Economic Brief 1 : Key Recommendations

Energy Transition in the Arctic: Governance and Justice Implications

Energy sits at the center of the debate about a more sustainable future for the Arctic. With most communities relying on oil and gas for their energy needs, path dependencies for fossil fuels are strong. The huge untapped fossil fuel reserves provide a powerful narrative that frames the region as an extractive frontier, even as efforts to decarbonize the economy are touted and climate change is transforming the region.

How can energy become a tool for a more sustainable and just economic development in the Arctic? What policy shifts would be needed? These are the key questions addressed in this brief from JUSTNORTH.

Drawing on multiple case studies ranging from the digitization economy and public transportation to energy storage technology and wind power development, our research suggests that it is high time for a paradigm shift in how the role of energy for a sustainable Arctic is understood.

Beyond the idea that "energy" is mainly about production and transportation, the challenges faced by Arctic communities call for a more holistic view. In particular, our case studies show that there is a need to place both a concern of justice and the concept of energy services ("What is energy for?") as integral parts of energy governance.

Some of the key findings and recommendations in the brief are the following:

1 **Renewable energy projects frequently draw ire of local communities. Early, meaningful, and collaborative engagement is key to buildin partnerships and turning sceptics into allies.**

2 **Renewable energy development cannot only be justified by the decarbonisation effort. Broader social and economic concerns for Arctic communities must be integrally taken into account.**

3 **Placing justice-based conditions and concerns at the heart of energy decision-making (for example, concerning permitting and licensing) holds significant potential to build a more legitimate energy governance regime in the Arctic.**