

CASE STUDIES ON AQUACULTURE SOCIAL ACCEPTABILITY

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STUDY ABOUT THE SOCIAL ACCEPTABILITY STRATEGIES ON RENEWABLE ENERGY PROJECT ON THE FRENCH COASTAL AREA

«Conflits et stratégies d'acceptabilité sociale autour des énergies marines renouvelables sur le littoral français». Annaig Oiry, 12/2015. PHD research study.

Installation of offshore wind projects share many similarities with the installation of aquaculture farm projects: both need to be installed in coastal areas that are usually already characterized by multiple uses (weight of professional fishing sector with major fishing ports, importance of the tourism sector, environmental issues, local people concerns, etc.). Actions that have been implemented to improve the social acceptability of the offshore wind turbines gives information about social acceptability of economic activities in coastal areas.

This document presents the results of a study that analyses strategies undertaken by industrial groups to improve the social acceptability of the installation of 2 offshore wind turbines parks (wind turbine park of Saint Nazaire bay, Wind turbine park of Saint-Brieuc bay) and 2 water Turbines Park (Water turbines park of Paimpol-Brehat and Water Turbine park of Raz de Blanchard, Normandy). All of these projects have been accepted and received an authorization from the government between 2015 and 2019.

This study has been made as a part of a PHD research study made by Annaig Oiry, Université Paris 1, Panthéon- Sorbonne, laboratory of physical geography.

Three main survey techniques were selected to carry out this research: the practice of semi-directive interviews, observation during marine renewable energy promotion fairs, and the constitution of documentary corpuses. Sixty interviews were conducted with a variety of stakeholders: users of the sea (fishermen, nautical activities), the local population (main or secondary residents), local associations, local authorities (mayors of municipalities and inter-municipalities), project leaders (also referred to as techno-industrial groups in this article), those responsible for and organisers of consultation procedures (consultation agencies, members of special commissions for public debates), public decision-making bodies (Directorate General for Energy and Climate).

Different categories of opponents seem to be distinguishable: the residents, environmental associations, and the fishing world.

The reasons used to justify a position against marine renewable can be grouped into four types: arguments mobilizing the problems of the living environment, arguments arising from a criticism of consultation procedures, arguments of a socio-economic (job losses) nature and, finally, arguments based on environmental issues. These raisons can be compared to the ones that the professionals of aquaculture face when they want to install new aquaculture farms even if the economical dimensions are different between wind turbine farm and aquaculture farm installation.

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Manage conflict with social acceptability's strategies:

The following text presents different activities that have been undertaken to improve social acceptability of the project amongst the local people:

Industrials that carry Wind Turbine farms projects develops social acceptability strategies upstream the project to assess the probabilities of its appropriation in order to limit the risks of possible rejection, repositioning the project or the technology itself if necessary. Windfarms project leaders are thus led to carry out real work on social acceptability, conceived here as a way of obtaining the consent of civil society. Industrials create communication strategies that aims to make this new infrastructure desirable for the local people.

Create “Consultation events” to improve the social acceptability of the projects:

Industrials that are responsible of the installation of offshore wind turbines or water turbine project, highlight the fact that their projects are concerted and that they have created a close dialogue with the local inhabitants. For them, consultation takes place through different types of initiatives such as the local consultation, meeting with a “monitoring body” (that is a group of local actors of the political, economic and environmental which meets regularly to follow the progress of the project), as well as public debate about the project. Public debates enable industrials to pass on information and to consult local stakeholders. Public debate is also an opportunity to implement various communication strategies to achieve acceptance of their energy infrastructure.

Project leader sometime hire professional agencies of council, communication and concertation to support them in the concertation processes: These agencies use a precise methodology to prepare the public debate and to try to improve social acceptability of the project that consist in:

A territorial analysis of the selected site: this consists of a documentary analysis and a context study based on interviews with the local people in the territory. This first study is used to identify the people who have potential concerns on the project, to study their discourse, to question the local stakeholders on their expectations regarding the consultation process and to evaluate the image that the local people have of the project. This will have to support the industrials to prepare solid argument for the public concertation events. The agency prepares the debate by helping the project owner to draw up the project presentation file. The agency also organises sessions to prepare project leaders for public speaking by providing coaching and media training sessions. They can also organize convivial events where all stakeholders are invited such as aperitif of presentations of the projects.

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Negotiating marine renewable energies presence projects through compensation:

Compensation can be defined as the allocation to a territory suffering the negative impacts of a development declared to be of public utility, of a set of measures aimed at improving its acceptability. Several types of compensation can be made within the framework of energy projects: financial compensation (which takes the form of direct or indirect financial compensation), environmental compensation (restoration of destroyed resources, re-establishment of species, classification of another territory as a protected area in compensation for the equipment of the first, etc.) or accompanying measures (financing of ancillary activities). In the aquaculture sector, this could be carried out with the organization of the professionals of aquaculture or the local/regional authority.

The fishing industry is particularly involved in these negotiations on compensation as fishing areas could be reduced with this kind of projects. During the construction phase of the installation of the first tidal turbine off the island of Bréhat, on the north coast of Brittany, some fishermen, those whose fishing area was temporarily inaccessible, were financially compensated. Measures for investment in public goods were also envisaged, including the financing of refrigerated lobster tanks (for the Saint-Brieuc offshore wind farm and the Paimpol-Bréhat tidal turbines), as well as ecological restoration actions: campaigns to combat the crepidule (a larva whose high densities prevent the recruitment of scallops), shell reseeded campaigns, immersion of artificial reefs to attract fish, etc. creation of specific jobs for fishermen wishing to engage in the maintenance of offshore wind farms.

The use of local taxation for acceptability purposes

The Winfarms project leaders have set up a tax on maritime wind turbines collected by different actors in the territory. The tax is divided as follows: 50% for the coastal municipalities from which the wind turbines will be visible, 35% for the National Committee for Fisheries and Marine Breeding and the remaining 15% is dedicated to funding contributing to the sustainable development of other maritime activities. The sums involved are not negligible, since they amount to approximately seven million euros per year and per park. The wind tax is an essential modality for the acceptability of mayors of municipalities. For elected officials, one of the determining factors in their acceptability of MRE (Marine Renewable Energy) projects is the issue of local development. Most elected municipal officials and members of local authorities have positions that are rather favorable to the various projects studied, because they see energy transition projects as vectors of local development creating a new economic sector on the territory.

Here the strategies undertaken by Industrials to improve the social acceptability of their Windturbines farm are more related to seduction and sometime manipulation strategies to convince local stakeholders to accept the project. There is here an important difference with the “social acceptability” that is meant to be co-constructed with the different stakeholders of a project.

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INDICATOR:

PROJECTS CARRIED OUT BY INDUSTRIALS HAVE BEEN ACCEPTED.

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