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[SPEAKER_00]

You are now listening to a podcast from the University of Stavanger.

[SPEAKER_02]

So welcome to this research seminar, which is organized by the research collective Ghosts of Empire in the North Sea.

We are sort of a loose network of researchers, mostly from countries around the North Sea, but also some people from Canada and Sweden.

So the Ghosts of Empire in the North Sea started sort of as a question of why

When we talk about fossil fuel extraction, we tend to talk about it, if it happens in the global south, as sort of extensions of empire and colonialism.

But that framework had never really been sort of applied to the North Sea, which we found kind of perplexing, especially since a lot of the practices that were foundational to oil exploration in the North Sea came from the former colonies or...

even then still colonies.

So we started this network in 2023 and

And we've been organizing some workshops and some seminars over the years.

So that was just briefly about the collective.

And I'll put a link to the website in the chat if anybody's interested.

But today we have two of our newest members who will present their fieldwork.

So it's not like...

final results probably, but preliminary findings.

And we have with us today Ava Rawson from the University of Oxford and Peder Østring from the University of Oslo.

So I'll just briefly introduce the two speakers and then I'll leave the word to them.

So Ava is an anthropology PhD student at the University of Oxford.

at the Institute for Science Innovation Society and the Society for the Anthropology of Europe and Council for European Studies.

And Peder is a PhD fellow in human geography from the University of Oslo, researching the emerging geographies of fossil decommissioning.

And we will start by inviting Ava to present her work.

And after that, we will have like a brief, if anybody has some very clear, some clarifying questions to her presentation, we'll take them right after Ava's presentation.

But if not, we'll leave the questions till after Peder's and then we'll take them all together.

So please go ahead, Ava, you can take over and share.

[SPEAKER_01]

Okay, hello.

Thank you everyone for being here today.

I'm Ava.

My research is on short-termism and residual liabilities within the North Sea, specifically the United Kingdom's continental shelf, exploring the construction of post-oil futures within mature extractive frontiers through decommissioning processes, primarily through the lens of liability.

And this presentation is specifically on the prevailing culture of short-termism, its effects on the decommissioning regulatory landscape, and our responses to residual liability obligations.

So for the conceptual framework, liability provides an entry into three central avenues for this research.

It centrally catalyzes action.

Decommissioning is happening because operators are legally required to do so.

And through studying liability, we can study what action is taken for a post or future and why.

Liability is then both an object of study and analysis while also operating as an agentic mechanism of accountability within this field of study.

Lastly, and for more traditionally anthropological sense, liability is also foundationally a social contract.

It's centrally an obligation of debt, so here we can move into discussions of the end of oil as both a specific technical and financial process, while also having decommissioning serve as an emblematic end of oil, and with a lived and political sense for a region and communities historically reliant on the industry for their modern economic and political relevance.

So my research in methods, I'm primarily concerned with how post-world futures emerge through decommissioning practices in the North Sea.

And in practice, my fieldwork is based in Aberdeen with oil and gas industry personnel at events, conferences, and kind of workshopping opportunities.

Methodologically speaking, I am an anthropologist.

My work is ethnographic.

This is complemented by interviews, document analysis, as well as using photography as method.

So just for a really brief regulatory background and kind of high-level overview of the scale of infrastructure we're discussing here, there's been 20,000 producing wells that have been drilled into the subsurface of the North Sea and 45,000 kilometers of pipelines since the first commercial well began extracting in the late 1960s.

Derelict offshore infrastructure is required to be removed under the 1998 OSPAR Convention, Decision 98-3, there were previous iterations of international conventions supporting full removal, but this was the first one kind of dedicated to offshore oil and gas infrastructure specifically, and kind of followed with subsequent national level legislation across North Sea coastal states supporting this removal decommissioning mandate.

And as this is mostly on the United Kingdom's continental shelf,

The really critical aspect of legislation here was the 1998 Petroleum Act.

And within this act, there's no formal decommissioning security requirements required within the licensing or productive phase or proof of financial security unless it's exclusively requested by the Secretary of State.

And foundationally, the legislation asserts that the pool group pays for the financial liabilities associated with the cost of decommissioning.

Suppose decommissioning liabilities in this context carry a much more ambiguous set of legal obligations.

I quote, residual liability remains for the operators in perpetuity.

An estimated cost of decommissioning all remaining infrastructure on the UKCS is, according to the most recent estimates, $43.3 billion.

The when of the end of oil.

So as an anthropologist, I'm speaking and engaging with people to understand how they perceive the creation of the industry and their obligation to decommission sites in the present, having conversations to understand how the industry was created from a material and legal standpoint, captures both the formation of the legislative regime and the nature of regulation and perceptions of law within this setting, all of which are really critical to understand how decommissioning obligations are understood and adopted in the present.

When discussing the creation of the industry with interlocutors, they often stress that decommissioning has not really been a priority when the financial, regulatory, or physical labor was primarily focused on materializing the industry in the North Sea.

It's often been captured by kind of effectual relations of the boom culture, kind of this really iconic photo in the corner of Harold Bell, owner of a hotel in his Texan hat, welcoming Americans that were seen to beckon the oil industry within this context.

One interlocutor claimed that it wasn't until the 1998 Petroleum Act that operators even realized that decarbonization was something that they would be liable for, kind of despite its precedence within the legal landscape.

And social scientists really love speaking about kind of the era that's been as a carbon modernity, a high energy modernity, and that this formulation has many repercussions, but a

key characterization, the prevailing notion of limitless and progressive growth possible through hydrocarbons, which is kind of captured in this effectual relations.

And this theme has been really encapsulated within discussions I've had with the interlocutors, with multiple people claiming that there was no expiry dates on the first three rounds of offshore oil and gas licenses in the UKCS.

And there were expiry dates and the legal impetus for full removal of infrastructure was present again before the 1988 OSPAR Convention. But is indicative of a prevailing idea that the time-conscripted indicators at the end of extraction were peripheralized or literally absent when industry was created, and that the end of oil did not feature in that idea of a carbon-intensive future.

This short-term system, or a dedication to creating the industry and not addressing how it would end, also had some pretty serious material consequences for the offshore oil and gas sector in the North Sea, as early infrastructure was not designed with the intention of removal.

So when the industry started in the 1970s, offshore extraction had not been actualized in conditions as harsh or with offshore reserves quite as large as the North Sea, and engineers developed offshore concrete gravity-based structures to secure jackets to the seabed, and this allowed them to support topside swing between 650 and 52,000 tons.

And so when really large reserves were discovered, equally large installations were built on top of them, like the Ekofisk complex pictured here.

Storage facilities had to be built on the rig as the extensive pipeline system, 45,000 kilometers that we know today, didn't exist yet. Oil was oftentimes held on platform or on topside before being transferred by tanker onshore.

