

Where the Wind Blows

The socio-political geography of wind power development in Finland, Norway and Sweden

Johanna Liljenfeldt

Akademisk avhandling

som med vederbörligt tillstånd av Rektor vid Umeå universitet för avläggande av filosofie doktorsexamen framläggs till offentligt försvar i S205H, Samhällsvetarhuset, fredagen den 27 januari, kl. 10:15. Avhandlingen kommer att försvaras på engelska.

Fakultetsopponent: Dr. Peter Schmitt,
Kulturgeografiska institutionen, Stockholms universitet, Stockholm, Sverige.



**Institutionen för Geografi och Ekonomisk Historia/
Department of Geography and Economic History**

Umeå universitet/Umeå University

Umeå 2017

Organization

Umeå University
Department of Geography
and Economic History

Document type

Doctoral thesis

Date of publication

13 January 2017

Author

Johanna Liljenfeldt

Title

Where the Wind Blows: The socio-political geography of wind power development in Finland, Norway and Sweden.

Abstract

This thesis analysis the planning process for large-scale wind power development in Finland, Norway and Sweden. The aim is to explore the emerging power relations and socio-economic dynamics of the negotiation, planning and realization of this new development. The thesis employs an energy justice framework to capture the opportunities different stakeholders have to take part in and influence wind power development processes ('procedural justice'), and how the potential benefits and burdens of wind power development are divided between stakeholders ('distributional justice'). The study's setup is an embedded sequential mixed methods research design, which includes analysis of policy documents, in-dept interviews, observations, as well as register based population data.

The thesis shows how power relations on both a structural level and an actor level are used to exert power and influence over the planning process for wind power development. On a structural level, the results indicate that transformations in EU directives and national planning laws and guidelines in Finland, Norway and Sweden in recent years have been more focused on speed and efficiency in planning processes than on legitimacy issues. The changes that have been implemented seem to point to diminishing opportunities for broad participation and debate in wind power planning processes, in favour of more top-down processes with a specific, sectoral focus on developing wind power. On the actor level, perceived improper behaviour by different actors within the planning process can further limit the possibilities for participation. People refrain from participating in planning processes, for instance, if they feel that they are treated disrespectfully or if there have occurred procedural errors that undermine the legitimacy of the formal planning process. However, participation in formal planning processes is not the only way to influence planning processes. There are a number of more informal channels, such as using the media or the Internet, lobbying, or rallying local support, that can and have been used by stakeholders to tap into the formal planning process to try to affect its outcomes. Such informal activities have a considerable spatial and scalar reach, the importance of which is that stakeholders utilizing such measures have the possibility to affect not only the local wind power project under debate, but also developments in other places and attitudes towards wind power more generally.

As concerns distributional issues, the results of the thesis show that the evidence of distributional inequality concerning wind power development on the national scale in Sweden is not very strong; but if such inequalities exist, there are possibilities to redistribute the benefits from wind power to those who are burdened by the developments. Distributional injustice related to wind power development is thus not an evident problem, generally speaking, in Sweden today. However, if this state is to remain, procedural aspects related to the continued development of wind power need to be kept in mind, as procedural and distributional inequalities are intimately related. Of specific concern is the need to address formal and informal procedures that marginalize stakeholder participation in planning processes, but it is equally important to also consider who is to be included in or excluded from negotiations and the distribution of local economic benefits connected to specific wind power projects.

Keywords

wind power, planning, land use, participation, power relations, energy justice, mixed methods, Finland, Norway, Sweden

Language

English

ISBN

978-91-7601-643-5

ISSN

1402-5205

Number of pages

117 + 4 papers