

Protests against Solar power parks

Trans4Demo

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12 November 2025

Agenda

- Protest against renewable energy infrastructures in Europe: a widespread dynamic
- Protest against solar power parks in Denmark: part of a wider European Phenomenon?



Protests against renewable infrastructures in Europe



European green transition

- 2019 European green deal
- 2021 European climate law
- 2022 RePowerEU Plan
- EU Solar Energy Strategy (2022)

Challenge:

- Install 4 to 15 times the current capacity of solar power stations by 2030
- double wind production
- Local protests and political opposition

The European Green Deal

Striving to be the first climate-neutral continent

European Climate Law

REPowerEU

Mere sikker og bæredygtig energi til overkommelige priser for Europa

Protest against renewable energy infrastructures

Not new

L'Amassada (France) (2014-2019)

Local occupation and zone to defend (ZAD)
vs construction of energy transformer in
Aveyron region

Today: many similar protests spread
across the continent



Protest against renewable energy infrastructures

Spain

2022 new national framework:

- 74% electricity from renewable by 2030
- 152 new large solar parks

Many civil society organizations opposing new parks

- ALIENTE: National coordination
- Aim: stop damages and balance of territory, biodiversity and sustainable local development



Protest against renewable energy infrastructures

Norway

- New wind energy project impedes reindeer herding, crucial for Sámi communities;
- 2021: Supreme court ruled wind farms violated human rights Sámi people;
- Windmill still operate
- 2023: blockade of entrance ministry of energy
- 2024: announced an agreement including provision to protect indigenous culture



Protest against renewable energy infrastructures

Other similar cases:

- Germany
- Portugal
- France
- Italy
- UK
- ...

PAN proposes "immediate" suspension of the Sophia solar plant project

PAN argues that the solar plant in the district of Castelo Branco may have negative impacts on the environment, tourism and natural heritage of the Beira Baixa region. Project generates contestation.

Protest in the state parliament against solar parks in Märkischer Schweiz

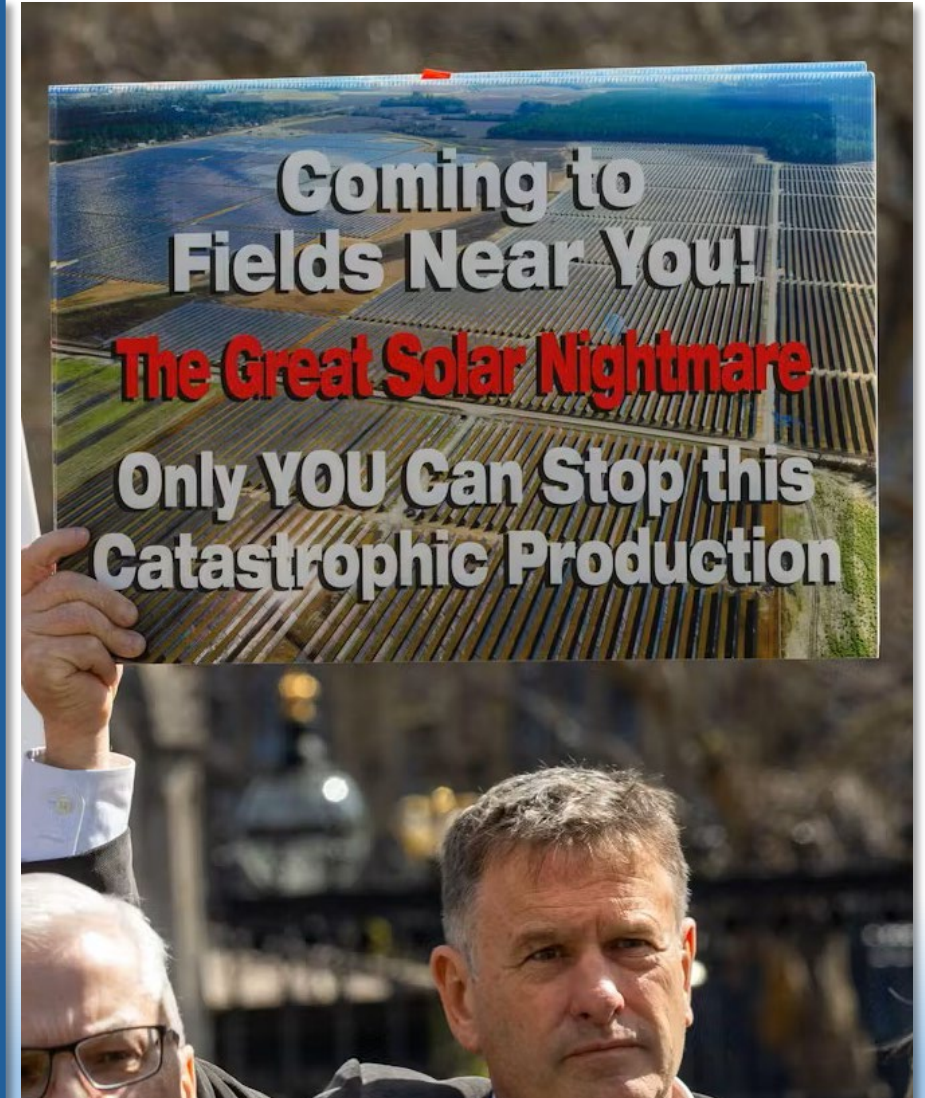
21 May 2025, 14:24 Source: dpa Berlin/Brandenburg

