

MARINE RENEWABLE ENERGY

Community, Consultation and Planning

Summary of the ISSMER online seminar series November 2014 – January 2015 www.issmer-network.org



ISSMER

The International network for Social Studies of Marine Energy (ISSMER) was established to bring together interdisciplinary researchers interested in diverse issues related to the development of marine renewable energy (MRE), e.g.: socio-cultural, economic, geographic, philosophical, organisational, and political.

Background

The MRE industry is at a crucial moment. Devices are now moving from engineering drawings to full-scale prototypes, and the first commercial scale wave and tide energy farms have been announced and are being planned.

Around the world countries are assessing the potential energy resource in their national waters, new developments in national electricity network infrastructures are in the planning stages, and large areas of the sea are being allocated to this new industry. This process of commercialisation is creating new interactions between environment, technology, and society. These take place in coastal communities, socio-economic markets, between other users of the sea, with policy-makers, amongst MRE companies, and between governments.

ISSMER aims to support collaboration with these diverse communities, and to coordinate international research activities in the social studies of MRE.

#1. Community (27 November 2014)

Sandy Kerr - Heriot Watt University

Community benefits from marine energy: fair shares or goodwill

Community benefits can be seen in terms of power relationships, as evidenced by experience by the experience of the Shetland Islands in the 1970s. For onshore wind there is now an accepted practice of making payments to the local authority, for offshore wind this is less established as the local authority has much less influence in the planning process. A fair share is generally paid when there is power in the community; otherwise engagement and payments are made primarily to facilitate the consenting process.

Glen Wright - Institute for Sustainable Development and International Relations (IDDRI)

Privatising a public good? Rights and ownership in marine spaces

MRE and other new activities are changing the legal landscape by demanding exclusive access to marine space and resources. Traditionally 'freedom of the seas' and common ownership are the guiding principles, and private rights in ocean spaces are rare. MRE has large spatial requirements, the devices are permanent, and are deployed nearshore. This means that they conflict with existing rights, public rights, and other rights and permissions, such as indigenous rights, or even the perceived 'rights' of local communities.

Simon Jude - Cranfield University

Marine Renewable Energy - Community Benefit or Burden?

A number of MRE developers have recently gone into administration, and there is concern that we are creating future problems for communities. MRE arrays are imminent and large international companies will take on most developments, with benefits bypassing communities. Communities are concerned that public money is being invested in infrastructure and programs for MRE, with no recourse if projects fail. For developers, the commercial reality is that they need to be showing progress to investors. At the same time, renewables asked to make community payments, while other energy sources are not.

Discussion

- Issues around decommissioning
- The first devices in the water are not necessarily the best technology. In any new industry there will always be many losers, and few winners
- The role of The Crown Estate (TCE) is there any potential for local management of the seabed?
- TCE tried to be planner and landlord for aquaculture in the early 1990s, and it didn't work. They tried again as planner and landlord with MRE, but there is a conflict of interest, or at least a perception of conflict of interest you can't be both

#2. Consultation (15 December 2014)

Carly McLachlan - Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research

Expectations and experiences of consultation processes

Consultation is often presented as way to convince stakeholders to support, or at least not oppose, a project, though in practice there are many models and interpretations. Consultation is getting earlier and more holistic. E.g. Wave Hub – concerns over surfing, tourism, navigation; divide between the developer, who moved the site due to navigation concerns, and objectors, who expected to be consulted prior to development. There are questions regarding the goals of consultation, what is actually open for negotiation, and whether MRE be held to a higher standard.

Bouke Wiersma - University of Exeter

Local knowledge and local energy deliberations: Offshore renewable energy in Guernsey

Case study of planning decisions in Guernsey, aiming to develop upstream consultation and engagement pre-design/deployment. Strong sense of place in Guernsey, community not keen on deployment in many places, despite support for technology. Early upstream consultation can assist in identifying such attitudes, identifying suitable locations, and reducing conflicts. This can also be useful in explaining the technology to the public.

Laura Watts - IT University of Copenhagen

Communication at the Edge: the 'Energy Walk' at the Danish Wave Energy Centre

MRE resources and developments are often located at the 'edge', distant and/or isolated. There is some concern regarding public understanding of these technologies. The 'Energy Walk', a guided 40-minute walk around the local area, was an attempt to engage with communities near the Danish Wave Energy Centre and shape perceptions of these new technologies.

Discussion

- Conflicting expectations regarding consultation processes
- How can innovative consultation methods feed into formal consultation processes?
- Can upstream consultation be fitted into formal consultation processes?
- Why should we engage in consultation? What is the purpose to be democratic, or to advance renewables?
- How can local experiences and knowledge best be integrated into consultation and improve outcomes?
- 'Consultation fatigue' numerous interconnected consultation processes taking place concurrently, public unsure of what they are contributing to and what to expect. How can this be streamlined and improved?

#3. Planning (14 January 2015)

Shelley Macdougall - Acadia University

The Value of Delay and Implications for Government Policy in Marine Renewable Energy Development

Many MRE projects are delayed, and projections reduced. This is likely because there is a value to waiting. When uncertainty is high, it is sometimes better to delay a project until more is known. The option to delay has value for a company and can be estimated using the Black-Scholes option pricing model. If the value of delay is greater than the value of investing now, it makes economic sense to wait. Developers either use this model, or make such risk-reward calculations intuitively in order to profitably delay their projects. This study can guide policy makers in the design of support mechanisms that encourage development.

Tavis Potts - Aberdeen University

Is the Blue Economy 'fit for purpose' in terms of delivering a low carbon society?

Expansion of several sectors is occurring within a 'blue economy' paradigm, though there is no formal definition of this concept. The dialogue of the blue economy focuses less strongly on environmental sustainability, instead the focus seems to be on expanding marine industries, including traditional activities. We need to have a more holistic concept to bring together the existing 'Green Economy' agenda with the blue economy We ask the question.... Is the concept doing enough for the transition?

Kate Johnson - Heriot-Watt University

The Politics of Planning at Sea - diverse drivers and perverse campaigns

Marine spatial planning (MSP) is emerging as the main tool for planning human activities in the marine environment. But are we planning for economic growth and industry or ecosystem services? Are we aiming for justice to present or future development? MSP is a highly political process, with lots of room for agendas and conflict. There are three broad approaches: state-controlled/top-down, neoliberal/market-based, and consultative/democratic. Which approach will we take? Sound MSP needs governance, justice, and the rule of law.

Discussion

- To what extent are net present value calculations used to choose to delay? Very widely an industry standard in oil and gas. Large companies and financial institutions will definitely be using this for MRE
- MSP is a tool used to achieve an end at some point, somebody is setting the agenda. MSP is therefore not necessarily benign
- International vs. regional governance mechanisms
- MSP complex and nuanced, developing slowly it may be that industrial developments take place in advance of MSP processes
- The nature of the sea makes it much more difficult to plan than on land communities are less clearly defined and interested are diffuse and varied
- Any form of planning begins to move in the direction of private rights this is one
 of the realities of the blue economy

What next for ISSMER? Three possibilities

- 1. Broaden sectoral focus: all elements of the 'blue economy' involve social impact. There is potential to expand the network to focus on the blue economy more generally.
- 2. Internationalise: expand focus to cover developing countries.
- 3. Investigate politics: politics is behind governance processes who are the powerbrokers, and what are the agendas at play?