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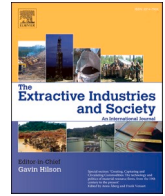
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Unravelling the discursive dynamics of counternarratives in the Dutch energy transition

Naomi Schrandt^{a,*}, Julia M. Wittmayer^{a,c}, Tamara Metzke^b^a Erasmus School of Social and Behavioural Sciences, Erasmus University Rotterdam, Rotterdam, The Netherlands^b Faculty of Technology, Policy and Management, Delft University of Technology, Delft, The Netherlands^c DRIFT The Dutch Research Institute for Transitions, Rotterdam, The Netherlands

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ABSTRACT

Decarbonization of the energy system to combat climate change poses a significant challenge for the Netherlands, often attributed to carbon lock-in: a persistent dependence on fossil fuels shaped by historical forces. Carbon lock-in also occurs at the discursive level, which is why research on sustainability transitions increasingly explores discourses as a crucial element for change. Our research contributes to this knowledge by exploring how counternarratives shape the discursive dynamics surrounding the fossil fuel industry's role in the Dutch energy system. Using an interpretive approach, we examine how the role of Shell, as the 'epitome' of the Dutch fossil fuel industry, is framed by both Shell itself and three discursive agents opposing fossil fuel-based pathways. To this end, we reconstruct the counternarratives by Friends of the Earth NL, Follow This, Code Rood and Shell around how they envision the role of Shell in the Dutch energy system, with the goal to identify how discursive agents position their narratives vis-à-vis each other and if coalitions are formed. Our findings reveal that discursive agents deploy a variety of strategic practices to increase the successful reproduction of their narratives: first, Code Rood strategically adopts a radical narrative that stimulates imagination, polarizing the discursive struggle surrounding Shell's role in the energy system. Second, Follow This strategically adopts a marginal narrative, designed to persuade incumbents of alternative interpretations, especially to rethink the profitability of fossil fuels. Third, Friends of the Earth NL and Follow This enhance their discursive agency through coalition building. Since unlocking institutionalized discourses becomes more important, further research should shed light on discursive dynamics within the institutionalized discourse. By offering insights into the pivotal role(s) of counternarratives in instigating discursive change, this study contributes to the growing body of knowledge crucial for accelerating the shift toward a decarbonized energy system.

1. Introduction

Phasing out fossil fuels is a challenge for the Netherlands, whose economy is heavily reliant on polluting industries, as the country is not on track to meet its 2030 decarbonization targets despite ambitious policy goals (International Energy Agency, 2020; Mayer, 2023). The difficulty in phasing out fossil fuels is often attributed to a phenomenon referred to as 'carbon lock-in', which describes society's ongoing dependencies on fossil fuels because of path-dependent development (Goldstein et al., 2023; Klitkou et al., 2015; Muttitt and Kartha, 2020; Piggot et al., 2020). Discourse constitutes a pivotal aspect of lock-in, as it assigns meaning, delineates power relations, and brings about subjects and objects through practice (Buschmann and Oels, 2019). In research

on sustainability transitions, there is an increasing awareness of discourses as crucial elements in socio-technical configurations shaping social change (Buschmann and Oels, 2019; Isoaho and Karhunmaa, 2019; Simoens et al., 2022). However, a structured exchange between transition research and interpretative discourse analysis is still in its infancy, limiting insights into the role of discursive dynamics in hindering and enabling change (Buschmann and Oels, 2019; Dietz, 2019; Feola and Jaworska, 2019; Simoens et al., 2022).

A discourse can be understood as "an ensemble of ideas, concepts and categories through which meaning is given to social and physical phenomena, and which is produced and reproduced through an identifiable set of practices" (p. 175, Hajer and Versteeg, 2005). A discourse can be considered as institutionalized when its underlying assumptions are unquestioned

* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: Schrandt@essb.eur.nl (N. Schrandt).

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and when its meaning structures are reflected in the material reality (e.g., technologies and infrastructure), institutional setup (e.g., regulations, values), and social practices (e.g., production and consumption patterns) (M. A. Hajer, 1995; Simoens et al., 2022). One might think of the discourse around natural gas as a transition fuel, which during the 1990s and 2000s led to the broad adoption of the fuel, resulting in producers increasing their supply, and transmission and distribution system operators expanding infrastructure (Si et al., 2023; Szabo, 2022). Such institutionalized discourses are both automatically reproduced through self-reinforcing dynamics (i.e. 'locked in') and they need to be constantly reproduced by discursive agents to maintain the continuity of its meanings (Simoens et al., 2022).

In this paper, we are interested in the ongoing discursive struggle around the role of the fossil fuel industry in the Netherlands. As elsewhere in Europe, secure, affordable, and clean energy remains high on the Dutch political agenda, and fossil fuels continue to be framed as a cheap and secure energy source vital for economic growth (Bosman et al., 2014; Dubský and Tichý, 2024; Piggot et al., 2020). This discourse represents a specific way of understanding and discussing fossil fuels and their role in societal development; it shapes, reinforces, and maintains the existing fossil-fuel based energy system making it politically and economically difficult to stop production (Muttitt and Kartha, 2020; Piggot et al., 2020). Due to their strong discursive agency, incumbents, including for example Shell and the Ministry of Economic Affairs, were able to dominate the discourse around energy transitions promoting a 'greening' rather than more radical transformations of the Dutch energy system (Bosman et al., 2014; Smink et al., 2015). However, the dominance of a discourse is not immutable; discourses are always in competition with each other in their struggle for reproduction and for dominance in a field (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002; T. Metze and Dodge, 2016; Simoens et al., 2022). In a study of 2014, Bosman et al. found signs of discursive destabilization of the institutionalized discourse, which prioritizes energy security and energy affordability in the Netherlands. It was contested by 'storylines in the making', such as the one emphasizing the rapid energy advancements in Germany and the impact of the Energiewende on the Dutch energy system.

