

Wind Power, Landscape and Meaning – A Study on Wind Power and Human Spatial Preferences.

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Abstract

The point of departure for this thesis is a core question in present-day environmental work, namely how to balance the conservation of nature against its utilisation. A wind power venture on a large scale energy production will, for instance, obviously have an impact on the natural scenery of the coastline. The overall aim of the thesis is to contribute to the understanding of how notions about the relationship between nature and society articulated in present-day environmental work influence what are regarded as possible solutions for tomorrow's sustainable society. The more specific aim is partly to better understand how conceptions of nature affect people's attitudes to wind power, and partly to understand how such attitudes are reproduced.

The thesis is based on two different empirical studies. One consists of 26 interviews conducted during the period 1995-1997 with people who either through their work or idealistic interests have been regarded as being able to have some influence regarding the establishment of wind power along the west coast of Sweden. The other study is a textual analysis, conducted during 1999-2002, of a number of documents that in various ways take up the landscape of wind power.

The study brings forward that the traditional distinction between nature and culture is still important, but that it is no longer a question of separating the natural from the cultural, but rather a question of separating what could be termed enjoyment landscape from industrial landscape. The study further brings forward that the care of cultural monuments, nature conservancy and physical planning form a powerful discursive coalition for the preservation of the landscape. The study also brings forward that in the discourse about wind power there are important aspects of landscape that are marginalised. The debate about whether wind power should be used in a landscape or not, generally concerns aesthetics. Other important aspects such as the connection between local renewable energy production and global environmental responsibility are seldom taken up. Finally it is argued that the ambivalence manifested in some of the interviews concerning wind power should not primarily be regarded as resistance to wind power as such, but more as an expression of uncertainty about the direction in which society is moving.

Keywords: culture, technology, nature, view of nature, renewable energy, ecocycles, environment, ecological modernisation, discourse, discursive coalitions, meaning, landscape, wind power, Sweden.