

Multiple objectives

The energy transition requires broad commitment and political innovation

Political innovation, based on broad understanding and interdisciplinary cooperation, will be necessary to ensure Norway is able to carry out a satisfactory energy transition.

“For Norway to meet its international environmental obligations in a way that also benefits ordinary people and society in general, we cannot really trust that economists and engineers alone will deliver the best solutions,” according to Professor Asgeir Tomasgard, director of CenSES and head of the Department for Industrial Economy and Technology Management at NTNU, the Norwegian University of Science and Technology.

“Most people and many different organisations, whether in academia or in business, have a sincere wish to be part of the energy transition,” says Tomasgard.

“This desire is not merely motivated by economic concerns, nor is it the case that technological advances should determine how society evolves. Rather, the requirements of society should determine how technologies are developed,” he says.

Consequently, political decisions must increasingly reflect people’s desire to take ownership of the transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy, says Tomasgard.



To understand how human decisions are taken, we must also understand the interaction between technology and people, says Professor Asgeir Tomasgard

“If we are to achieve the goals of reducing emissions of greenhouse gases, then politics must work better than it does today, so political innovations are needed,” he says.

Effective instruments

For this to happen, we must understand both how politics has evolved in the past, as well as how more effective politics can be developed for the future.

For example, it is important to understand how economic policy measures have influenced and can affect technological development and innovation processes.

”Decisionmakers must understand the interaction between various sections of society,” says Tomasgard.

“There is a growing appreciation of the fact that human behavior is not only driven by economic incentives. Human relationships are also important, indeed, to a greater extent than researchers and politicians realise,” says Tomasgard.

Interdisciplinary competence must therefore be developed and applied to our search for answers to major challenges, in order to ensure we avoid a situation where important decisions are made on the basis of narrow and partial understanding.

“The challenge now is to understand the interaction between technology and people, and then we must understand how human decisions are taken.”

~ Professor Asgeir Tomasgard, director of CenSES

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Cross-disciplinary insights are also important for politicians striving to meet a diverse and extensive range of targets, such as economic growth, reduced pollution, increased welfare, and improved energy security.

Consequently, many of the political tools that are being developed must be designed in ways that achieve more than one goal.

It is therefore important to have a good understanding of how incentives are perceived, for example by industry or households, or by other players in society.

”We must understand how politics has been designed, and we must understand human behavior, and then we must understand how all this affects different systems, such as the public transport system,” says Tomasgard.

”The challenge now is to understand the interaction between technology and people, and then we must understand how human decisions are taken. Because it is people who make decisions, both at the political level, in companies and in households.”

Our recommendations:

- seek comprehensive understanding across disciplines, in relation to which are the most useful incentives.
- reflect people's desire to take ownership of the transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy.
- provide a broad understanding of the interaction between technology and people.

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~ Professor Asgeir Tomasgard, director of CenSES

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Centre for Sustainable Energy Studies

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