Such 'storylines in the making' or alternative discourses can thus challenge institutionalized discourses in a discursive struggle over meaning (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002; Simoens et al., 2022). Over the past decade, several agents have engaged in shifting attention to the role and responsibility of the fossil fuel sector in climate change and in mobilizing against fossil fuel-based pathways (Grasso, 2020; Hielscher et al., 2022; Piggot, 2018). In the Netherlands, their narratives particularly challenge the role of Royal Dutch/Shell (since 2021, Shell). Shell has long been an Anglo-Dutch company and is the 4th largest oil company globally. For a long period of time the company was for the majority Dutch, and while Shell has moved its' tax residence and headquarters to England since 2021, still many activities, shareholders, employees, offices and laboratories are based in or steered from the Netherlands (M. Metze, 2023). The company is responsible for 1 % of global GHG emissions and as a result, Shell has become a focal point for various actions and narratives opposing current fossil fuel pathways (Milieudefensie, 2021; Offshore Technology, 2020). Initiatives range from divestment campaigns to anti-greenwashing efforts and filing climate lawsuits (Mayer, 2023; Piggot, 2018; Walfisz and Campbell, 2021) as well as actively constructing, developing, and voicing narratives that challenge the status quo of the energy security discourse as promoted by Shell. At the same time, oil and gas majors like Shell are (re)positioning themselves in energy transitions by incorporating renewables into their portfolio, shifting communication strategies by integrating environmental concerns, and presenting themselves as energy transition companies (Abraham-Dukuma, 2021; Shell, 2021; Si et al., 2023).

Inspired by this dynamic, this paper aims to answer the following research question: *How do (counter)narratives shape the discursive dynamics around the fossil fuel industry's role in the Dutch energy*

system? It does so through an interpretive study into both the institutionalized and alternative discourses related to the fossil fuel industry's role, with a particular focus on Shell. To this end, the narratives and discursive strategies of four discursive agents are analyzed: Shell, exemplifying the institutionalized energy discourse in the Netherlands; and the counternarratives of Friends of the Earth NL, known for their climate lawsuit against Shell; Follow This, a green shareholder initiative within Shell; and Code Rood, a climate activist organization.

2. Discursive dynamics in sustainability transitions

This section provides insights into a variety of discursive dynamics that underpin processes of stability and change, enhancing our understanding of the role of discourses in sustainability transitions. It starts off with a conceptual understanding of the role of institutionalized discourses in socio-technical systems and their self-reinforcing mechanisms (Section 2.1). Considering our interest in discursive change, the next subsection explores the role of (counter)narratives and connects these to alternative discourses (Section 2.2.). It is followed by insights into discursive agency (Section 2.3).

2.1. Discursive perspective on sustainability transitions

Taking a discursive perspective on sustainability transitions foregrounds the role of language, narratives, and discourses in the analysis of processes of stability and change (Simoens et al., 2022). Proposing such a perspective for analyzing transition dynamics, Simoens et al. (2022) align the analytical dimensions of transition dynamics, namely niche, regime, and landscape (cf. Geels, 2004) with discursive elements, namely alternative, institutionalized and meta discourse respectively along their level of structuration.

Institutionalized discourses are related to the regime dimension and as such are characterized by their relative dominance as compared to other discourses. They are reproduced by a coalition of incumbents with strong discursive agency (Leipold and Winkel, 2017; Simoens et al., 2022). Through its dialectic relation with other system elements, the institutionalized discourse shapes material reality, institutions, and established practices connected to the regime. Generally, such institutionalized discourses may endure for decades, engendering a path-dependent development of the energy system as the existing configuration evolves and optimizes (Bosman et al., 2014; Rosenbloom and Rinscheid, 2020). Still, discourses "require a constant discursive reproduction [through narratives and discursive agents] to guarantee the continuity of its meaning structures" (p. 125, Hajer, 1995). For instance, incumbent agents use strategic practices to enhance the reproduction of their narratives, thus ensuring the relative dominance of their perception of reality in comparison to non-incumbents (Simoens et al., 2022; Simoens and Leipold, 2021). Consequently, incumbents can 'lock-in' the institutionalized discourse, and in doing so protect their responsibilities, resources and positions in the system.

Nonetheless, the degree of structuration of an institutionalized discourse can change over time, particularly when **alternative discourses** emerge at a niche level (Kaufmann and Wiering, 2022). Alternative discourses can challenge institutionalized ones by presenting different meaning structures, possibly creating tensions among the narratives of incumbents, and altering coalitions of discursive agents, contributing to a less structured, i.e. dominant, regime (Bosman et al., 2014; Simoens et al., 2022). For example, when shale gas became part of the natural gas discourse in the Netherlands, various alternative discourses raising concerns about sustainability, local safety and risk issues, and the utility and necessity of shale gas led to controversy around the energy source and challenged the natural gas discourse (Cuppen et al., 2019).

2.2. Counternarratives: challenging institutionalized discourse

Narratives are a pivotal element in the discursive struggle between institutionalized and alternative discourses (Simoens et al., 2022). They are the “linguistic tools” of discourses, summarizing them into condensed stories, and in doing so making complex issues tangible and facilitating the transfer of meaning structures (Hajer, 1995). Narratives often include a rationale, outlining a perceived problem and desired future, relevant agents in different roles, and a plot with contextualized activities (Dubský and Tichý, 2024; Squire, 2012; Wittmayer et al., 2019). When a significant number of agents collectively reproduce a narrative, it can be considered as ‘dominant’, contributing to the institutionalization of the overarching discourse (Simoens et al. 2022). As a response to the institutionalized discourse and its associated dominant narratives, alternative narratives can emerge (Hajer, 1995).

Such **alternative narratives** can also be considered “**counternarratives**” since they challenge dominant ways of thinking in a discursive struggle (Fage-Butler, 2020; Hyvärinen et al., 2021). Counternarratives have much in common with future narratives (Inayatullah, 2008; Sools, 2012) or narratives of change (Wittmayer et al., 2019) since they include an element of ‘what if’ or of what could be different. Given their capacity to evoke imagination and to provide a guide for action towards an envisioned alternative future, counternarratives possess transformative potential (Dietz, 2019; Wittmayer et al., 2019). Counternarratives are often represented by weak discursive agents and emerge as antagonism towards certain aspects in the dominant narrative that they contest (Dellagnelo et al., 2014). Antagonism, a term also used by discourse theorists Laclau and Mouffe (1985), manifests by introducing new ways of thinking, questioning and reframing the status quo, and challenging and confronting dominant norms, values, and beliefs (Wittmayer et al., 2019). In other words, antagonism can be found where discourses collide (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002). Counternarratives can have varying degrees of antagonism towards the institutionalized discourse, from marginal difference to rather radical ideas (Simoens et al., 2022). The antagonist relationship between counternarratives and institutionalized discourses highlights the limitations of the institutionalized discourse (Dellagnelo et al., 2014). Many different alternative discourses and corresponding counternarratives can exist at the same time in relation to the same institutionalized discourse (Simoens et al., 2022). As a result, these alternative discourses not only **compete** with the institutionalized discourse, but also with each other. This can be a challenge in the successful reproduction of a counternarrative.