And the UKCS, and the Norwegian continental shelf, highest number of concrete gravity restructures in the world, oftentimes built before the 1998 OSPAR convention.

And here's what some concrete gravity-based structures look like for reference.

I think the name implies that it is just concrete, but what makes this so technically challenging is that it's not just concrete, sadly. The most technically challenging aspect of this is oftentimes the base structures are tankers.

And so posting this diagram on the right, which often held hydrocarbons and are thus kind of really heavily contaminated by the duration of exposure that they've had to these materials.

And there's also drill cuttings, which is evident in this diagram as well.

So should any substantial project remove the sites, it would disturb the drill cuttings, which are contaminated with mercury and naturally occurring radioactive materials, which would expose the marine environment to these as a result of disturbance.

So this sense of stageism and short-termism that was really prevalent within the creation of the industry also characterizes the productive life of installations as well.

This is really obvious within kind of the distinct aspect of the installations, often described in terms of exploration, production, decommissioning, which has a really staged transition, not only in terms of what infrastructure is for, but also the group of people who are working on them.

So oftentimes these communities of engineers, geophysicists, are not necessarily overlapping within the different productive spaces of this installation.

And it's also really interesting to think about how this global system of infrastructural development, which has been prolifically adopted and developed, has been done without a full understanding of the consequences.

So this is relevant both within the very nature of the resource infrastructure is materialized to extract with the productive and very combustible capacity of oil to reduce carbon emissions resulting in climate crisis.

It's also this stagism is biased against the futurity of oil across the productive life installations, which is often kind of characterized within studies of site-specific damage, oil spills, disasters.

It's really obvious, especially within scholarship of the Deepwater Horizon spill, a well blowout that occurred within the installation of a laser rig in the Gulf of Mexico.

It was a leak on a full reservoir, essentially, explicitly chosen for its robust potential, which resulted in oil and gas leakage as the well was uncapped for months. So many scholars and kind of a host of investigations by U.S. government officials concluded that the spill was a technical failure, but that it was a consequence of a conscious decision, a structural failure of the company to develop a field in a responsible way and not the most cost-efficient way.

So to think about long-term beyond the primacy of profit. This holistically presents a failure to plan for crisis and the necessary environmental remediation.

Within this lineage just then becomes a question of why the failure to consider the future across circumstances that seem so incredibly obvious in hindsight.

What happens when people use your product?

What happens if something goes wrong?

And from the context of this research, what happens when there's no oil left is so persistent across settings.

So within the context of decommissioning, what can we learn about short-termism?

I guess it's hopefully less depressing than the short-termism that's resulted in the climate crisis and oil spills.

Within the context of decommissioning, short-termism has consequences that go beyond kind of facing the technical challenges of decommissioning infrastructure that wasn't designed to be removed.

The social scaffolding of the industry is often cited by interlocutors as not being built for long-term thinking from kind of a structural perspective.

This is often relating to the prescriptive nature forecasting for the economic system of production from both a well-meaning perspective as well as an economic perspective.

Interlocutors, groups, and teams are always commissioning and consolidating well data and forecasts against economic modeling amidst variable tax regime, insurance rates, and oil price.

And it does promote a really interesting orientation to the future, but it is necessarily a confined one.

It socially reinforces an orientation to the very near future and a future that is still defined by production and profit.

Especially within the context of enhanced production in a very mature sector like the North Sea, the near economic future ahead of the infinity which awaits after the last barrel is extracted after the site is totally abandoned.

There are also claims of not being capable or incentivized from a structural standpoint to have long-term thinking as people related that they often felt dictated by the time the nature of producing shareholder returns with operators functioning economically on much shorter time spans it doesn't necessarily remediate alongside the same terms as viability and perpetuity.

It is really interesting to see how this operates in such a capital poor aspect of production and over late life fields. Field optimization within this context becomes a credible trajectory for individuals. Maximizing economic recovery becomes an orientating financial and ethical driver for individuals. And this oftentimes gives discussions about canonical assertions of liberal economics that would claim that the only time band that becomes relevant is dictated by shareholders within this context.

Interestingly, with the case of decommissioning, scenario forecasting for projects within risk modeling frameworks often places an equal consideration of cost for the association of projects, which is to be expected within this context to some extent.

But for decommissioning, there's an obvious bias against spending money because the very nature of this material process is occurring when the installation is no longer economically viable.

And with the highest cost of decommissioning projects being plugging and abandonment, this is kind of a very dangerous metric to be equalizing amongst other environmental and material factors, especially because the more mature the North Sea gets, the more likely operators are to inherit kind of a host of well waters that have been historically plugged to different standards.

And if you're measuring cost within these scenarios,

Kind of the outputs that you get most often claim that legacy sites that have already been plugged do not need additional sealant mechanisms or to be brought up to contemporary standards because the cost is so high.

And there's the assumption that risk to some degree is inevitable because these sites will degrade anyways.

Short-termism is also present when considering how to understand the consequences of infrastructure as knowledge of the very consequences is being produced now after infrastructure has already been in situ.

So there's a really great body of research that's developing on naturally occurring radioactive material within this setting, mercury bioaccumulation within ecosystems, and across ecosystems, trying to understand how much mercury is present within drill cutting piles and how it even enters ecosystems, in addition to the corrosion materials within the marine environment.

But this robust and growing body of scholarship is asking these questions as we're encountering mercury once it's already in situ, once pipelines have already started to corrode,

And this presents a really interesting claim to the future, not as a question of whether there is mercury or whether pipelines will corrode, but how that occurs in the environment.

When certainty, to some degree, is really limited by the material presence of infrastructure itself, there will never be a future where these consequences do not exist, no matter their quantified or actual scale.

Reactionary regulation landscape also emerges from this kind of culture of short-termism, and this is most often studied within context of crisis, really famously with the Alexander Kielland and the Piper Alpha disasters of 1980 and 88, resulting in the strengthening of health and safety regulation across North Sea jurisdictions, also seen within the Brents Spar case and the development of the OSPAR Convention.

But the regulatory landscape itself has been really reactionary to decommissioning as well.

Here I've got the OEUK oil and gas kind of guide to decommissioning security agreement and security here is not a legal requirement for decommissioning expenditure, but interlocutors were often assert otherwise.

So standard or model DSAs are integrated into government guidance through the 2008 Energy Act. But guidance itself is not binding. So it's a structural obligation between parties, but it's not a regulatory obligation from this perspective.

And it's really interesting that this was only instituted in 2008. There have been several series of revisions by OEUK, but it only occurred more than three decades past extraction and capital accumulation within the industry.

And really interestingly, within the context of decommissioning, operators are leveraging the security within mergers and acquisitions.

