

Towards a place-based perspective on the deployment of wind energy in Sweden

Dr Adam Peacock
Postdoctoral Research Fellow
University of Exeter

Content of talk

- What is social acceptance?
- How are national stakeholders thinking about deploying energy technologies?
[My research – national view of Sweden's energy transition]
- What does a place-based approach look like?
[My research – Munga-Hamra powerline development]
- Future research:
[My research – wind developments in Northern Sweden]

What do we mean by “social acceptance”?

- Research topic which emerged in the past two decades.
- Challenges the ‘NIMBY’ (Not In My Back Yard) thinking.
- “Community acceptance” – not about **obtaining consent** or **overcoming conflict**.
- About understanding the **multiple different reactions** - *early adoption, support, resistance, opposition, apathy, tolerance, uncertainty, indifference*

AND

The **values and emotions** which inform these reactions.

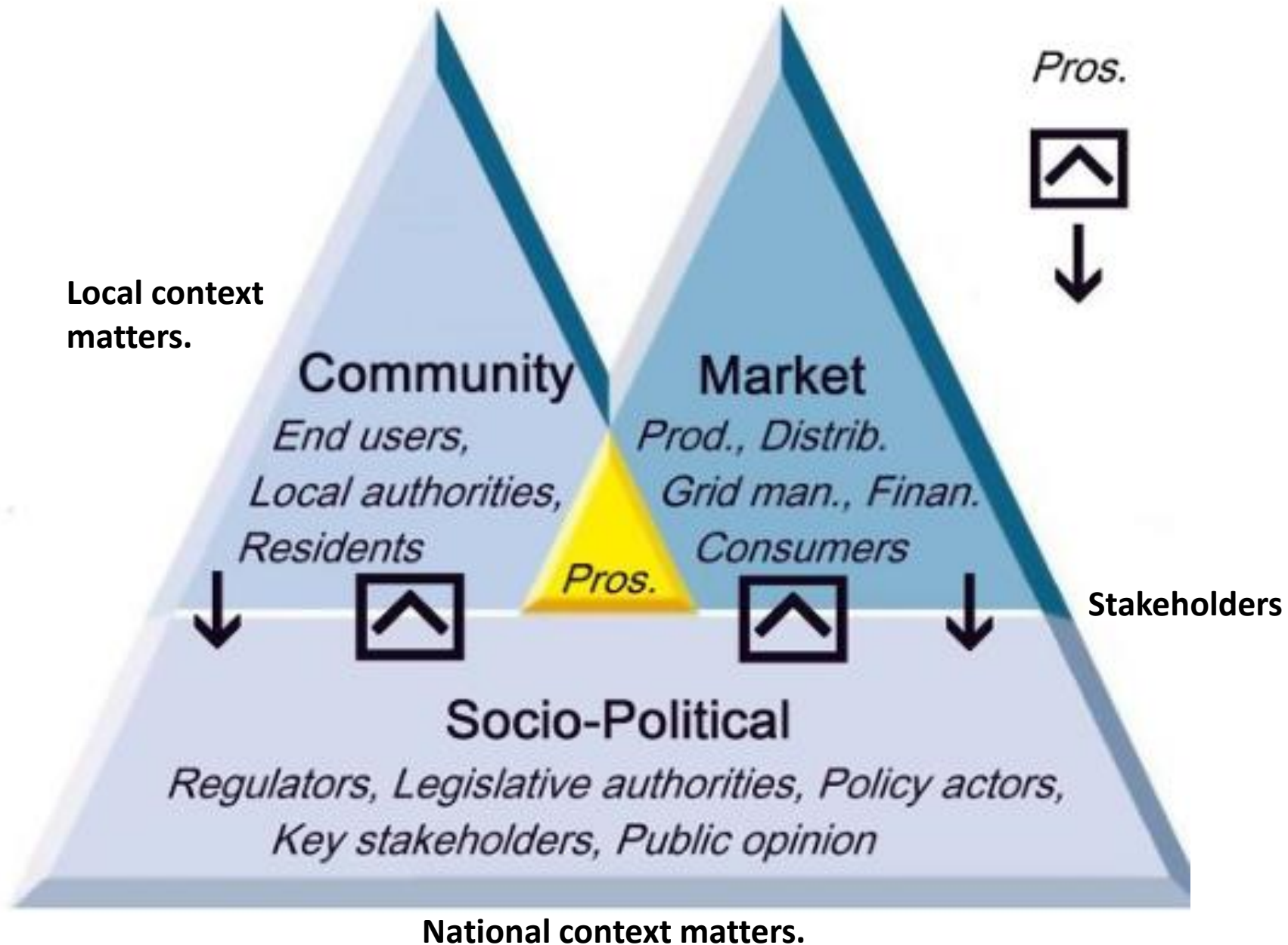
AND

Issues of **trust in companies, institutions** and their **agendas**.

(Batel, 2020)

	Normative approaches	Criticism approaches	Critical approaches
		➔	➔
Main assumptions regarding local opposition to RET	Need to examine NIMBY	Need to criticize NIMBY and propose alternatives	Need to focus on how power relations shape RET, their deployment and people's responses
Expected societal implications	To overcome opposition to RET	To understand opposition and ease the transition to RET	To question if opposition to RET should be reduced/overcome

“Social justice”



National 'public' and what how stakeholders anticipate their reactions to energy developments – 'imagined publics'.

How are national stakeholders thinking about the deployment of energy technologies?

Spatial assumptions at the national level

What are socio-political and market stakeholders thoughts about public acceptance in relation to Sweden's energy transition?

- Where are key “hot spots” of energy developments and how are they described (*characteristics of places*)?
- How is “public acceptance” perceived to vary across Sweden? (i.e. to what extent to stakeholders *generalise public acceptance* or do they differentiate at the community/ municipal level?)

Phase 1

Participants introduce their experience and expertise in relation to the energy sector in Sweden.



Phase 2

Participants identify specific places, clusters of places, or regions of interest in relation to the **current** deployment of energy technologies.



Phase 3

Participants identify specific places, clusters of places, or regions of interest in relation to the **future** deployment of energy technologies.



