

Axe politiques socio-fiscales & Axe Politiques environnementales

Matteo MANDELLI



Postdoctoral Research Fellow at Sciences Po's Centre for European Studies and Comparative Politics & board member of the *Sustainable Welfare and Eco-social Policy Network*. His core research interest is the politics of eco-social policies in the European Union and in its member states.

In Collaboration With:

- Anne-Laure BEAUSSIER (CSO)
- Tom CHEVALIER (Laboratoire Arènes)
- Charlotte HALPERN (CEE)
- Éloi LAURENT (OFCE)
- Bruno PALIER (CEE)

MAPPING THE SOCIAL RISKS OF ENVIRONMENTAL TRANSITIONS

The advent of climate change and the green transition is bound to threaten the already-unstable foundations of European welfare states, creating a new wave of unprecedented social risks, but also novel opportunities for policy changes. This project aims to expand our analytical and empirical knowledge about the social risks of environmental origin, as well as of the eco-social policies that aim to address these risks. The project – which operates between LIEPP's Axe politiques socio-fiscales & Axe Politiques environnementales – envisages dissemination activities oriented to influence the academic and policy debates in this new field. In this view, the Socio-Ecological Transition Initiative (SET) was launched as a collaboration between LIEPP and other Sciences Po laboratories.

The Problems at Stake

It is becoming increasingly evident that both climate change and green transition policies are generating a new wave of social risk for the welfare state to address. In the face of growing risks, harsh political conflicts are also appearing, pitting the proponents of environmental transitions against the "losers" of this transition, who often find representation in far-right parties or anti-green movements. While the literature investigating the socio-ecological nexus is expanding, a widespread prescriptive tendency prevents us to understand both the social risks of environmental transitions and their political implications. Thus, an empirical approach to study these risks and policies appears essential.