Sardinia, the offshore wind project that neither the municipalities nor the Region like. But the concerns are growing.

Citizen activists take on 'destructive' solar power plants in France's Provence region

Topics of contention

- Damage to nature and biodiversity
- Land-grabbing
- Differentiated impact on stakeholders
 - Urban/rural conflict
 - Reinforcing pre-existing inequalities
 - exclusion of local communities from decision-making
 - Lack of public control
- Cultural conflict: pragmatism vs. traditional role of countryside



Modes of protest

Civic engagement

- Community organization (group foundation, coordination)
- Online activism

Institutional channels

- Petitions, appeals, etc.
- Initiations of Court cases

Direct action:

- Mass demonstrations
- Occupation, Sabotages



Role of radical right parties

Green turn

- Not necessarily denying climate change
- Conditional environmentalism: yes, but
 - National over international policies
 - Favor environmental over climate policies

Still, impeding climate governance

- Ideological reasons: identity, rural traditionalism
- Strategic reasons
 - Attract voters concerned with specific climate issues
 - Challenge the 'left-green' hegemony



Role of radical right parties

Differences across European Radical right parties:

- Against solar parks: AfD (Germany), RN (France), Forum for Democracy (FvD) and Party for Freedom (PVV) (Neherlands)
- Against solar parks: Vox (Spain), Lega (Italy), FPÖ (Austria), VB (Belgium)
- Differences: geographical (north/south), strategic objectives



Protest against solar power parks in Denmark



Denmark Solar parks

- 2020 Danish Climate act:
 - emissions reduced by 70% compared to 1990 levels by 2030;
 - climate neutrality by 2050;
 - projecting to reach 100% renewable electricity consumption by 2028
- 2024 new solar strategy:
 - Accelerating green transition
 - Market-driven expansion - further expansion without state subsidies.
 - (...)



Increase global
climate ambition



Reduce global
greenhouse gas
emissions



Strengthen focus on
climate adaption and
sustainable
development



Shift financial flows
and investments
from black to green



Collaborate with
the private sector
on green solutions

Protest against solar parks

Increasingly a topic of discussion since 2019

Who:

- civil society actors: local communities, local electoral lists, Facebook groups, professors and researchers
 - political parties: DF, Æ, but also C, DF, Ø, RV, S, SF, V
 - institutional stakeholders: mayors, national agencies and associations
 - energy providers
-
- Where: rural areas across the country



Topics of contention

- **Green transition policies:** National Climate Act (2020), Planning Act (Planloven) (2021), Danmark kan mere II (2022), ...
- **Grid connection:** outdated for widespread electrification
- **Green certificate system**
- **New Solar parks:**
 - Damage to natural landscape: visual pollution, damage to idyllic Danish nature
 - damage for biodiversity
 - Differentiated impacts on stakeholders
 - Urban/rural conflict: Value reduction in areas surrounding solar parks; “Somebody in Copenhagen chose for us”
 - Stakeholder exclusion: Climate as an alibi for profit; Lack of information

Modes of protest

Discursive initiatives:

- Public condemnations
- Op-ed on newspapers

Civic engagement:

- Community organization (electoral lists)
- Online activism (Facebook groups)

Institutional channels

- Dialogue with local politicians
- Petitions, letters, appeals, etc.
- Alternative solutions/ policy proposals

