



# Strategic Advocacy

How environmental advocates navigate climate obstruction

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## Abstract

Numerous scholars have devoted their work to understand the persistent inaction on global warming. The emerging research field of *climate obstruction* contributes to this equation by uncovering the rigorous efforts of resourceful networks to delay or hinder climate action as well as the complex mosaic of identities, interests, discourses and actors reinforcing said efforts. The concept goes beyond climate denialism to paint a fuller picture of current practices that vigorously hinder socioecological sustainable transitions.

The purpose of this study is to explore how Swedish environmental advocacy actors experience and strategically navigate climate obstruction. Environmental advocates working with the urgent and overlapping ecological crises hold first-hand experience of navigating this phenomenon. Despite being acknowledged for making scientific knowledge accessible and providing space for public deliberation, they are currently experiencing pushbacks such as a shrinking civic space and tech-facilitated affective polarisation that further complicate their work.

Through interviews with eight environmental advocates and a structured analysis of the collected data, this study shows ample experiences of climate obstruction as well as strategic reflections on how to address it. The results indicate that advocates use a diverse but complementing set of strategies to creatively and intentionally counter and pre-empt climate obstruction. A central theme among their strategical reflections is to raise awareness through relatable science communication. Another is to consciously move beyond matters of knowledge to address the underlying aspects of identities and interests that they perceive to be reinforcing climate obstruction.

A key conclusion is that the advocates connect matters of climate obstruction to matters of democracy and implement strategies to vitalise democracy as part of their work. With the Swedish elections of 2026 coming up, environmental advocates accelerate their work to raise climate action on the election agenda while climate obstruction is broadcasted by influential actors who effectively downplay climate issues. As climate obstruction grows in complexity and sophistication, the pressure grows on abilities to reveal, resist, pre-empt and counter it to work for climate action. This study contributes to the body of knowledge on how to identify climate obstruction and illuminates a variety of strategies to navigate the phenomenon.

*Keywords:* climate obstruction, climate denial, climate action, environmental communication, advocacy, civil society, NGO

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# Abbreviations

| <b>Abbreviation</b> | <b>Description</b>                          |
|---------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| ENGO                | Environmental non-governmental organisation |
| R1, 2, 3...         | Respondent 1, 2, 3...                       |



# 1. Introduction

For several decades, the knowledge about human induced global warming has been accompanied by rigorous efforts to undermine both research, solutions and actors addressing the environmental problems (Roberts et al. 2025). Emerging research of climate obstruction uncovers the intentional attempts of powerful actors to make societal transitions considerably more difficult through engaging in various versions of manipulation, greenwashing and spreading doubt despite robust climate science (Ekberg et al. 2022; Roberts et al. 2025). Environmental advocates have first-hand experience with countering this obstruction (Stephens & Yadin 2025). Complicating their work and further delaying climate action is the societal fragmentation and tech-facilitated affective polarisation creating increasingly diverging interpretations of the social and political world (Braun 2019; Treen et al. 2020). Though struggles over meaning are inherent to societal issues (Jasanoff & Simmet 2017), the extent of current polemic creates a worrying situation in relation to the irreversible factors of climate crisis and the precarious urgency of societal change depending on decisive political action (Arora-Jonsson et al. 2024; Fletcher et al. 2024).

Numerous scholars have devoted their work to understand the persistent inaction on global warming and the continued dissonance between knowledge and actions (Fischer 2019; Hochachka 2024). The perspective of climate obstruction contributes to this equation by drawing attention to the manifold efforts to oppose and delay adequate climate measures (Ekberg et al. 2022; Roberts et al. 2025). Building on early disclosures of vast networks intentionally disinforming the public despite knowingly posing a substantial threat to environmental safety (Oreskes & Conway 2010), climate obstruction research continues to uncover networks forcefully perpetuating status quo for political and economic interests (Brulle 2023; Si et al. 2023; Plehwe & Farrel 2025).

Furthermore, the lens of climate obstruction broadens the view from epistemic struggles of climate denial to include a complex mosaic of identities, interests, practices, strategies, benefits, disappointments, distrust and disorder (Almiron & Moreno 2022; Fortin et al. 2025). This allows for a more rigorous understanding of how climate inaction materialises and connects accumulating scientific evidence explaining orchestrated climate obstruction as a root cause for continued inaction (Roberts et al. 2025).

But this is not the whole story. Around the world, actors from governments, corporations and civil society work to address the collective character of global warming and avoid dangerous interference with the climate system (Hormio 2023). Previous research observes an increasing variety of organisations engaging in environmental advocacy which, despite counterefforts, have shown positive effects on climate policies (Rietig 2016; Böhler et al. 2022). Extensive research is

dedicated to document the environmental advocacy strategies of environmental non-governmental organisations (ENGOS)(Gullberg 2008; Holz 2012; Mosley et al. 2023). They portray a wide range of strategies from lobbying, litigation and writing reports to public mobilisation and social media campaigns. However, less attention has been brought to ENGO-advocacy in relation to climate obstruction.

While there is a growing body of literature on climate obstruction on one hand, and on ENGO-advocacy on the other, there is a shortage of research covering the overlaps and interactions between these two fields. While important pioneer work has started mapping the international lines (Stephens & Yadin 2025), this thesis aims to address the gap by exploring some perspectives from Swedish environmental advocacy.

Sweden poses an interesting example as a country long renowned for its environmental ambitions (Lidskog & Elander 2012; Duit 2016; Stiftung 2024), for instance, establishing the first national park in 1909, introducing one of the first carbon taxes in 1991 and constituting one of the most ambitious environmental legislations in 2017 (Malm et al. 2025). However, since the last election, the Swedish government has changed direction. Despite claims to preserve high ambitions, their new policies and legislations tell otherwise. Cuts in environmental budgets and weakened climate policy instruments result in growing emissions (Persson & Johansson Stenman 2026; SCPC 2024), which derail Swedish progress towards its environmental goals for 2030 (OECD 2025). In a few months (13<sup>th</sup> September 2026), Sweden is set for a new election. Thus, ENGOS across the country work to establish environmental issues on the agenda while encountering these obstructionist tendencies from a new actor: the government itself (Malm et al. 2025). Hence, the relevance of this research is underlined by the intersection of the aforementioned fields in the light of the upcoming election.

As climate obstruction grows in complexity and sophistication, the pressure grows on abilities to reveal, resist, pre-empt and counter it to push for climate action. This study contributes to the body of knowledge on how climate obstruction materialises in the advocacy field, which is relevant for practitioners advancing their strategies. Moreover, understanding how advocates strategically reflect on how to counter climate obstruction provide valuable insights for others with similar ambitions, including actors from civil society, corporations, policymakers, politicians and media.

## 1.1 Research purpose

The purpose of this study is to explore *how Swedish environmental advocacy actors experience and strategically navigate climate obstruction*. To guide the direction of research are the following sub questions:

RQa) How do environmental advocates experience climate obstruction?

RQb) How do environmental advocates reflect on their strategies to handle climate obstruction?

## 2. Background

The following chapter situates the study further in existing research on climate obstruction and environmental advocacy and provides some initial insights to the context of Swedish environmental advocacy.

### 2.1 Obstruction and advocacy in the Swedish context

#### 2.1.1 The vested interests of resourceful networks

Climate obstruction largely spreads through international networks profiting from continued inaction (Oreskes & Conway 2010; Falzon et al. 2023; Si et al. 2023). Despite heterogenous backgrounds and motivations, the actors find a shared interest in climate obstruction. Prominent actors include fossil industries, neoliberal conservatist thinktanks, trade associations, media companies, advertisement agencies and far-right organisations (Brulle et al. 2024; Dembicki et al. 2025; Plehwe & Farrel 2025).

In the Swedish context, early examples of climate obstruction spread from neoliberal conservative thinktanks who promoted market mechanisms over climate regulations (Ekberg & Pressfeldt 2022). To refer to ideals of infinite growth, free-market fundamentalism and property rights are identified as central arguments in climate action obstruction (Petersen et al. 2019; Plehwe & Farrel 2025). The redirection of responsibility from systemic solutions to individual choices obscure how powerful actors shape said choices and delay meaningful action on climate change (Lamb et al. 2020). However, novel Swedish research studies the internal strengths of neoliberal ideologies to tackle climate change (Torpman 2025).

Other prominent actors among the Swedish climate obstructionists are the political far-right, who spread suspicion of climate science as serving a leftist agenda, argue for national sovereignty and portray climate policies as threats to cultural identities and practices (Ekberg & Pressfeldt 2022; Painter et al. 2023; Vowles 2024). The far-right has been crucial to accelerate climate obstruction in Sweden, providing a digital media ecosystem and political representatives in governmental-like<sup>1</sup> power (Malm et al. 2025; Vowles & Ekberg 2026). Both reasonings and patterns resonate with European trends (Lockwood 2018; Kulin et al. 2021).

Overall, the international obstruction networks play a part in funding influential industries and media actors in Sweden (Ekberg & Pressfeldt 2022). These networks often hold influential positions within industry, media and

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<sup>1</sup> For a description of the current government, see [Appendix 1: Glossary](#).

academia (Vowles 2024; Roberts et al. 2025). Together, they reinforce obstructionist discourses and impact public opinion, policymakers and politicians (McKie 2019; Brulle 2023). For example, they deliberately engage in climate science debates to create an appearance of lacking scientific consensus, which has successfully confused the public and policymakers for decades (Supran & Oreskes 2017; Si et al. 2023).

### 2.1.2 The deep-seated obstruction

While much climate obstruction originates from the resourceful networks with political and economic interests, their arguments need to be socially accepted and embraced by parts of the public (Brulle et al. 2024). Therefore, the perspectives of norms and deep-seated values provide valuable insights to understand such processes (Almiron & Moreno 2022). Some prominent examples are people who feel left behind by globalisation or overruled by a cosmopolitan elite (Lockwood 2018). Similar to a countermovement, the support for climate obstruction has grown as a reaction to the recent progress of environmental movements by which parts of the population feel that their interests and identities are threatened (Almiron & Moreno 2022; Vowles 2024). With other words, it springs from a fear of losing freedom when climate actions are interpreted as an attack on the values and practices they know and love (Fischer 2019). Sweden poses no exception (Malm et al. 2025; Vowles & Ekberg 2026). These insights inspire Swedish researchers to explore the roles of ideologies and identities in climate politics (Anshelm & Hultman 2014; Torpman 2025) and inspire Swedish environmental advocates to call for environmental policies for a just transition (Ergon et al. 2025).

