

Integrating Social Characteristics into Site Assessments for Offshore Wind Deployment

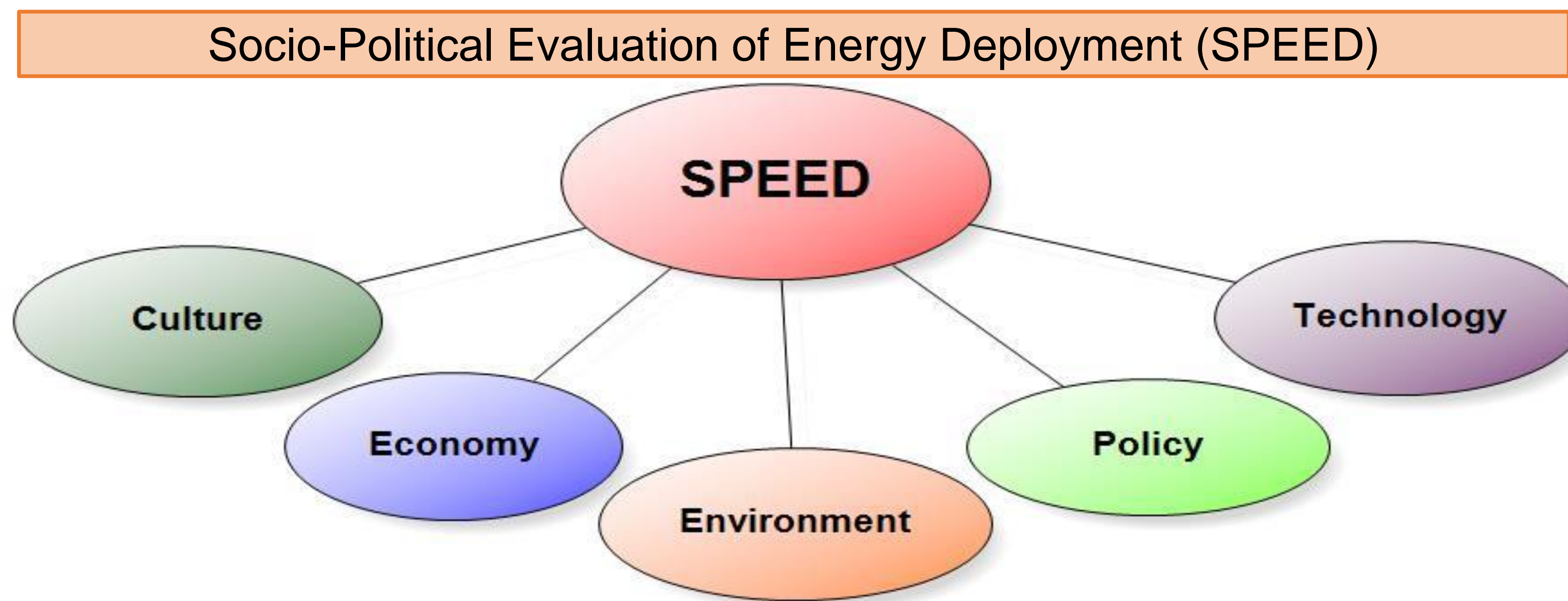
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INTRODUCTION

Careful site assessment is essential to the production and transmission of offshore wind energy. Although critical data gaps regarding technological feasibility and the biophysical environment remain*, it is equally important to fill data gaps to enable socially appropriate offshore wind development. Socio-Political Evaluation of Energy Deployment (SPEED) identifies social characteristics of a site. *<http://www.boem.gov/Renewable-Energy>

METHOD

- Conducted focus groups and interviews with wind energy professionals
- Used SPEED to identify and differentiate social characteristics displayed in data (Stephens, J., Wilson, E., & Peterson, T. (2014). Socio-Political Evaluation of Energy Deployment (SPEED): A Framework Applied to Smart Grid. UCLA Law Review, 61: 1930-1961.
- Used NVivo 10.0 qualitative software to code text (QSR International, Doncaster, Victoria, Australia)



RESULTS

Offshore Wind Energy Opportunities

08%	Policy
12%	Environment
79%	Economy
01%	Culture

Technology

Correlations between Technology and other SPEED Dimensions
 % is one social dimension compared to other social dimensions

Offshore Wind Energy Challenges

14%	Policy
68%	Environment
17%	Economy
01%	Culture

Technology

Correlations between Technology and other SPEED Dimensions
 % is one social dimension compared to other social dimensions

Topic	Example
Culture-Opportunities	Getting public opinion behind a project in place is very important.
Economy-Challenges	The further the turbines are apart...you then have greater costs on the inter-turbine cables.
Environment-Challenges	Offshore wind farms can affect marine life in large distances from the source.
Policy-Opportunities	Government picked up on the concerns that developers were raising.

DISCUSSION

Integration of social dimensions is important to site assessment. When wind energy professionals described the opportunities of wind energy technology, the conversation focused most on the economic dimension (79%), then environmental (12%), policy (08%), and least of all, culture (01%). When they described wind energy technology challenges, the conversation focused most on the environment dimension (68%), then economic (17%), policy (14%), and least of all, culture (01%). Since all social dimensions coordinate with each other, wind energy professionals may want to consider further integration of cultural dimensions into their assessment of both the opportunities and challenges associated with wind energy technology. This may enable greater public interest in and support for development of offshore wind energy.