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Assessing Intermediary
Expertise in Cross-Border
Arctic Energy
Development

Publications:

- Salonen H. Public justification analysis of Russian renewable energy strategies. *Polar Geography* 2018; 41(2), 75-86.
- Salonen H. Modernization of Russian district heating systems with the help of biomass energy – a Gordian knot? (submitted)

RUSSIAN ARCTIC ENERGY TRANSITIONS: LINKS ACROSS AN OPEN SPACE

RUSSIAN ARCTIC AS ENERGY TRANSITION CASE STUDY

- Reliability of energy supply an increasingly topical issue across the Arctic states
- Weaknesses in the fossil fuel system open new possibilities for alternative fuels.
- Renewables may also boost socioeconomic development.
- Old and trusted networks of fossil fuel players pose key problems

INTERMEDIARIES CROSSING DISTANCIES

- The study of intermediaries reveals **what happens at the interfaces between** the public and the private, the regulator and the regulated, the expert and the advisee, etc.
- Intermediaries can be public, private, and civil society organizations, groups or individual actors.
- **Arctic remoteness** from the main centers of decision-making, finance, and consumption **highlights the role of intermediaries** as in-between actors in energy governance.

ENABLING AND RESTRICTING FORCE

Bridge actors and interests
Facilitate project implementation
Support & monitor rule enforcement
Provide specialized knowledge/expertise

Lobby for own goals
Distortion of competition
Disparity between logics of business and politics

1. RENEWABLES IN POLICY-MAKING

Background. The importance of renewables has been emphasized in the Russian energy policy at the federal and local level in the last ten years.

Research goal. Identify the broader policy priorities by focusing on the sources of legitimization.

Methods. Public justification analysis of six documents.

Results. Technical and financial actors are stronger proponents for renewables than civil or environmental activists.

2. BIOMASS IN DISTRICT HEATING

Background. Replacing coal-burning boilers with ones that burn biomass would reduce importing costs and improve local energy security and efficiency in remote Russian towns.

Research goal. Examine why local governments are not efficient actors in this case.

Methods. Qualitative content analysis of expert interviews and local media

Results. Modernizing heating plants to use renewables has been slow because the plans made address only a part of the issue, ignoring the surrounding structures (outdated infrastructure, distorted markets, lack of intermediaries, flow of materials).



Fig. 1 Traditional use of biomass in heating, the Republic of Karelia

3. NETWORKS OF ENERGY SECURITY IN REMOTE SETTLEMENTS

Background. Replacing imported diesel fuel in remote Arctic settlements with renewable energy would improve local energy security but also entail dismantling a well-established system with dozens of actors.

Research goal. Compare networks formed by actors in Arctic fossil fuel deliveries and renewable energy projects to reveal most powerful intermediaries and the scope of their power.

Methods. Social network analysis of relevant actors, validated by content analysis of local policy-making documents.

Results. Similar actors hold most influence and power among the fossil fuel and renewable energy actors; regional decision-makers and state-owned energy companies. Renewable energy development aligned with larger development trends of the republic.



Fig. 2. Fuel deliveries often travel by rivers

CONCLUSION

- Transitions towards low-carbon systems in the Russian Arctic represented by niche projects, but success depends **networks formed** at a deeper **structural level**
- Importance of **links** between the governing bodies and new actors in the field should not be overlooked
- Here, role of **political and business** intermediaries crucial