

Maritime spatial planning for the Baltic Sea Region - as a regulating instrument for sustainable future “without [U+FFFD] uncertainties for the marine environment?

E. Riekens

MARUM, Bremen, Germany (eriekens@marum.de)

Within the framework of the integrated maritime policy (IMP) for the European Union (EU) several political initiatives have been approved to coordinate human and economic activities in European marine waters, such as offshore wind energy. However there is still a need to coordinate the competition for space and to control the pressure by the use of the marine resources, especially in terms of the sustainable management in this area. With a common European framework for maritime spatial planning (MSP) the activities should be mapped and should be transparent for all actors; and in particular, should include all interests (e.g. ecologic, economic and social). The offshore wind energy sector is one field of the framework and it is linked to other sectors as environmental protection, shipping or fishing industry.

The central paradox is that: on the one side, the offshore wind technology is promoted as a new sector of the “green economy” and reduces Co2 emission. On the other side, the offshore wind farm installations will dramatically affect the marine environment and negative effects are unavoidable. New art of conflicts emerges. Environmental effects are uncertain for now, especially in the long-term perspective. The fact is that the marine system will continue to be increasingly affected by human activities.

My doctoral research examines and compares the regulatory frameworks for offshore wind projects in Germany and Poland, focusing specifically on the effects on the marine environment. The main research question is: What strategies have the member states formulated; and to what extent are environmental impacts integrated in the national plans? Relating to this, I am searching for any conflicts-of-interests during the political decision making processes, as well as examples of cooperation among institutions, economic sector and environment associations. Oriented on the European IMP approach, I will analyze the national efforts to include different sectors. The aim of this analysis is to explore how the ecosystem-based management approach really works in practice. With my research results I want to contribute to the governance discussion which is relevant for the future development of the marine ecosystems.

In the current research phase I am looking for types and constellations of conflicts allocated in several areas (e.g. or i.e. social, ecological and economic sectors), which are visible by the policy decision making processes regarding the offshore wind energy planning. The result of this analysis should be an overview of existing conflicts and the future progress especially with relation to national offshore projects. In this respect, the scientific knowledge about existing conflict lines between different actors in this field will provide insight into various uncertainties within political decisions. The conflict overview will highlight the level of integration visible within the existing governance system.

Reducing uncertainty within the topic of renewable wind energy requires dealing with the topic as a complex, heterogeneous, and dynamic often with abrupt changes field. Thus a multiple perspective should be incorporate in maritime spatial plans. Otherwise, changing circumstances cannot be taken into consideration, new results of research cannot be monitored, and new failures of governance can take place.