Unlike the networks, the public is less concerted. Anthropocene forces us to reconsider the human place in planetary ecosystems and social relations, challenging deep-seated values, identities and practices within each and every one of us (Fischer 2019; Almiron & Moreno 2022; Ekberg et al. 2022). Almost everyone, in Sweden and elsewhere, more or less intentionally reproduces climate obstructionist norms and discourses in everyday thought and practice, sometimes despite knowing better (Wolrath Söderberg 2021; Hochachka 2024). Moreover, the climate obstruction discourses can be compelling. New, creative, intricate versions of climate obstruction are regularly put forth to erode public and political support for climate policies (Lamb et al. 2020). Strategically, the arguments often tap into legitimate concerns of climate policies while denying the possibilities to deliberate alternative solutions. Other arguments combine an appeal to values of justice or social well-being, which draws attention to risks of sudden transitions while denying the potential to form inclusive and improving policies (Lamb et al.

2020; Fortin et al. 2025). Thus, support for climate obstruction is oftentimes entrenched with norms and deep-seated values.

### 2.1.3 The long history of advocacy and compromises

To understand the Swedish context of environmental advocacy, we switch focus to the prerequisites they spring from. Sweden has a legacy of corporatism, where interest representation is institutionalized through close collaborations between public authorities and major interest organisations (Arvidson et al. 2018). Civil societal organisations are viewed as experts in their area and are *expected* to provide politicians and government officials with knowledge to consider in policymaking. The tradition stems from a recognition of civil society as enhancing the quality of democracy through providing important spaces for idea exchange, popular education<sup>2</sup>, making research accessible and providing platforms for the public to influence societal development (Arvidson et al. 2018; Essen 2021). Together, this results in an institutionalised form of advocacy, where established ENGOs since the 1990s have held more or less regular meetings with the Swedish parliament to discuss climate strategies (Vowles et al. 2024).

The collaborative approach of corporatism briefly described above creates a norm of negotiation rather than open conflict (Arvidson et al. 2018). Hence, Swedish environmental policies have been characterized by several compromises where all major political parties, labour unions and corporate associations have long agreed on environmental concerns as important while limiting space for transformative politics, creating a middle way between business as usual and radical change (Vowles et al. 2024). Arguably, the compromise slowly dissolved into conflict and ultimately broke down in the late 2010s, with vocal oppositions on both sides of the middle-way approach (Vowles et al. 2024). On one side, for instance, Fridays For Future launched the fastest growing social movement in history, creating a social tipping point of public awareness and mobilised more people in climate movements (Malm et al. 2025). On the other side, climate obstruction spreads rapidly, partially enabled by the far-right media ecosystems and political representation in parliament (Vowles 2024).

### 2.1.4 The current situation

Fast forward to today, the current Swedish government<sup>3</sup> has changed direction of environmental policies, causing growing emissions (OECD 2025; Persson & Johansson Stenman 2026; SCPC 2024) and a growing shift between what is said

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<sup>2</sup> For a description of popular education, see [Appendix 1: Glossary](#).

<sup>3</sup> For a description of the parties included, see [Appendix 1: Glossary](#).

and done (Vihma et al. 2021; Malm et al. 2025). Policy roll backs are motivated by, for instance, that Sweden has been overly ambitious, harming the life of “real Swedes”, that Sweden is too small to matter and that other countries should catch up first (Ekberg & Pressfeldt 2022; Malm et al. 2025). The haltered ambitions were also reflected on COP30, where Sweden argued to water down directives that keep large companies accountable (Firmin et al. 2026). The situation is reminiscent of climate obstruction discourses (Fortin et al. 2025) and has triggered responses abroad (Bryant 2023).

Simultaneously, the public conversation is under pressure. Advocates report a more distant and inaccessible government (Isaksson 2024; ForumCiv 2025; Halkjaer 2026; Wassholm 2024), increased harsher language use, threats, violence and harder police treatments (Vowles & Hultman 2021; Bjerström 2025; Von Malmborg 2025; Nordh 2026). The increase in retaliations and prosecutions causes the UN rapporteur for environmental advocates to send a letter of critique to the Swedish government (Alestig 2025). ENGOS struggle with the harsh circumstances that divert resources, decrease their democratic influences and further obscure climate crises (Sörbom et al. 2024; Firmin et al. 2026).

Further complicating the situation, environmental advocacy often requires long-term planning (Rietig 2016). Such commitments can be expensive, which is democratically problematic when ENGOS face actors with more resources available (Baumgartner et al. 2009; Böhler et al. 2022). Because of the billion-dollar industries involved in the climate obstruction networks (Oreskes & Conway 2010; Roberts et al. 2025), their resources stand like Goliath in comparison to most environmental movements, creating a huge asymmetry in climate change discussions (Vowles & Ekberg 2026).

Nevertheless, resistance to climate obstruction is gaining momentum globally and environmental advocacy is shown to have positive effects on climate policies (Böhler et al. 2022; Stephens & Yadin 2025). The growing diversity of ENGOS engaging in advocacy sparks innovation and specialisation as ENGOS find their niche and strategically complement each other (Eilstrup-Sangiovanni 2019). Furthermore, ENGOS contribute with innovative solutions and well-established public networks (Essen 2021; Bonnedahl et al. 2022), both important resources to facilitate the vital task of publicly anchoring climate policies (Harring 2025). Moreover, Sweden continues to show high levels of public awareness and support for political instruments (Naturvårdsverket 2025) and continues with high ranks on, for example, international reputation and public knowledge of climate issues (Svenska institutet 2024).

## 2.2 A typology of climate obstruction

In this thesis, climate obstruction includes actions, practises and discourses hindering adequate climate action<sup>4</sup>. Drawing from the work of Fortin et al. (2025), the concept is further operationalised into three categories based on the different targets of obstruction. First, the category of *Phenomenon Obstruction* targets the facts of climate change and the severity of human impact. Second, *Climate Action Obstruction* targets the solutions and policies to tackle climate change, including greenwashing initiatives, disproportionate technological confidence, awaiting perfect policies and appeals to identities and partisanship to delay climate action. Third, *Source Credibility Obstruction* encompasses examples targeting the actors and research promoting climate action.

Assessing whether actors intentionally or unintentionally engage in obstruction is outside the focus of this study. While several researchers define climate obstruction with intentionality being a central aspect (Brulle et al. 2024; Roberts et al. 2025), this typology includes both intentional and unintentional obstruction, as both are delaying climate action (Fortin et al. 2025).

The typology is mainly used to structure the analysis of RQa to provide insights to how environmental advocates experience climate obstruction.

| Target                         | Examples                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Phenomenon Obstruction         | 1. Denying climate change<br>2. Denying the human impact of climate change<br>3. Denying the severity of climate change                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Climate Action Obstruction     | 4. Greenwashing or promoting false solutions<br>5. Shifting responsibility<br>6. Portraying climate action to be inefficient, harmful or not a priority<br>7. Calling for policy perfection, awaiting more public consultation or social acceptance e.g.<br>8. Appealing to identity, partisanship, culture |
| Source Credibility Obstruction | 9. Attacking the credibility of climate actors<br>10. Attacking the credibility of climate research<br>11. Describing climate science as a conspiracy                                                                                                                                                       |

Table 1. An overview of climate obstruction. Own table inspired by Fortin et al. (2025).

Below follows some examples to concretise how climate obstruction can materialise. To motivate inaction based on claims that Sweden would benefit from global warming is an example of *phenomenon obstruction* (no. 3) that ignores the

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<sup>4</sup> For a description of the term climate action, see [Appendix 1: Glossary](#).



complex character of climate change interlinked with biodiversity loss and accelerating geopolitical tensions (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs 2026; Lenas 2026). Similarly, to avoid carbon taxing based on arguing for future technological solutions to fix carbon capture and storage instead, is an example of *climate action obstruction* (no. 4). While there still is a possibility for future technologies to assist climate action, it is yet non-existent on an adequate level in comparison to the latest scientific consensus summarized by the IPCC. Furthermore, to legitimize Swedish political inaction by referring to other strong emitters is an example of *climate action obstruction* (no. 5). While it is necessary that all emitters forcefully implement political interventions, Sweden needs to be included in that work. Another example of *climate action obstruction* (no. 8) is to perpetuate fossil fuel dependency by referring to it being essential to Swedish lifestyles. While the transition is comprehensive and can seem complicated, it is to be considered climate obstruction to use complexity to disregard climate policies instead of acknowledging the need for political interventions to promote a just transition. Lastly, an example of *source credibility obstruction* (no. 9) is to accuse researchers, advocates, politicians or media for being alarmist, hysterical, irrational or corrupted by a certain party. The attacks discredit their integrity, hence undermining the arguments or solutions they put forth. These attacks are distinguished from attacking the credibility of climate research per se (no. 10), which revolves more around questioning climate research methods and reliability of climate science. All examples above are inspired by Fortin et al. (2025).

## 2.3 Environmental advocacy

Environmental advocacy is a form of environmental communication that entails a strategic course of action undertaken for a specific purpose (Pezzullo & Cox 2018). Advocacy is understood in this thesis as organised efforts to influence the public, politicians and policymakers to promote change (Arvidson et al. 2018). The environmental prefix emphasizes organised efforts focused on the intertwined ecological crises. While climate change is the main focus of most participants and research projects referred to in this thesis, several participants used the terms “climate” and “environment” almost interchangeably during interviews. This illustrates how the topics are often experienced as overlapping in advocacy work.

Advocacy efforts are commonly categorized on a spectrum between direct and indirect tactics (Arvidson et al. 2018; Mosley et al. 2023). Tactics are the concrete acts made to carry out the broader strategy (Pezzullo & Cox 2018). Hence, a strategy is a set of deliberate tactics chosen to achieve aspired goals (Mosley et al. 2023). In direct tactics, advocates engage directly with the target groups of said tactics, for instance in lobbying when directly contacting policymakers about policies. The indirect tactics approach their target groups via intermediates, for

instance when mobilising to build public pressure on the policymakers to change policies. The figure below illustrates some common examples.

