

Media Analysis

This newspaper analysis has been carried out for four local newspapers: Niederlausitz Aktuell, Lausitzer Rundschau, Märkische Allgemeine Zeitung (MAZ) and Potsdamer Neueste Nachrichten (PNN). Articles reporting about the topic of wind energy have been identified and read between the months of January and June in 2016. After repeatedly finding the same topic in the newspapers not all seven months have been covered. This is especially relevant for the MAZ. For this newspaper only the months between March and June have been covered. Between 10 to 20 articles have been considered for each newspaper. The search-function of the webpages for the terms "Windenergie" (wind energy), "Windkraft" (wind power) and "Bürgerwind" (civic wind) has been used. The aim was to identify how the newspapers report about the topic wind energy and to analyse the arguments they use in favor and against wind energy. The aspiration is to create a mood picture, not a complete analysis.

Before starting our analysis, we had a brief look into the literature. What do scientists state about the role of local newspapers? Several research projects on the political function of local newspapers have been carried out already in the 1980ies. They found that local newspapers are used by local political and economic elites as an instrument to enforce their interests. They use the newspaper as a mouthpiece (Benzinger 1980, Wolz 1979, Ellwein 1982). More recent research by Otfried Jarren (1998) confirms these earlier findings. He states that local reports in local newspapers are dominated by the economic and political elites. Reports are very much on the surface of an event and no background information is provided or connections are drawn. Therefore, there is a tendency to report uncritical and shy away from conflicts.

Our analysis of all four newspapers shows that the newspapers frequently cover the topic of wind energy, which is not surprising since many wind turbines are built in Brandenburg and in particular in our study regions. Wind energy causes various discussions, disputes and actions the local newspapers report about on a regular basis.

The daily local newspaper is one media among others (e.g. TV, internet, talks with the neighbours, expert literature, training) forming peoples opinions on wind energy. It is assumed by us that locals with a strong attachment to their community read the local newspaper. Moreover we assume that especially the elderly population informs itself by the local newspaper and, in contrast, a younger population that has moved recently into the area tends not to read a local newspaper, since it is less attached to the community. Our assumption is based on a rough literature review concerning the use of media.

As shown in [figure 1](#), 80 out of 187 interviewees from Dahme/Mark, Niederer Fläming and Uebigau-Wahrenbrück stated in our survey that information about energy supply is often gained by reading the daily and weekly newspaper. 53 persons answered to gain moderately often information from the local newspapers. 20 answered to gain only seldom information from the papers. In the rural areas mainly an elderly population completed our questionnaire. Only 5 persons in the age group of 20 to 30 years participated. These results direct into the direction of our above assumption that elderly people tend to read the local news. Since only 5 persons with a relatively young age participated, we cannot draw any conclusion from the data regarding their media use.

The questionnaire in Potsdam did not include any question asking how people inform themselves about the topic of wind energy. Our argumentation for this decision was that a rather young population lives in Potsdam and we assumed they do not inform themselves reading the local newspaper. Our assumption was confirmed at least so far that 42 out of 125 respondents in Potsdam

were between 20 to 30 years old. Unfortunately we do not gain any information in the survey on the use of media of the people interviewed in Potsdam. Since the interviews took place on the street it was aimed to keep the questionnaire as short as possible. Learning about the media use of young people was not our priority question.