2.3. Boundary work and discursive agency

The **success** of counternarratives relates to the extent to which their meaning structures alter or replace those of the institutionalized discourse, which can influence material reality, institutions, and established practices of the socio-technical configuration (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002; Simoens et al., 2022). The ability to replace or alter institutionalized meaning structures relates to the legitimacy that counternarratives gain and the extent to which they are reproduced. The reproduction of counternarratives is influenced by two factors: 1) the positioning of the content of a narrative vis-à-vis other narratives, and 2) the strength of the discursive agents sharing the narratives (Simoens et al., 2022).

First, discursive agents use discursive boundary work to enhance the legitimacy of their narratives, that is they deploy “*discursive strategies of demarcation and coordination to gain support, credibility and authority for, or to change, a particular framing of a controversy*” (p. 367, Metze and Dodge, 2016). Demarcation means that competing facts or ideas are produced, discriminating one narrative from another to make it more convincing. It links to the concept of ‘othering’, which involves identifying a shared opposition that hinders those voiced demands (Griggs and Howarth, 2019). Coordination refers to the alignment of the meaning of

objects or concepts between narratives. Describing discursive dynamics, demarcation and coordination are processes of narrative construction and alignment.

Second, the strength of discursive agents varies and depends on certain positional- and individual characteristics attributed to the agent, such as their mandates, resources, skills, and knowledge (Leipold and Winkel, 2017; Simoens et al., 2022). Consequently, incumbent agents are generally considered to have strong discursive agency. Shell is an example, with a position as a global energy company with the skills to negotiate energy policy, as one of the top fossil fuel extractors and its material resources, and because of its economic weight as an employer. Incumbents aim to keep their position in the socio-technical system by reproducing to a large extent the narratives associated with the institutionalized discourse (Leipold and Winkel, 2017; Simoens et al., 2022). Non-incumbent agents generally have weaker discursive agency, making the strategic practice of coalition building important to build their strength as discursive agents and for the successful reproduction of their counternarrative(s) (M. A. Hajer, 1995; Leipold and Winkel, 2017). A discourse coalition is a network that forms around a shared narrative and that develops as agents repeat the narrative and factual information and as normative orientations become integrated (cf. Metze and Dodge, 2016, Hajer, 1995). For example, in their study on the controversies around hydraulic fracturing in the Netherlands and the United States, Metze and Dodge (2016) show that a discourse coalition (consisting of local citizens and activists, local politicians, national and international NGOs, members of national parliament, and provincial and national journalists) emerged around a counternarrative that emphasized the environmental risks of fracking, successfully challenging the dominant discourse coalition.

To sum up, discursive dynamics manifest in several ways: (1) At the discourse level, institutionalized discourses are perpetually reproduced to maintain their dominance, often ‘locking-in’ their position within socio-technical systems. To this end, dominant narratives are collectively reiterated by agents, upholding the institutionalized discourse. (2) When alternative discourses emerge, they seek to challenge, alter, or replace institutionalized discourses, thereby inciting discursive change. Non-incumbent agents use counternarratives to incite discursive struggles over meaning. They employ discursive boundary work to enhance the legitimacy of their narratives, aiming for their successful reproduction. (3) These discursive strategies involve the positioning of content relative to other narratives. They can involve demarcation, where competing facts or ideas highlight differences, or coordination, where meanings between narratives align, and coalition can be built.

Looking into these discursive dynamics allows us to develop a more dynamic understanding of how agents position their own narratives more convincingly and demarcate it against others, as well as how discourses around the role of the fossil fuel industry are formed within and across existing and emerging discourse coalitions. This enhances our comprehension of how discourses contribute to both the maintenance of current systems and the potential for transformative change in sustainability transitions.

3. Methodology

We applied an interpretive approach and used a qualitative research design (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow, 2012) to comprehend how (counter) narratives shape the discursive dynamics around the fossil fuel industry’s role in the Dutch energy system. We chose to research how the role of Shell, as the ‘epitome’ of the Dutch fossil fuel industry, is interpreted by both Shell itself and discursive agents opposing fossil fuel-based pathways. Shell represents the institutionalized discourse, as it is a key player in the Dutch fossil fuel industry, one of the largest fossil fuel companies globally (Metze, 2023; Milieudefensie, 2021; Offshore Technology, 2020), and frequently a focal point in numerous narratives and actions against fossil fuel-based pathways in the Netherlands. Besides the dominant narrative by Shell, we reconstructed the

counternarratives from Friends of the Earth NL, Follow This, Code Rood around how they envision the role of Shell in the Dutch energy system. We chose Friends of the Earth NL, Follow This and Code Rood for a) their outspoken antagonism regarding Shell, and therewith fossil fuel-based pathways; b) their diversity in the ways they are targeting Shell, and c) their active campaigning against Shell at the time of data collection. An introduction to the discursive agents is presented in [Table 1](#).

For the reconstruction of the narratives and the analysis of their discursive dynamics, we relied on three main data sources: key documents, interviews, and a media analysis (see [Table 2](#)).

The analysis covers the narratives that were reconstructed based on the documents and interviews between the years 2015–2021. The year the Paris Agreement was signed was chosen as a starting point, since it constitutes a turning point in discourses around energy transitions (i.e. the studied narratives refer to the agreement). Also campaigns against Shell either started around or after 2015 (Follow This, Code Rood), or have shifted their focus (Friends of the Earth NL).

First, we studied the dominant and counternarratives around Shell and their role in Dutch energy transitions. For this narrative content analysis, we took the ‘narrative of change’ framework developed for analyzing narratives about societal transformations ([Wittmayer et al., 2019](#)) that distinguishes between a rationale (problem description, future orientation), relevant agents (varying from those that enable

Table 1
Introduction to the four discursive agents.