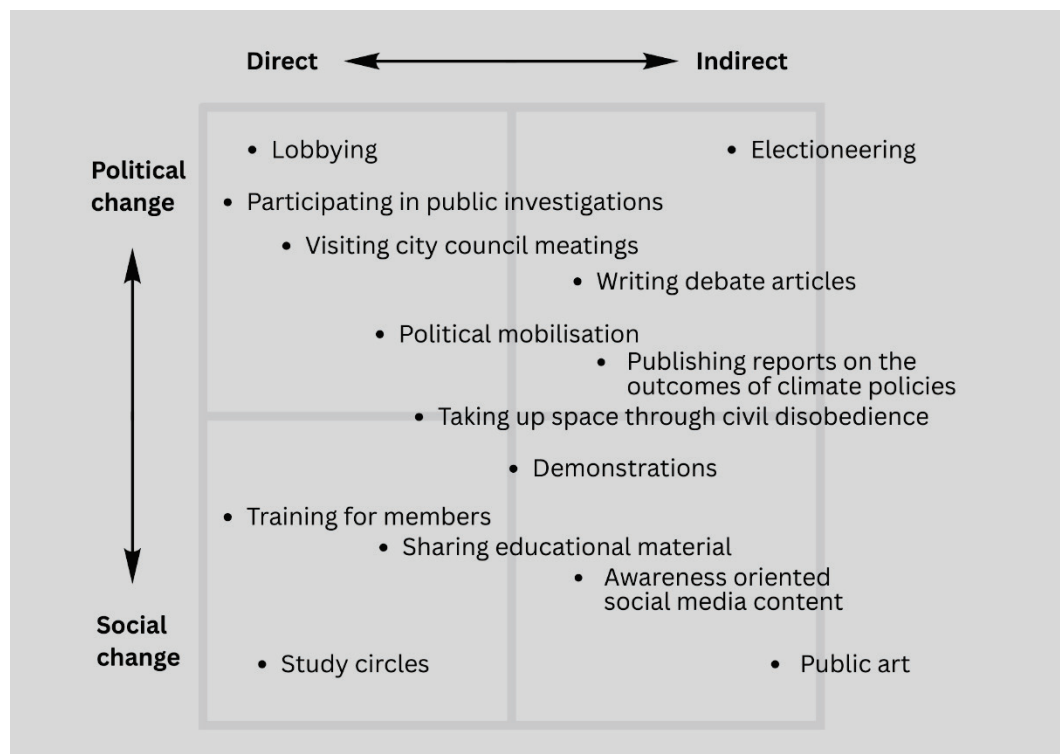


Figure 1. The map illustrates advocacy across a range of goals (political - social) and tactics (direct - indirect). Own illustration inspired by Mosley et al. (2023).

The strategic choices of tactics to use are situated decisions developed through years of experience, allowing for creativity and variation (Rietig 2016). Previous research acknowledges some factors to be particularly important in guiding the choices, such as what is concluded to be the most productive in relation to available resources (Arvidson et al. 2018), organisational traditions (Arvidson et al. 2018; Hadden & Jasny 2019), international and organisational ties (Hadden & Jasny 2019), advocacy norms and regulations where they engage (Mosley et al. 2023), as well as their relationships to their target groups (Gullberg 2008). In practice, strategies are often dynamic in character, entailing multiple goals per tactic and multiple tactics per goal (Rietig 2016; Mosley et al. 2023).

Zooming in on the environmental advocacy challenging climate obstruction, ENGOs work with a wide array of strategies to hold powerful actors accountable when intentionally delaying transformative climate action (Stephens & Yadin 2025). Some common tactics include various ways of social exposure to reveal and raise awareness, campaigns to alert and mobilize the public as well as lobbying and litigation to prevent or interrupt ongoing climate obstruction. For example, tactics of disinformation rebuttal can be used to inform the public and policymakers on obstructionist attempts which create loopholes in climate policies

(Stephens & Yadin 2025). Other tactics centre social norms and practices. For example, to raise awareness of fossil fuel subsidies or promote fossil fuel divestment can serve as revoking the socially constructed legitimacy of the fossil fuel industry (Stephens & Yadin 2025). Thereby, ENGOs work to delimit the collaborative partners and services facilitating continued climate obstruction. Here, a successful advocacy example is major banks starting to halt loans to fossil fuel companies after strategic civil societal campaigns (Fair Finance Guide & Swedish Society for Nature Conservation 2025).

### 3. Material and methods

The following chapter is a presentation of my methodological choices for this research, as well as a critical and ethical discussion of the same. In line with standard research praxis, my own position and background is scrutinized to allow transparency and strengthen research reliability.

#### 3.1 Data collection

In order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the experiences of and counterstrategies to climate obstruction in the environmental advocacy field, I have chosen a qualitative semi-structured interview design. This enables an in depth understanding of the participants' experiences and allows participants to take part in steering the conversation, while also giving me as a researcher the mandate to keep track of the direction (Creswell & Creswell 2018). In interviews, the researcher and participant co-construct data and knowledge in an interactive social setting (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009). Through open ended questions, the interview dynamic is alternating between cooperation and struggle of what themes are relevant to discuss, while staying within the limited time scope of approximately 50 minutes per interview (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009).

The interview guide was shaped by my literature review and chosen theoretical concepts, both illuminating relevant aspects to include (Creswell & Creswell 2018). However, to make it useful in an interview setting, I operationalised central concepts and rephrased the research questions into more concrete versions (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009). For example, the theoretical concept of climate obstruction was expressed in terms of polarisation, science-scepticism, climate denial, personal attack, hinder, delay, evasion, etc. As explorative research, I revisited my choice of words throughout the process in order to calibrate how certain words were perceived by the people in front of me (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009).

Before the interviews, I explored webpages, debate articles, demonstrations and events with the ENGOs to familiarise myself with their context. Thereafter, data was collected during February and April of 2026. The interviews were recorded, with approval from the participants, to be transcribed and analysed through the structural process described below. Some interviews were conducted on site, while the majority was conducted via videocall. Since gestures are important to human communication, I strived to be aware of the lost communicative gestures missed through digital meetings and decided on videocalls over phone calls (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009).

## 3.2 The participants

The organisations represented are all civil societal non-governmental organisations with a focus on environmental and/or climate issues. They range from a couple of years to several decades old and vary in size, organisational structure and resources available. Some are established actors in traditional political negotiations, others engage in civil disobedience<sup>5</sup>, others engage prominently in broad public education, others in media debates. Broadly speaking, they vary in means and measures but are all engaged in environmental advocacy.

From these organisations, I interviewed actors with a rich experience of environmental advocacy from ENGOs on a national level in Sweden. They vary in classic categorisations such as age, gender, faith and educational or professional background. Some work in their organisation as employed, while others work on a voluntary basis.

The process of finding interview participants was a dynamic practice, combining my previous knowledge of the field, reaching out to contacts of my contacts, consulting official websites and visiting local events by ENGOs. The latter opened up the possibility to a face-to-face mingle with locally involved advocates, providing me contacts to their nationally involved ones. In the end, eight participants were interviewed, bringing experiences from six organisations. R3 and R8 represent the same organisations, as do R5 and R6. However, they each inhabit different roles and perspectives. More importantly, this study focuses on the experiences of advocates rather than comparing ENGOs.

It is considered good research practice to inform participants beforehand of the prerequisites to take part (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009). All participants were sent information and consent forms before the interviews, including principles of voluntary participation and anonymisation. All participants read through and signed their consent form before the interview started.

Due to the relatively small field of research and the increasing pressure experienced by some of the participants involved, I have chosen to anonymise the organisations. To not name the organisations is predicted not to have a significant impact on the research findings in relation to the safety of my participants.

## 3.3 Data analysis

In qualitative research, the analysis and data collection processes overlap (Creswell & Creswell 2018). When conducting interviews, I simultaneously scribbled potential analytical embryos in the margins and continued to explore and deepen my understanding throughout the process of transcription, organising and coding the data. I documented this process in a field diary.

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<sup>5</sup> For a description of the term civil disobedience, see [Appendix 1: Glossary](#).

To create a thorough foundation for discussion I employed a combination of deductive and inductive analysis. First, I prepared codes based on the formerly described typology of climate obstruction (Fortin et al 2025).<sup>6</sup> Second, I employed an explorative approach, noticing how additional codes emerged when carefully reading through the material while being attentive to both reoccurring patterns and outliers. All codes were revisited and formed into more abstract coding families, clustered together into abstract themes and placed in a matrix to gain clarity and structure. To strengthen reliability in the inductive coding process, I followed the steps of structured analytical coding by Creswell and Creswell (2018).

Throughout the theorizing process I repeatedly went back and forth between theoretical concepts and the empirical material to alter and validate the emerging conclusionary claims. To maintain consistency, the themes were elaborately described and revisited (Creswell & Creswell 2018).

Transcriptions were initially made in Microsoft Word and revisited manually to control the accuracy with the field diary and voice recordings. As some interviews were conducted in Swedish, the translation brings room for misunderstandings as concepts and idiomatic expressions are translated by me, why I frequently consulted dictionaries and thesauruses.

### 3.4 Transparency

Inherent to interview-based research lies asymmetrical power relations when the interviewer (me) interprets and reproduces the answers of the interviewed (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009). The social production of knowledge is further shaped by my prior understandings and chosen research design. Similar to many scholars in the discipline of Environmental Communication, I am not only involved in academic work on environmental issues but am also engaged in environmental issues in my spare time and consider environmental matters to be of utmost importance for life on Earth, including the quality of human life.

Adding to this reflection, it is worth noting that I am living in a highly fossil fuel demanding country and am by no means myself living a life free from obstruction or internal conflicts. This leads me to the conviction that structural change is needed, since individual choices are important but not enough on their own to bring about adequate change. I also recognize that my initial research preparations have been made during the warmest years recorded so far (Ripple et al. 2025), further shaping the topic and research design.

Prior understandings of a field and a shared understanding with participants can strengthen the research, since being familiar with certain norms and practices

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<sup>6</sup> The typology is described in section [2.2 A typology of climate obstruction](#).

helped me create a safe space for participants to share their experiences (Öhlander 1999). Nevertheless, to increase analytical distance I chose to interview people from ENGOs that I am not involved with myself and was recurrently scrutinizing how my preunderstandings shaped data construction throughout analysis and thesis writing. Still, rather than claiming neutrality from these internalized perspectives, they are here transparently presented to allow an informed reading of the findings.