Direct action:

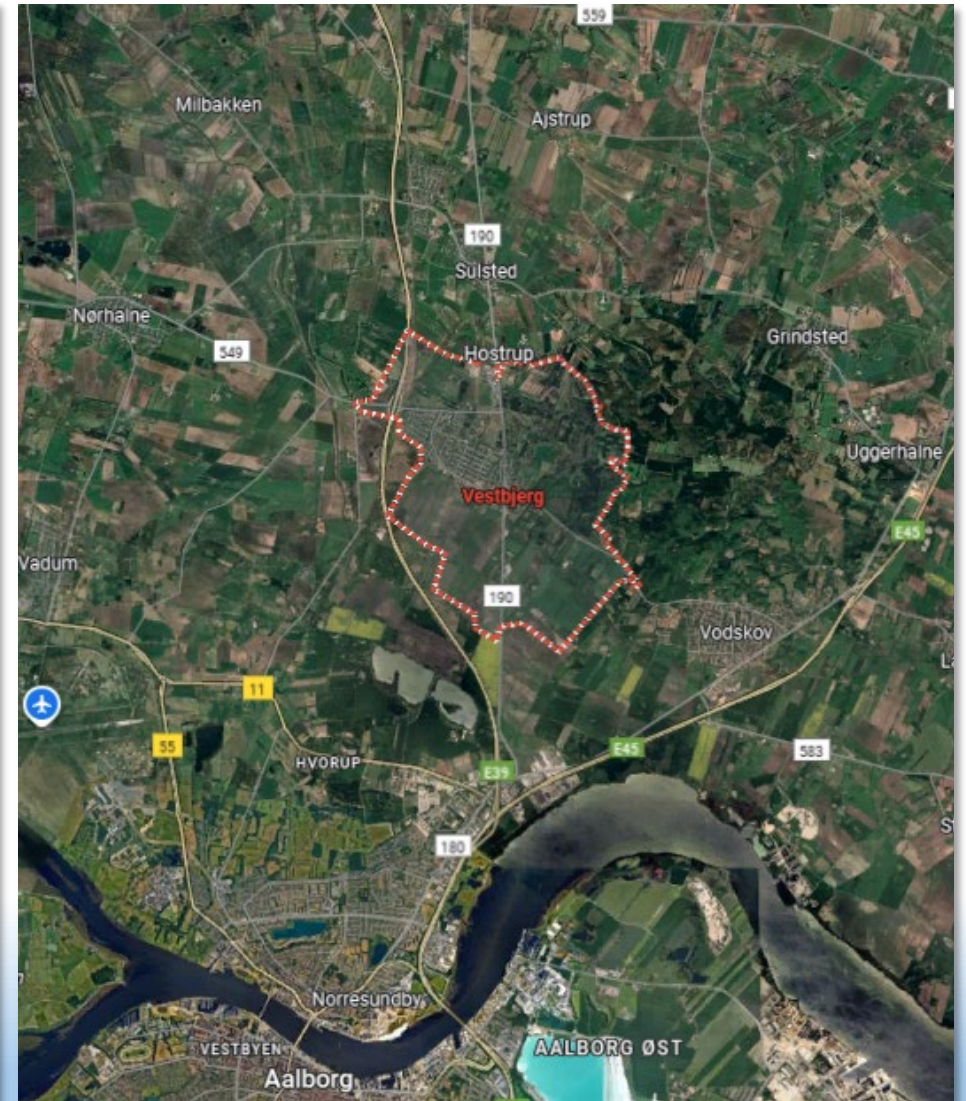
- exposition of banners, public meetings
- Local resistance: refusal to sell property



Opposition to solar parks

Vestbjerg, Nordjylland (May-Sept. 2025)

