credibility and trust both domestically and internationally. They are increasingly under pressure to communicate their climate ambitions clearly, while simultaneously supporting industries and activities that contribute to emissions. At the same time, in democratic societies, trust lies with the elected government to make the right decisions. This trust often depends on an individual's political orientation and their perception of climate policies (Llewellyn et.al., p. 2).

Ultimately, this thesis highlights how these framing strategies risk not only overstating national progress, but also shaping public perception in ways that may compromise trust and democratic accountability. As the success of the green transition increasingly depends on public engagement, how governments frame their environmental ambitions is not merely a matter of political strategy, but one of democratic responsibility.

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