## 4. Results

The following chapter presents the main findings of the analysed data. The first section describes the advocates' experiences of climate obstruction, followed by a section divided into four identified themes of strategies to handle climate obstruction. Lastly, an underlying theme of care is presented, with strategies that do not target climate obstruction directly but create the conditions necessary to do so.

### 4.1 Experiences of climate obstruction

Together, the experiences below provide an important backdrop to understand the advocates' reasoning about strategies. Even though the exact words of climate obstruction were seldom used during the interviews, the examples described below paint a picture of the resistance they face. In the frame of this thesis, this indicates ample experiences of climate obstruction.

#### 4.1.1 Phenomenon Obstruction: disinformation and the far-right

*Phenomenon obstruction* includes issues such as climate denial, denial of the human responsibility of global warming, and sceptical stands on the severity of climate change. These aspects of climate obstruction surfaced frequently throughout the interviews, mainly in relation to experiences of social media comment sections. R3, R4 and R5 described how the disinformation and mistrust spread by far-right media ecosystems are highly problematic since they reach a wide audience with messages obscuring the severity of global warming. R5 described experiences of interacting with these actors and how they neatly compose comments meant to deride and disinform with relevant climate policy terminology, which distort reality in deceiving ways:

“They seem to have a strategy to wear down their resistance [...] and you can't keep up for long. You're worn down. They've become polished, they've learned the language and concepts, like IPCC for example, but then they twist the truth a bit and say that” IPCC claims...” and say something that's a little true and a little false. It's quite effective. And it costs a lot of energy to respond to it.” – R5

The quote illustrates an example of *phenomenon obstruction* where facts are twisted to disinform the readers and provide insights into how exhausting the interactions can be. Several advocates shared similar experiences from social media. As R3 put it, the physical encounters are easier to handle since they



usually show up one by one, while “online they work as a pack”. Which can be quite overwhelming.

Opinions differed on whether it was worthwhile to engage with such comments or if the advocates’ resources are better used elsewhere. On one hand, for example, R1 described how it is a priority to manage comment sections and challenge disinformation for the sake of other readers, explaining that “sometimes it’s just about making other opinions visible, you don’t want an opinion to be standing there without being challenged”. On the other hand, for example, R2 described it as impossible to pursue fruitful conversations about science with actors who lack interest in honest and truthful conversations.

#### 4.1.2 Climate Action Obstruction: greenwashing, responsibility shifting and appeals to identity, interest and partisanship

*Climate Action Obstruction* encompasses the broad variety of attempts to interfere with solutions that address climate change. Hence, it is not the denial of climate science per se but the postponement of climate action. Throughout the interviews, an abundance of experiences was described in this category. For example, R5 and R7 recalled politicians who shifted responsibilities onto others while neglecting their own possibility to contribute by claiming that Sweden has done enough. Moreover, several participants shared encounters with greenwashing and false solutions where politicians, journalists and business actors oppose systemic regulations while rooting for modified consumer behaviours to single-handedly halt global warming.

On a general note, R2, R3 and R4 explained the difficulties of advocating for climate policies in contexts where climate change is conceptualised as any other issue rather than a threat to the fundament for life on Earth as we know it, as it allows climate solutions to be debated, bargained and watered down. R6 and R8 shared a frustration of how misleading, yet rhetorically compelling, arguments are used to win political debates. Especially before the upcoming election. R4, R5 and R8 pointed out that politicians often blame the lack of public support in such discussions, despite research showing the opposite.<sup>7</sup>

Among these experiences of *climate action obstruction*, the current government was often mentioned as problematic. For instance, R8 expressed with shock how quickly they have demolished environmental policies:

“During this term, the current government... they have slaughtered the environmental and climate politics in a way that staggered even us. We figured things wouldn’t

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<sup>7</sup> Several advocates referred to research indicating that 89% of the global population demand intensified political action (Andre et al. 2024).

improve much, but these very active decisions [to exacerbate] ... I don't think people understand the extent of it and how the trajectory of emissions in fact has turned." – R8

When asked about the resistance and pushbacks they experience, it was most striking how all advocates perceived the obstruction as reinforced by interests and identities. R3-7 recorded actors consciously pursuing obstruction for personal benefits such as power or profit. For example, R7 described climate denial obscuring the vested interests of politicians:

"Certainly, there's people [who] deny climate change on different levels because they don't know better. But the dangerous ones, they promote it for political and economic reasons. And that includes politicians. Like the climate minister and finance minister [of Sweden] say that we are the world's best on climate transition, but that is a straight up lie. And I'm sure they know it. They only promote it to win an election." – R7

R7 further described how the ministers use the argument of being world leaders to request climate action elsewhere, which R7 agreed on the need for, but expressed concerns with how they use the argument further to motivate a decrease in climate action ambitions in Sweden. The reflections insinuate that such argumentation appeals to certain voters. Together, this is an example of *climate action obstruction* with several layers of interest; both of voters and of politicians with re-election ambitions.

R2 and R3 further described a backslide during the current political term, where climate actions are not only up for debate but have also started to divide left and right in unprecedented ways. As far as R3 is concerned, climate action has become increasingly tied to political identities in new ways, while "just a few elections ago every party competed to be environmental parties".

R4 took the discussion further, reflecting on the identities in partisanship as unconsciously consolidating climate obstruction alliances, inspiring their ENGO to deliberately address such issues in their advocacy work:

"Environmental politics have been kidnapped by private interests within right-wing politics, so we think that there must be many [voters] with conservative values who don't dare to "come out of the closet", so to say, as climate worried. Because in their contexts it has become solely an energy issue or labelled leftist, so it creates this resistance among right wing voters to take responsibility for climate issues." – R4

R4 continued to record a variety of tactics to create a more inclusive movement by broadening the representation of what environmentally concerned people might look like and what types of activities it may entail. R3, R6 and R8 made similar reflections. Their reasoning insinuates an understanding of how partisanship can cause people to accept and reinforce *climate action obstruction* when their political parties do so. Their intentional attempts to address and

include those people in tactics showcase a strategical choice of environmental advocates navigating *climate action obstruction*.<sup>8</sup>

Further on the topic of identities, R2, R3, R5, R6 and R8 described how perceived identity threats also trigger strong obstruction reactions, for instance, when climate solutions disturb norms or lifestyles. They experience both denigrating rumours online and being yelled at or threatened in person. R8 described a strategy to foresee and pre-empt such strong reactions through personal conversations based on lived experiences. The reflection<sup>9</sup> illustrates conscious strategic choices based on experiences of navigating *climate action obstruction*. Acknowledging these vested interests and identities has shaped advocacy strategies in particular ways, as advocates balance communicating the urgency of climate change while taking into account the complex emotional aspects of climate obstruction.

#### 4.1.3 Source Credibility Obstruction: violence, hatred, heated conversations and a shrinking civic space

Moving on to the third and last category, *source credibility obstruction* refers to the attacks on actors and research promoting climate action. While the advocates shared experiences of high levels of trust and appreciation in many contexts, most advocates also testified of harsh working conditions. For example, R1 and R4 shared experiences of men visiting their meetings with a threatening scowl and brashly interrupting their activities:

“One thing that is happening, and that’s not just [us], is, for example, at demonstrations, there are people from the right-wing, like neo-Nazis, right-wing extremists, who take pictures of people. And then post them online with the name and address.” – R1

“A man from a right-wing podcast approached me for an interview and was very intrusive. He pushed the camera in my face. And I had no idea who he was.” – R4

R1, R3, R4 and R5 all argued that the situation has escalated slowly over the last decade, with increased repressions, threats and degrading language from politicians, journalists and the public. The experiences range from overwhelming amounts of hateful comments to death threats and violence. R5 observed a language use that frames environmental activists as terrorist, dangerous, alarmist or biased. R1 elaborated on how this shift materialises in increased prosecutions:

“We experience, for example, higher punishment. Or a very prominent thing: we go to court more often for the same kind of punishment. And that just means a lot of resources

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<sup>8</sup> Predominantly described in section [4.2.3 Initiating normative conversations](#) and [5.2 Strategies for deep-seated obstruction](#).

<sup>9</sup> Predominantly described in section [4.2.4 Cooperating and activating networks](#).

and time that go towards court cases that don't really have to happen. So, it's things like very clearly trespassing - which we don't deny. And in the past, we would have just gotten a fine for it. But now it goes to court." - (R1)

Overall, the advocates described these experiences as part of a greater trend of a shrinking civic space, referring to the set of conditions that non-governmental actors need to meaningfully and safely participate in public life, as well as the respect and protection of said participation.<sup>10</sup> The experiences described above, as increasingly being portrayed and treated as dangerous for the same kind of actions as before, illustrates how the conditions have harshened and how the manoeuvre space to participate safely has decreased. Both the harsher language use and the increase in prosecution signals that the advocates' actions and motives are questioned and delegitimised, which demonstrates examples of *source credibility obstruction*.

Among these experiences, several advocates identified the current government as a problematic driver of obstruction. The participants reported a uniquely distant government who shows less interest in their expertise and neglects traditions of public investigations in unprecedented ways. Doing so, the government limits the abilities for advocates to meaningfully participate in public life. In combination with the current government partaking in the harsher language use, these changed practices can be understood as an example of *source credibility obstruction* and signals a governments' perception to the public of advocates as less legitimate.

## 4.2 Strategies to handle climate obstruction

With their experiences in mind, the next sub-chapters move on to discuss the advocates' strategical reflections on how to handle climate obstruction.

### 4.2.1 Raising awareness through climate science communication

All respondents discussed strategies to raise awareness through sharing knowledge about climate change and the possibilities of climate action. These strategies were rendered important in relation to when climate obstruction is facilitated by unawareness, ignorance or disinformation. Their tactics to raise awareness range from distributing flyers, sending podcasts, writing debate articles in newspapers, directly responding to public investigations, organising public lectures, initiating study circles, to actions of civil disobedience.

