

"I find energy
inextricably
intriguing"



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My research focuses on energy development in the Barents region. Alongside my dissertation research, I have also been teaching at the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Lapland, giving visiting lectures at other universities, and occasionally publishing non-scientific articles on themes related to my ongoing work with the dissertation.

Whereas energy in general tends to be seen as something clinical, uninteresting and distant, I find it fascinating. There are a wide variety of concerns related to energy, and they are intertwined with all domains of societal life. While energy is a universal concern to human societies, it is also an issue which manifests itself in different ways in different geographical, temporal and social settings. I see energy as relentlessly cultural: the ways of producing, consuming and talking about energy are inextricably interwoven with societal values as well as with conceptions of a 'good life' and a 'desirable society'.

My dissertation focuses on the theoretical debates revolving around the central 'energy concepts' of agency, security and sustainability through a case study on the contemporary Barents energyscape. I see my work as having a twofold focus. On the one hand, it aims to take part in and shape theoretical and conceptual debates on the key concepts in my field of study; on the other hand, my aim is to help build a more socioculturally and environmentally sustainable basis for regional energy policies and development.

In the context of the Barents region, I hope through my own work to broaden the way both energy and the 'political' are understood in regional energy debates. Although international political and popular discussions have focused almost exclusively on a single issue, there is more to the regional energy landscape than the discursive horizon dominated by large-scale hydrocarbon extraction. Among other issues, the potential of and plans for renewable energy development, projected and currently ongoing programs on saving energy and energy efficiency, and concerns related to electricity,

heating systems and the nuclear issue are an integral part of the regional energyscape.

In the same way that energy encompasses more than oil and gas, the concept of the 'political' in the context of energy needs to be re(de)efined. Whereas contemporary approaches to energy politics tend to relegate energy-related issues to the domains of markets and 'high politics', thus detaching them from other spheres of societal life, I see politics and the political as taking place in and through the diverse range of voices aiming to participate in shaping regional energy developments. From this viewpoint, energy is profoundly intertwined with broader questions of regional, economic and social development, as well livelihoods and living environments. It is precisely these intertwinements that need to be acknowledged and addressed in order to grasp the elusive social dimensions inescapably connected with all aspects of energy and related developments.

The contemporary Barents energyscape takes its shape from the interplay of a broad spectrum of elements both human and 'nonhuman'. Among other elements, a wide range of collective actors, existing and estimated resources, harsh environmental and climactic conditions, infrastructures, technologies, legislation, political systems and institutions, as well as conventional ways of thinking about and defining energy, all play a part in negotiating the outcomes of regional energy development. To better grasp the diverse manners in which different elements interact and intertwine, I approach the energyscape and agency in it through the notion of situatedness. Rejecting ideas of predefined actor-structure frameworks, generalizable theories and universal definitions of key concepts, my emphasis on situatedness opens up a space for identifying and addressing the variety of themes and concerns which make up the Barents energyscape in all its complexity and diversity.