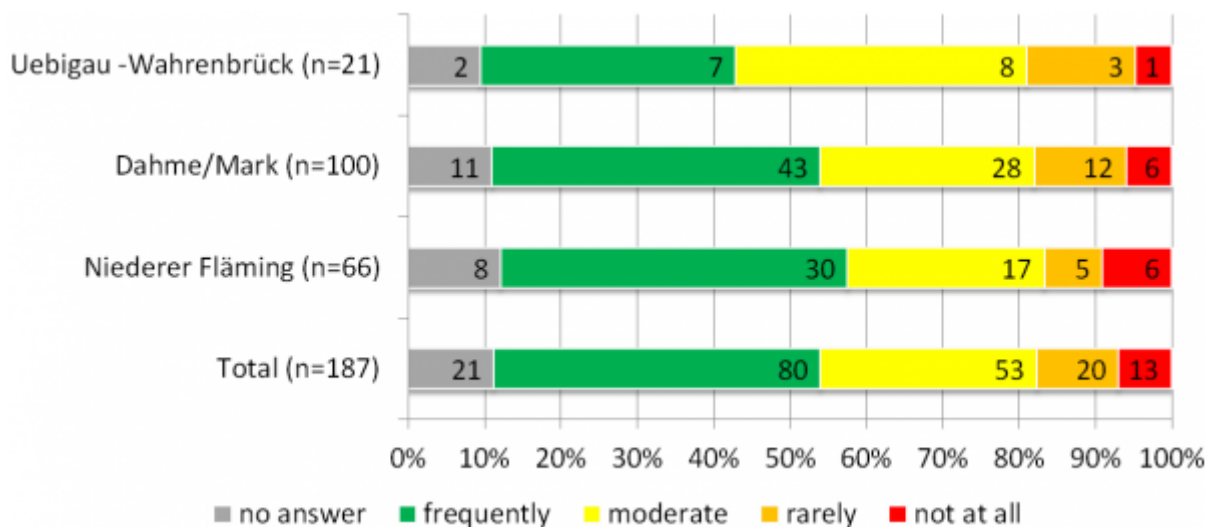


Fig. 1: Results of the question "How often do you read a daily or weekly newspaper?" for the regions Lausitz and Havelland-Fläming

Different local newspapers cover our overall study area. The Havelland-Fläming region is covered by the daily local newspaper "Märkische Allgemeine Zeitung" (MAZ), as well as the "Potsdamer Neuste Nachrichten" (PNN). Both are also read in Potsdam. The MAZ has rather detailed local sections. There are 15 different local editions. This shows the local focus of this newspaper. In contrast the PNN is very much focused towards the city of Potsdam and the capital city of Berlin. The PNN does not report extensively beyond these two cities. Thus it can be doubted if PNN is a traditional local newspaper. The PNN has a relatively small circulation with about 22 000 prints. This is significantly less than the circulation of the MAZ with about 120 000 prints. 100 000 of these are subscriptions (MAZ 2016). Some people would argue that the PNN is rather read by the urban population and people who have a higher education since it offers more critical articles that go more into depth regarding analysis and backgrounds. Our analysis confirms at least that the PNN offers more background information and analysis.

In Lausitz-Spreewald with the municipality of Uebigau-Wahrenbrück the newspapers "Niederlausitz Aktuell" and "Lausitzer Rundschau" are read.

Niederlausitz Aktuell und Lausitzer Rundschau

The two newspapers have been analyzed together since they cover very much the same region. [Here](#) you find a list and the links to the articles analyzed.

Our analysis found that the mood in the region Lausitz-Spreewald is pro wind energy. The newspapers [Niederlausitz Aktuell](#) and [Lausitzer Rundschau](#) report about wind energy mainly from the viewpoint of its contribution to economic growth, creation of jobs, as investment opportunities for the municipalities or even citizens (Bürgerwind). A farmers association reports how essential the turbines are for their income generation. There are rather neutral reports informing about new permits or designated areas for turbines or how municipalities argue in front of courts for their rights to give construction permits. The newspaper is used by the investors and wind park developers (economic elites) to announce the opening of new wind parks and to invited the citizens to an information event.

A renewable energy fair held in the region is announced. It is also discussed that the grid is not strong enough to transport the generated energy. Further the topic of higher energy prices due to the renewable energies is discussed. One article states that the negative effects of coal mining are much higher than any effect of the turbines. Negative effects on wildlife are not discussed at all. This is surprising since this is a topic often discussed in connection with wind energy. It is conspicuous that the start of the initiative "Rettet Brandenburg" is announced in an article but there are no additional articles about the initiative that is very different in the MAZ. The overall reporting of the two newspapers reflects very much the local activities. The 'Energierregion Lausitz-Spreewald GmbH', <http://energieregion-lausitz.de> a cooperation between the regional administrations and businesses promoting the regions potential for renewable energies, is active in the region. Further the administration declared the region as climate protection region (Klimaschutzregion Elbe Elster). There is a yearly „Renewable Energy Fair“ at the Brikettfabrik „Louise“ <http://www.brikettfabrik-louise.de>. Further, there are many wind turbine investors and developers active in the region. All these actors receive a voice in the newspapers.

Märkische Allgemeine Zeitung

The [Märkische Allgemeine Zeitung](#) provides a different picture. As the subtext didn't vary much in the considered articles only 12 articles from this newspaper were analysed.