R3 argued that a vital aspect of their advocacy work is to reintroduce complexity and describe systemic interlinkages since media and politicians tend

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<sup>10</sup> For a description of the term civic space, see [Appendix 1: Glossary](#).

to simplify with false technological solutions, thereby describing complexity as a strategy to counter *climate action obstruction*. However, R2 emphasised the difficulty of explaining complex climate issues in an honest yet constructive way:

“Because the climate crisis is not like the pandemic. The pandemic is rather in-your-face-obvious. You get sick and die, and the math is fairly straightforward. Whereas the climate crisis, I mean [...] how do you relate to the kind of crisis that’s kind of creeping up? But if you and I don’t do anything about it, and all people living with us today and living around the world don’t do anything about it, the crisis will carry on growing. It will just get worse and worse. It’s not going to get better without us acting.” – R2

Their reflection brings insights to the difficulty of communicating climate science as well as the importance of doing so understandably to enable climate action. Later in the interview, R2 emphasised this point by asking “how many people actually understand what the difference is between a 1.5- and 1.6-degree world?”. The question illustrates the difficulty of helping people grasp the complex reality and further underline the need to communicate climate change in relatable ways.

Similarly, several advocates returned to the need to raise awareness by making knowledge relatable. Here, a reoccurring strategy was through popular education:

”It [popular education] is a way of communicating. If there are flyers and posters or such in public transport, people might just pass by... But popular education might have more of an impact on people.” – R5

“I would say that many people don’t realise the seriousness of the [climate] issue, nor how the scientific community stands unified behind the fact that we’re entering a climate catastrophe. So, I’d say that popular education... so that everyone actually understands how serious it is, you know? That’s fundamentally important. So that people can’t bury their head in the sand as easily.” – R6

These quotes exemplify how advocates consider it important to communicate science in relatable ways, preferably through popular education with its unique sets of pedagogics and formats to facilitate learning. Moreover, R3 emphasised that their ENGO is a social movement with popular education as one of their foundations.

Standing out from the material were a few strategies to raise awareness within and through the judicial system. Through tactics of litigation or civil disobedience, R1, R3 and R7 described how courts can be useful actors in directly countering obstruction. R3 emphasised that sometimes informal and relational conversations are more productive, but that other times, especially in relation to large companies, courts can be places for them as advocates to speak on the behalf of nature. R7 explained courts as a strategic part of their advocacy and how they in fact have seen a raised awareness in courts lately, which further strengthen their counter-obstruction work. Moreover, R7 described courts as a space of constructive dialogue. The following quote portrays said reflections:

“All courts in Sweden know that we’re in a climate emergency on the level that can imply impunity due to emergency. And that’s interesting, because there [in court] the fruitful dialogues that we call for exist, where you listen respectfully to each other and you can bring science-based arguments.” – R7

Through raising awareness everywhere from the public, to politics, to courts, advocates strive to help people understand the complex systemic interlinkages and radical transformations needed. Their strategies are based on experiences of climate obstruction as surrounded and facilitated by disinformation.

#### 4.2.2 Making climate a priority through reminders of relevance

When inaction continues despite raised awareness and great knowledge, several advocates focus on making climate change a priority through reminders of how the issues are relevant. For instance, they send direct emails to politicians, write debate articles in industry specific magazines, hand out flyers on the street and ask journalists for adequate news coverage. The strategies build on the advocates’ experiences of a general climate awareness and climate worry in Sweden that they perceive is not sufficiently materialised in public conversations, votes or policies. Hence, the need to prioritize climate issues through reminders of relevance.

R2, R3, R4 and R6 connect the matters of priorities and relevance explicitly to the advocacy in times of Swedish elections. As phrased by two advocates:

“What becomes important for an actor like [ENGO] is to ensure that environmental issues are on the agenda, simply to make it an important issue when people vote.” – R3

“Both voters and politicians need to be reminded, often, that this is a problem. Just as we have been fed with gang crime and immigrants all the time – it creates this... when politicians and media repeat the same issue all the time, it somehow becomes important to the voters. So, we want that repeatability for the climate crisis and this climate emergency as well.” – R4

The latter reasoning exemplifies how priorities can be raised through increased media attention. However, it is a struggle to reach through the media noise: R1, R3, R6 and R7 pointed out that the media cycle is increasingly rapid and overflows with artefacts and disinformation. R1 described this change causing them to modify their media strategies;

“But now there’s just a flood of crazy [visual] images. So, you don’t get as much space anymore for just an image. So, you need to create more time for the storytelling and have something that you can repeat more. It’s not this like one-time-image that would fly [anymore]. Because there’s just such a saturation when it comes to images. And so [we are now] doing things that are... like longer actions or longer storytelling. And centring people more, like centring the stories around people.” - R1

Their reflection exemplifies how they adapt their media strategies to keep the attention and evoke a sense of relevance through storytelling and personal experiences. Their creative approach to try out new ways to keep media attention is one way to pre-empt and counter disinformation that also opens possibilities for ENGOs to speak on their own behalf, which in turn can be a way of indirectly challenging discrediting rumours of *source credibility obstruction*.

To complement the media strategies, advocates work with physically taking up space. For example, R3, R5 and R6 described how a political hearing in a municipality creates both relevance and reminders for the local public. Similarly, tactics of directly visiting political meetings or organising manifestations serve as a reminder of the severity of climate change while simultaneously personalising a counterweight to the obstructionist actors. Doing so, they serve as an indirect support for other actors willing to work for climate action:

“Every time they [the politicians] go into the city council, they are reminded of the climate crisis and that there’re citizens who care about what they’re doing in there [in the meetings]. So, I think we’re a reminder to everyone that we’re in a climate emergency, and we’re a support for those who are driving these issues” – R4

“You have this dynamic where politicians or government bodies, for example, would like to do more. And they need this kind of public push to be able to do it.” - R1

Some strategies to create a public push and call for priorities of climate issues include tactics of civil disobedience. Doing so, R7 explained that alternating actions of repetition and renewal have been vital for them to keep the media attention and to reach the transformative conversations aspired. However, whether or not to engage in civil disobedience posed a distinctive crossroad between the ENGOs. While some use civil disobedience frequently, some reject it and some pragmatically but passively support others who do. R7 explained their reason to use tactics of civil disobedience:

“We do civil disobedience solely out of practical reasons: it is the most effective way to change a society. Peaceful civil disobedience. We have learned that from history and the existing social science research. So that’s why we do it.” – R7

Thoroughgoingly, strategies to make climate issues a priority were underpinned by the notion that a public sense of urgency and possibility are both *intrinsically* important to raise awareness and *instrumentally* important to mobilise for climate action. As more people gain insight, less people are tricked by climate obstruction and might join the movement for climate action.

### 4.2.3 Initiating normative conversations

In addition to knowledge and priorities, several advocates perceived social norms to underlie climate obstruction. This was especially mentioned in relation to *climate action obstruction*. To challenge those norms, the advocates described a variety of different tactics to initiate normative conversations. Some advocates work with uncovering destructive norms, for example resonating as follows:

“The idea is that you remove what we call a ‘social license’ from companies, for example. Because whatever practice a company or politician does, like if you... if you run a forestry company, for example, your practices are kind of defined by what’s acceptable by society. Like clear cutting at the moment is accepted by society, so that’s why they do it. But if you remove the social license, suddenly it’s not acceptable anymore, then something will change.” – R1

R1 explains how norms create the conditions and acceptance for many practices. Hence, initiating normative conversations by questioning and revealing certain practices can in turn initiate change.

Others focus on reinforcing useful norms, pointing to positive examples or connecting climate solutions to conversations about transforming visions:

”[We want to] create visions for the transformed society, that are something to look forward to! So, it’s not the usual [talk] of everything that you need to give up: life will become spartan and boring and you won’t be allowed to eat meat or fly anymore. All that creates resistance. That you won’t be able to consume as you want. But we believe that there are many advantages with the transformed society. So, we want to highlight those and make space for the positive [...] so that people *want* the change.” – R4

”I believe many people think ‘okay, our societal systems don’t work, but what else can we do, what are the alternatives?’ and that’s when we need to blast visions that are possible and believable. It might not be that you get more money, but more spare time, cleaner air, more time together. Those things. Because then it becomes obvious that our current system is not... if I may say so, it’s not a human friendly society.” – R6

The reflections echo the advocates’ experiences of identities and interests reinforcing obstruction<sup>11</sup> and highlight how visions can challenge norm-related resistance. On the same note, R3, R4, R5 and R6 all reported confrontations with politicians and civil servants who obstruct climate action on the basis that it conflicts with their perception of possibilities. Hence, the visions serve the purpose to expand opportunities for climate solutions.

In the context of the election, most advocates invite politicians to public conversations, debates or lectures. Moreover, two ENGOs reviewed a rigorous machinery to evaluate the past electoral period to educate the public on concrete

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<sup>11</sup> Predominantly described in [4.1.2 Climate Action Obstruction: greenwashing, responsibility shifting and appeals to identity, interest and partisanship](#).



statistics of how politicians have acted in environmental issues the last four years. Thus, the ENGOs become like a “consumer information guide” for the voters, reviewing the practical implications of different parties:

“We’re quite careful because we are strictly non-party-political. So, what we do is we invite parties to tell us about their promises, what they plan to do, and we calculate how that would affect the climate. So, we convert their promises into how much carbon they’re going to burn and then [we] just provide that information to society.” – R2

“It’s quite common that you trust someone else [when deciding how to vote]. For example, if you are young it’s your parents. Or someone who seems reasonable. So [the ENGO] in that perspective, we become like this stand-in-mom that you can trust. Because we can be the ones who read up and say that ‘these perspectives are important’ and ‘these parties have done this and that’. And since we are non-party-political we provide a smorgasbord and point to all the parties. Just a couple of elections ago every party competed to be environmental parties. That’s not the case anymore.” – R3

By calling attention to parties who contribute to climate action and putting pressure on the ones actively obstructing, the evaluations work as a starting point for normative conversations of how politicians should prioritise. The evaluations are furthermore utilised and spread by other ENGOs, which indicates that more advocates consider them to be important. R4 and R8 emphasised it particularly in relation to the upcoming election due to the unprecedented shift in environmental policies from the current government. They expressed a worry that voters are not aware of the damage done. Hence, the evaluations and normative conversations are crucial to their pre-election advocacy.