So they're liquefying security held in cash for a merger and oftentimes reducing a bond letter of credit, which in the case of insolvency or bankruptcy is not necessarily worth quite as much because it doesn't actually act as promissory capital in this context.

[SPEAKER_02]

I think Ava fell out for a moment there.

Let's see if she connects again.

[SPEAKER_01]

The NSTA began in 2015 in response to the Wood Review on the Maximization of Economic Recovery from remaining reserves in the UKCS and seeing the development of a new regulator to support enhanced extraction shows how prevalent economic recovery is as an orientating view within this context.

The OGA became the NSTA in 2022. But what's really significant in both these forms is how critical this regulatory body is and the fact that it wasn't necessarily developed until kind of decades again after the North Sea had started producing.

This short-termism is deeply entangled with the reactionary nature of legislation and also the regulatory landscape, which as a result has been characterized by compounding levels of fragmentation.

And the way it's been broken down to me by interlocutors in terms of how they actually experience this regulatory landscape, OPRED, the offshore petroleum regulator for the environment and decommissioning, is responsible for decommissioning programs and structures, and they see the NSTA as responsible for decommissioning consents and plugging and abandonment.

So there's a real lack of clarity over where each aspect of liability starts and stops within a very material sense, but also where there's a regulatory overlap within this context or where the regulators fail to overlap with in some ways.

And this regulatory framework has a structural difference between the roles that mirrors the structural components of the installation themselves above ground and below ground, which is really interesting.

So there's fragmentation in the liability landscape as well. You have Section 29 holders, which are individuals, corporations who are capable of being held liable for the cost of decommissioning.

This includes operators, joint venture holders, legacy operators.

It's further complicated by companies exiting the North Sea, previous owners retaining liability within sales in order to incentivize the sale of assets.

You have companies who have emerged, you have companies who have dissolved.

There's a categorical difference between the owner, the Section 29 holder, who's actually liable for decommissioning costs, and the property owner, which is the Crown of State.

And so interestingly, we have a fragmentary regulatory landscape, a fragmented security landscape, a lack of clarity surrounding potential liable parties, and all of this compounded levels of fragmentation is with the governance of the material progress of fragmentation itself and dismantlement within the context of decommissioning.

So why care about residual liability in this context, and how does a future-oriented legal mechanism operate within this space if all we're seeing is compounded levels of short-termism and uncertainty?

So on the right, you have a map of the legacy and productive wells in the North Sea, which it honestly looks like an island about the size of the UK in the North Sea.

The orange dots are plug sites and the grey dots are sites which have yet to be plugged.

And this was published in 2025 for reference. Well barriers will eventually and inevitably degrade. The true eternal permanence of well sealants is not possible. So despite being liable in perpetuity, there is no comprehensive framework how they can actually be monitored in perpetuity.

And monitoring is particularly challenging in offshore sites such as the North Sea.

So when the sites degrade, there will be methane leakages and hydrocarbon leakages.

And kind of despite the full scale of decommissioning that is still planned occurring, North Sea already possesses the highest concentration of offshore super emitting wells, with methane emissions 11 times higher than the average onshore legacy well.

So importantly, these harms do legally qualify as damages under the conceptualization of liability and perpetuity, as they can directly be traced to licensed sites with proper monitoring.

So if the future is within discussions of decommissioning and P&A (plugging & abandonment) for me in the field, it's always been followed by sentiments that hydrocarbons leak into the North Sea anyway, that drilling itself has not produced mercury, it has only displaced it from the subsurface of the seabed, and naturally occurring radioactive materials by their very name are naturally occurring.

So all of these claims function to naturalize traceable damages as kind of literally a natural process.

So this operates both within kind of the literal naturalization, but also it socially delegates these future harms as normal, expected, inevitable, and thus not worthy of attention or plans of mediation, not a liability in and of itself.

So operators are even suggesting an accepted threshold for hydrocarbon leakages to be inserted into regulation for these documents as well.

Conversations about residual liability have honestly felt like some of the most candid features of the field work so far. There's lots of candor about the consequences, while often reiterating that it's not within the operator's remit to be responsible for them despite their legal obligations.

It's really hard to emphasize the untested nature of residual liability, kind of a refusal to prepare until operators feel like it's a real threat.

I've had multiple people say they don't even think residual liability is real.

It's often characterized as the tension or uncertainty, and it fundamentally questions and peripheralizes the capacity for residual liability to be productive to over-governance wells across time based on this nature.

There's 20,000 sites of productive extraction in the North Sea, and the wells itself are the essence, the core of this extractive regime.

It's what materializes oil in every little sense. Long-term consequences of wells are unknown.

And efforts to understand them are oftentimes peripheralized by operators who feel as though they don't have the incentive within their current approval frameworks.

It's really difficult to monitor and quantify these harms across scales, but more importantly, in perpetuity.

Operators themselves do not plan on existing in perpetuity.

They'll complete decommissioning, sell, exit, or dissolve before these harms are actualized.

This is also compounded by the fact that we have a regulatory regime whose priorities to decommissioning happen on their projected timescales over the coming decades and to reduce the backlog rather than take on kind of a really temporally challenging aspect of decommissioning obligations.

So the radical potential of liability with the context acts as a mechanism of accountability for certain harm over uncertain scales.

And despite being an untested or quote unquote, not real aspect of the legal system, there are encounters of interlocutors with these scales.

So we see lawyers and scholars questioning licensee versus property owner characterization, as this is what the current framework of residual liability hinges on.

So they're trying to fundamentally question who actually owns the seabed, who will be liable over different scales.

I've also had really interesting conversations with an interlocutor recently who told me of a company they did some legal work for in the past who was served a Section 29 notice, clarifying that they were liable.

After completing decommissioning, they attempted to exit the North Sea, so it was their last asset, and they were informed by the government that they were not allowed to leave because their Section 29 notice was still alive.

So this is most applicable within instances of derogation, but the operator was forced to keep an office in the UK, staffed with one man who works there and lives the minimum required time in the UK, which is six to eight months, in order to fulfill the obligation of retaining a recognizable corporate form should further damages hold.

So really interestingly here, despite this being an untested, quote-unquote, real aspect of future obligations, we have companies who are effectively being held hostage through their residual liability obligations.

And again, this is by no means standard.

This is, as far as I know, the only case of this happening, but it does show how obligations can be compelled to make a contribution to retain a corporate form that is capable of being held accountable for future damages that we know will occur.

So the crux of this presentation explores why decommissioning is perceived almost as a surprise to authors, despite the very explicit nature of extraction.

And what this really shows is a significance of understanding the social scaffolding of the industry, to understand how and why decommissioning decisions have developed in specific ways on the United Kingdom's continental shelf.

