Local government sustainable energy capacities: scale, context and materiality

UKERC Annual Conference, 24 April 2019
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Outline

• Specific focus on capacity of local government in sustainable energy
• ‘Capacity’ widely referred to but largely in relation to (1) a lack of capacity or (2) how capacity relates to national institutions
• Developed a typology of local government capacity and linked to contextual factors
• Applied conceptual framework to 7 case studies in England.
• Based on 60+ interviews, three workshops and attendance to numerous events
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Capacity Type</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Responsibilities</td>
<td>Statutory duties; defined political responsibility; often assigned by central government and/or national constitution</td>
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<tr>
<td>Autonomy</td>
<td>Policy discretion; capabilities to decide on policies in relation to the locality, rather than contributing to national policy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Financial Assets</td>
<td>Local financial resources; tax raising abilities; access to capital; property and land ownership</td>
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<tr>
<td>Personnel</td>
<td>Personal capital; numbers and quality of staff capable of making and implementing sustainable energy strategies, policies, investments</td>
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<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>Experience; access to specific forms of knowledge; sustainable learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Energy Geographies</td>
<td>Proximity to renewable/clean energy resources; space for renewables; low carbon energy assets; energy legacies</td>
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But what about context?

- But capacities to ensure sustainable energy transitions are also contextually contingent (Beveridge and Kern, 2016; Kuzemko, 2019)
- Examined factors that interrelate with capacities
- What factors are driving shifts in, or limiting realisation of, capacities?
Local Authority Sustainable Energy Capacity Types

- Responsibilities
  - Autonomy
- Financial assets
  - Personnel
  - Knowledge
- Energy geographies

Context

- National and global political economies
- Local political economies
- Energy & Climate Policy
- Material aspects of energy systems
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IGov
New Thinking For Energy

University of Exeter
Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council
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Material aspects of energy systems

Devolution focus

Barriers
- ECO programme poor fit for Cornwall
- Grid constraints
- Stagnating community energy groups

Cornwall Deal
- Energy Efficiency pilot
- Grid and Storage pilots
- Community ownership pilots
- Geothermal and Enterprise Zones

Context
- National and global political economies

City Leap Prospectus

A soft market test exercise for partners in a low carbon, smart infrastructure project

ENERGY CAPITAL

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New Thinking For Energy
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National and global political economies
Local political economies

Material aspects of energy systems

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Material aspects of energy systems

Context

National and global political economies

Local political economies

Institutions and structures
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Conclusion

• Presented framework to help understand not just how LA capacity is constrained but the diversity of capacity and how it can be shaped by changes to political and material landscapes.

• Being specific about capacity reveals some types of capacity are particularly important – e.g. knowledge and responsibilities.

• Could suggest embedding specialist staff and knowledge in LAs could drive longer-term capacity in other areas (financial, autonomy, understanding of local energy materialities)?

• But still the question of responsibilities