When exposing obstruction and displaying positive examples, R2, R7 and R8 emphasised the need to do so with honesty and respect. Moreover, R7 argued that respectful attitudes and transparent motives may strengthen legitimacy while pre-empting attacks of *source credibility obstruction*. R8 described an elaborate procedure to respectfully and intentionally initiate conversations around climate action by starting with personal experiences of climate change and climate anxiety. The personal conversation starters serve to open conversations about norms from a more vulnerable and less steadfast perspectives.<sup>12</sup>

#### 4.2.4 Cooperating and activating networks

Across all interviews, advocates strategically reflected on the need to make use of their networks. Two main reasons emerged. First, several advocates reported diminishing resources in comparison to their obstructionist counterparts. Thus, working through networks is a strategy to be smart with their resources. Second, the advocates identified climate obstruction to be related to interests, identities

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<sup>12</sup> The strategy is further described in [4.2.4 Cooperating and activating networks](#).

and disinformation.<sup>13</sup> Thus, networks increases the advocates' impact as they provide a broader variety of actors for people to trust, listen to and identify themselves with. The following quote about cooperating with influencers exemplifies both arguments:

"When a celebrity takes a political stand, it spreads more and people who like or identify with that celebrity will listen. Like, it creates credit to be worried about the climate crises and to want to, dare to, take a stand. We think that can affect voters and politicians. [...] We don't have any sponsorship from big actors, we rely on volunteers and do this in our free time, so we don't have the same muscles as the fossil lobby... so we need support."  
– R4

The most prominent network, utilised by all respondents, is with other ENGOs. Some examples mentioned were to share competence and resources, co-write articles, and learn from each other's experiences. Sometimes the cooperation unfolds in detailed planning of joint election campaigns. Other times it is less outspoken, when the work of different ENGOs create momentum for others. R4 and R7 described it as if they are "hooking arms" with others, where each organisation fills a different role. Another common reason to cooperate is to get a broader reach:

"So, we were invited [to cooperate with another ENGO] this fall and it sounded like a good idea in an election year. It seems like it could get a lot of publicity on social media, because there are many organisations and everyone is spreading the word." – R5

Another prevalent strategy is to activate the personal networks of their members. R1, R3 and R8 described it in terms of utilising their strength as grassroots movements with numerous members who reach beyond their official modes of contact. Through initiatives like weekly seminars to practice presentations, dialogue training, study circles, nature excursions and creating social media posts which members want and dare to share, ENGOs equip and inspire their members to participate in the advocacy. R1 and R3 explain:

"In social media, we talk to our bubble, right? [...] We have our community: people who are following us, they see our emails, they're volunteers or donate money to us. Those are people that we can very easily talk to, and they will align with us on most issues. And they have their people, who probably are also somewhat aligned with us. So, our approach nowadays is to try and get our community to engage with their base, with their community." – R1

"If we talk about advocacy before the election: the more people who read our party evaluations and show them to their friends... that can be most important, pivotal, for the

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<sup>13</sup> Predominantly described in section [4.1.1 Phenomenon Obstruction: disinformation and the far-right](#) and [4.1.2 Climate Action Obstruction: greenwashing, responsibility shifting and appeals to identity, interest and partisanship](#).

whole election. Just imagine, if all our active members, if they talk to five people each. That can be pivotal. So one should not underestimate this, there's engaged people everywhere. You don't have to sit on a board to have an impact." – R3

Moreover, most advocates reflected on the need for activating their networks in the light of increased disinformation. R1, R4 and R8 identified it particularly in relation to AI and tech-facilitated affective polarisation that they experience to be encouraging climate obstruction. On that note, working in networks are an important counter-obstruction strategy since networks consist of connections:

"So then [as AI grows stronger], personal conversations are more important than ever, that you feel like, okay, this information is coming from a source that I trust. And that is often somebody that you know." – R1

Building on that notion, R8 described dialogue training as one of their election advocacy strategies:

"We strive to move beyond unshakeable opinions to reach experiences and emotions, because people tend to have more inhuman opinions than lived experiences and emotions. So, respect the opinion, but you don't stop there but try to find shared experiences. [...] Then you make visible the cognitive dissonance, the difference between opinions and experiences. That's really difficult [...]. You must practice it, respectfully and often with a glimpse of humour." – R8

Starting out by requests of members themselves, the training inspires to an approach of curious listening, exploring climate emotions and personal experiences, which, R8 argues, can challenge climate obstruction on a more deep-seated level. The quote also illustrates a sensitive dimension of environmental advocacy and the need to proceed carefully. It also implies the need to activate the personal networks of the ENGO-members to increase personal contacts and relationships.

Another category of networks frequently mentioned were public actors such as politicians, civil servants, journalists and business representatives. Apart from the aforementioned public investigations, R3 and R4 described both dynamic and mutual relationships where they advocate through cooperation with these actors. For instance, advocates provide help with writing legislations, motions, policies and respond to requests for statistics and analyses. Advocates also invite public actors to participate in events, public hearings or lectures, which provides officials and representatives with a stage to meet the public. Furthermore, R7 mentioned how a broad network helps them to stay attentive to reactions when calibrating and planning their advocacy tactics.

## 4.3 Taking care of the movement creates conditions for other strategies

A reoccurring theme during interviews was the fundamental care work for the already engaged. It was described as a prerequisite for other strategies. As previously established, the advocates face a harsh working environment, including staggering obstacles. When asked how they manage, one responded with describing how they find support and inspiration in the community:

”How do we manage? There’s a portion of gallows humour, dark humour. You have to laugh about it, that’s one thing. But then... people are really stubborn and driven [...] and it is honouring to work for such an organisation.” – R8

Another way to manage through resistance emphasised by close to all advocates, was the need to explicitly connect specific actions with the bigger picture to keep motivation and a sense of momentum. One argued diligently that an important aspect of their advocacy is to show the capabilities of environmental movements:

”Fight the oil industry in Sweden? That’s really difficult so you have to break it down to partial goals that you can win. [...] If we can show some progress and show that if you follow our methods... then that can create hope and perhaps ripple effects. [...] And that is probably the greatest victory of all, to spread hope in Sweden.” – R7

Following that thought, R7 reiterated the importance to declare achieved victories to empower and reproduce the notion that change is possible. In line with this reasoning, R2, R4, R5, R6 and R8 reflected on a strategic motive underlying most tactics: to counter the feeling of compact silence that reinforces and facilitates climate obstructionism:

”In daily life, the climate crisis is like the elephant in the room that no one talks about. So we have a goal to talk about it in everyday situations in a way that isn’t activist, but normalising. [...] We ourselves have experienced how encountering each other has been comforting, to see that there’s more people who care. That makes it easier to take a stand, and, well, you simply feel better. So we assume that could be the same for many others since 89%<sup>14</sup> want more decisive climate politics” – R4

“We need to point to the 89%<sup>15</sup> to wake people from the paralysis, this silence that occurs when you initiate climate conversations. Because it’s a myth that people aren’t interested, people are worried! So, we can build on that.” – R5

“My feeling is that climate issues are silenced. That if you write a debate article, for example, there’s almost no response [...]. And there’s no catch if it’s quiet. If someone’s

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<sup>14</sup> Several advocates referred to research indicating that 89% of the global population demand intensified political action (Andre et al. 2024).

<sup>15</sup> See note 14.

really angry, like 'what are you saying? This is rubbish!' - that's at least a conversational starter, but silence suffocates everything, like 'I don't even hear you'." – R6

When silence effectively shuts down conversations and intimidates the movement, voicing climate issues are also an act of care. For example, R6 described how silence increase the feeling of isolation, creating the illusion that you are alone in the fight for climate action. Similarly, both R5 and R6 described personal experiences of sometimes avoiding raising climate issues after several experiences of initiatives being met with silence. Consequently, most advocacy tactics are also tactics of care as they challenge the illusion of loneliness.

Continuing the reasoning, R2 described a collaboration between climate scientists and psychologists to explore how to advocate in honest yet constructive ways. They described it as particularly important when dealing with people whose obstruction is based on identity related fears, perceived threats or hopelessness:

"It's a very serious crisis and taking it on board is actually quite challenging. The only way, in my opinion, to handle that sort of person is with care. Because they're good people, but they're dealing with a really, really bad crisis. And we have different ways of protecting ourselves. I think every single one of us uses a certain amount of denial to get through the day. Because if you actually stop and think about where we are today, and what the scientific facts are, it can be overwhelming." – R2

Their reasoning expanded to include climate researchers, who R2 described as also fighting similar battles of silence and fears but from a unique position of knowledge on the matters. Climate researchers have deep insights into the severity of climate change and observe the dissonance between a society that continues to rank high on global levels of climate awareness whilst still not responding as it would if it really perceived climate change as a crisis. Thus, collaborating with psychologists is a three-fold act of care. Both caring for the scientists by interdisciplinary collaboration to address the gap between awareness and action, caring for the environment itself and the people experiencing climate change, and caring for the people who struggle with identity related fears.

One aspect of care stands out from the rest. Since climate obstruction sometimes materialises in hateful or even violent actions, several advocates reflected on the need to take care of the organisational front figures. R4 and R1 described support systems for their members, providing guidance and care if exposed to harassments or repressions as well as designated teams to look after the group during gatherings. R7 described how they use careful preparations to practice non-violent reactions to violence in a safe setting before being exposed to it in real life:

"You need the non-violence to be your reflex. [...] For example, if someone attempts to do something violent, you can use techniques to re-humanise the person being targeted. That works really well. So, if someone tries to attack any of us, you say, for example

‘this is Name, Name has three kids, they work as a bricklayer on weekdays...’ and you continue to tell who Name is. Then it’s really hard [for the attacker] to continue.” – R7

From everyday encouragement to handling extreme attacks, the organisations express the need for internal care work in order to be able to continue to counter climate obstruction and to create a vibrant and resilient environmental movement.

## 5. Discussion

The following chapter combines the empirical findings with former research to discuss the research question: *how do environmental advocates experience and strategically navigate climate obstruction?*

### 5.1 A matter of democracy

One of the most striking insights from the results is the advocates' understanding of climate policy setbacks as connected to setbacks in democracy. Their observations resonate with former research (Vihma et al. 2021; Malm et al. 2025). Their experiences of a shrinking civic space and harsher working conditions with increased prosecution, repression, harsher language use and a heated public space confirm former observations of political trends (Sörbom et al. 2024; Firmin et al. 2026). Additionally, the advocates expressed their concern that the current government actively contributes to the sense of democratic setbacks through pursuing said harsh language use and dishonouring traditions of rigid public investigations.

