Resolving the peatland restoration conundrum

Mapping different stakeholder interests

What are peatlands?

- Peatlands are wet ecosystems with a peat deposit
- Peat is dead, partly decomposed organic material that has accumulated in the place where it has been formed under waterlogged conditions. It grows at a rate of 1 mm per year
- Although they cover only 3% of the total earth's land surface, they store more carbon than any terrestrial ecosystem, making them the unsung heroes of climate change

Why restore peatlands?

- For centuries long, peatlands have been drained.
 Drained peatlands emit greenhouse gases. This exacerbates the climate crisis. Emissions from degraded peatlands represent 4-5% of the total global anthropogenic GHG emissions
- Other reasons for restoration: flood mitigation, improvement of water quality, protecting rare and endangered plants and animal species, reversing erosion (landslides)
- How? Restoring peatlands means **rewetting** them

Why this research?

- Despite several (legal) instruments in place, peatlands keep degrading at an alarming rate
- This thesis aims to identify the gaps in and contradictions between these instruments to arrive at policy recommendations to remedy shortcomings and upscale successful restoration projects
- Holistic approach: also incorporating socioeconomic factors

A first crucial step is mapping the different interests at stake and the different legal regimes that are triggered



- Peatland restoration intersects with many **different legal regimes**, including climate, energy, agriculture, biodiversity and planning, with potential for both synergies and conflicts
- Harmful (extractive) activities on peatlands can sometimes be rooted in tradition, further complicating their phase-out
- Sometimes degraded peatland is not recognised as such, and landowners can still consider themselves "environmental stewards" (although not always)

next

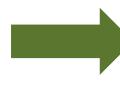
steps

• Peatland restoration often requires a change in mindset, as peatlands have often been considered "wastelands"

Identifying parameters that ensure a holistic approach, taking the different perspectives/issues into consideration



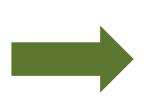
Analysis of relevant international and European instruments



Two national case studies:







Policy recommendations







