ENERGY & SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES 2026

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JOURNAL CLUB

20% of final grade. ***Groups of 3 or 4 people*** *(discuss alternatives with teachers if not possible!)*

Workflow:

1. Chose a paper from the literature list (*provided by Kaya on class 3*).
2. Read the chosen paper.
3. Present the chosen paper to class, supported by slides or other forms of showing the necessary data.
4. Design 3 questions to present to the class as discussion topics.
5. Lead the discussion of the contents with the class as audience.

Evaluation points:

A) **Time management**: The presentation should not be shorter nor longer than stipulated (will be decided based on number of groups to present)
B) **Clarity of the exposition of the over-arching question**: The presentation should start with the broader context of the paper being presented within the class themes.
C) **Clarity of the explanation of sub-topics & methods**: The audience should be able to follow the process of the investigations/analysis of the specific topics of the paper and the methodologies applied
D) **Clarity of the explanation of the study's conclusions**: It should be clear for the audience which are the conclusions of the study and contributions for the over-arching question presented on point B.
E) **Critical analysis of the paper**: Clarity and depth of what the presenters found important and found missing in the analyzed work, the presenters need to tell us clearly about their core learnings and strong points of the work and what they believe could be further researched/was not included, etc.
F) **Quality of the 3 questions provided to the audience to guide de discussion**: Good questions are open-ended, rather than answerable with yes/no, and should invite the audience to take a position, connect the paper to their own experience or context, or disagree productively. They should not be answerable by simply repeating the paper, and should open onto the broader themes of the course.
G) **Readiness to engage with audience answers**: A good presenter will be ready to follow up on audience's answers rather than steering them to predetermined answers or accept them without comment.

PROJECT

80% of final grade: 70% written report + 10% oral presentation. ***Groups of 3 or 4 people*** *(discuss alternatives with teachers if not possible!)*

Tip: *you can pick themes that are important for your MSc, this will help you: on the literature review for the state of the art, and on getting collective class feedback on your long-term project*.
! Your project should be reality-bound ! it either addresses an issue close to you / your community, or is based on solving known issues from existing projects!

Written report (70%):

- In almost every class your group will have time to work *in-house* on the project with feedback from the lecturers, including consulting the invited stakeholders and experts on your specific research questions.
- On the last class (14. December) all groups will make a final oral presentation supported by a slideshow. Your group will get feedback from peers, teachers and invited guests that you can incorporate into the written proposal (which should be practically written at this point) before final evaluation. This presentation is worth 10% of the final grade.
- Your final written proposal is delivered post-course and evaluated for 70% of your final grade.

Overarching topics and sub-themes for choice:

- **Critical perspectives on sustainable transitions: from social acceptance to decolonial anti-extractive transitions.**
  - Social acceptance; Decolonial energy transitions/ Energy colonialism; Environmental & landscape impacts of large-scale energy & mining projects; Green extractivisms/green grabbing;

- **Sustainability and justice from below & grass-root energy initiatives.**
  - Decolonizing Justice; Genocide-ecocide nexus; Energy Justice; Criteria and best practices for transparency and community participation; Energy communities and prosumer projects; Energy sovereignty and democracy;

Structure of the written proposal:

I) TITLE

Keep it **clear and specific** regarding key terms of your proposal, making sure it reflects your research question in a clear and exciting way.

II) ABSTRACT

Good abstracts/synthesis are key for excellent communication, and facilitate conference acceptance and publication processes.
Summarize **1-2 sentences per following section**:

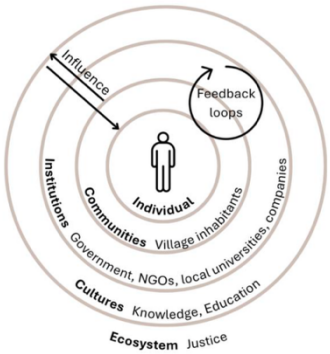
- **Theme relevance:** opening statement on the current relevance of your overarching theme.
- **Problem**: Why does this project matter?
- **Gap**: What's missing in current knowledge/existing infrastructures?

- **Goal & Inovation**: Your main objective and what innovations does your project bring to the problem.
- **Methods**: Briefly how you will analyze the problem and plan to implement the innovations.
- **Impact**: Expected socio-ecological/economic/technological outcomes.

