

Justice in Transitions

Toward a just energy transition in the Arctic



The Arctic is a part of the ongoing energy transition, but doing this with justice and equity in mind is one of the most important issues facing the region.

The Arctic region has a long history of extractivism, which includes energy resources and materials used for energy infrastructure. Path dependencies for fossil fuels are strong, but not insurmountable. There are significant decarbonisation efforts underway in several Arctic countries.

Across six case studies drawing on extensive new data, JUSTNORTH researchers have explored some of the most significant cross-cutting concerns in the energy system. Ranging from mobility and heating, production and transportation to carbon lock-in and stranded assets—while traversing multiple geographies from Greenland and Iceland, Russia and the United States to Sweden and Norway—this research has explored central aspects of the energy transition among key stakeholders in the region with regard to economic development and climate change.

CASE STUDIES I-6

CS1

Transport: Opportunities For Sustainable Mobility and Addressing Transport Poverty in Iceland

Researchers:
Benjamin Sovacool, Sussex University
Paul Upham, Sussex University

CS2

DataCentres: Sustainable Digitalization & Resilient Communities: Low Carbon Data Centres in Greenland, Iceland & Norway

Researchers:
Benjamin Sovacool, Sussex University
Chukwuka Monye, Sussex University

CS3

WindNO: Renewable and Ethical? Motivation for Wind Power Resistance in Sápmi & the Norwegian Arctic

Researchers:
Ragnhild Freng Dale, Western Norway Research Institute
Halvor Dannevig, Western Norway Research Institute

CS4

Post Industrial: Liabilities into Assets- Reviving Post-Industrial Communities Through Repurposing Industrial Infrastructures in Swedish Arctic

Researchers:
Roman Sidortsov, Sussex University
Timothy Scarlett, Michigan Technological University

CS5

OilGas: Stranded Assets, Path Dependencies & Carbon Lock-in: Short/Medium/Long Term Implications of Oil & Gas Development in the Russian., Norwegian and U.S Arctic

Researchers:
Roman Sidortsov, Sussex University
Anna Badya, Sussex University

CS6

Energy: Corporate Cultures & Geopolitical Aspirations: Exploring Socio-Political Barriers to Energy Transition in Russia & Norway

Researchers:
Maria Pavlenko, Erasmus University Rotterdam
Darren McCauley, Erasmus University Rotterdam
Ryan Holmes, Erasmus University Rotterdam
Cas Balder, Erasmus University Rotterdam
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By mapping perceived risks, impacts, and benefits onto an ethical matrix of different values, our research gives a big picture of the major value-related conflicts and synergies, and of what drives and motivates key actors such as governments, civil society organizations, indigenous groups, and businesses. The aim has been to identify critical barriers to and opportunities for ethically sustainable and equitable energy systems. The wide variety of values found resists a neat summary, but one point stands out: for conflicting values and perspectives to be reconciled, more meaningful participation by the stakeholders, not least local communities and indigenous populations, is necessary.

To tackle some of the main value conflicts found and to chart a path toward a just transition, our research has identified several possible legal and regulatory solutions:

Policy-making should place greater emphasis on strategic energy planning. This encourages a holistic approach highlighting not only the potential for climate mitigation but also the ways in which a project can account for and address past, current, and future injustices and inequities.

Make the energy justice concept a critical concern of permitting and licensing. Conditions on business operating permits or licenses should be placed to further human flourishing and not interfere with it (which is not always the case today).

Improve rate- and tariff-setting to enhance equity and justice by incorporating the concept of energy services into the process. For example, the electricity to heat an emergency worker's residence should not cost more than the electricity spent to mine cryptocurrencies. New forms of rate and tariff-making can play a vital role for a more just and sustainable development.

Supplement environmental and social impact assessments. These assessments need to better factor in the who, what and why to help build stronger cases for just sustainability. We suggest that applying the concept of undue interference (with individual and collective capabilities) can be an important tool.