The challenges of decommissioning are by their very nature material, their heavy structures, their contaminated seabeds, their future of leaky wells, but they are the result of a predominant social structure within the industry.

The primacy of profit, reliance on quantified perceptions of risk, lack of incentivization to think beyond short-term stages of production, and regulatory exercises at each stage of the world's life.

It's a structural structure which uses offshore oil and gas operators as physically and intellectually incapable of generating solutions that would better stand the test of time or actualize the removal of concrete aggregate structures.

We saw how the end of oil was peripheralized materially within the construction of infrastructure that was not designed to be removed.

We've seen the rise of the predominant ethic of well optimization and enhanced recovery in late life sites, the widespread adoption of the maximization of economic recovery, the social ordering force prolonging the fields within the establishment of the oil and gas authority.

Within the context of decommissioning, we're seeing a continued peripheralization of residual liability obligations to the point that interlocutors will go so far as to say that they're not real.

We have damages that are certain, but under this guise, they're conceptually fixed as not even future damages at all.

So residual ability provides an opportunity not only to think through kind of really challenging questions like this to the industry and governance, but it's also a mechanism of accountability itself, which can and has been called on to address kind of possibility for damages within this context.

Thank you.

[SPEAKER_02]

Thank you so much, Ava.

If anybody has any clarifying questions for Ava now, you can post them in the chat or raise your hand.

If not, we will just move on to Peder and then we will have a discussion afterwards.

I don't see anybody raise their hands.

All right, then we'll go over to Peder and then we can have some questions afterwards.

And if you have questions, just write them in the chat.

Go ahead, Peder.

[SPEAKER_04]

Thank you so much.

Thanks for a great presentation, Ava.

So I'm curious if I am now able to share.

I think you have to close your PowerPoint, Ava.

Sorry.

There you go.

[SPEAKER_03]

Let's see.

[SPEAKER_04]

Here we go.

Perfect.

Okay.

Thank you.

Thank you so much for inviting me and looking forward to the discussion afterwards.

I'm going to try to be relatively quick so that we can maybe have some discussion and debate afterwards.

And also I very much welcome your comradely criticism of my research so far.

So I am

As I said, a PhD fellow at the University of Oslo.

I'm a human geographer and I will be working on my projects until the early summer of 2028.

So I'm a bit over halfway through my PhD.

course as of now and this presentation will be going on some field work that I did was in the UK this spring doing academic mobility at the geography department at the University of Durham but I also did some field work or some field visits to the northeast of England to the coast and also to Scotland so I will be

giving you some kind of key takeaway from my research that far and it's based on also articles that I'm in the process of writing.

So as I said, any criticism is very much welcome.

Yeah, I'm very grateful for for a presentation running ahead of mine so that you now have a very rigorous and updated idea of kind of the scale of decommissioning in the North Sea.

I would just maybe add one fun fact, which is that if you place all the pipelines

If you were to make one big pipeline of all the pipelines in North Sea, they could go all the way around the globe.

So it's a lot of infrastructure, and most of it we have no chance of seeing, not just because it's offshore, but also because it's under the surface.

So there's hundreds of...

structures, so platforms, platform legs, there's thousands and thousands of wells which make up an impressive subsurface geography and of course all kinds of cables and

human-made structures that we're dealing with, which will have to be removed as a rule.

Of course there's exceptions and we'll come back to that.

But broadly my research question or my research questions for my project is how interested in how different actors are affected by and affecting the emerging bath sea decommissioning

network.

So basically the industry

that are dealing with the decommissioning of fossil offshore structures in the North Sea.

And amongst those actors, I am particularly interested in the role of labor.

So one of my articles goes further into the labor process of mainly dismantling these structures onshore and also labor as a collective political subject, thinking about the

labor movement and labor unions.

Moreover, I'm interested in two terms that you might come across more in kind of policy circles than in academia, which is the circular economy and the just transition.

So those are terms that I think with

And obviously there's a lot of steel, there's a lot of metals standing out in the North Sea now, so that's why I'm interested in the circular aspect of decommissioning.

And the just transition, the way I approach it is very much in line with the original history of the term, where

It emerged from the labor movement demanding new jobs and demanding policy that would make it easier for them in a transition scenario.

So by thinking about a just transition, it also allows us to think about vulnerable workers

but also their communities and regions in which they're embedded.

Okay, so I'm doing a move by sighted fieldwork.

I'm doing all qualitative methods, so interviews with the people at dismantling yards, both on the shop floor and the company representatives.

Although to be fair, it's been easier to get in touch with managers rather than, say, temporary workers.

I also rely on observation.

I've been to several decommissioning conferences and I've also dug into a couple of archives.

And one of the things I've been interested in is the Brent Spar, which is a fascinating piece of infrastructure.

It was... So, yeah, just to say something quick about the Brent Spar, it was...

basically a floating tank that was owned by Shell and Enso.

And it was basically, if you think about it in kind of Marxist terms, it was a huge piece of fixed capital.

So it was made to ensure the continuous flow of ground rent from the Brent field and the

onto the markets.

So in conditions of harsh weather, the tanker boats, when they couldn't approach the platforms,

the produced oil could go into this huge tank.

So as you see in the picture to the right, it's like an iceberg.

Most of it was submerged.

And when the Brent field was connected by a pipeline,

it was basically, its use value was kind of not there anymore.

So Shell opted to get rid of it in the early 90s.

And they found out that the easiest way for them to get rid of it was to dump it in the Atlantic Ocean.

So to tow it further out into the Atlantic and dump it in a deep part of the ocean.

And actually what I found through my archival research is that the news reached the environmentalists in Greenpeace via an engineering firm that was very much disgruntled by the prospect of losing out in future contracts of lifting all of the offshore fossil structures and bringing them onshore.

So Greenpeace

soon mobilized very fiercely against these plans, seeing it as a potentially precedent-setting event.

So the battle of the Brent Spar was not just about this structure in itself, but it was about the principle, whether you should be able to do anything like this.

And yes, it's basically a structure.

So it is quite large.

It's heavier than the Eiffel Tower.

And if you were to place it in the middle of Oslo, it would be the tallest structure in the city.

So just to give you an idea about the dimensions here.

But what happened was that during the spring and summer of 1995, Greenpeace managed to occupy the Brent Spar.

They had activists from all over the world, from many different countries, and they also had an international TV team with them that were able to broadcast

an occupation that lasted for several weeks.

So this made kind of the Brent Spar battle into an event that caught headlines across the world and it was a conscious effort by Greenpeace to kind of upscale, to make this into a case for politicians all over Europe.

