



Implementing wind power policy – Institutional frameworks and the beliefs of sovereigns



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ABSTRACT

As the development of renewable energy remains prominent on the global policy agenda, international organizations and states have created policies intended to foster renewable energy development. With wind power projected to make the largest contribution to Europe's renewable energy mix, the EU and EU member-states have attempted to create institutional frameworks favoring the development of wind power. In many cases, however, this has proven to be a necessary, but insufficient, condition for wind power development, making wind power policy an interesting case of policy implementation. Because of the inherently local nature of wind power development, the influence of local actors and institutions on the policy process must also be considered. This article suggests how a proposed theoretical development in the Advocacy Coalition Framework can be used to explain how concerns exogenous to local policy subsystems can affect local political decision-making and policy implementation. This approach is then used to examine the case of wind power development in Markbygden, Sweden and finds partial support for the effect of exogenous concerns on local political decision-making.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

A major contribution of the scholarly study of *policy implementation* has been to elucidate the myriad obstacles that stand between political decisions—*policy intentions*—and the results of those decisions—*policy outcomes* (c.f. Wildavsky, 2007). For example, rather than asking *why do policies fail?* Pressman and Wildavsky (1973) assert *why it's amazing that [policies] work at all*. Given this, policies that *do* work as envisioned become interesting objects for study. In the study of policy implementation, asking *what went right?* is just as—if not more—interesting than the question of *what went wrong?*

In an effort to address climate change, the EU created the EU 2020 targets, specifying that at least 20% of EU power consumption should come from renewable energy resources by 2020 (European Union, 2014). These goals were recently updated in the EU 2030 framework, which stipulates that 27% of energy consumption should come from renewables by 2030 (European Commission, 2014). In order to reach these EU-wide targets, EU states have set state-level targets, which vary based on countries' energy consumption, production capabilities and existing energy mix. However, these efforts have met with varying levels of success, with some countries surpassing their targets, but some failing to meet them so far (European Union, 2013).

Wind power is projected to contribute the most to meeting EU member-countries' renewable energy production goals. Therefore, determining how to successfully encourage the development of wind power in EU countries is critical to implementing the EU's renewable energy policy. However, despite binding targets at the international level, as well as legal frameworks and financial incentives at the national level, wind power development has proceeded with varying levels of success (Nadai, 2007; Söderholm et al., 2007; Szarka, 2007; Nadai and Labussiere, 2009; Clement, 2010; Ek et al., 2013) despite enjoying general, popular support (Jobert et al., 2007; Nadai, 2007; Todt et al., 2011). The EU thus presents a classic case of where policy intentions—of both political elites and the general public—fail to align with policy outcomes. However, while wind power development has not proceeded as envisioned in some cases, in other cases it has. Cases of successful wind power implementation in the EU are therefore of special interest for illuminating *what went right* in policy implementation.

This article suggests how a proposed theoretical development of the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) can be used to study wind power (as well as other) cases of policy implementation. After reviewing the literature on policy implementation generally, wind power policy implementation, and policy subsystems, the outlines of a framework for policy subsystem interactions will be drawn. This framework is then used to understand a case of successful wind power development in

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Piteå, Sweden. This will be followed by a discussion of how this study contributes to a better understanding of both policy implementation and the ACF itself.

1.2. Previous research

Since the publication of *Implementation* (Pressman and Wildavsky, 1973), policy implementation has been a major focus of academic policy research. Pressman and Wildavsky's work served as a catalyst for this research by emphasizing "why it's amazing that federal programs work at all." Since then, policy implementation research has grown, encompassing a broad range of policy areas (cf. Smith, 1973; Matland, 1995; O'Toole, 2000). And, despite changes in emphasis and nomenclature, policy implementation research has continued as an area of scholarly interest in more recent times (Saetren, 2005).

Wind power policy implementation research has taken divergent paths, focusing on either the local level of implementation or the national/regional level. At the local level, most of the research on wind power policy implementation has been from the perspectives of *social acceptance* and *the planning process*. Researchers using the former approach have identified public participation, values and beliefs, local profit-sharing/ownership, local geography and economy, and aesthetic and landscape considerations and local support networks as important determinants of local acceptance of wind power development (Todd et al., 2011; Khan, 2003; Devine-Wright, 2005; Jobert et al., 2007; McLaren Loring, 2007; Breukers and Wolsink, 2007; Agerbosch and Breukers, 2008). Most research has also concluded that local opposition to wind power development cannot simply be ascribed to the NIMBY (Not-In-My-BackYard) effect (Warren et al., 2005; Devine-Wright, 2005; Jobert et al., 2007; Breukers and Wolsink, 2007), i.e. the phenomenon of people wanting a particular development, but only as long as it is not located near them. Researchers using the *planning process* approach have focused on how planning instruments and siting procedures favor or hinder wind power development (Nadai 2007; Nadai and Labussiere, 2009), public participation and stable networks in the planning process (McLaren Loring, 2007), local ownership (Toke et al., 2008), and municipal planning capacities and the strength of policy measures (Khan, 2003). These studies have revealed how the local dynamics of wind power development influence policy implementation. Yet, these approaches do not account for the influence of actors and institutions of the national level in a theoretically systematic way, nor do they explain how the national and local levels interact.