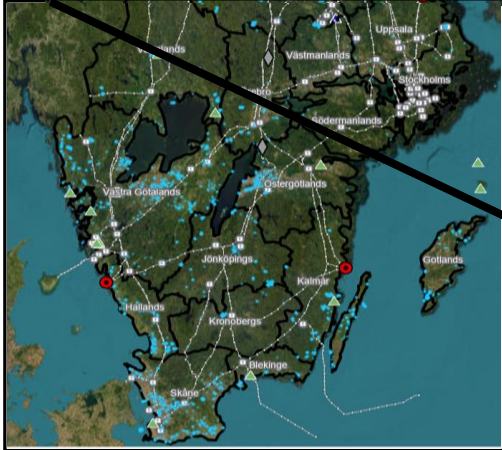
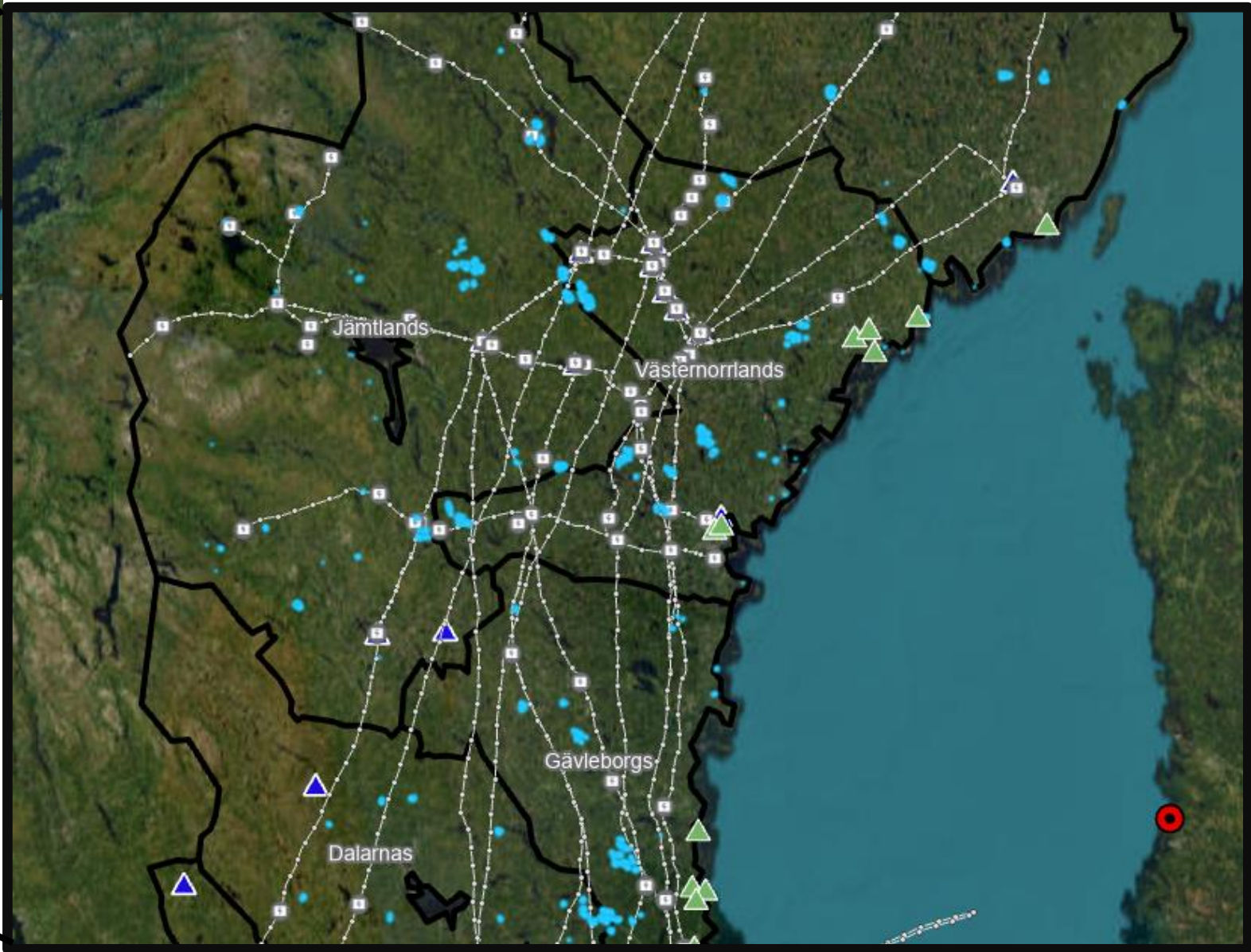
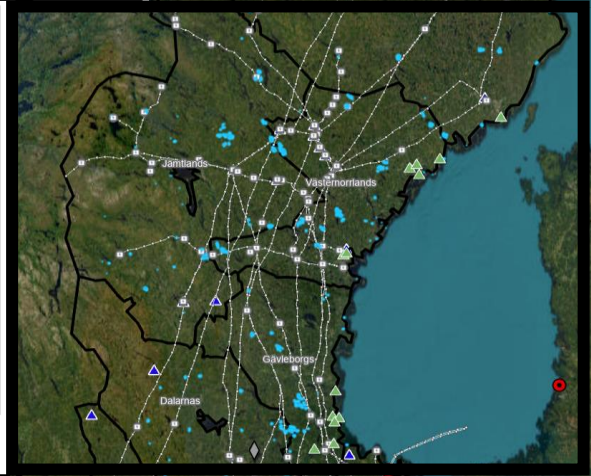