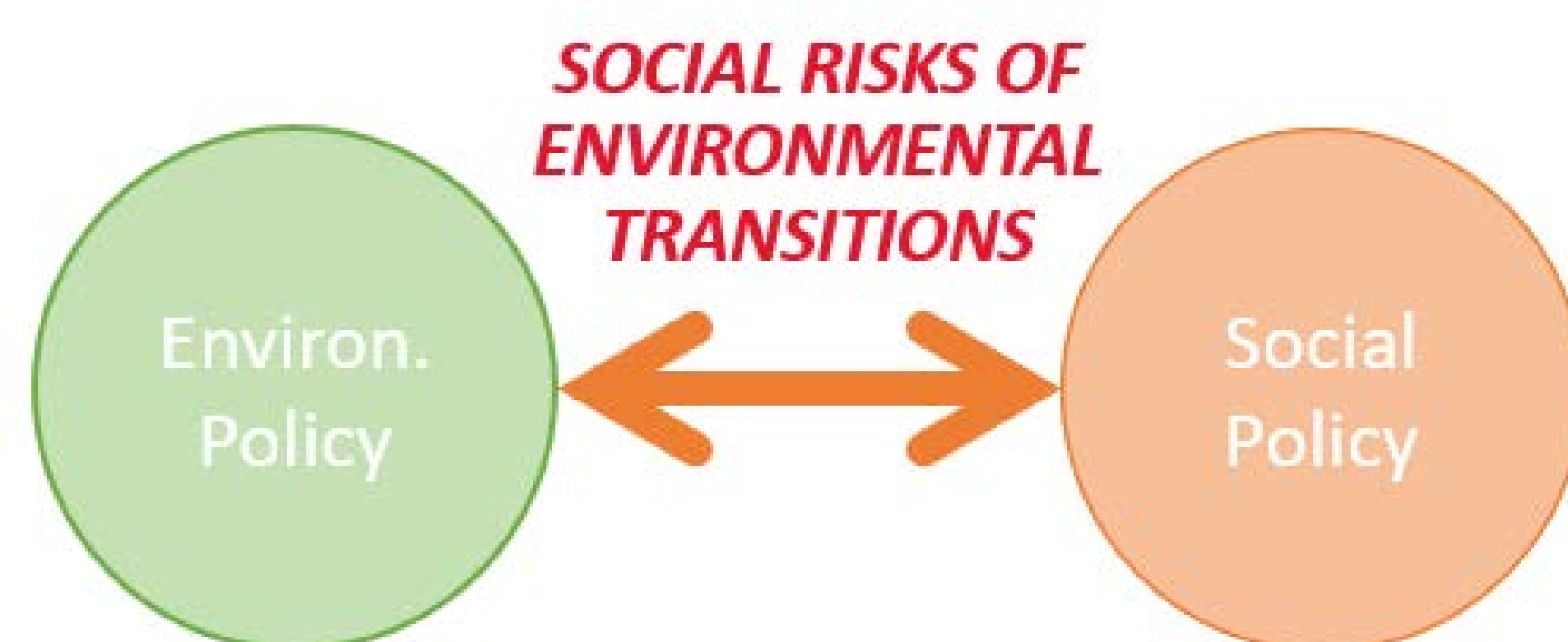
Two Main Objectives

1. A new wave of social risks

The project aims to provide an empirically-applicable definition, taxonomy and operationalization of the new wave of social risks connected to the ongoing climate and ecological crisis. In this sense, it advances an empirical research agenda striving to grasp what are these risks and who we can expect to be most at risk.

2. Eco-social Policies in Europe

Focusing on the European Union (EU) and its member states, the project also aims to identify and analyze existing supranational and national eco-social policies, which represent responses to the social risks of environmental transitions. It does so by focusing on risks connected to decarbonization, both from the production side (e.g., job losses and skill needs in carbon-intensive industries) and the consumption side (e.g., growing energy poverty).



Research Strategy & Methods

To reach its goals, the project employs a variety of different methods. For the conceptualization of the social risks of environmental transitions, it builds upon a critical literature review of studies situated at the intersection between welfare and environmental policy fields. To map eco-social policies, the project relies on a qualitative textual analysis of relevant EU and national policy documents. In particular, the *National Energy and Climate Plans* are used to retrieve EU countries' policies to address the social risks of decarbonization.

Dissemination

Between Academia & the Policy World

This project aspires to provide a comprehensive map of eco-social risks and policies with the ambition to guide future quantitative and qualitative empirical research. The results have been disseminated via 2 LIEPP publications, as well as journal articles, book chapters and academic conferences. Dissemination also occurs through the SET Initiative and the *Sustainable Welfare and Eco-social Policy Network*. Finally, the project also seeks to feed the European policy debate on just transition, through collaborations with the *Green European Foundation* and the *European Trade Union Institute*.

