



Energy research Centre of the Netherlands

Public engagement in wind energy: Lessons from a Dutch case study

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June 7, 2010





Public concerns about onshore wind

- Public attitudes generally favourable, but locally often unfavorable

Main concerns:

- Visual impact, noise,... NIMBYism?
- Process of decision making:
Decide – Announce – Defend (DAD)
- Distribution of costs and benefits:
Local co-ownership

Research focus and method

Research focus

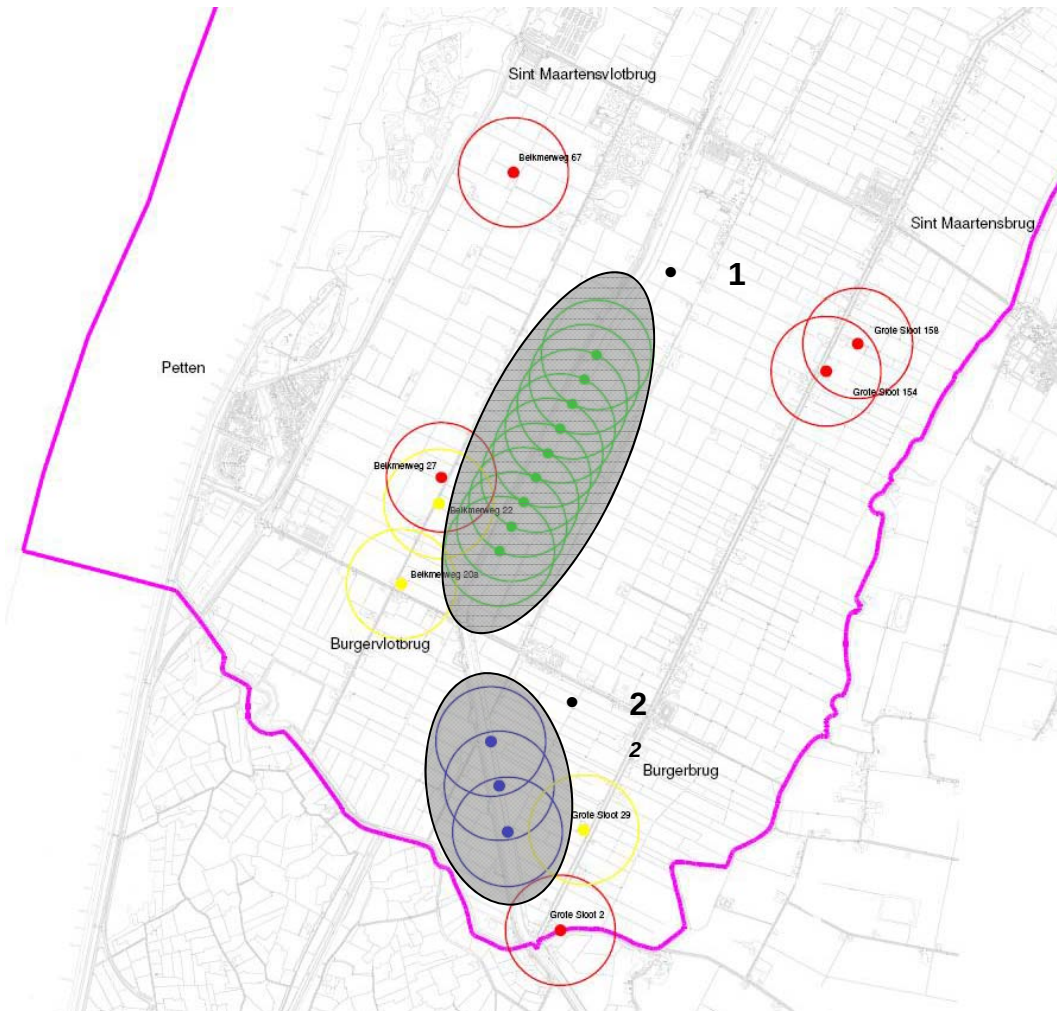
- Local context and history of project
- Stakeholder engagement (Who? How? Why)
- Which concerns were raised by stakeholders?
- Stakeholder interactions and relations
- Stakeholder view of process and outcomes

