How People, Place, and Technology Fit:
Participatory Methods to Support Community Resilience in Ocean Renewable Energy Siting

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Background

- Maine's renewable energy targets depend on ocean renewable energy, especially the deployment of floating offshore wind.
- Relatively little is known about the potential ecological, economic and social impacts of floating wind in the Gulf of Maine.

Place-Technology Fit

Place-technology fit refers to the degree to which a given energy project is suited to a place. Suitability is determined by

- place-specific cultures, economies and ecologies,
- the beliefs people hold about land and seascapes,
- place as a locus of meaning and attachment,
- energy system knowledge and needs, and
- social and cultural identities.

Methods

- Coproduced method selection: surveys and participatory mapping eliminated based on feedback, interviews emphasized.
- 42 semi-structured interviews
- Interviews conducted in southern, midcoast, and Downeast Maine regions over the last year.

Acknowledgements

Key Takeaways:

- The **wide spectrum** of nuanced **perspectives** on offshore wind go **unshared.**
- Opposing sides (for or against wind) **share many values.**
- Influential values include **responsibilities** to past and future **legacies**, deep commitments to **family, community and the state**, & **nested individualist and collectivist cultures**.
- Distrust of process comes from inherent **uncertainties,** poor past **communication,** many **key unanswered questions, faceless developers,** & **lack of agency.**

Image courtesy Bella David and TNC Maine

Broad Needs:

- **Community visioning** processes
- Structures to acknowledge **grief and loss**
- **Basic (K-12) education** in electric power systems
- Better methods for **dealing with uncertainty** in outcomes, clear **boundaries for harm**

To Improve Engagement Processes, Communities Need:

- Agency
- Transparency
- Recognition of context
- Questions answered from expert witnesses
- Novel methods of engagement based in building long-term relationships
    - Shared personal stories that connect people to place, each other, and their work

Community Indicators of Fit:

1. Living memory of **industrial heritage;**
2. New industry clearly meets a **basic local need** (jobs, housing) without harming **community cohesion;**
3. Fit with the **community's vision** as determined by deliberative process with **strong leadership;**
4. Community has **resources to advocate for agency / justice;** and
5. Project supports wider **portshed.**

Additional findings and strategies will be organized in a toolkit, available in 2025. For more information, contact Jessica.reillymoman@maine.edu

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