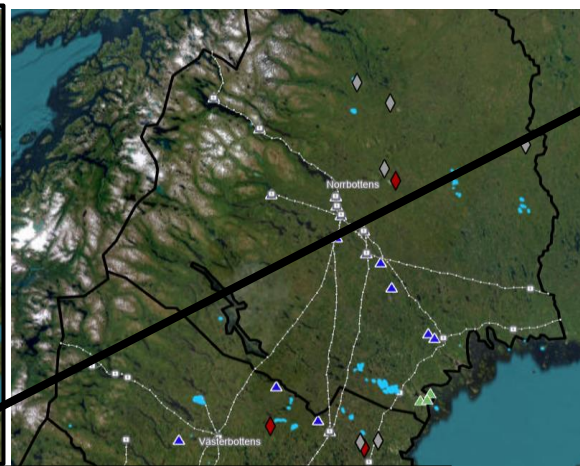
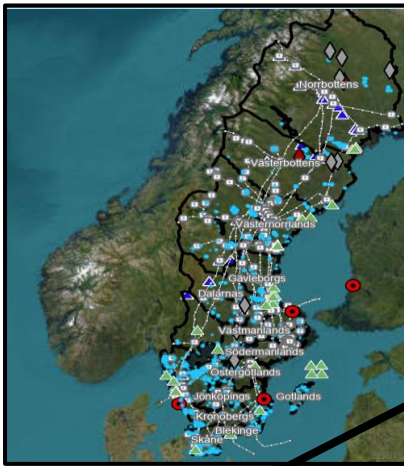
Phase 4