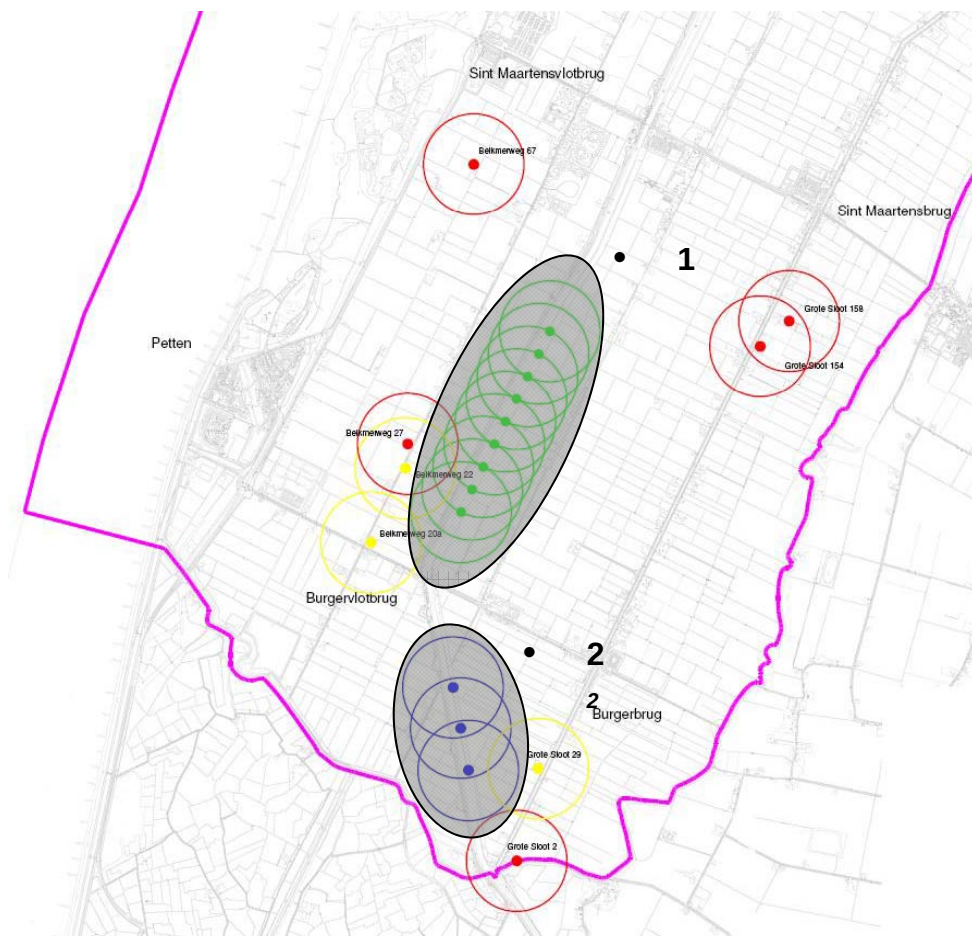
Method

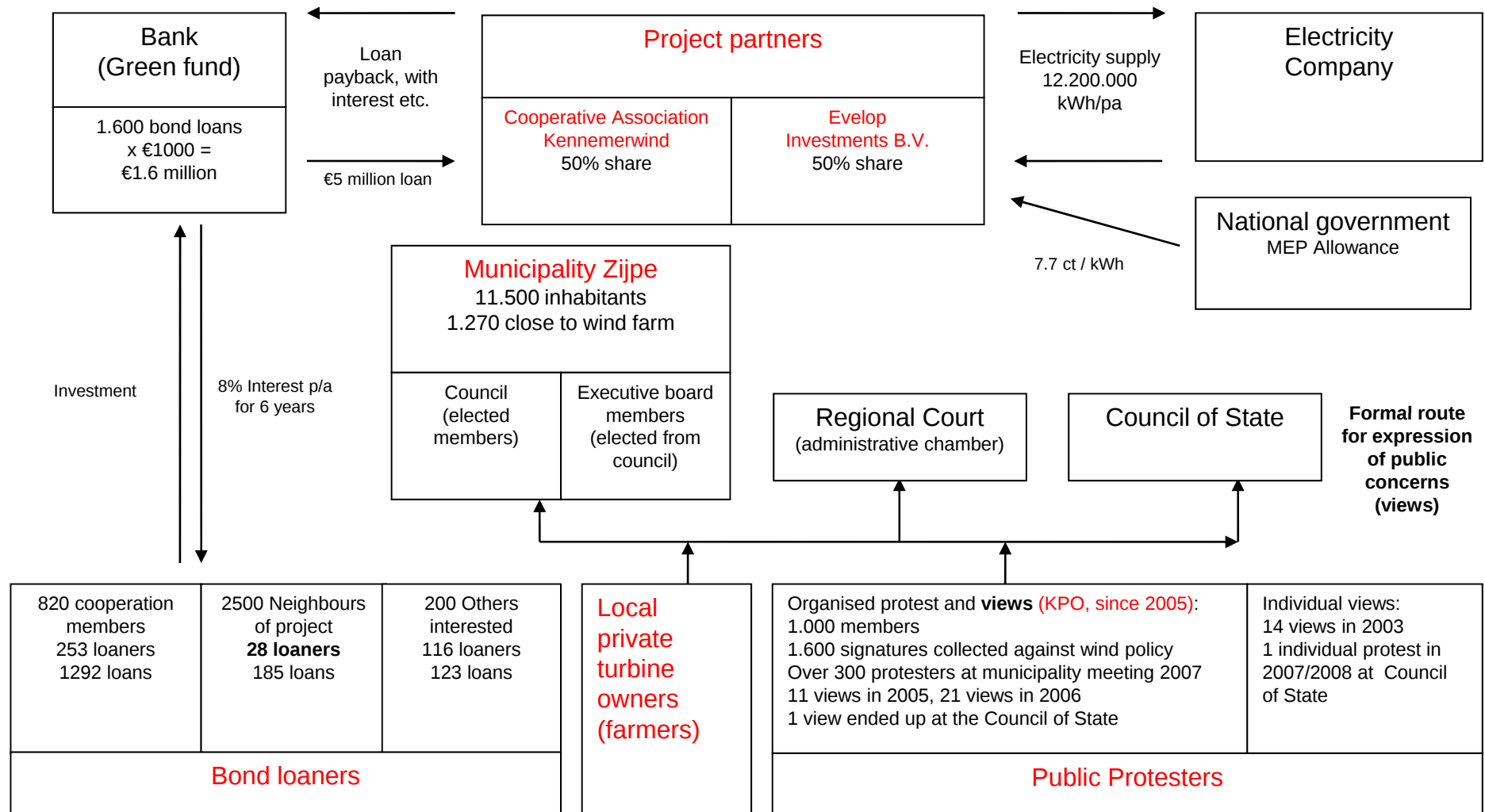
- Desk research of publicly available information
- Missing and/or confidential information from stakeholders
- In-depth interviews with 6 key stakeholders
(September 2009, after the project was finished)

Municipality Zijpe – Wind farm Burgervlotbrug









Project chronology

- 1993-2000:
Unclear wind policy
Ground ownership issues
Financial issues (subsidies)
- 2001: municipal wind policy
- 2003: application for permit →
formal public protest by individual residents
- 2005: permit from municipality →
organized protest by KPO; court meetings
- 2008: financial closure
- 2009: turbines built, in operation since July 2009

Public concerns/arguments

- Noise, visual impact (clustering with solitary turbines), birds, cast shadow, reflections
- Process of decision making: inconsistencies between wind policy as approved in 2001 and project plan; inconsistencies between provincial and municipal wind policies 2003-2007
- Distribution of cost and benefits: cooperative perceived to make huge profits whereas residents fear decrease in property value
- Questions about effectiveness of wind energy altogether
- Project relies too heavily on public funding

Public involvement in decision-making

- 1993: chair of cooperative visits neighbours of project
- 2001: neighbours involved in wind policy development
- 2002: wind cooperative distributes project information letter
- 2003: project plan changes without update to neighbours; provincial wind policy updated; municipal wind policy adapted to fit project plan without public consultation