Discursive agents	Description
Follow This	Follow This, an organization founded in 2015 by Mark van Baal, unites over 8000 shareholders aiming to push the oil industry towards sustainable energy. By acquiring a minimum number of shares in oil companies, Follow This secures a shareholder position, enabling them to propose resolutions during shareholder meetings. These resolutions call for oil companies to align their emission targets with the Paris Agreement, including ‘scope 3’ product emissions. Resolutions are annually filed until companies adopt ‘Paris-consistent’ targets, illustrating the organization’s commitment to environmental sustainability.
Code Rood	Code Rood, established in 2016, is an activist group dedicated to resisting the fossil fuel industry, influenced by the German Ende Gelände protests. They advocate for collective action over individual efforts to combat fossil fuel-induced climate change. The group organizes ‘massive civil disobedience’ protests, including blockades and occupations, with a strategic focus on reshaping public perception of Shell’s role in the energy transition. Code Rood operates as a horizontal grassroots organization, relying solely on donations, supporters, participants, and solidarity funds, with its precise size undisclosed.
Friends of the Earth NL (Milieudefensie)	Friends of the Earth Netherlands, also known as Milieudefensie in Dutch, was founded in 1971 to promote fairness and sustainability in the Netherlands. As a member of Friends of the Earth International, it is one of the country’s largest environmental organizations, with 55,000 members, 33,000 donors, 2000 volunteers, 35 local branches, a professional staff, and a national headquarters in Amsterdam. In 2018, it successfully sued Shell to mitigate climate change.
Shell	Shell plc (“Shell”) is a global energy and petrochemical conglomerate with 80,000 employees across 70 countries. It ranks as the fourth-largest oil and gas company and the sixteenth-largest corporation globally. In 2022, the company relocated its headquarters from the Netherlands to the United Kingdom for strategic reasons. Traditionally a petrochemical company, Shell is currently undergoing a transformation, positioning itself as an ‘energy transition company.’

Table 2
Data for analysing narratives.

Discursive agents	Interviews & participant observation	Key documents	Media documents
Shell	1 interview with a Former Manager (INT#1 Shell 2022) in 2022.	Shell Energy Transition Strategy (Shell, 2021)	149 documents, under which press releases, newspaper articles, websites, policy- and industry reports. Documents were collected from the agents’ websites and supplemented with a LexisNexis search for each agent, covering the period from 2015 to 2021
Friends of the Earth NL	1 participant observation during a webinar on ‘Klimaatzaak Shell’ including Q&A with a Communication Employee in 2022.	Summary Subpoena (Milieudefensie, 2019) + Opening Plea (Milieudefensie, 2020)	
Follow This	2 interviews: one with the Founder (INT#1 Follow This 2022) and one with a Communication Employee (INT#2 Follow This 2022) in 2022.	Shareholder Resolution (Follow This, 2016) + Shareholder Resolution (Follow This, 2021)	
Code Rood	None	Shell Must Fall Toolkit part 1 (Code Rood, 2021a) + Shell Must Fall Toolkit part 2 (Code Rood, 2021b)	

change to those that counteract change) and a plot (the activities and developments necessary for change) (as shown in [Table 3](#)). We (re-) constructed the narratives of all four discursive agents, while acknowledging that these are snapshots of more fluid realities ([Wittmayer et al., 2019](#)). Through this process, we take on the roles of co-narrators and co-producers, contributing to a specific interpretation of these narratives.

Second, we studied the discursive dynamics between the four narratives, focusing on two aspects: the strategic positioning of narrative content and the building of coalitions. On the one hand, we analyzed how the narratives are positioned in relation to one another, that is where there are overlaps or significant deviation in meaning, especially regarding the role contribution to Shell. On the other hand, we analyzed the potential building of discourse coalitions around certain content. The analysis was informed by the concepts of ‘coordinating’ and ‘demarcating’ dynamics from discursive boundary work to compare meaning constructs across the narratives.

4. Results: shaping shell’s role in the Dutch energy transitions

Each of the four agents frames the role of Shell, as one of the major fossil fuel producers, and the context within which it is acting in different ways ([Section 4.1](#)) ([Table 4](#)). In this section, we outline the different narratives and compare those to understand where coordinating and demarcating dynamics emerge ([Section 4.2](#)).

Table 3
Framework for analysing content, construction, and roles of narratives of change. Adapted from [Wittmayer et al., 2019](#), p.5.

Content of narrative	Why does the world need to change? (= rationale)	What are the current problems? What is the desired future?
	Who are the relevant agents? (= agents)	Who are the agents working towards the desired future? Who are the agents opposing or counteracting the desired future?
	How is the desired future achieved? (= plot)	What developments and activities lead to the desired future? When and where do these take place?

Table 4
Summary of narratives of the four discursive agents.

	What are the current problems?	What is the desired future?	Who are the agents working towards the desired future?	Who are the agents opposing or counteracting the desired future?	What developments and activities lead to the desired future?
Shell	Collaboration with societal agents. Keeping up with societal change, while providing accessible, reliable, and affordable energy, and ensuring competitiveness.	Fossil fuels as financial backbone, with gradual decline. Mix of CCS, biofuels, hydrogen and fossil fuels.	Various essential agents. Consumers, shareholders, policymakers and industry groups in particular.	Consumers and Friends of the Earth NL.	'Avoid' emissions by scaling up low-carbon energy solutions. 'Reduce' emissions by enhancing efficiency. 'Mitigate' by capturing residual emissions.
Friends of the Earth NL	Climate change threatening basic human needs. Unalignment Paris Agreement Shell, greenwashing campaigns, delay tactics.	Paris Agreement as guideline. Absolute emission reduction without negative emission technologies and dismantling of fossil fuel production and usage.	Mainly the court, but also a mix of co-plaintiffs, NGOs, and initiatives such as Follow This.	Shell, fossil fuel multinationals and branch organizations, and other major polluters.	Climate lawsuits to legally enforce responsibility for GHG reduction. Anti-fossil fuel policies for companies, NGOs and states.
Follow This	Lack of imagination and attitude at management level. Greenwashing campaigns.	Paris Agreement as guideline. No specific requirements regarding energy sources, but advocates for clean energy. Combination of technologies and business models with traditional forms.	Broad spectrum of agents. Most important: Shell's shareholders and employees to exert pressure on the company from within.	Shells board and CEO, and other fossil fuel multinationals.	Shareholder activism is the central activity. Climate litigation and media engagement.
Code road	The capitalist system that drives profit maximization at the expense of peoples and ecosystems.	Transcending capitalism by a rapid and complete dismantling of fossil fuel infrastructure. Decentralized and socialized energy system.	Activist movements, non-profit research organizations, and workers and worker unions from the fossil fuel industry	Mostly Shell, and right-wing groups.	Dismantling fossil fuel industry, including Shell. Communicate with affected workers. Build a campaign to construct narrative, facilitate learning and organize actions.

