

Uebigau-Wahrenbrück

The Municipality Uebigau-Wahrenbrück is a small rural area with around 6000 inhabitants. It is located in the south-west of Brandenburg and partially in the county Elbe-Elster. The area of the municipality, which overall has a size of 13.491 ha, is mostly used for agriculture activities (8.672 ha) and further largely covered by forest (3.468 ha).

The population density in the municipality is very low, as the share of surface covered by the settlements,(rarely inhabited area of the municipality is divided into 21 subdistricts), which are the following: Bahnsdorf, Beiersdorf, Beutersitz, Bönitz, Bomsdorf, Domsdorf, Drasdo, Kauxdorf, Langennaundorf, Marxdorf, München, Neudeck, Prestewitz, Rothstein, Saxdorf, Uebigau, Wahrenbrück, Wiederau, Wildgrube, Winkel and Zinsdorf. These subdistricts differ in size and number of inhabitants, the largest of these subdistricts are Uebigau and Wahrenbrück.

The coalmining within the municipality Uebigau-Wahrenbrück,(which) was active from (started in the 19th century and stopped in the end of the) 20th century, had a high influence on the regional development. Still today are present in the landscape remaining sites from the previous historical time. For instance the subdistricts Domsdorf, Beutersitz and Wildgrube throughout a regional coalmine and related factories like briquetting plants show a high historical influence of the coalmining activities.

However, today no active Coalmine is to be found within the municipality and the historical coalmining sites just play a role within tourism sector. Therefore, the situation is significantly different from the “neighborhood” region in the south-east of Brandenburg, where still high scale coal-mining activities takes place.

Nowadays the municipality Uebigau-Wahrenbrück, as well as the county Elbe-Elster, is facing several problems,as aging population and a negative demographic trend.

Despite the issues that the municipality confronts, the municipality Uebigau-Wahrenbrück use renewable energy as an opportunity for development. Throughout the engagement of the Uebigau-Wahrenbrück the municipality became an important stakeholder for the regional renewable energy development. Therefore throughout the time the region still keep a role in the energy production and further tries to adapt to today’s challenges.

It is also remarkable that the municipality Uebigau-Wahrenbrück is engaging in several research cooperation. These projects are for instance “RePro”, which focus on the use of regional resources and the “w3 regional energy spatial politics”, a project which focus on the research on development, local opposition to WF and wellbeing aspects of regional energy within spatial politics.

As a result of its high engagement in research and other cooperation’s the municipality produce a consistent amount of renewable energy. Indeed the electricity production in 2010 of the municipality did not just covered by the energy need within the region, but was about 424% of their own demand. The overall production in this year was 91 GWh, from which 70 GWh could be exported to other regions. Furthermore the municipality includes several types of different renewable energy sources, which are photovoltaic, biomass as well as solar heat. The largest and most important energy source however is wind energy, which already had a capacity of 85 GWh in 2010.

Today the municipality already has 32 installed wind turbines and further there is an ongoing approval process for another 14 wind turbines and another 3 are in a construction process . These wind turbines are mostly situated in the two wind parks of the municipality.

The future development of wind energy in the region is rather unclear, however. the climate protection concept of Uebigau-Wahrenbrück, which was published in 2013 provides scenarios about the potential future development of wind energy.

All these scenarios are based on the year 2010 data and estimate the technical and spatial development potentials for the renewable energy production in the year 2030. While the “trend” scenario, predicts no further increase of the current wind energy capacity, the ambitious scenario states that an increase up to 226 GWh would be possible, even though it still would need to be weighted against other public interest.

Taking the current status of the wind energy production as well as the potential development capacity into account the importance of wind energy for the municipality is highlighted once more.

Research questions

What are the relevant factors behind possible differences in social acceptance of wind energy between the municipalities in the planning region Havelland-Fläming and Lausitz-Spreewald?

Among the possible outcomes, four hypotheses were identified as crucial regarding either contrasts or similarities between the regions. They will be at the centre of the analysis and further discussions.

1. The local authorities position in favour of wind developments may contribute to residents’ social acceptance of it. Moreover, aspects of public participation may be relevant. For instance, if the citizens agree with the energy policy in the municipality; if they feel themselves informed by the administration and if they trust it, if they perceive their opinion as been taken in consideration during the decisive process, whether benefits from wind energy are until now equally shared.
2. The history of energy production in the region may contribute to their acceptance either positively or negatively. Citizens may see wind energy as changing their cultural identity of coal-based energy producers while others may see it as the evolution to a sustainable energy production, or others may see the need for replace coal-based energy production, but perhaps preferring other sources rather than wind energy.
3. Other relevant factors, for instance perceived health impacts, may naturally rise from the survey as the most frequently mentioned or the most contributing for the local’s opinion, showing that the preliminary assumptions are not relevant as expected.
4. There is no significant difference in acceptance level between those regions. Nevertheless, the contributing factors still can be compared whether they are the same among the regions or not, as well with case studies worldwide.

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