We found many articles discussing the direct effects on wind energy on the local environment, especially the negative ones. The negative impacts refer to species (e.g. wild goose), landscape protection, noise, encirclement and height as well as increasing numbers of turbines, cf. [MAZ 05.05.2016](#), [MAZ 07.04.2016](#) and [MAZ 03.05.2016](#). The topic of the overloaded grid and that it is not able to transport more energy is quite central, as well as the higher energy costs for the consumer, cf. [MAZ 29.04.2016](#) [MAZ 09.05.2016](#). Another frequently discussed topic is wind turbines in the forest and its negative effects (e.g. [MAZ 16.03.2016](#)). This topic is relevant since the wind park "Chransdorf" with 24 turbines in a forest is constructed. Interestingly there are no such discussions in the Niederlausitz Aktuell and Lausitzer Rundschau. There we can only read about the invite of the investors and developers to visit the wind park.

The positive arguments deal with income generation for the municipalities e.g. through payments for the use of roads and crossing municipality lands during the construction phase, protection standards for humans e.g. the minimum distance required from the turbine to the closed housing and the environment (e.g. [MAZ 18.04.2016](#)).

In the region a great number of organized protest groups against wind energy has arisen. There are many local groups formulating their protest against the turbines. Just to name a few: Verein Pro Krug Heiligengrabe, Interessengemeinschaft/Bürgerinitiative Hohe Heide, Bölzker Windkraftgegner, Aktionsbündnis Gegenwind Temnitz, Aktionsbündnis Gegenwind, Bürgerinitiative Fichtenwalde. These groups are often intertwined with the local politics. The most prominent association is the citizens initiative "Rettet Brandenburg" which unites many of these tiny but locally influential groups in its demand for a referendum (Volksentscheid) regarding wind turbines. The MAZ often quotes persons associated to these initiatives (e.g. [MAZ 16.03.2016](#), [MAZ 02.05.2016](#)). Taking a closer look at other public figures mentioned in several articles (e.g. mayors, politicians) it becomes clear that many local politicians are involved in these groups. This activism appears either through forming further initiatives, direct support for existing ones or indirectly, such as taking position in interviews and assemblies for wind energy objectors.

Potsdamer Neueste Nachrichten

The [Potsdamer Neueste Nachrichten](#) reports rather neutrally about wind energy. A main focus in most

articles deals with the legal framework. A positive attitude towards renewable energies in general is presented.

The newspaper reports frequently about the regional plan for the region Havelland-Fläming. Advantages of a regional plan such as planning security for all involved stakeholders and control over the number, height and distance of wind turbines under construction are mentioned. In some articles the regional planning authorities are even considered as possible institution for solving conflicts between locals and investors. Repeatedly reports about lawsuits dealing with the legality of the regional plan and areas suitable for wind farms (Windeignungsgebiete) are published. These claims are stated from both supporters and opponents, cf. [PNN 26.01.2016](#).

The newspaper reports about possible negative factors like possible health impacts, environmental threats and the risk of fire in the forest, but keeps a neutral position. It is left open to the reader to interpret these factors (e.g. [PNN 09.01.2016](#)). The NIMBY (not in my backyard) phenomenon is treated by the Potsdamer Neueste Nachrichten, e.g. [PNN 12.04.2016](#). The articles reports that Brandenburgs citizens are in general pro wind energy but against it when the turbines shall be built in there neighborhood.

Wind energy is considered to be able to contribute to job creation in the region and structural development. However, the newspaper finds that currently inhabitants of structurally weak regions have few opportunities to participate in the economic advantages from the wind turbines (e.g. [PNN 25.05.2016](#), [PNN 29.06.2016](#)).

The newspaper does rather report on a meta level and presents analysis. Arguments are well balanced. The general tendency is to quote political representatives from federal level and relevant associations.

Conclusion

Generally, our findings in this newspapers analysis confirm what has been stated in the literature: local newspapers are a mouthpiece for the local political and economic stakeholders and, as mentioned before, in the case of the rural newspapers, local protest groups. Reportings about wind energy conflicts are rather uncritical. Depending on the political and economic environment the studied newspapers offer articles to the reader with arguments for or against wind turbines. The newspapers for the Lausitz-Spreewald region report rather positive about wind energy since the local elites are supporting the development. In contrast the MAZ reports rather negative since there are many opinion-forming activities with a negative attitude towards the turbines. The PNN seems to report more on a meta level which supports the argument that the PNN might not be a classical local newspaper.

Further research is needed to connect scientifically robust the findings of our media analysis to the opinions the local population stated in our questionnaire. However, we found indications that opinion forming could take place to a certain extent over local print media. Therefore, it matters how local newspapers report about wind energy. One factor to increase acceptance might be the local newspapers.

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