4.1. Narratives

4.1.1. Shell

Climate change poses an urgent challenge that requires “unprecedented global collaboration” (p. 6, Shell, 2021). Fossil fuels will remain profitable, and they remain an important energy source during the transition, albeit with a gradual decline. Next to fossil fuels, emerging technologies such as carbon capture and storage, biofuels and hydrogen will become an important part of the future energy system. Ending oil and gas activities too fast can negatively affect the availability of energy and increase energy poverty, as millions of people are still lacking access to energy, making fossil fuels “vital to meeting today’s energy demand” (p. 3, Shell, 2021), while it threatens a stable cash flow and financial strength.

Collaboration with others is key, including with consumers, governments, investors, industry groups, and with forerunners within the company. Moving in step with society is crucial to avoid the supply of products that “our customers are unable or unwilling to buy” (INT#1 Shell 2022), because they think that they cannot afford it, or because the development of new industries and infrastructure is criticized for being too expensive. Consumers need to be stimulated to make low- and zero-carbon choices to facilitate progress. The support of shareholders is crucial to help shape transition goals. Policymakers are pivotal in accelerating change and in shaping effective policies for decarbonization through sectoral coalitions. The European Union is important as their directives shape the transition towards a more sustainable energy system. When disagreement occurs, common ground must be found, so “Shell’s door is always open ... we always engage in conversation with everyone” (INT#1 Shell 2022). The lawsuit with Friends of the Earth NL has however closed that door, as it is forbidden by lawyers to talk to other parties when a case is sub judice. This evoked a lot of internal discussion “for some people the windows shut, and they put their heels in the sand. While others are saying, we must be ahead of this. So, in that sense, it gives a lot of commotion within a company” (INT#1 Shell 2022).

There are specific carbon intensity targets to measure progress, with a long-term ambition of becoming net-zero emissions by 2050. To achieve this, there are three lines of actions for the company taking place at a multitude of venues throughout the world – from locations of extractions to Brussels policy chambers: a) avoiding carbon emissions means

scaling up low-carbon energy solutions and eventually replacing higher-carbon products; b) reduce actions focus on enhancing the efficiency of energy use within operations; and c) mitigating involves capturing and offsetting residual emissions through carbon capture and storage (CCS) and nature-based solutions. Next to these points, it is also important to prepare workers for the transition.

4.1.2. Friends of the Earth NL

Climate change is a perilous threat to basic human needs, and it “will affect the fundamental rights of people worldwide, among which the right to live, health and basic needs” (p. 17, Milieudefensie, 2019). It is imperative that the Paris Agreement goals are reached, and that global warming stays below the 1.5-degree Celsius threshold, to avoid “dangerous human disturbance of the climate system” (p. 3, Milieudefensie, 2020) and the subsequent consequences this has for the quality of life for current and future generations.

Shell, as a major contributor to global greenhouse gas emissions, is “one of the most polluting organizations in the world”, and in doing so endangers human rights (p. 2, Milieudefensie, 2020). Despite understanding the risks associated with their activities, Shell consciously chooses to employ delay tactics and to engage in greenwashing campaigns to bolster their image contributing to the “goal-oriented influencing of the collective subconsciousness” (p. 21, Milieudefensie, 2020). There is essentially a governance gap, which makes it “evidentially impossible to reach the necessary drastic decrease of the global carbon dioxide emissions in the coming 10 years” (p. 25, Milieudefensie, 2020). Important agents who want or can hold Shell accountable are courts, who hold the potential to impose obligations on Shell and set important legal precedents; but also, co-plaintiffs, and non-governmental organizations, such as Urgenda, who sued the Dutch state over climate action, or Follow This, whose actions revealed Shell’s reluctance to align its policy with climate goals. Still, Shell has the potential to play a positive role in an energy transition if the company decides to use its influence to combat climate change more effectively.

An effective way to impose anti-fossil fuel policies is to file lawsuits against polluting companies to legally enforce their responsibility for reducing greenhouse gas emissions: “The court can assign value ... to the fact that Shell has committed to [...] the UN Guiding Principles on business and Human Rights” (p. 32, Milieudefensie, 2020). As such court rooms

are important venues, as are media outlets and the streets, the latter for campaigns to raise awareness and increase societal support. Also, companies and non-state agents can adopt climate policies that align with the Paris Agreement, which should involve a rapid dismantling of fossil fuel production and use, while states can adopt anti-fossil fuel policies.

4.1.3. Follow this

Climate change is a problem for our societies and economies where carbon emissions need to be reduced and energy sources diversified. Delaying the transition includes running financial risks for businesses: there is a “growing understanding among global financial institutions that climate-related risks are a source of financial risk” and that therefore “limiting global warming is essential to risk management and responsible stewardship of the economy” (p.2, Follow This, 2021; INT#2 Follow This 2022). However, Shell’s top management lacks the imagination to envision revenue models besides oil and gas.

As major fossil fuel business, Shell is a prominent player who exerts major influence on delaying the transition by arguing why fossil fuel and their business is still necessary, starting from the “energy poverty argument” of not wanting to deny Africa its’ development, to the best barrel argument: “oil and gas are still needed in the coming 30 years, we [Shell] are the best and most responsible player on the market” (INT#1 Follow This 2022). Shell also diverts responsibility to consumers or governments. A broad spectrum of agents exerts pressure on Shell, e.g., the Dutch court, climate activists, states, and scientists to change “there is a feeling of respect and appreciation among those who work on this issue, and there is no debate on how to address this issue as ‘everyone chooses the tactic that fits them best’ and it is the diversity that is efficient” (INT#1 Follow This 2022). The most important agents are Shell’s shareholders, since they can use their power to insist on unambiguous Paris-consistent targets for all emissions.

For Shell to reduce emissions and change its business model, shareholder activism is considered the most important activity, as Shell is subject to short-term and profit-driven ‘shareholderism’, which creates a low threshold to bring in resolutions while the influence of shareholders is significant. Engagement with investors throughout is thus key: “this engagement is particularly to inform [the investors], and to be an ‘honest broker of truth’, because we always tell the truth” (INT#2 Follow This 2022). This engagement culminates in Shell’s Annual General Meeting (AGM) – being one of the main arenas.

4.1.4. Code road

The capitalist system is at the root of the climate crisis, of the exploitation of people and ecosystems, and inequality. To have “decentralized and socialized energy democracy for all” (p. 9, Code Rood, 2021a), the capitalist system needs to be dismantled.