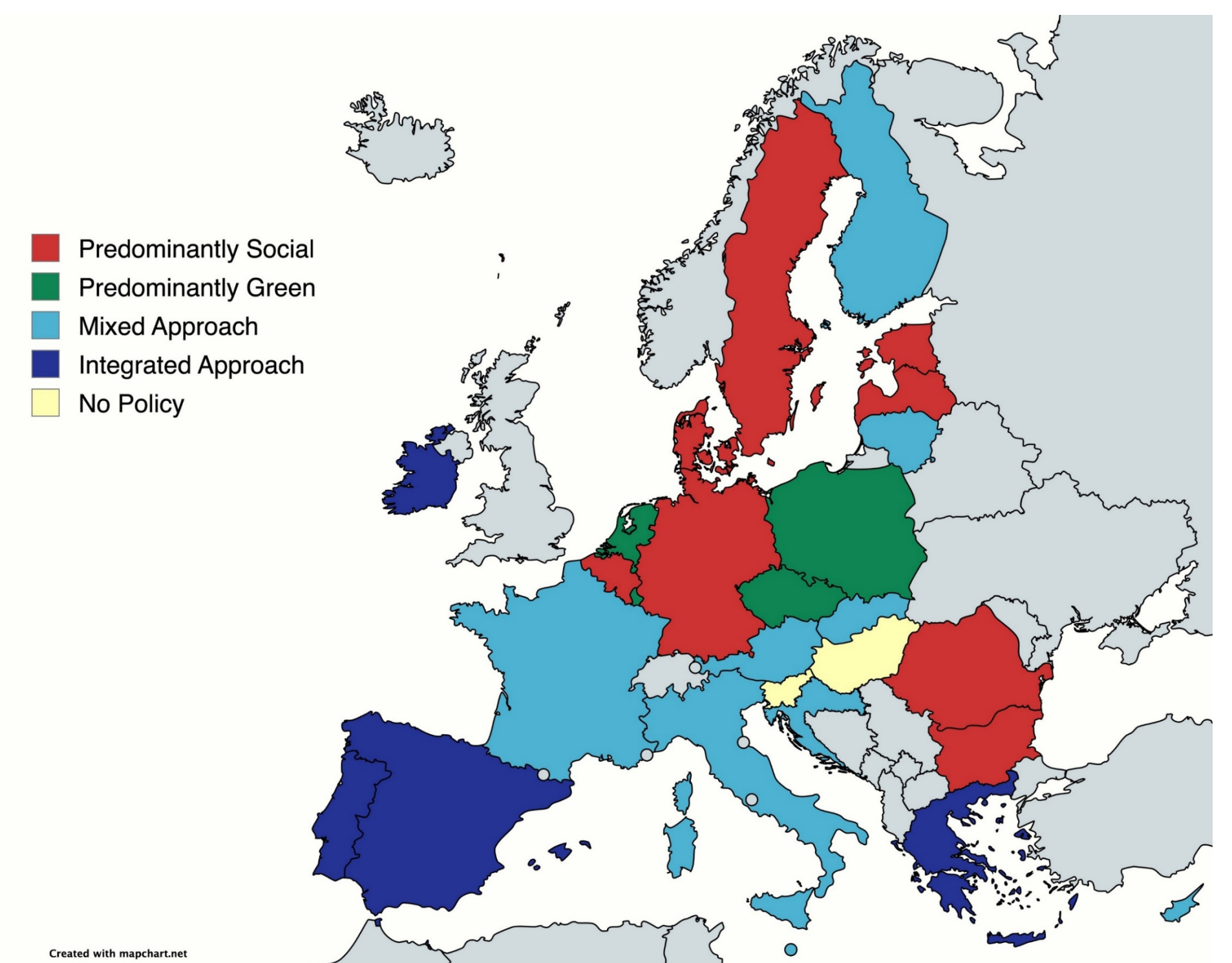
Grasping New Socio-ecological Risks

The social risks of environmental transitions can be defined as a significant change in the nature and/or distribution of social risks that occurs either *directly* because of environmental hazards, or *indirectly*, due to the (re)distributional effects of environmental policies. Notable examples include risks related to income, health, mobility, food, energy and jobs. The incidence and distribution of new risks is hypothesized to depend mainly on the following mechanisms: pre-existing vulnerability (v); exposure to environmental hazards (e); and dependence on ecologically-harmful activities or assets (d). Furthermore, eco-social policies (p) appears to be crucial for risk reduction. The equation below summarizes the proposed operationalization of the social risks of environmental transitions.

$$R = v * (e + d) * \frac{1}{p}$$

Mapping Eco-social Policies

Analyzing EU countries' responses to the new social risks of decarbonization, and specifically energy poverty, we find that, although most address this problem, they do so with different policy mixes. In particular, the relative emphasis given to social or green energy instruments is very heterogeneous. While in Belgium, Bulgaria, Estonia, Denmark, Germany, Latvia, Romania and Sweden social policy instruments are prioritized, green energy policies prevail in Czechia, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Poland. Other countries - Austria, Cyprus, Finland, France, Croatia, Italy, Lithuania, Malta and Slovakia - combine social and green instruments in their responses to energy poverty. Only three Southern European countries (Spain, Greece and Portugal) and Ireland are more evidently pursuing an integrated eco-social approach via dedicated strategies and governance structures coordinating sparse policy instruments.



The Social-Ecological Transitions (SET) Initiative

Founded in 2024, the SET initiative aims to promote cooperation between Sciences Po's researchers from various disciplines, while also engaging with external academics, policymakers and experts. The ultimate goal of SET is to encourage dialogue and to advance our knowledge about social-ecological transitions. SET is a collaboration between different Sciences Po research laboratories: LIEPP, CSO, CEE and OFCE. It also operates in partnership with the *Institut pour les Transformations Environnementales* and the *Atelier Interdisciplinaire de Recherches sur l'Environnement*. For 2025, SET has planned several activities, including an international academic workshop, a public event, a stakeholder roundtable and a PhD seminar.