The election of 2026 stayed as a backdrop across all interviews. None of the advocates work for a party-political organisation and none work solely with election campaigns, but the sum of aspects presented in the results paints a picture of the trade-offs considered also when planning their election advocacy strategies. The impartial role as non-party-political gives the advocates a distinct role in addressing environmental issues and climate obstruction before the election. Still, the findings point to some experiences of critical voices disregarding their inputs as corrupted by a socialist agenda. The critique can be interpreted as undermining the legitimacy of ENGOs and an example of *source credibility obstruction*. Several respondents touched upon this issue, and while it was not among their main obstacles it allows a cautious reflection on the intertwined matters of democracy and climate change when advocating for the fundamentals of life on Earth are treated as a matter of partisanship. However, the ideological ties to climate action and the contributions of liberal and conservative ideologies remains an interesting field to rediscover (Torpman 2025).

Furthermore, the advocates connect environmental issues with democracy in their pre-election work. They employ tactics such as organising cross-partisan political hearings, inviting politicians for dialogue, raising medial attention to climate change, as well as publishing evaluations and reports to showcase how political parties respond to the climate crisis. Several tactics are strategically carried out through cross-organisational cooperation to multiply the effects of their work. Moreover, their strategies illustrate how well-known methods in

advocacy literature are applied in a context of climate obstruction (Gullberg 2008; Arvidson et al. 2018; Mosley et al. 2023).

Together, the advocates' experiences with a two-edged sword of climate policy pushbacks and a shrinking civic space, this study draws attention to the need to vitalise democracy. Two advocates phrased it as;

“We want people to be engaged in the election: talk to people, actually vote and be engaged in the democratic process. Because it's part of this shrinking democratic space that people are less engaged in democracy in general.” – R1

“A lot of civil society organizations right now are focusing on the coming election. That makes sense. Because the single action that you as a member in society have, your most powerful action, [the one] that will have the most effect, is when you vote. So it is the most important act you can do for the climate: using your vote.” – R2

Their concerns about democracy are interesting with regards to their Swedish context which, on one hand, continues to perform well on international rankings (Civic Space Watch & European Civic Forum 2025; Civicus Monitor 2026). On the other hand, their experiences are confirmed by recent reports indicating a trend of a shrinking civic space in Sweden (Sörbom et al. 2024; Civic Space Watch & European Civic Forum 2025).

An important last note on this topic is that underlying all challenging experiences, several advocates still did not fear conflicts or conflicting views. They rejected the use of harsh language and threats and emphasised the need for respectful conversations, but they did not reject nor fear diverging viewpoints. Quite the contrary, several advocates reflected a willingness to engage in discussions. This approach can bring concrete contributions to public conversations and, in the long run, embed advocates into the Swedish tradition of civil societal organisations strengthening the essence of democracy (Essen 2021).

## 5.2 Strategies for deep-seated obstruction

The results indicate that advocates experience obstruction to be facilitated and reinforced by underlying, deep-seated, aspects of interests and identities. The deep-seated obstruction is experienced throughout the categories of climate obstruction. The findings complement previous research with perspectives from the advocacy field. For instance, advocates encounter rejections to systemic regulations motivated by economic or ideological interests (Kulin et al. 2021; Plehwe & Farrel 2025), while other rejections draw on identities such as partisanship or a perceived threat to lifestyles (Lockwood 2018; Almiron & Moreno 2022; Vowles & Ekberg 2026). Furthermore, the findings provide insights to how these deep-seated aspects make some environmental topics to be more sensitive than others, which materialises in stronger reactions: violence,



hatred, mistrust and false rumours. The reactions are further experienced to be facilitated by technological design choices of social media platforms and amplified by far-right media ecosystems, a recognition consistent with previous research (Kulin et al. 2021; Vowles & Hultman 2021). Additionally, the findings indicate that the deep-seated aspects are sometimes obscured behind hidden agendas, which resonate with former research (Fortin et al. 2025).

The advocates reflect conscious choices to deal with described deep-seated obstruction by using strategies on a similar deep-seated level. Hence, a common denominator is the recognition of personal relationships and personal experiences which enable connections despite the increasingly rapid media cycles and tech-facilitated affective polarisation. Some examples of strategies are tactics of popular education to make science more relatable, of social media campaigns that centre people in storytelling, and of initiatives for normative conversations around future visions and personal experiences. A reflection from one of the advocates illustrates the recognition to explore deep-seated aspects to increase their advocacy impact:

”I would say it’s always been there, the longing to make an impact, but I think that our organisation is maturing in the way that we realise that we can’t talk *only* about facts. Obviously, it’s not enough. There are other things we also need to do and, in a way, [...] it’s about reaching emotions, stories and shared experiences.” – R8

Following the recognition of personal relationships, the findings also indicate that advocates consider it important to activate their networks. In relation to the deep-seated obstruction, networks are vital to increase representation. A broad representation entails more role models that potentially can reach through opposition sprung from deep-seated obstruction. Hence, a pre-emptive advocacy strategy is to build relationships and cross-sectoral alliances to expand their networks, as well as to encourage and facilitate for their members to do the same. The mobilisation of grassroots participation simultaneously serves to vitalise democracy, increase climate-policy acceptance and to push for climate action. Additionally, to activate the networks is necessary to work smart with resources when facing the resourceful networks promoting climate obstruction.

Adding to this discussion, findings indicate that mixed with counter-obstruction strategies, the advocates consistently reflect initiatives of care: caring for the environment as well as for human well-being, the scared, vulnerable and overwhelmed. One of the less expected findings was the advocates’ consciously caring work to create inclusive movements with inclusive visions that more people can identify with and feel excited to strive towards. This complements previous research by connecting identities and the need for visions with the need to navigate climate obstruction. Working with consideration for deep-seated values, norms and emotions is previously known to be important to mobilise

environmental action and is repeatedly shown as a motive for advocates to engage (Mosley et al. 2023; Stephens & Yadin 2025).

### 5.3 Diverse but complementing strategies

The material demonstrates a diverse range of strategies, in terms of time commitment, cooperation, and version of climate obstruction to focus on. The strategies reflect a variety of target groups approached both direct and indirect, similar to previous advocacy research (Arvidson et al. 2018; Mosley et al. 2023). Confirming previous research on climate obstruction advocacy, their strategies include aspects of social exposure, lobbying and litigation, campaigns and protests (Stephens & Yadin 2025).

The findings show that advocacy traditions and organisational heritage shape the choice of advocacy strategy when faced with climate obstruction. An example is the distinctive crossroad of civil disobedience. One advocate exemplified the importance of organisational traditions by describing a non-spoken rule that their organisation works solely with popular education which rule out civil disobedience as a thinkable option. The decisive impact of organisational traditions confirms previous research (Arvidson et al. 2018; Hadden & Jasny 2019). However, the material do not indicate any clear differences based on organisational level or establishment apart from resources available.

A concluding reflection standing out from the material is that the advocates consider the diversity of tactics to be important in itself. This conclusion is based on a compiled picture of the advocates' strategical reflections. Firstly, all advocates described numerous tactics, each explained as valuable in different ways, and some even work intentionally with experimentation to creatively try out and calibrate tactics. Secondly, several advocates made explicit connections between different tactics and how they can complement each other. Thirdly, the advocates described a comprehensive effort needed in order to handle what they experience as a vast and complex phenomena of climate obstruction. Fourthly, the advocates identified a need to target the numerous actors involved in obstruction slightly differently, as illustrated by the advocates' explicit discussions on representation, networks and deep-seated strategies. Lastly, the advocates connect different tactics to their different experiences of climate obstruction, preferring certain strategies in relation to certain types of obstruction. These five findings together indicate that the advocates consider diversity in itself to be important in order to build pressure from several directions and to keep the movement in momentum, which resonates with previous research (Chenoweth 2021).

Regarding the last finding, the pattern was identified by how, for instance, the strategical reflections on making science available and relatable was mostly mentioned to counter aspects of *phenomenon obstruction*. Whereas the reflections

on uncovering and naming political greenwashing and false solutions was mostly mentioned in relation to *climate action obstruction*. The strategies of personal conversations, broadening the representation and creating inclusive visions was predominantly mentioned in particular to counter the identity-related *climate action obstruction*. As to *source credibility obstruction*, the cooperation in broad networks were often mentioned to increase credibility in certain target groups.

Overall, the notion that diversity is important in itself for strategies and tactics to complement each other, is perhaps best conveyed in the advocates' reflections on cooperation together with other ENGOs, viewing their part as an important piece. Talking to the advocates, I noted a growing determination to make use of synergies between different organisations in the environmental movement, which is in accordance with previous research (Rietig 2016; Eilstrup-Sangiovanni 2019).

## 5.4 Concluding discussion

To conclude, the purpose of this study is to explore how Swedish environmental advocacy actors experience and strategically navigate climate obstruction. The results contribute with a more profound understanding of how climate obstruction materialises in the field of environmental advocacy in various ways. It describes how environmental advocates identify disinformation as one of the key aspects of climate obstruction. Thus, strategies to raise awareness, promote climate literacy and expose disinformation are regarded critical to build public resistance against manipulative climate obstruction. Another key finding is the deep-seated aspects of identities and interests. Thus, the advocates work with challenging norms, sharing innovative practices and inviting to normative conversations of future visions. These findings are among the main contributions of this thesis.

My conclusionary understanding gathered from this research is that the advocates have developed both elaborated and attentive strategical reflections on how to target each different form of climate obstruction with slight modifications. Together, the advocates portray a broad palette of tactics to form their strategies and demonstrate a situational sense of the advocacy work needed to target climate obstruction where it is most useful and to create a momentum in the movement. Their strategies are both diverse and complementing when navigating climate obstruction.

As a final remark, the limited scope of this study requires cautious generalisation of conclusions in terms of representation, as this thesis by no means covers the experiences of all environmental advocates in Sweden. Neither does it include perspectives of actors actively pursuing climate obstruction to share their views. One alternative research method debated throughout my data collection process was whether it would have been beneficial to give the participants a more in-depth description of climate obstruction beforehand. This may have allowed

them to benefit more from the conversation and may have resulted in more stringent conversations. On the other hand, the open approach may have enabled exploring more spontaneous and genuine experiences. Another alternative method discussed was whether it would have been useful to invite advocates to a participatory workshop to facilitate co-creation of knowledge and an opportunity to further study the synergies between different groups. On the other hand, the semi-structured interviews allowed each respondent more time to elaborate their thoughts.