Shell stands symbol of what is wrong with the capitalist system, as “Shell’s main priority remains profit maximization, the company thrives on inequality and undermines democratic decision-making, and Shell’s scenarios and marketing are misleading” (Code Rood, p. 4, 2021a). Its revolving door relationship with the Dutch government has resulted in “far-reaching protections for companies and investors against any government measures that might interfere with their expected profits” (Code Rood, p. 5, 2021a). Consequently, Shell “cannot be part of the world we want fair, just, and environmentally sustainable” (p. 4, Code Rood, 2021a). Movements are of key importance to overcome Shell’s influence, be it through collaborating with, learning from or taking inspiration from one another. The legitimacy of the movements work is enhanced by findings from non-profit research organizations such as SOMO and TNI. Adhering to a “save employees and communities, not the bosses” (p. 12, Code Rood, 2021a) philosophy, collaboration with workers and unions in the fossil fuel sector is essential.

To overcome the capitalist logic and to move away from fossil fuels, Shell and their fossil fuel infrastructure is to be dismantled. This means “a controlled phase-out and a radical, responsible transformation of Shell’s

ownership and economic activities” while ensuring a just transition to the people working in the sector (p. 5, Code Rood, 2021a). This requires public and political acceptance of a future without Shell and tasks the climate movement to have a shared narrative, for people to “work in unison – but from different strategies – to bring down Shell” (p. 10, Code Rood, 2021a). By combining public campaigning (e.g. information evenings, climate marches) with non-violent resistance (e.g. action camps) with more robust actions, such as disabling of machinery, “different groups can play different roles within a movement, all contributing in their own way to a common narrative” (p. 11, Code Rood, 2021a). Protests take place at symbolic venues, such as Shell’s headquarters or the Annual General Meeting (AGM), but also at fossil fuel infrastructure, such as filling stations, and a coaling port in Amsterdam, often at multiple locations simultaneously.

4.2. Narrative dynamics

Comparing the four narratives, several coordinating and demarcating dynamics have been identified and are outlined in the following section. These dynamics are analyzed in terms of discourse coalitions, highlighting a weak coalition among the three counternarratives and a strong coalition between Follow This and Friends of the Earth NL. Additionally, some coordinating dynamics between Follow This and Shell regarding their role in the future energy system are identified.

The counternarratives of Friends of the Earth NL, Follow This and Code Rood center around the notion that Shell significantly contributes to climate change and is failing in its decarbonization efforts due to its continued high emissions. They also coordinate on the impact of climate change on basic human needs, the urgent need to reduce fossil fuel production and use, and the belief that Shell is using delay tactics to obstruct energy transitions. However, there are demarcating dynamics concerning fossil fuel use: Friends of the Earth NL and Code Rood view fossil fuels as incompatible with a sustainable future, while Follow This remains more neutral, as long as emissions are reduced across all three scopes in line with the Paris Agreement. Thus, while Friends of the Earth NL, Follow This and Code Rood show some coordinating dynamics in their problem definition and strong antagonism of Shell’s current role, their narratives diverge on many other aspects. Consequently, the coalition between Friends of the Earth NL, Follow This and Code Rood can be considered a relatively weak discourse coalition.

The narratives of Follow This and Friends of the Earth NL both emphasize a major role for Shell in the transition towards renewables, and the necessity for the company to make efforts to reduce emissions. This demarcates from Code Rood, as they do not see a possible role for Shell in an energy transition; instead, they believe Shell should be dismantled. Follow This and Friends of the Earth NL recognize Shell as a crucial player in an energy transition because emission reductions by Shell will have a significant positive influence on reaching the Paris Agreement and mitigating climate change. Moreover, both Friends of the Earth NL and Follow This support each other’s strategies. However, there is demarcation regarding Shell’s motivation for profit maximization. Follow This views Shell’s drive for profit as a means to shift its role, aiming to persuade shareholders -who are considered influential agents within the company- that investing in renewables is financially sustainable and future-proof, while fossil fuels represent a risky investment. Follow This hopes that shareholder pressure will push Shell’s top management to implement policy reforms. In contrast, Friends of the Earth NL believes that Shell is unwilling to change voluntarily because it seeks to maximize profits from fossil fuels for as long as possible, regardless of human rights violations, and thus avoids regulation. Consequently, Friends of the Earth NL supports legal obligations. Despite this difference in perspective on profit maximization, Friends of the Earth NL and Follow This generally coordinate on Shell’s role in energy transitions, indicating a relatively strong discourse coalition.

Finally, the narratives of Follow This and Shell coordinate around profit maximization as a key driver for Shell, with both envisioning Shell

as a potential leader in the future energy system. This demarcates from Friends of the Earth NL, which is less explicit about Shell’s future role and adopts a more critical perspective. Code Rood, in contrast, is explicitly opposed to any role for Shell in the future energy system. Despite this, there are also demarcating dynamics between Shell and Follow This on fossil fuel profitability. Shell remains optimistic about fossil fuel profits, whereas Follow This perceives fossil fuels as a financial risk and advocates for investing in renewable, clean energy. Nevertheless, a weak discourse coalition can still be identified between Follow This and Shell around Shell’s role in the Dutch energy system.

These dynamics reveal that the antagonistic discourse coalition is critical of Shell’s current role in the energy transition. Despite this criticism, the relatively strong coalition between Friends of the Earth NL and Follow This argues that Shell still has the responsibility to play a crucial role, given that its emission reductions are significant for mitigating climate change. Code Rood takes a more radical stance, asserting that Shell should have no role in the transition or future, thus distinguishing itself from the other counternarratives. In contrast, both Follow This and Shell envision that Shell has the potential to be a leader in the future energy system (Table 5).

5. Discussion

As said, counternarratives play a crucial role in discursive struggles over issue interpretations by presenting new meaning structures (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002; Simoens et al., 2022). Having analyzed the various (counter)narratives concerning the role of the fossil fuel industry -specifically Shell- in the Dutch energy transition, including how these narratives position content relative to one another and whether discourse coalitions are formed, we now turn to examining three identified strategies used by discursive agents to increase the reproduction of their counternarratives. First, we will explore the deliberate positioning of radical narrative content by Code Rood. Second, we will describe how Follow This deliberately positions marginal narrative content. Finally, we will further examine coalition building, which is intertwined with narrative content, as a discursive strategy.