- 2005: chair of cooperative celebrates permit in local newspaper interview → start of organized protest by KPO
- 2005 & 2007 failed attempts to update municipal wind policy
- 2008: public meetings on renewable energy at municipality
- 2009: cooperation announces shareholder opportunity – one month to decide – minimum investment EUR 1.000

Development in stakeholder relations: A common pattern

- Project developer starts informing people, but continues discussion mainly with the permitting authorities
- Some members of local public raise concerns to project developer and to local authorities
- Concerns are only addressed through formal routes of decision-making – no informal participation/negotiation
- Community member takes the lead in organizing public protest
- Why? No NIMBYism, but the feeling that the public view is not taken into account and/or defended by any of the parties involved (democracy fails)
- A process of arguing and counterarguing leads to polarization between proponents and opponents – distrust, conspiracy theories
- Deadlock – project developer thinks the public cannot be reasoned with; public does not trust project developers and authorities

Recommendations for public participation

- Start early – do not wait until all details are clear
- Engage all relevant stakeholders
- Project → Process: joint exploration of solutions
- Decide-Announce-Defend → Negotiation
- Acknowledge values, interests, feelings, identity
- Trust in process = trust in(research) results
- Do not skip discussion on utility and necessity
- Tit for tat: no unreasonable behavior or demands

Thank you

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