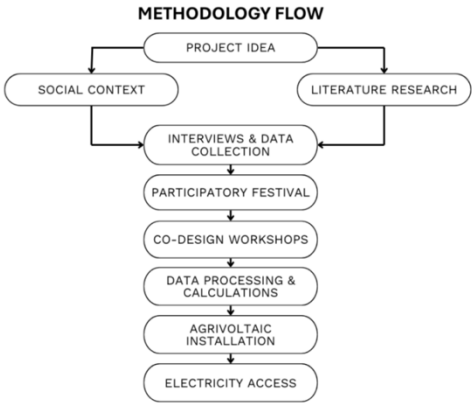
III) GRAPHICAL ABSTRACT

A graphical abstract is a single, concise visual summary of your project's main findings. Its goal is to allow a reader to quickly understand the core of your work.
There are **2 mandatory visuals** in your graphical abstract (you can add others if you like):

1. **The Socio-ecological model of the multi-level impacts and stakeholders of your project**



2. **The methodological summary & workflow of project implementation**



(e.g. from 2025 colleagues)

IV) STATE OF THE ART

Critically review existing research (review **8 key sources minimum**), highlighting **Consensus** (cross-contextual claims in the field) **Research/Innovation trends** (Dominant approaches in the field); **Debates or Conflicts** in the field (where there seems to be contextual disagreement); and **Gaps** (what is currently unknown and the importance of knowing more to be able to reach higher understanding in the field to reach sustainable solutions).

V) RELEVANCE & INNOVATION

- **Relevance should answer:**

Which gaps in knowledge / societal needs are you addressing with your project?
What's the relevance of your project **for the state of the art** described above?

- **Innovation should answer:**

What's new about your work? Is it an approach that hasn't been tried? A community that has been historically ignored? A context to which current trends have not been applied to? A tool that would allow a shift in the field?
Both points should have clear links with the research trends, debates and gaps identified in the state of the art.

VI) OBJECTIVES

- **Primary objective**: Your overarching research question (should be reflected on the title and should have been clearly identified by your state of the art review and have clear context in the relevance and innovation section).
- **Secondary objectives**: the 2 or 3 sub-questions and respective methological approaches that you might need to address to implement the primary objective successfully.

VII) METHODOLOGY

- **Structure:** This section should reflect the order of the objectives and be organized by project methodological dynamics i.e. tasks that inform / influence the outcome of other tasks downstream should be presented first, etc.;
- **Methods**: Specific tools (*interviews, statistical analysis, modeling, etc.*) you will apply and how they address each of your main/sub-questions;
- **Feasibility**: Why/How the chosen methods fit your objectives, how efficient they are at addressing your questions and what are your strategies to ensure the project's sustained productivity.
- **AI usage:** declare openly and transparently as a topic of the methodology if AI was used during your process and how, and provide prompts utilized.

VIII) BIBLIOGRAPHY

All cited research / data sources; APA style.

Oral presentation (10%):

Present your project to class, supported by slides or other forms of showing the necessary data. You receive feedback from the audience and teachers to eventually improve your project before the final delivery of the report.

Closer to the presentation date you will receive an evaluation grid to guide your work for the oral presentation.

- **Group project presentations:** **Last class > 14. dec. 2026** *here you will get final feedback from peers and teachers that you can incorporate to improve your written proposal for final evaluation by the teachers.*

- **Final written report deadline:** **Post-course > 12. Jan. 2027** *this is the final document that will be evaluated by the teachers.*

NOTE ON ETHICS:

We expect every student to apply **transparency and radical self-responsibility** for their learning, and to pay attention to individual and group wellbeing during the course (this includes **attention to and care for workload distribution in groups**). The **undisclosed and unethical use of generative AI is unacceptable** with **impacts on grading,** because it **defeats the core purpose of the course: the practicing of critical thought and learning core competencies that support you and your future work**. Furthermore, **we ask you to reflect on this**: you have chosen to learn about *sustainable communities*, this shows **care for sustainable futures**. AI is a modern critical socio-ecological challenge **creating environmental and social sacrifice zones** that contradict the sustainable futures we want to work towards. This class **will offer you space to explore the alignment of your principles with your processes, which includes the tools we use**. Our main goal is to learn to work in ways that bring us closer to our collective dreams of sustainable futures.