5.1. Diversification of narratives

The analyzed counternarratives share an antagonistic relationship towards the institutionalized energy discourse and its’ dominant energy security narrative. As has been discussed in literature (M. A. Hajer, 1995; Simoens et al., 2022), we have also seen that multiple alternative discourses emerge in reaction to the same institutionalized discourse, with varying orientations of antagonism in their counternarratives. Some of these counternarratives differ only marginally from the institutionalized discourse, whereas other narratives have more radical orientations. We found that Code Rood holds radical ideas towards Shell’s role, by aiming for a complete dismantling of the company and by criticizing the capitalist logic of the institutionalized discourse. Follow This takes a marginal approach by speaking within the format of the institutionalized discourse and appealing to its economic motives. In other words, Code Rood and Follow This are applying demarcating boundary work: they produce competing facts or ideas to gain credibility for their specific framing of the issue (Metze and Dodge, 2016). Their

counternarratives are ‘demarcating’ on the topic of capitalism and the associated role of fossil fuel multinationals in an energy transition. These diverse orientations have their own discursive dynamics and risks.

5.1.1. Radical imagination: deliberate positioning of radical narrative content

The first strategy of discursive practice is the deliberate positioning of radical narrative content. The ideas of Code Rood are at odds with Follow This, Friends of the Earth NL and Shell, as their narrative demarcates that Shell should be entirely dismantled, as it is fundamentally incapable of aligning with a just energy system due to its capitalist nature. As a result, Code Rood represents the **most radical** counternarrative among the three studied.

However, radical narratives that present completely new ideas compared to institutionalized discourses are however at risk of not being reproduced at all (Simoens et al. 2022). In the empirical analysis, Code Rood interpretations mostly diverge from the other agents, leading to a weak discourse coalition and suggesting that they are likely to remain relatively weak discursive agents. Despite this, the demarcating dynamics of radical narratives can generate competing framings of facts, potentially invigorating the debate around an issue (Metze and Dodge, 2016). By challenging prevailing norms, radical ideas can help shift the range of politically acceptable policies by the overall population.

Code Rood strategically presents strongly demarcated ideas about the role of Shell, arguing that this vision engages the public’s imagination and can create change: “Many people, and the public and political discourse, are stuck in a vision of the future in which Shell undoubtedly exists. Hence, the discussion often focuses on making Shell more fair or green ... People need to realize that a future without Shell is an actual possibility. If that frame is taken over by our allies, the Overton window [window of discourses] shifts and Shell’s fall is closer” (Code Rood, n.d.). By using demarcating boundary work, Code Rood highlights the differences from the institutionalized discourse (a future in which Shell undoubtedly exists) by introducing new competing facts (a future without Shell is possible). In doing so, their radical ideas can reveal the limitations of current structures of authority, power, and resources within the energy system, offering fundamentally different visions and encouraging imaginations of alternative futures beyond the status quo (Khasnabish, 2019; Sovacool et al., 2020).

5.1.2. Horse: deliberate positioning of marginal narrative content

The second strategy of discursive practice is the deliberate positioning of marginal narrative content. From the findings emerged that the counternarrative of Follow This can be seen as the most ‘marginal’ one in comparison to the studied discursive agents. There are elements within the counternarrative of Follow This that show coordinating dynamics with Shell’s narrative, which is a deliberate choice of Follow This. Speaking within the format of the institutionalized discourse and appealing to the economic motivations of Shell makes the narrative of Follow This attractive for incumbents and provides the narrative a higher chance of being sufficiently reproduced and to become influential (Simoens et al. 2022). The coordinating dynamics between the narratives of Follow This and Shell provide an opportunity for the narratives **to integrate**, as the narrative of Follow This introduces new interpretations of the presented facts, shifting the common but ill

Table 5
Summary of the three discourse coalitions and their discursive dynamics.

	Discursive agents	Coordinating dynamics within coalition	Demarcating dynamics within coalition
1: Antagonistic coalition	Follow This, Friends of the Earth NL, Code Rood	Shell’s current efforts to address climate change, Shell as contributor to climate change, significant reduction fossil fuels, delay tactics Shell	Role Shell and fossil fuels in transition and future energy system
2: Reform coalition	Follow This, Friends of the Earth NL	Shell’s major role in energy transition, supporting strategies	Profit as driver for change
3: Profit coalition	Follow This, Shell	Profit maximization, power of shareholders, Shell’s role as a leading energy company in future energy system	Profitability of fossil fuels, current efforts of Shell in complying with Paris Agreement

structured meaning of an issue (Metze and Dodge, 2016). For example, that would be the notion that fossil fuels are a financial risk, and that Shell can secure a position as a leading company in an energy transition when it transitions towards a renewable energy company. Simoens et al. (2022) describe this as a pathway of dynamic discursive change from within.

However, it is still debated to what extent the ‘discursive **change from within**’ pathway can lead to change: if it can only result in optimization, or if it holds the potential for radical change (Ferguson, 2015; Leipold, 2021; Simoens et al., 2022). The extent of discursive change depends on how new meaning constructs of the counternarrative are integrated within the institutionalized discourse. There is a risk of incremental or no change of the energy regime, when ‘narrative co-optation’ occurs: the marginal narrative aligns too close with the dominant narrative, losing its transformational power as the core values and assumptions remain the same (Pel, 2016; Simoens et al., 2022). Recent research indicates that fossil fuel industries are ‘co-opting’ the idea of transition, where those in power form strategic coalitions to prevent coalition building of a credible opposition (Newell, 2019; Si et al., 2023). As we found, Follow This and Shell coordinate on the notion that Shell can be a leading company in an energy transition, and that profit maximization is the main drive of Shell to achieve that. Narrative co-optation would entail a transition strategy of Shell that grows their renewable energy portfolio, while also growing the fossil fuel portfolio alongside CCS-techniques to compensate for emissions because this enables the highest profit maximization. In that situation, parts of the counternarrative of Follow This are integrated within the institutionalized discourse, but it loses its transformational power to change the regime. Bosman et al. (2014) describes this process also as ‘regime restabilization’, as the incumbent coalition reconfigures around the meaning structures of the counternarrative, resulting in an even stronger energy regime.

The potential for transformative change occurs when the counternarrative contributes to the dislocation of meaning structures from the dominant narrative, that is when discursive meanings become disrupted and when possibilities for new discursive constructs emerge (Saharov, 2021). In that situation, the dominant narrative and counternarrative reconfigure around the new meaning structures presented by Follow This, forming a new discourse coalition that is including of strong incumbent agents. Follow This aims for this outcome by convincing strong incumbent agents, such as Shell’s shareholder, of their framings, so that their discursive agency is increased. This is done through several strategic practices: building trust, providing space to discuss conflicts that arise from a transition, and by presenting clear directions and goals of a desired, for example during Shell’s AGM (Luo et al., 2021; Simoens and Leipold, 2021). If incumbents, as strong discursive agents, are attracted to the meaning structures presented by Follow This (such as the financial risks of fossil fuels), this could lead to the destabilization of the institutionalized discourse, providing the opportunity for radical, discursive change (Simoens et al. 2022).