Summative questions: participants reflect on the interview and revisit any topics for additional clarity.

16 interviews with senior officials related to Sweden's energy transition:

- x5 public sector
- x8 private sector
- x3 third sector

(anti wind, Sami council, All Sweden Shall Live)



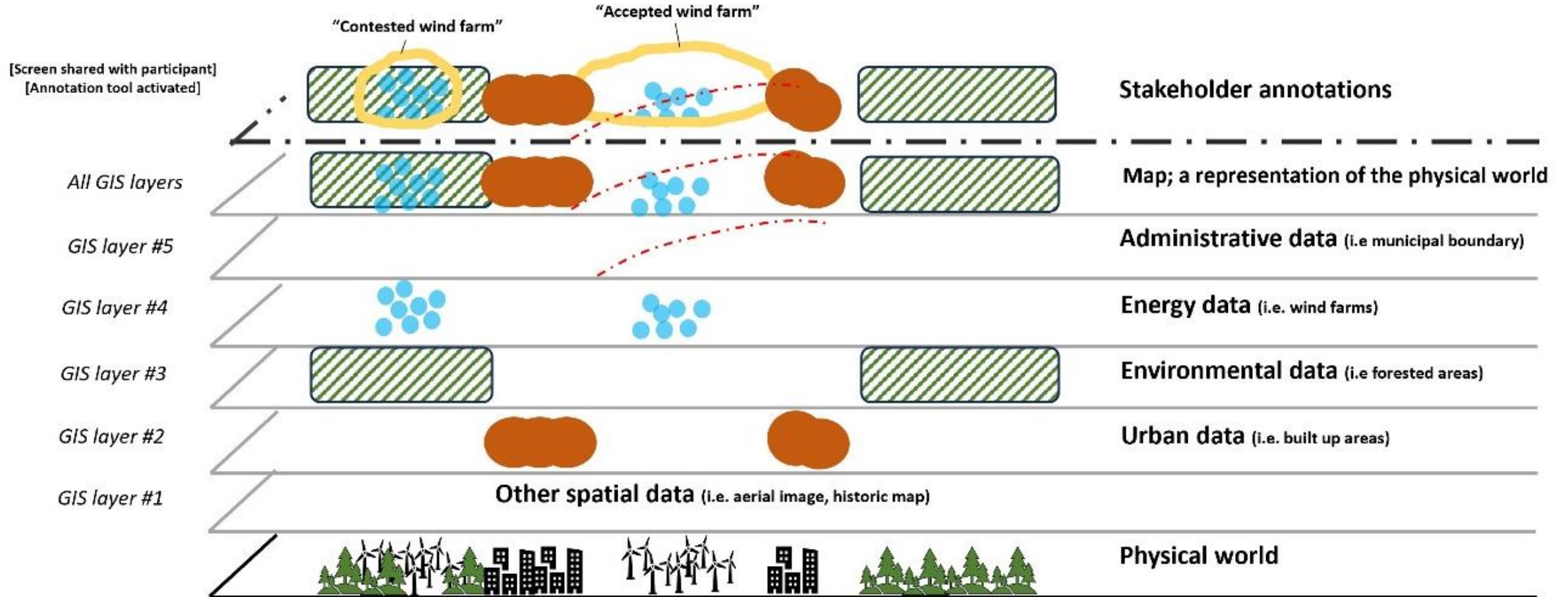
Legend

Energy technologies, sources and processes:

- Wind power in operation
- ▲ Hydroelectric power stations
- ▲ Biofuel power stations
- ◆ Iron mines
- ◆ Base/ precious metal mines
- Nuclear power stations
- Transmission grid
- Transmission stations

Administrative boundaries:

- Regional boundaries



Evidence of:

Prevalence of NIMBY perspectives amongst stakeholders

A tendency to generalise the characteristics of populations in Sweden

A tendency to focus on Northern Sweden and the future energy developments there – strong narratives about reindustrialisation and hydrogen economy – “rebalancing the North”.

Less coherent narratives for Southern Sweden... fragmented perspectives because of issues of acceptance.

Place-based perspectives

Social acceptance – a place-based perspective?

Geography – interested in the location of things. Everything has to go **SOMEWHERE**. Implications?

Place – traceable to the work of Aristotle and of importance to environmental psychology, architecture, geography and sociology literature.

- *“variety of meanings and emotions associated with a location by individuals or groups”*

People can define their *identity* based on perceived features in a *place* – **place identity**

People can become emotionally *“attached”* to a place – **place attachment**

When a change occurs, this can threaten place attachment and place identity – **place-protective actions**

(Devine-Wright, 2009).

When a developer approaches a municipality/
community, they are proposing a potential
disruption to place:

Rate and scale of change:

*How big of an impact will a
wind farm have? Where? To
whom/ what?*

“disruption to place is characterized by **extent, rapidity and control.**”

**...unfolds over time as individuals make sense of what has
happened or is about to happen and attempt to cope accordingly.”**

Communication: *What have
people been told? How clear
is the proposal? How honest
is it about potential impacts*

**What do people *imagine* the
impact will be?** *How does a wind
farm threaten their place
attachment or place identity? How
will it disrupt their*

How do people respond? *To what extent
can they respond (i.e. is there a way to
contact a developer at any time, or do
they have the time to commit? Do they
feel they will be listened to?*

A place-based approach:

“You need to scratch down to the bottom of the problem in each and every area. What is important to them? How will you disrupt their lives? And that work takes time and it takes money. But now you know what to expect. And you can work with them to find solutions to some of the issues”

How stakeholders view a place.



Disconnections?

How communities view their place.

Why low acceptance?



"In the South we have a really big NIMBY issue... They don't want the projects near them" [Private sector interviewee]

"Southern people don't want to look at the wind turbines and power lines. It is about aesthetic, really" [Public sector interviewee]

Using the same engagement approach for different wind farms?

“Every wind park in every surrounding, every community, is unique”

“I work with companies and politicians. They say we did this and this and this and try hard to work to talk to the community in this area and this worked fine. We developed a wind park. Now I'm going to be building on in this area. We have a model for how to do this and we did everything just the same”.

“But now, everybody's angry and nothing works and everything, but you just blown up. What did we do wrong?”

And I have to tell them “Actually, it is that it's unique for each and every opportunity”

Preliminary investigations of suitable sites – how can we better integrate place-based perspectives?

What tools are useful for developers/ authorities? How can GIS/ social mapping approaches support this?

How can we challenge dominant “NIMBY” perspectives within the sector.

“What do you do when you do not feel you have been listened to? When you are frustrated that you have been ignored. That you have not been consulted on the potential changes to where you live. That you have not been told as much as you think you should have...

...You find a bat. And you make them listen. And that is what the veto is. A bat. It slows things down. It makes the people in charge notice. And it sends a message”. **[Third sector interviewee]**



Thank you for your time!

- **X** - @Adampeacockgeog; **Linked In** – Adam Peacock
- A.j.peacock@exeter.ac.uk
- Available for additional webinars about our research, place-based perspectives, or social acceptance more generally.
- Available for discussions about collaborative future research opportunities.
- Academic papers and public reports coming soon!