So

Eventually, there was a Europe-wide boycott of Shell, so people started driving past Shell gas stations, and the upshot of the whole campaign was that Shell started sustaining such heavy loss that their HAG-based headquarters in the Netherlands

said to the UK subsidiary that they couldn't go on with their plans of dumping the spark.

And in June that year, there was a turnaround in the programs.

And that was very... The structure itself was by then

on its way to the Atlantic and it was loaded with explosive devices that the two activists managed to defuse after having been dropped off a helicopter.

So it's very outlandish, the whole campaign.

the environmentalists managed in this case to turn both Shell and the UK government around in their plans.

And this is the topic of one of the articles that I'm writing and there my point is that it was not just Greenpeace as

of history has kind of or we've learned from some of the books or the headlines about the branding bar campaign it was also uh fractions of of capital so if we think about this engineering firm that that tipped off Greenpeace initially or

There was also other parts of civil society, so the Protestant church in Germany, and eventually also politicians from all over the world.

Angela Merkel was the environmental minister in Germany and spoke out against Shell's plants.

So it's really an event that I think is conditioned by the

the time, both when it happened, so the 90s, the world had just been boycott actions against Shell because of their involvement with apartheid South Africa, but also the

They had just seen kind of scandals tied to Shell's activity in Nigeria.

So this marked also kind of, there might be several things behind the boycott action, but in the end it was very, very effective.

So eventually this international security made it to Norway, to a Norwegian fjord, which was deep enough so that it could just stay there.

And

Eventually, there was a ruling in the Oslo-Paris Convention, the OSPAR meeting of 1998 stated they made a decision effectively banning a new disposal or dumping in the Northeast Atlantic, although

there are also exceptions to that rule.

There was a clear expectation of kind of a directionality so that it was going to be just stricter and stricter and harder and harder for companies to dispose structures.

Also that as kind of technology evolved, more and more of these fossil structures should become commercial.

And that is also what happened.

So if you go to this place today, this is Vats in western Norway.

It now is the site of one of the world's kind of state-of-the-art dismantling yards.

So this was where the Brent Spar, more than three decades ago, was kind of cut to pieces and cleaned and processed before being recycled.

And now also since 2004 has been a dismantling yard where people work in shifts to dismantle and recycle the metals coming from the North Sea.

So my argument is that I try to tell a story of kind of how this event in the 1990s ushered in a new kind of regulatory regime and new expectations of companies that also gave way to new coastal landscapes.

So now there's

several of these onshore dismantling yards and the blue ones are yards that I have visited and the orange ones also exist there's a couple of green ones that are kind of there's effort to establish further yard because we are much in the yeah most of this work is still ahead of us

Okay, so one of my guiding questions is I want to find out whether the act of shutting down and cleaning up after the fossil industry offshore in itself should be part of a just transition.

And in this case, I think so many of you might kind of know or have heard from operator companies or from

politicians about all the jobs that are tied to the extraction of oil and gas or the supply industry.

But then I think it's also interesting to note that there are more and more jobs going into decommissioning as well.

And this is a picture from Stord, one of the most

oil dependent municipalities, economically speaking, in Norway.

So in the background of this picture is one of the yards of Stort, where they have constructed some of the biggest platforms in the North Sea.

But now we see in the foreground, in a peninsula called Eldøyane, they have

Arctic Solutions have the vessels came on shore with more than 14,000 tons of steel from the North Sea, which was then cleaned and processed and recycled.

So it's also a story of economic diversification in oil dependent regions.

I'm also very grateful that there are people now looking into how many jobs go into decommissioning, looking into more specific numbers.

There was a report that came out from the UK that you see here to the left this spring that stated

that there would be 11,000 direct full-time equivalent jobs per year over the next decade.

And you could double that if you look at the indirect numbers.

And there's also

so much to be done when it comes to these wells.

For instance, I spoke to one expert that stated that the current fleet of rigs and the people on them could easily be

busy for the next couple of decades just plugging the existing wells.

And as we've just learned from listening to Ava, they also corrode over time.

So this will go on forever, the monetary of these wells in principle.

Then it's also, of course, all the planning and engineering and of course, the heavy lifting vessels and

The one you see down onto the right is the Pioneering Spirit, which is the largest vessel of its kind, and it was particularly constructed so that it could do the heaviest lifts of decommissioning in the North Sea or in the world, wherever they would get contracts.

Yes, so this is now, decommissioning is something we are starting to see at scale all across the North Sea region.

This is a picture from Teesside, from Abel UK's dismantling yard outside of Hartlepool.

And I think it's important to note that kind of jobs aren't just jobs equally everywhere.

There's certain regions that are historically, we could call them Rust Belt regions.

They've had, they've been industrial powerhouses, but they have gone through

periods of deindustrialization, such as in the northeast of England, where these kinds of jobs is maybe able to ameliorate negative effects of past deindustrialization to a larger extent than, say, new jobs coming in Oslo, for example.

Okay, so one of the findings so far is that even though the industry has kind of been exposed to this narrative that the kind of boom in the incoming wave of structures is just around the corner, this is, as I've written here, something

reminiscent of chasing a rainbow so the further you go ahead the further the the goal moves or the further away it seems so there's been talk of a lot of work coming from dismantling offshore structures for over a decade now but we haven't really seen this materializing and there's many reasons for that some of them

For instance, today we see that Equinor, they're developing very small marginal fields and they're doing something called tieback.

So establishing all this subsurface infrastructure and they're tying them to existing installations.

So that means that even though you had planned to remove one of the troll platforms, it might serve as kind of a hub for new developments like this.

And this is of course contingent on the market.

So the price of oil, which we have seen recently, go through the roof.

And this also affects

boardroom decisions about when to go ahead with decommissioning and when to invest in further field life extension.

Okay, so I've said

Yeah, I will try to round off soon, but just to say something about... We've seen some numbers, we've seen something about the quantitative aspects of the jobs in the commissioning, but what about their quality?

So here I could say many things, but

I think it's important to note that there's a lot of material factors at play such as so you're dealing with very potentially dirty structures they are very large so there's a lot of potential energy in great heights making this potentially a dangerous line of work and it can also be smelly with

years of accumulated marine growth suddenly coming on shore on a hot summer day.

You can have a lot of smoke and also radioactivity.

Just to mention some factors.

These are kind of challenges that are present in any kind of waste work.

literature, you can see colleagues talk about waste work as kind of involving the four D's being potentially dirty, demeaning, demanding and dangerous.

And I would say that this can be the case also in the dismantling work on shore as part of the decommissioning of oil and gas.

But it doesn't have to be so.

And it's also a tendency that is counteracted by mechanization.

So using machines to cut up structures rather than manually cutting and burying, for instance.

So by drawing on more capital incentive intensive rather than labor intensive labor processes.