5.2. Coalition building

As discussed in the previous section, coalition building is a discursive strategy closely tied to how narrative content is positioned. Follow This uses marginal narrative content to convince incumbents of their meanings, while also building coalitions with non-incumbent agents such as Friends of the Earth NL. Our findings indicate that the counternarratives of Friends of the Earth NL and Follow This largely coordinate, emphasizing Shell’s pivotal role in influencing the course of energy transitions, uniting them in a discourse coalition.

However, Follow This and Friends of the Earth NL also **hold certain differing views**, for example on the continued role of fossil fuels. Follow This remains more neutral on the continued role of fossil fuels but advocates for absolute emission reduction and clean forms of energy. In contrast, Friends of the Earth NL calls for absolute emission reductions

with the complete phase-out of fossil fuels. Despite these nuances, both align on the view that a successful energy transition necessitates a substantial reduction in Shell’s emissions. This alignment in narrative logic enables them to form a coalition aimed at altering Shell’s role in the transition (Hajer, 1995; Stevenson, 2009). As a result, their combined discursive power as a coalition is strengthened (Hajer, 1995; Leipold and Winkel, 2017). Friends of the Earth NL, through street campaigning and media outreach, seeks to increase public support and further reinforce this coalition.

The **coalition** between Follow This and Friends of the Earth NL has the potential to dislocate the institutionalized discourse. By bringing forth new facts or events that the incumbent coalition finds difficult to address, discursive repositioning among incumbents can occur with implications for the coherence of the regime (Bosman et al., 2014; Metze and Dodge, 2016). An example of this is the Paris Agreement, where the event is discursively positioned to challenge existing interpretations. The Paris Agreement is a legally binding framework that obligates countries to limit global warming to well below 2 °Celsius (Paris Agreement, 2015). Follow This used this framework to challenge Shell’s practices, culminating in their demand for Shell to align with the Paris Agreement’s goals through shareholder resolutions from 2017 and onwards (Follow This, 2017). Friends of the Earth NL leveraged the Paris Agreement and the outcomes of these resolutions to legally bind Shell to these goals. During this time, several former Shell employees have criticized and left the company over its decarbonization pace (e.g., Bousso, 2023a, 2023b; de Volkskrant, 2018; RTL Nieuws, 2020; Trouw, 2023). This suggests that the interaction between the coalition of Follow This and Friends of the Earth NL is putting pressure on existing meaning structures. This continued pressure can lead to ‘discursive regime destabilization’ and weaken the structuration of the regime (Bosman et al., 2014), creating opportunities for alternative discourses to gain dominance, and even result in the phase-out of contested elements of the regime (Simoens et al. 2022).

6. Conclusion

The most recent developments surrounding the role of the fossil fuel industry in the Dutch energy system show further polarization dynamics: Shell’s new CEO as of January 1st 2023, Wael Sawan, introduces a more aggressive approach towards fossil fuels over renewable developments (Gosden, 2023; Jolly, 2023); Friends of the Earth NL sues Dutch bank ING for its investments in fossil fuel projects (Milieudedefensie, 2024), and releases a manual for climate litigators (Milieudedefensie, n.d.); and Exxonmobil sues Follow This in an attempt to stop a shareholder climate resolution from going to a vote, marking the first company that goes to court to block such a shareholder motion (Financial Times, 2024). The energy regime is in a phase of destabilization, as fossil fuel-based pathways are increasingly being questioned, also from within the energy regime, in a discursive struggle.

This underscores the importance of our research, which explored how (counter)narratives shape the discursive dynamics around the fossil fuel industry’s role in the Dutch energy system. This was done through a qualitative study examining the institutionalized discourse represented by Shell and alternative discourses represented by Follow This, Friends of the Earth NL, and Code Rood, along with their emerging discourse coalitions. A successful reproduction of counternarratives is essential for facilitating discursive change and advancing sustainability transitions. Our findings reveal that discursive agents deploy a variety of discursive strategic practices to increase the successful reproduction of their narratives, including the strategic positioning of radical narrative content, the strategic positioning of marginal narrative content, and coalition building.

How counternarratives shape discursive dynamics in transitions varies based on these strategic practices of discursive agents. Code Rood, for instance, strategically positions radical narrative content, asserting that Shell should have no role in the transition and future energy system

and should be dismantled. Radical ideas evoke demarcating discursive dynamics, polarizing the debate around an issue. This can inspire imaginations of alternative futures beyond the status quo. However, there is a risk that these ideas are not being reproduced as Code Rood is likely to remain a relatively weak discursive agent. In contrast, Follow This positions their narrative more marginally, partially aligning with Shell's narrative in their vision of Shell as a potential leader in the energy transition. Their marginal narrative evokes coordinating dynamics, aiming to shift meaning structures within incumbent coalitions. By providing meaning structures that are appealing to incumbent agents, Follow This can potentially discursively reposition these incumbents and destabilize the institutionalized discourse. Nonetheless, there is a risk that such marginal narratives might be co-opted, leading to regime 'restabilization' and only incremental changes, if any. Additionally, Friends of the Earth NL and Follow This enhance their discursive agency through coalition building by aligning their narratives. They argue that Shell still has the responsibility to play a crucial role in the transition, given that its emission reductions are significant for mitigating climate change. As a result, their combined discursive power as a coalition is strengthened, enhancing their potential for discursive regime destabilization.

While this article delves into the discursive dynamics surrounding the fossil fuel industry's role in the Dutch energy system, with Shell exemplifying the institutionalized discourse, it should be noted that this discourse is upheld by a broader coalition involving for example policymakers and interest groups. Looking into the narratives of other incumbents, we can gain more differentiated insights into the extent to which the institutionalized discourse is destabilizing. Further research on discursive strategies employed by incumbents and longitudinal research on the changes in narratives over time would enhance our understanding on the role of discursive dynamics in sustainability transitions.

Declaration of generative AI in scientific writing

During the preparation of this work the author(s) used ChatGPT in order to check parts of the text for spelling errors and repetition. After using this tool, the author(s) reviewed and edited the content as needed and take(s) full responsibility for the content of the publication.

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