For future research, a more comprehensive study may add valuable insights to how advocacy strategies are affected by the perceived pressures from a shrinking civic space, increased climate change urgency, and political inaction. Moreover, a comparative study situated in a context where the civic space has been constrained for longer time may complement these findings with insights of how resilience strategies can be practiced. Furthermore, while this study briefly touches upon the issues of care and identities, I am curious for future research to elaborate on the connections between identities and climate obstruction or to explore how advocates hold space for such emotions. Lastly, further research may turn the attention to obstructors and how they perceive different advocacy strategies in order to continue exploring how to navigate climate obstruction.

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# Popular science summary

## Facing Goliath?

**Strategic advocacy to navigate climate obstruction.**

**Have you ever been overwhelmed** when trying to understand why the work for climate action takes so much time? This study tries to piece together the puzzle with the help of people who have first-hand experiences of such work: the environmental movements in Sweden. Their experiences with and reflections on how to navigate obstacles help us grasp why it can be so overwhelming.

A concept to help us untangle this is *climate obstruction*, meaning, *the efforts to hinder climate action*. This concept draws our attention to how powerful networks intentionally hinder climate action for their own economic interests. For example, the networks actively spread doubts about climate research, attack climate action and undermine actors addressing the environmental problems. Moreover, the concept of climate obstruction shifts our view from the black-and-white conversations about climate denial, to help us identify the complex mosaic of identities, interests, practices, norms, benefits, disappointments, distrust and disinformation that reinforce the persistent inaction on global warming.

**Through interviews with people** from Environmental Non-Governmental Organisations who advocate for environmental issues (ENGO-advocates, for short), the concept becomes clearer. ENGO-advocates identify disinformation to be an important piece of climate obstruction. They describe forms of greenwashing and manipulation to deceive the public and decisionmakers. As counterstrategies, advocates strive to make science more relatable, invite people to study circles and create public hearings to inform voters before the election. Moreover, they strategically collaborate with others to strengthen their work.

The interviews show that ENGO-advocates perceive identities and interests to be further fuelling climate obstruction. For example, when climate policies are portrayed as scandalously threatening the lives of “real Swedes”. These insights inspire ENGO-advocates to address such underlying elements with strategies on a similar deep-seated level. They work both confrontationally and pre-emptively. Confrontationally, like exposing when short term economic interests hinder systemic regulations. Pre-emptively, like inviting people to workshops where they explore new and inclusive visions for a sustainable society.

**However, ENGO-advocates describe** several factors that complicate their work. One of them is the polarising algorithms on social media platforms, with far-right actors shouting loudly, creating diverging interpretations of reality. Another factor is the public conversation under pressure, where advocates experience a harsher language use, threats and violence. Thirdly, advocates describe the current government as actively contributing to disinformation around climate issues, undermining climate actions, and ignoring traditions of civil societal consultation.

**The image that is starting to emerge**<sup>16</sup> is not only about climate issues anymore, but also about the state of the democratic conversations. The answer to our initial question of why it can be overwhelming is starting to become clearer. The ENGO-advocates explicitly connect matters of climate obstruction to matters of democracy and consciously strive to strengthen public conversations and vitalise democracy as part of their work. Instead of fleeing from confrontations, they describe both willingness and determination to meet people with opposing views and to respectfully discuss pathways for climate action.

Moreover, this study identifies creativity and care to be useful tools when handling the overwhelming situation. Creativity, in exploring new ways to work around the obstacles of climate obstruction. Care, both to support each other and build a stronger movement, but also to support people who are scared, vulnerable or overwhelmed by the interlinked ecological crises.

**As climate obstruction grows** in complexity and sophistication, the pressure grows on abilities to reveal, resist, pre-empt, and counter it to work for climate action. The experiences and reflections of ENGO-advocates encourage us to notice climate obstruction around us and to explore new strategies when working for climate action and socioecological sustainable transitions.

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<sup>16</sup> For a visual summary of the thesis, see [Appendix 2: Summary in a scientific poster](#).

# Acknowledgements

Thank you, who takes time to read this thesis. I hope it gives you some ideas for new things to explore, uncover, name, care for or try out. Most of all, I hope it leaves you with some sense of rage, comfort, and hope, as it does with me.

Thank you, all participants who shared your knowledge, experiences and thoughts with me. Despite covering worrying topics, our conversations gave me hope.

Thank you, Amelia, for supervising me throughout the semester. I am ever grateful for your patience and your openness to engage with my ideas.

Thank you, classmates and dear ones who have kept me company in writing. Let's continue to bounce ideas, read texts, and have lunch breaks together in the park.

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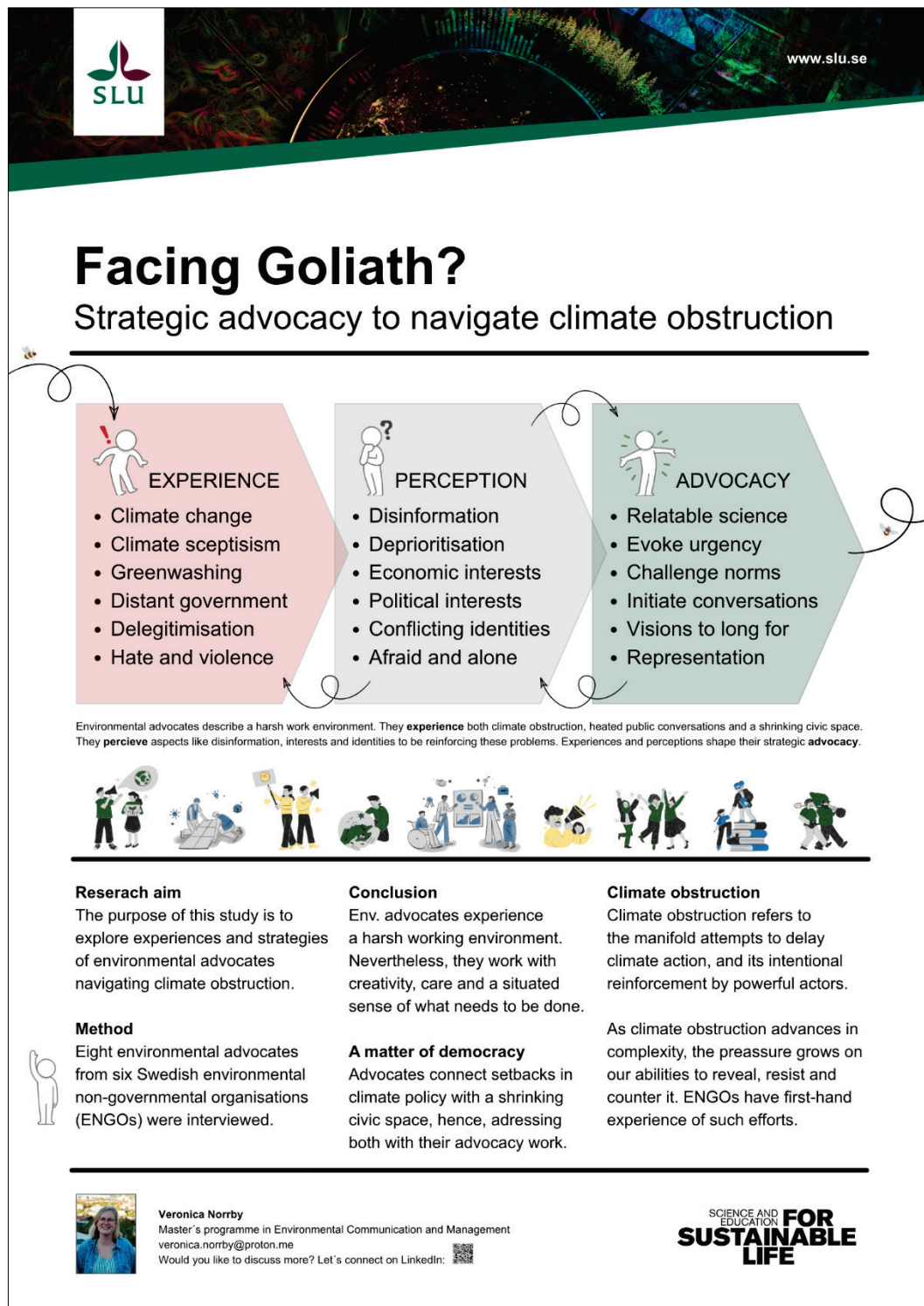
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## Appendix 1: Glossary

| Term               | Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Civic space        | Civic space entails the set of conditions non-governmental actors need to meaningfully and safely participate in public life (Civic Space Watch & European Civic Forum 2025). It includes “the respect in policy, law and practice for freedoms of association, expression and peaceful assembly and the extent to which states protect these fundamental rights” (CIVICUS Monitor 2025).                                                                                |
| Civil disobedience | Civil disobedience is non-violent refusal to obey regulations perceived unrighteous or dangerous (Britannica 2026). Actions often refer to moral or ethics perceived violated and seek to evoke meaningful political, social or economic change (Chenoweth 2021).                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Climate action     | Climate action refers to policies, practices and initiatives that adequately address climate change. What is considered adequate stands in relation to the latest scientific consensus as summarized in the assessments by the IPCC (Roberts et al. 2025). Climate action substantially contributes to combat climate change, while inaction or obstruction perpetuate dependence on fossil fuels and avoid targeting the causes of climate change (Fortin et al. 2025). |
| Current government | This refers to the political term of 2022-2026 and includes the political parties of Moderaterna, Kristdemokraterna, Liberalerna and Sverigedemokraterna, despite the latter not officially in government, since they, through a political agreement, likewise have governmental-like influence and power over the politics performed during the term (SVT Nyheter 2022).                                                                                                |
| Popular education  | In Sweden, popular education [folkbildning] is an established form of free and voluntary learning, characterised by inclusive participation and acknowledged for contributing to vitalise democracy (Folkbildningsrådet 2025).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |

## Appendix 2: Summary in a scientific poster





## Appendix 3: AI disclosure

I used Microsoft Word transcription for all interviews, manually correcting afterwards.