



Gender and the Energy Transition in the North: Light on a Dark Area

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Women & the energy transition in the North

- Women working in the sector
- Women as consumers
- Women influencing policy

Part I



WOMEN WORKING IN THE SECTOR

The Energy Sector – an exciting place to work

- Female employment in the Electricity, Gas and Steam, and Water – 50% of male employment
- Mainly administration and customer payments
- Sector with representative face of (white) male 50+ in suit
- Engineering requires physical work ‘not suitable for women’

Does it matter?

For women:

- Gender equity
- Women's personal fulfilment
- Women's economic empowerment → transformations in gender roles and relations (?)

Does it matter?

For companies:

- not tapping into a pool of talent
- company with women on its board outperforms their rivals
- teams that include women are found to make better business decisions

Does it matter?

For government/society:

- women tend to invest their assets in their families and communities
- Commitment to Beijing Platform for Action

What does (n't) work in increasing diversity - Canada

- Quotas don't work
- Putting the responsibility on management not on women
- In context of diversity in society should reflect in employment
- What produces a shift in seeing women as a +ve asset?
A shortage of men!

Local Energy Initiatives – where are the women?

- Part of energy sector transition
- Local communities – education function & a generation decentralised energy function
- Survey LEI members in Friesland (53) & Almere (21) plus key informant interviews
- Variation in maturity of LEIs which makes it difficult to compare

Local Energy Initiatives – where are the women?

- Issues are too technical – although participation gave knowledge
- Lack of awareness about LEIs
- Time poverty – works on basis of volunteers
- Women members don't volunteer for leadership roles
- Environmental issues motivate women – economic issues motivate men
- Possibly age/life cycle is a cross cutting issue

Is it any better working for yourself?

Experience of woman engineer own consultancy company

Clients usually men, who often hesitate before accepting that her as professionally competent

“Every new customer or colleague treats me like a beginner, a male colleague of my age would never have to defend his competence.”

“More often than necessary, I have to explain why I am working in this ‘exotic non-female field’.”

Are cooperatives more women friendly places to work?

- Windfang – Wind turbines in Germany
- Women with no technical knowledge who wanted to be proactively green
- Women disillusioned with masculine working environment

Part 2



WOMEN AS CONSUMERS

Energy Poverty

- Women more likely than men to live in Energy Poverty
- Old women more likely than younger
- (Be careful how you interpret the figures – British Queen lives in energy poverty – spends more than 20% of income on energy in her home(s??))

Women carry the burden for energy conservation

Women in partnership
–woman working
outside home used
more energy than
working at home
women



Our survey in Netherlands showed women were responsible for energy use in household & men made decision about energy sources



WOMEN INFLUENCING POLICY

What are the gender dimensions of energy policy

- Are women more green than men?
- Only data on nuclear preference
- What does a gender aware energy policy look like in the North?
- Not an issue of parity of numbers – places too much burden on individual women & lets men off the hook



A WAY TO GO AS A RESEARCH AREA

Gaps in knowledge

- Lots!
- Sex disaggregated data supported by quantitative data

Some progress within EC (but not all my own work!).....

- Initial evaluations of proposals now done on-line (addresses problem of child care)
- Gender as a topic for investigation within the human dimension of the energy system

Concluding remarks

- Gender mainstreaming in the energy sector is seen more as ‘something for the South’
- In Northern energy organisations – diversity in work force might be easier entry point
- Often it’s a problem of not knowing how to do it
- Having a clear gender goal is key in the South – it isn’t essential to focus on women’s empowerment (creates resistance)



**THANK YOU FOR
LISTENING**