Research on wind power policy implementation at the national/regional levels, on the other hand, has primarily taken *historical institutionalist* or *policy subsystem* approaches. Historical institutionalist approaches (c.f. Breukers and Wolsink, 2007; Toke et al., 2008; Agerbosch and Breukers, 2008; Ferguson-Martin and Hill, 2011) have illuminated how national level institutions that affect local level policymaking are the result of decisions made at critical junctures, as well as subsequent path dependencies. Policy subsystem approaches (Szarka 2004, 2006, 2010; Wiener and Koontz, 2010; Jegen and Audet, 2011) have shed light on the process by which wind power policy has developed as the result of coalition behavior, or the actions of groups of actors bound together by similar beliefs. In such analyses, the local level is considered to a degree, but only as a part of larger national or regional policy subsystems. However, national-level actors and institutions deal with wind power development in terms of developing various energy resources, e.g. wind, solar, hydro, nuclear, coal or gas power, or, in other words, in terms of national *energy policy*. Local actors and institutions, on the other hand, tend to view local wind power development in terms of the effects it will have on *land use*. From a land-use perspective, energy development is usually not a question of developing wind or solar or nuclear power. Rather, it is a question of the impact of developing energy resources on *existing and potential land uses*, such as housing, farming, forestry, recreation and natural beauty.

Because the substance of *energy policy* differs from the substance of

land use policy, the interests and concerns of actors involved in the policy processes dealing with wind power at the national or local levels may not always align. While there are differences between countries, institutional frameworks that grant local authorities substantial discretion in the permitting process for wind power development are the most common (IEA, 2007). In places where land-use decisions are made at least in part locally, understanding wind power policy implementation requires understanding both the energy policy process *and* the land use policy process. Economic, financial, legal and other measures—i.e. the policies or institutional frameworks—created at the national level, while certainly influencing the prospects for wind power development, only provide the *framework* within which local actors determine where, if, and to what extent wind power is actually developed *in relation to other land-use possibilities*. This dynamic explains why "wind power projects are increasingly confronted by local opposition which delays or blocks implementation despite the fact that the level of general public support for wind energy is high and stable" (Breukers and Wolsink, 2007) and why national institutional frameworks designed to encourage wind power development through incentives, etc. have proven insufficient in many cases to promote significant wind power development (Söderholm et al., 2007; Szarka, 2007; Nadai, 2007; Nadai and Labussiere, 2009; Clement, 2010).

1.3. Aim

The aim of this article is to understand why local authorities decide to permit wind power development in situations where 1) national authorities have created institutional frameworks encouraging the development of wind power, yet 2) local authorities have significant discretion concerning wind power development. To achieve this aim, a theoretical model will first be developed, based on the ACF, that explains the interaction of the *energy policy subsystem* and *land use policy subsystems* in terms of institutional frameworks, the beliefs of sovereigns, policy outputs and policy outcomes. Based on this model, hypotheses concerning what influences local sovereigns, and their beliefs, will be derived and then tested using a case of successful wind power development. Doing this will elucidate the mechanisms by which the national and local levels, or the energy and land use subsystems can potentially interact, and thus provide an explanation for why wind power policy implementation may have been successful in the specific case being studied in this article.

2. Theory

2.1. Policy subsystems and the advocacy coalition framework

Policy implementation across different levels of government has been understood in terms of *cross-scale linkages* (Young, 2002; Berkes, 2002), *multi-level governance* (Hooghe and Marks, 2003), *polycentrism* (Ostrom, 2001; Imperial, 2005; Skelcher, 2005) and *nested enterprises* (Ostrom, 1990; Lundqvist, 2004). This article hypothesizes, as will be expounded upon later, that one of the causal mechanisms explaining policy implementation across different level of government is *beliefs*. Therefore, the *Advocacy Coalition Framework* will be used because of its emphasis on the centrality of beliefs in the policy process. The ACF offers a comprehensive explanation of the policymaking process and its actors and has proven to be a useful tool for examining policy stability and policy change in a number of areas, most prominently in policy subsystems dealing with natural resource management (Sabatier and Brasher, 1993; Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 2007; Sotirov and Memmler, 2012).

The ACF integrates several developments in actor- and subsystem-based frameworks of the policy process into a theoretically coherent, empirically testable model. ACF parameters include examining policy processes over a period of ten years or more to capture real policy change (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1993:16), a focus on policy

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