There's also varying levels of precarity that can be

related to pay, temporary contracts.

When there's little predictability about when structures will actually come onshore for dismantling, then there's a very little incentive for the company to have a large fixed term or permanent staff, which might result in more temporary labor.

which might result in kind of segmentation and you have maybe people coming in the yard and not speaking the same language as the other workers and so on.

There's also examples of kind of not in my backyard approach to some of these yards.

And I've seen examples that not all of these yards are deemed desirable by workers or by local communities.

So I think cultural political economy or the cultural aspects of commissioning is also important to be aware of.

But I should also note that I've also spoken to workers that take great pride in working with

what they deem as a green activity.

They don't necessarily like working within the extractive oil industry.

And also there might be a certain thrill of working with large structures and the thrill of the job, which could also be tied to certain forms of masculinity.

So there's a lot of interesting things going on in terms of culture as well.

Yes, briefly noting that the labour movement has also articulated demands for more local content.

So, for instance, the RMT in the UK demanding that

decommissioned oil rigs come onshore to UK yards to be dismantled, rather than being sent off to South Asia to be cut up under precarious conditions.

And there's also examples to the rigs you can see in the report, commissioned by

Australian unions together with Greenpeace Australia demanding a dismantling yard in Western Australia, which is a very oil-rich region, but without their own capacity to handle their offshore structures, which has resulted in one oil-producing vessel being sent all the way to Denmark for dismantling, for instance.

Okay, so rounding off...

I argue that what we're seeing in the UK, we've gone from a political economy of speed when it comes to developing the oil industry as fast as possible.

But now we're seeing more what I call a political economy of delay, where you have all kinds of factors making the actual dismantling of removal of oil structures in North Sea.

pushing it further into the future.

And this is driven by the market.

So the anarchy of markets to a large extent and the lack of planning.

I think I've seen kind of some imaginaries of circular futures, where you kind of draw on this

structures from the North Sea and feed them into new productive processes, making tomorrow's energy landscapes, renewable energy structures.

And there's also been some state subsidies to kind of de-risk such plants.

But in the end, they haven't really materialized.

And there's maybe a growing

particularly in the UK, a growing disillusionment by kind of this decommissioning as just transition in the machinery.

I think if we are to take something more hopeful from what I've said, it is that coalitions have managed to turn around policy before.

So thinking about the Brent Spar case in particular, which was not just Greenpeace, but also a coalition of civil society, politicians, the media, etc.

So, yes, sorry for taking a bit more time than I had, but I'm very much looking forward to the discussion and questions afterwards.

[SPEAKER_02]

Thank you.

Thank you so much, Peder.

I can see some people already raised their hands, and we also have a question in the chat.

But before we go over to that, I was just thinking if you, Peder and Ava, could reflect very quickly, or not quickly, but because you are approaching decommissioning from, what you could say, very different angles, right?

Like Peder is more from the labor

perspective and Ava is more from the legal slash what you call it industry perspective.

So how do you think those two perspectives sort of speak to each other when you're looking at the same phenomenon, but from very different angles?

[SPEAKER_03]

Yeah.

[SPEAKER_04]

Can you, by the way, can you still see my screen?

Or have I stopped sharing?

[SPEAKER_03]

You haven't stopped sharing.

[SPEAKER_02]

How can I stop sharing?

I can stop it.

So just go ahead and answer.

That'd be great.

[SPEAKER_01]

I think it relates really well.

I think especially in the way Peder was describing

kind of the coordinated actor approach for the actualization of a change in the regulatory landscape with the OSPAR Convention.

But it's, I think as an anthropologist, my interlocutors are industry, but I am speaking to a lot of people who are working in some of the jobs that like Peder has discussed within his work.

And it's, I think I'm coming at it through the lens of liability.

So I'm looking at how those macroscopic kind of

legal and financial and economic tensions are are working across sectors but it's it is very kind of top down in a way but it's it's just yeah i guess a different way to target kind of the same the uncertainties with i was about to say rapidly transitioning sector maybe a delayed transitioning sector but a changing sector nonetheless

[SPEAKER_04]

Yeah.

Yeah.

Just to add to that, I think it's everything I look at has to do with regulation to some extent and to kind of the regulatory landscape.

And I try to trace that to the Brent Spar campaign of the 1990s.

But also to kind of looking at how, for instance, the British Union GMB in 2016 commissioned a report to look at the potential for these dismantling yards throughout the UK, which I didn't have time to mention now, but it spurred actually some government funding and support for.

setting up some UK sites, which seems defaulted because there wasn't really much work 10 years ago.

But I think these different actors, they're very much affecting what regulations actually end up being passed as well.

[SPEAKER_02]

I saw some people raise their hands and then they've disappeared and now I can't see them.

So can you raise your hand again if you have a question?

In the meantime...

We have a question from, given the ambitions in offshore wind development in the North Sea, would there be enough available offshore workships, port infrastructures, et cetera, in the next decades?

More generally, how will oil and gas decommissioning and offshore wind development dovetail in the next, in the coming years?

Do any of you have a question, an answer to that?

[SPEAKER_04]

Yes, I could just comment briefly on that.

Initially, I wanted also to include offshore wind in my studies, but given that the regulations aren't really getting figured out as we speak, we're not really there yet.

It's a process that is mostly ahead of us in time.

I found it difficult to fully get into, but I think it's very much something

relevant when we think about decommissioning as an industry or about circularity and kind of offshore energy structures, because the sheer mass of the projected development of offshore wind is

huge and it will rely on certainly some of the same skills some of the but also some of the same vessels I think which can lead to this is my fear that we if we continue to kind of delay decommissioning of gas then the squeeze the bottle

the bottleneck of handling offshore wind structures in the future might be bigger and drive inflation and costs in offshore decommissioning.

[SPEAKER_01]

Yeah, just to jump in as well, I know the Port of Aberdeen offshore wind deployments make up less than 2% of their current revenue in decommissioning.

They mostly do kind of substrates, billicles, and kind of small level pipelines if required in decommissioning program.

That makes up less than 1% of their current portfolio.

So ports are still kind of majority dominated by offshore oil and gas extraction.

I think the most interesting perspective is looking at contractors who are

oftentimes looking at risk and are consulting across offshore oil and gas, decommissioning, and offshore wind for some of the really large-scale projects that are trying to integrate decommissioning considerations for their development.

Oftentimes, they're being presented with the kind of number of workers expected, vessels expected, ports they're going to, and the offshore wind stakeholders, or at least according to my interlocutors, aren't actually negotiating with those parties now and don't realize, like,

how Peder mentioned within his presentation, there are some of these vessels that have decades of contracted work ahead of them, and not all of those really large-scale vessels will be necessary for offshore wind, just depending on the scale.

