Will it Fly? An Interactive Role-Playing Game for Exploring Social Conflicts in Airborne Wind Energy Siting

Schmidt, H.S.; de Vries, G.; Renes, Reint Jan; Schmehl, R.

Will it Fly? An Interactive Role-Playing Game for Exploring Social Conflicts in Airborne Wind Energy Siting

Helena Schmidt[1], **Gerdien de Vries**[1], **Reint Jan Renes**[2], **Roland Schmehl**[1]
[1]Delft University of Technology
[2]Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences

Helena Schmidt

PhD Researcher
Delft University of Technology
Faculty of Aerospace Engineering
Wind Energy Group

Kluyverweg 1
2629 HS Delft
The Netherlands

h.s.schmidt@tudelft.nl
www.tudelft.nl/en/ae

Developing airborne wind energy (AWE) requires more than just technical and economic expertise. As an energy technology, AWE must be embedded in society, and the technology's success depends on wider social factors [1]. Experience with other renewables has shown that opposition to local energy projects can slow down, halt, and even hinder their realization. Some AWE developers have already encountered objections to planned or existing test sites, including the withdrawal of site permits. As AWE approaches commercialization, it is important that developers meaningfully engage local communities and other relevant stakeholders in deploying AWE [2]. A one-size-fits-all approach for good engagement does not exist because the particular socio-economic, political, and historical contexts shape responses to a given project. However, the types of stakeholder and the nature of their concerns and needs can be similar [3]. We have developed a role-playing game that allows participants to immerse themselves in the social conflicts and dilemmas frequently encountered during the proposal of renewable energy projects. In this session, participants will be asked to imagine a fictional but realistic scenario: An AWE project is being planned in a small town, and some regional stakeholders have found out and are raising concerns. The project developer invited them to a typical 'town hall meeting' to mitigate concerns and address unresolved issues. Participants will simulate the meeting by playing a pre-defined role from a set of selected stakeholders (e.g., concerned resident, local council, nature conservationist, landowner, and airport manager). Guided by a facilitator, the participants will explore whether and under what conditions the AWE project can be realized. After the role-play, participants will jointly reflect on what the game has taught them about social conflicts that can occur for proposed AWE projects. Spots are limited and will be assigned on a first-come-first-serve basis. Join the game to understand better the societal implications of siting AWE projects.

References:

*[1] Sovacool, B. K.: Rejecting renewables: The socio-technical impediments to renewable electricity in the United States. Energy Policy, **37**(11) 4500–4513 (2009).*

[2] Aitken, M., Hagget, C., Rudolph, D. P.: Wind farms community engagement good practice review. DTU Library (2014).

*[3] Sovacool, B. K., Hess, D. J., Cantoni, R., Lee, D., Brisbois, M. C., Walnum, H. J., ... & Goel, S.: Conflicted transitions: Exploring the actors, tactics, and outcomes of social opposition against energy infrastructure. Global Environmental Change, **73**, 102473 (2022).*

This work was supported by the Dutch Research Council (NWO) and Kitepower B.V. under grant number 17628.