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Wind energy development in Ireland, Scotland and Denmark - A comparison of challenges

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Abstract:

Despite being a pioneer in the utilization of wind energy, the siting of wind turbines has now reached a critical and demanding stage in Denmark. In particular, wind farm developers face new challenges to the deployment of commercial wind farm projects on land. These challenges are often related to scarce spatial resources resulting in an intricate appropriation of land; a diminishing local acceptance; and an increased local detachment and socio-economic decoupling from wind farm projects.

In order to identify ways for addressing such challenges, a useful starting point is to broaden the scope and look beyond the national context. Although cross-country comparisons are often limited due to non-transferable national particularities, different legislations and histories, looking at how certain issues play out and are dealt with in other countries cannot only help formulate learning points but also help develop more adequate political responses and practical approaches.

While following such an epistemological path, this paper explores these challenges as they are experienced, framed and approached by wind farm developers and affiliated stakeholders in Ireland and Scotland. In doing so, this study draws on a number of qualitative interviews with several developers, community and landowner organisations in Ireland and Scotland as well as a media analysis to investigate central challenges in general, and the relevance and significance of landownership and local acceptance for the siting of wind farms in both countries, in particular. The empirical data underpinning this research was gathered as part of the Wind2050 research project which looks at the interplay between wind farm planning and social acceptance. Thus, this paper condenses observations from the Wind2050 project² in Denmark focusing on issues of land access, community participation and benefit-sharing, and illuminates how these issues play out in Ireland and Scotland under different regulatory and political conditions^{3,4,5}. It concludes by sketching out potential lessons for stakeholders in Denmark.

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² Cronin, T., Clausen, N.-E., Rudolph, D., Kirkegaard, J. K., Geraldi, J., Kreye, M. & C. Thuesen (2015): Interviews with wind farm developers. The path to the understanding the relation between project development and local acceptability. Wind2050 WP3 Deliverable 2. DTU Wind Energy I-0441.

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⁴ Markantoni, M. (2016): Low carbon governance: mobilising community energy through top-down support? *Environmental Policy and Governance*, 26(3), pp. 155-169.

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