But it's oftentimes a lack of communication between what the actual schedule of work will be to manifest this, and when there's so much uncertainty and so much delay within

decommissioning, there's, yeah, the really negative capacity for what should be kind of a beautiful,

progressive stages to transition offshore wind and offshore oil and gas which is never actually going to happen in reality like looking at the consequences or also looking at the linear development of work it's they're not often communicating in terms of the logistics of kind of development and decommissioning which has been interesting yeah well let me see if there are any questions um not here right now but

[SPEAKER_02]

Maybe I can ask you two questions.

Ava, if you had to ask one question to Peder about his research, what would it be?

[SPEAKER_01]

Yes, yeah.

I am super interested in the kind of the politics of delay, because I feel like different stakeholder groups are looking at it as delay versus anticipation.

So within the different interlocutor groups that you're looking at, what is this kind of delay actually look like for them?

Because it is, you know, an uncertain orientation to the future.

But I imagine different stakeholders are looking at it as a different kind of personal security in terms of access to jobs, economic security or delay from the operational perspective.

[SPEAKER_04]

Yeah, thank you.

Great question.

I think one of the aspects might be anticipation of reforms and regulations.

So in, for instance, one of the conferences I've been to, there's discussions in plenary about kind of, okay, today we have to cut at this depth, but what if we said, you know, we could cut...

less deep for instance that would across all of our portfolio and structures that would make quite a difference to how we do things and it would make make the process of decommissioning cheaper so my suspicion that i can't really

This can't be proven, but my suspicion is that some of the people in the operator industry are kind of anticipating maybe relaxation, or they're at least hoping, I think, some of them, for a relaxation in the regulations in the future.

So if they wait it out, maybe it will be less of a job.

So that's one.

potential driver for kind of the delay.

Another one is also the innovation.

If you actually see the result of some of the research and development that is going into, for instance, plugging and abandonment, as you said, represents at least 50% of the costs are descending in decommissioning.

So if you were suddenly able to do that in some underworld drone without

commissioning these huge rigs with a full crew, then this would be substantial saving.

So I think we're seeing also this dynamic where a lot of operator companies are kind of looking at each other and hoping someone else kind of does the job of driving down costs through technological innovations, for instance.

But then the end result is that you don't really see any major

development so I think I'm not an expert in plugging and abandonment but I've heard people say that it's mostly they're doing it the same way they've done it the last 20 years essentially there's not been any revolutions in the way that's been done and it's no wonder that we're seeing costs go up from

and abandonment and decommissioning in general because there are more projects chasing maybe a dwindling value chain even as some of the companies have defaulted or gone to other regions such as Australia where there's also a lot of decommissioning going on.

Thanks.

Go ahead, Ava.

[SPEAKER_01]

I was just saying, thank you.

I feel like it was an interesting articulation of a dissertation for regulatory change, because I feel like that's something I noticed in my field side as well, but maybe hadn't characterized in that way.

But it is kind of a future not only for kind of more clarity, but also clarity that will benefit them in a way.

But yeah, that was interesting.

Thank you.

[SPEAKER_04]

Right, yes.

I guess there's a lot of anticipation in oil and gas in general.

The fact that we're exploring for new resources is kind of betting against the Paris Agreement for instance.

So certainly things going on in anticipation of a certain future.

And of course, if the operator companies were to believe that it's actually like the OSPR Convention states, that it will be stricter and stricter as we go, they would have every incentive to do decommissioning sooner rather than later.

So I guess it's maybe the way they're acting can tell us something about what they think about the future as well, or what future they bet on, kind of.

[SPEAKER_02]

Yeah.

[SPEAKER_04]

Yeah.

[SPEAKER_02]

Peder, did you have a question for Ava?

[SPEAKER_04]

Yes.

Yeah, I'm also speaking about kind of

plurality and this the fact as you've written about also that wells will not be perfectly sealed for forever and they will corrode so I think thinking about this together with my abilities is quite mind-boggling because it means the you can't really put a number on something that has this dynamic you know and this temporal

going on forever.

So yeah, if I could just challenge you to speak about the implications of that, because like in my mind, then the kind of costs and responsibility would go back to the state and taxpayers.

Isn't that kind of the upshot of that?

And shouldn't maybe then environmentalists, I've seen some in the audience pick up on that when speaking about future, you know, because we're still drilling new wells and we will be having to deal with it forever.

[SPEAKER_01]

Yeah, I think the presentation of inevitabilities is really important to discuss the scale, but oftentimes it leads to an inability to address how do you address forever kind of structurally from a governance perspective or from an operational perspective when you're an operator.

I think dealing with

this type of epistemic domination of hard sciences, quantifiable returns, and the quantification of risk and damage, it becomes even more incommensurable when you're thinking about how do you actually internalize this, if those are your metrics.

But there are other scholars looking at how you actually trace accountability for this.

I think there are legal mechanisms that

wouldn't exist in any sort of philosophical definition of permanence or eternity but there are mechanisms that would have a sense of durability that would you know go in parallel to a state so you're likely looking at kind of long-term trust there's the establishment of the fisheries legacy trust in i think i don't know if it's you just the ukcs or if it's across the North Sea but it's

It is looking at kind of what are the long-term implications from a financial perspective of how you have future use of the sea with kind of the existence level of cable pipelines, derogations and infrastructure that has been left in situ or must remain in situ because of previous historical circumstances.

So, yeah, in that context, you could be you'd be paying in with e-commerce acquisition.

You can establish more permanent, robust system of security and financial incentives or decisioning processes that that also require security to be held for environment toward mediation, monitoring.

There are jurisdictions in Thailand that have this stipulation with, interestingly, specifically the dumping of rigs to reef.

And so operators have to pay for monitoring for the ecosystems.

So the UK wouldn't necessarily have this because the OSPAR Convention and the prevention of dumping are the rigs to reefs.

But it is an interesting kind of legal apparatus that could be used to force monitoring, at least within scales that make sense.

the actors accountable while they still remain kind of recognizable corporate forms that can be linked to these licenses before they disperse.

And so it's, I guess, more, I don't want to say more actionable in some jurisdictions.

The UK is mature, the North Sea is mature, but it's not mature to the same sense as like onshore extraction with the United States and Canada, where

kind of the dispersible of liability as these sites completely orphaned.

And so we, we have the potential to create mechanisms that would prevent that at least in maybe temporal threshold, like a hundred, 200 years, but in terms of like 500 years, 600 years, a thousand years, like the same kind of questions that you're thinking about the temporalities for nuclear, that is still kind of a really big vacuum for the oil and gas industry.

Right.

[SPEAKER_04]

Right.

[SPEAKER_02]

That's really interesting.

that timeframe, how difficult it is for industry to deal with those.