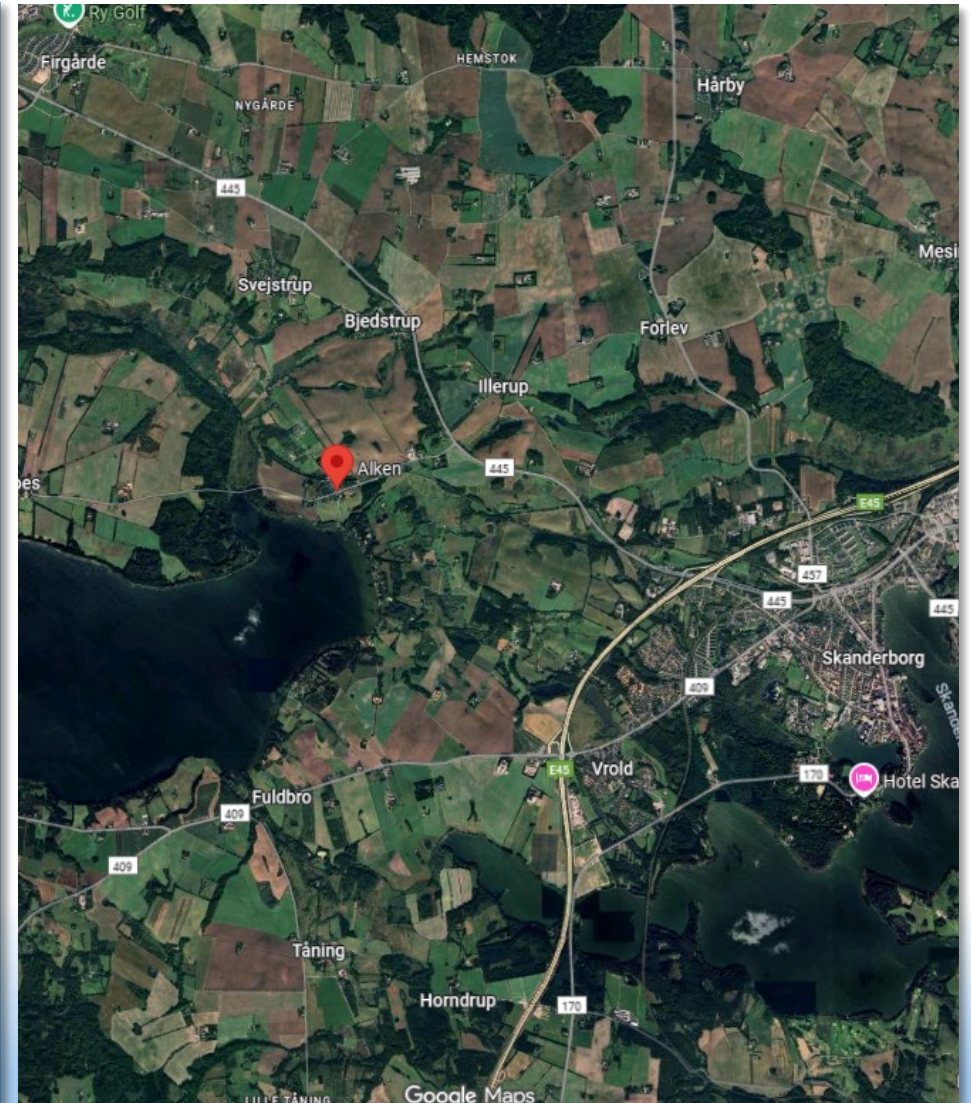
- Local solarpark project risk affecting nature and cultural landscape
- Petition: 19 people submit letter to working group to ask relocation of solar park to sum it up with another project
- Working group submit request to city and landscape committee
- Petition collects 860 signatures



Opposition to solar parks

Alken, Midtjylland (Sept. 2025)

- Two citizens refuse to sell their property to local energy park project (wind turbines and solar park) 300 metres from their home.
- Developer (NRGi renewables) must offer to buy the house to proceed by law;
- the kommune could expropriate but local politicians and mayor rejected this solution.
- NRGi abandons the plans to build the park and no alternative solutions will be taken care of in the immediate future
- local population have shown opposition to the park in prior protests.



Role of the radical right

DF and Æ

- Climate skepticism, not denial: yes-but relation to climate change and energy crisis
- Critique of green transition goals: unrealistic, excessive
- Populist message: elite driven agendas vs local rural people
- Proposed solutions: urban solar panels and nuclear power (DF)

Relation with local citizens:

- Sometime keywords sticking (iron fields)
- Especially in electoral campaigning – defined goal of separating themselves from the ‘political bandwagon’



Comparison: Europe vs Denmark

Similarities:

- similar issues and actors,

Different forms of protest:

- less polarized in Denmark
- more institutional oriented

What is different about Denmark?

- Tradition of community-inclusive approach
- Low politicized issue (so far)
- Lack of significant political opposition to green transition