

Policy support: When impact is measured by re-invitations

Tomas Kåberger
Advisor, Debater



Tomas Kåberger, professor at the department of Energy and Environment

At 08:15 CET on the 11th of March in 2011, the International Atomic Energy Agency's global focal point for nuclear incidents and emergency receives information from the International Seismic Safety Centre (ISSC) about an earthquake of magnitude 8.9 near the east coast of Honshu, Japan. The early information from Japan, and the nuclear industry and scientists, is ensuring. However, in the coming days the world learns that reactor cores are melting and sees reactor buildings exploding.

Following the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster the discussion emerges about the future energy supply in Japan. One of the initiatives taken towards opening the monopolised electricity market, and for utilisation of renewable energy was the start of Japan Renewable Energy Foundation. Thanks to the fellow researcher Tetsunari Iida, Tomas Kåberger, was contacted by Masayoshi Son, CEO of Softbank and the initiator of the foundation, and asked to chair the Executive Board. "This was in June 2011 and it was a task I couldn't resist", he says. At that time Tomas Kåberger was Director General of the Swedish Energy Agency and he was known to have successfully implemented renewable energy policy in Sweden. He asked the Swedish government to be released

from his duties, took on the position in Japan and, in parallel with his new work at the foundation, he returned to Chalmers managing contacts between industry and energy researchers. Tomas Kåberger, professor at the department of Energy and Environment at Chalmers, has since then spent some two weeks every second month in Japan. Armed with international experiences he helps industries and policymakers in Japan to develop renewable energy so as to make further Fukushima like accidents unnecessary.

Some obstacles are difficult to amend

Recently he has been asked to prolong his assignment for another two years period, an offer he associates with 'having been useful.' "Only if you get re-invited to a policy context you have made a difference", Tomas Kåberger says and laughs. He continues "Policy influence is never documented. If you make a contribution as an expert you are not referred to, at least not if the policy is successful. So it is impossible to document when you have made an impact. But if you are re-invited, you know for sure that someone have found what you had to say valuable." Tomas Kåberger knows what it takes to impact policy, not least from his time at the Swedish Energy Agency, but also as member or expert in several Swedish governmental investigations, two task



Making Science Useful

Roles: Seven types of roles are identified in relation to making science useful. The roles are developed from different activities for diffusion and utilisation, carried out by one or a group of researchers, or by an entire part of the organisation. The roles are; researcher, educator, advisor, debater, entrepreneur, infrastructure developer and networker. These roles are in general intuitive but develop differently, based on personal characteristics, area of research, the recipients of results within the area, and by different local traditions of how to work with utilisation.

More information: This framework is developed by Staffan Jacobsson, Eugenia Perez Vico, Chalmers University of Technology, Hans Hellsmark, SP Technical Research Institute of Sweden and Merle Jacob, Lund University. For more detailed information, please contact Eugenia Perez Vico (eugenia.perez@chalmers.se) or Hans Hellsmark (hans.hellsmark@sp.se).

force assignments within China Council, engagement in think tanks like FORES and Global Utmaning (Global Challenges), and numerous posts in national and international organisations.

“Japan will expand its use of renewable energy on a broad scale. It is inevitable”, he says, continuing “But it may take time. There are a large number of solar PV projects in Japan at the moment, but the potential for lower cost wind projects, as well as further development of biomass and geothermal energy are effectively blocked, as legislation allows private monopolies to refuse new producers access to the grid”, he says.

Sweden needs to step up

Tomas Kåberger describes how global renewable power production over the last years has grown much faster than expected as costs have fallen. Germany and China have led the development, and the economic realities have changed quickly. *“China is going from copying to leading, and the EU commission is getting worried about energy technology security of supply, not only security fuel supplies”, he says.*

But still, in Japan he also sees evolving markets for European energy technology. *“With all I know of Swedish energy technology, it is disappointing that not only German, but also Norwegian embassies and companies are more active in Japan than the Swedish.”*

At the Japan Renewable Energy Foundation, Tomas Kåberger tutors investigators at the foundation, gives lectures and presentations at conferences, industrial associations and different policy seminars supporting the policy process of the ongoing energy modernisation in Japan.

The future lies in cooperation

When I meet him, he tells me that he soon will go on his second trip to Mongolia, invited by the Ministry of Energy. *“Mongolia has enormous potential for wind and solar power”* he says. They have renewable electricity potential between 1 and 2,5 TW, that may yield in the order of half the global electricity consumption. But to make use of this potential they need co-operation with other countries in the region. *“While governments at the moment entertain their conflicts, my foundation together with Energy Charter, NGOs and research institutes in Russia, China and Korea co-operates to prepare for the day governments realise co-operation is more profitable”,* Tomas Kåberger says.

The ‘Asian Super Grid’ is a future vision of transmission lines linking energy resources in Mongolia and other Asian countries with consumers in Asia.

I ask Tomas Kåberger what drives him, and he replies: *“Well, despite strenuous changes of time zones - It is so interesting to see how different society and energy systems can be. All of us, even scientists, tend to be stuck with national traditions and habits of thinking. When you work in a different context, you are hopefully able to make a contribution, but you can also understand more about your own background.”*

“Are we prepared for the future?” I ask him. He narrows his’ eyes and replies: *“In general, few have realised the consequences of renewable energy technology progress in the last five years. Energy supply is not a problem area any more, it is an area of economic opportunities provided by new technologies”,* he says and continues: *“And we need to face the intelligent industrial policies in China. While Europe talks about energy efficiency and renewable energy industries,*

in China the companies are gaining competitiveness by being more energy efficient than their European peers, and companies are earning money by developing renewables energy technologies faster.”

“And what part of the world does best?” “Well,” he says, “as technologies are available, it is now a matter of deployment under intelligent and efficient industrial energy policy. China does well at the moment, the US is developing energy technology—lead by the military, Europe limps behind, while Japan may well face an economic collapse as a result of inability to adjust electricity market regulations and not allowing renewable power or nuclear re-starts.”

Text: Niklas Fernqvist

Photo: Tomas Kåberger

Contact

Tomas Kåberger
tomas.kaberger@chalmers.se

Chalmers Energy Area of Advance
www.chalmers.se/energy
energy@chalmers.se