We do have a question about, and then maybe it's for Peder, but maybe for both of you as well.

Do you think that the Brandspar campaign could take place today?

And what would be different about it in today's context?

And I think you also, you briefly touched on that, Peder, also that there probably also was a specific moment in the 1990s and the role of Shell and

in, for example, South Africa and so on.

But do you have an answer to that?

Do you think that could happen today and how would it happen?

Could it accelerate the decommissioning?

[SPEAKER_04]

I think, yeah, as you summed up, that there was something with that moment.

So I think of it as kind of a specific conjuncture where you came out of different social struggles that came together in what we know as the Brent Spar campaign.

But there's elements that I think absolutely we could learn from that is

also coalition building and actually appreciating the diversity of that winning coalition.

So actually,

Acknowledging that there was also, as I said, fractions of capital engineering firms and heavy lifting firms involved.

You had some in the periphery of the Brent Spark case, there were some fishers.

There were a range of actors that kind of came together.

The way it happened, I think, of course, that can't be replicated.

And it had also to do with the medium of television being, you know, in its heyday.

And it was made into this viral event, which is very hard to replicate today.

But I think we can learn from the Brent Spar.

And also I draw on Antonio Gramsci and kind of thinking about hegemonic blocks and alliances, virtually, in

trying to make something politicized that until then was mostly, you know, decided between the industry and state bureaucrats and politicians at the high level politicians.

But then it was very much put on the agenda of the wider civil society.

So yeah, I think there's lots to learn.

[SPEAKER_01]

I'm a pessimistic answer.

If I could jump in, I think it's working a lot with operators.

They often make jokes about how they're prepared for kind of that low occupation tension and anarchist environmental action now in terms of establishments of kind of internal frameworks, but how you vocalize your property rights in a way.

And so it's lots of comments about how what Greenpeace did was

illegal necessarily and lots of iterations about that these were bureaucratically and regulatory approved processes and the idea that you could return to that and that Greenpeace was able to achieve this kind of because of the really really large socio-cultural buy-in but it is interesting having conversations with operators who act as if they're they're prepared to combat this within legal or litigation kind of aspect as well yeah

[SPEAKER_02]

I just thought about also...

There's also a temporal aspect in the sense that, so Brent Spar, it was happening, right?

They already started to transport it into the North Atlantic.

And then on the other hand, what you have now is like, okay, we're doing decommissioning, but the pace is quite slow.

So again, there is this also like delay works quite well against that sort of...

Brent Spahr moment that you sort of, you do put in some legislation that requires decommissioning onshore, but then the actual decommissioning just is being deferred into the future all the time.

I'm wondering if that also has an influence on the ability to mobilize broadly

I don't know if you have any thoughts on that.

[SPEAKER_04]

Sorry, could you repeat the question?

If the kind of delaying tactic has any... because of mobilization?

[SPEAKER_02]

Yeah.

Yeah, if you are able to sort of say, well, the legislation is basically in place, we are working on it, it's not going as fast as we hoped for, that is also a way to sort of like counter that kind of mobilization that happened around Brent Spa because there was actually happening

There was something happening, right?

That was very, very obvious.

There was something to be opposed to very clearly in that moment.

But here you're saying we are working on it.

It might not go as fast as we had hoped for, but I don't know if that has an effect on the ability for those who want to speed up decommissioning of mobilizing more broadly.

I don't know if that makes sense.

[SPEAKER_04]

Yeah, I think to some extent the forces at play in the 90s during the Brent Spar crisis are still kind of there today.

And I think still the industry is thinking about scenarios.

So if they opt for a certain

I think in the wake of the Brent Spar this social license operate was very much in people's heads and within business schools and in companies.

I think to some extent there's a before and after the Brent Spar.

It's still with us.

It's still having an effect, I think, in the way people and companies, organizations, the world.

But yes, certainly you had also, of course, this you could do something concretely.

You just drive to the next gas station or something very so.

Once you have such a campaign, then a political agency, a collective agency can be very powerful.

But when you don't reach that kind of level of activism, mass mobilization, then it's quite difficult.

So you don't have the same leverage.

I'd say and yes I think like communicative departments amongst oil companies have studied the Brent Spar case many times as well so it was also the outcome of very more I think

communication driven more by kind of legal experts and engineers rather than people really knowing how to deal with kind of the narrative in kind of a

the scale uh like in in in a public debate um yes and and effects also you know it was very much uh rationality on one side and numbers and science maybe and then more effective uh approaches on the other even though yeah that's also more nuanced yeah

But it was a way to make a very complex case more black and white, I'd say.

Whereas now, of course, it's a very... You have to be an expert of some kind to understand, have an appreciation of what's at stake.

And it's a lot of business vocabulary and a lot of hurdles to get over to actually...

discuss these things.

And it's not really a matter of public discourse either.

It's very much confined, I think, to industry, like spaces where the industry and regulators meet, which is so we're again kind of back to that moment when it's decided amongst relatively few actors, I'd say.

[SPEAKER_02]

Do you have anything to add, Ava?

[SPEAKER_01]

Yeah, I think it's interesting in terms of where the obstruction comes into in terms of public...

Yeah, I guess wider public's ability to understand and participate within these debates, there hasn't seemed like there was a similar case within our sense.

Even looking in jurisdictions where dumping is successful, like Thailand, Singapore, Mexico, there wasn't an emblematic or principled public debate about what this would mean for the future of that kind of wider marine ecosystem.

But it is interesting with kind of public perceptions

shift of the industry being recorded over the past few years with the global destabilization of the energy market through kind of US-Israel's interventions in the Middle East with kind of rampant military aggression in Ukraine and more calls for kind of domestic energy production, especially in the UK.

Operators are really interested to see how this changes public perception towards them in alternative decommissioning scenarios.

And there's a lot of science research that's funded by industry looking into how do you measure public perception specifically for alternative decommissioning scenarios, which is really interesting because it seems kind of straightforward how this will be operationalized in a way.

So yeah, keep a lookout for any public surveys on decommissioning if you'd like to actually have an opportunity to intervene.

There should be one coming out of a few projects in the spring.

But it's interesting seeing the ways at which we're interested from an organizational perspective.

The operators are also really interested as well.

And they're coming at it from very different perspectives.

So it'll be, yes, we'll see how it plays out.

But it is interesting.

All right.

[SPEAKER_02]

Thank you so much, both of you.

We are right on time, so I will...

end the seminar here thanks to those of you who joined us online and thank you Ava and Peder for taking the time to present your research it's been really interesting to hear about decommissioning is not something I have really studied myself so for me there was also a lot of new things but thank you so much to both of you

[SPEAKER_00]

You have listened to a podcast from the University of Stavanger.