Dispute, discontent and displacement:
exploring the intersections between discourse and scale in the governance of renewable energy

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Abstract

Wind power's 'planning problem' is complex and multidimensional. Prominent aspects of this problem are issues surrounding social acceptance and how this is (mis)understood in the policy domain. Attempts to remedy such issues often rest on the assumption that 'better information' will generate consensus and thereby resolve disagreement. However, efforts at this have been largely unsuccessful as planning disputes over the quantum, size and location turbines have failed to dissipate with advances in assessment methods and engineering technologies. This begs the question as to how wind power's planning problem can be better understood? We explore one possible response to this by investigating the ways different knowledges and knowledge holders seek to accumulate authority over the 'facts' of a situation. This is undertaken through an interpretive analysis of how agents to contentious windfarm proposals in Ireland strived to mobilise contending realities wherein they were advantageously positioned as credible sources of knowledge. We draw conclusions from this analysis regarding broader debates in environmental governance and suggest how wind power's 'planning problem' should be reconceived.

Introduction

A post-carbon world of energy security, affordability and environmental sustainability has long been part of discourses about a better future (Pasqualetti, 2011; Toke, 1998). However, debates concerning renewable energy, and wind energy in particular, are characterised by a 'social gap' between general support and local opposition (Bell, et al., 2013). For advocates of wind energy development, this provokes an unnecessary obstacle course of planning processes that must be negotiated in proposing new windfarms (Hadwin, 2009). For those opposed to such developments, planning is seen at best as an uncomfortable ally in helping them articulate objections (Cowell, 2007), and more commonly as an arena where unfair accusations of NIMBYism proliferate (Devine-Wright, 2009; van der Horst, 2007; Wolsink, 2012).

These conflicts attest to the multidimensional nature of the 'planning problem' concerning wind power (Ellis, et al., 2009), ranging from perceptions of planning as a bureaucratic barrier to the renewables sector, to the inability of planning policy to effectively balance environmental trade-offs, such as promoting renewables that may negatively impact on ecological resources (habitats and wildlife). However, for Ellis et al. (2009) a more important dimension of the 'planning problem' relates to issues surrounding social acceptance and how this is (mis)understood in the policy domain. Among the issues highlighted by the authors included the following key research findings (p. 528):

- Local discontent over wind power deployment may be accentuated by insensitive decision-making processes;
- Issues over perceived or actual ownership of wind power schemes and the distribution of benefits are influential in shaping the level and nature of local opposition or acceptance;
- Objectors have differential resources at different stages of the decision-making process such that they may exert influence unevenly;
- Social acceptability of windfarms is inextricably linked to values, world views and the way localities are related to the wider global environment.

Remedying these problems have often rested on the assumption that 'better information' will generate consensus and thereby resolve dispute (Barry, et al., 2008). Despite criticism of this view (Owens, et al., 2004), the generation of such information in planning practice remains inured to linear-rational models of knowledge production that are assumed to provide the 'facts' of a situation by virtue of their internal merits (Adelle, et al., 2012; Cowell and Lennon, 2014). This disregards the variety of ways in which the world is interpreted and knowledge claims about reality are produced (Rydin, 2007). Consequently, efforts to identify, understand and solve the 'planning problem' of wind power may be handicapped by a blinkered epistemological commitment to an inherited bias in modes of knowledge generation.

This begs the question as to how wind power's planning problem can be better understood. We endeavour to explore one possible response to this by investigating the ways different knowledges and knowledge holders seek to accumulate authority over the 'facts' of a situation, and indeed over 'reality' itself. This is achieved by examining how agents to contentious wind energy debates may strive to mobilise interpretations of reality wherein they are advantageously positioned as credible sources of knowledge. Specifically, we examine how attention to the discursive constitution of reality can provide greater insight into how facts are established, and as a corollary, how agents are authoritatively positioned to legitimately pronounce upon the ways a situation ought to be perceived. We argue below that greater attention to this process facilitates a nuanced reconception of wind power's planning problem.

The next section outlines the theoretical perspective adopted in this paper. It first outlines the benefits and epistemological assumptions of a discourse centred approach. It then describes how situating rhetorical analysis within a broader examination of discourse can be used to expose how 'facts' are constructed simultaneous to the positioning of fact constructors as authoritative knowledge holders. The subsequent section demonstrates the utility of this theoretical perspective through application to contentious debates concerning large scale windfarm proposals in the Irish midlands. In the ensuing section, we identify and discuss the deployment of rhetorical forms, rationalities, issues and scales in the construction of expertise in the foregoing debates. We return to wind power's 'planning

problem' in the final section of the paper. Here, we show how our preceding interpretive analysis indicates that this 'problem' should be reconceived. The paper closes by suggesting ways in which this avenue of research can be extended.

Discursive Positioning and Rhetoric

Discourse analysis refers to the process of studying discourse construction and the influence of discursively mediated interpretations. Although a broad church of many different perspectives (Wetherell, et al., 2001), the spectrum of investigative approaches encompassing discourse analysis are united by a desire to describe, understand and explain particular phenomena in the context of their occurrence (Andersen, 2008). From this investigative standpoint, discourse analysis commences inquiry from the epistemological assumption that it is not reality in an observable or testable sense that shapes social consciousness and action, but rather it is the ideas, beliefs and values that discourses evoke about the causes of satisfactions and discontents that mould comprehension and intent (Fischer, 2003). As an implication of this perspective, knowledge is seen as discursively constructed through shared understandings of context-specific meaning. In this manner, a discourse can be appreciated as a 'shared way of apprehending the world' (Dryzek, 2005, 9). Importantly, those engaged in discourse analysis do not simply contend that there is no world external to discourse, but instead argue that comprehensions of this world are mediated by discourse. It is this mediating process that engenders the perceptions of what constitutes 'reality' (Harré, et al., 1999).

Discourse is thereby conceived to be more than the 'mode of talking' synonymous with common parlance. Rather, it is understood as a specific and cohesive ensemble of ideas, concepts and categorisations that are produced, reproduced and transformed in a particular set of practices and against the background of a specific social, temporal and spatial context (Epstein, 2008; Feindt and Oels, 2005; Hajer, 1995). Accordingly, discourse analysis is concerned with understanding the ways in which discourses function to regularise how a particular issue is perceived both ontologically and epistemologically, and thus how the basic principles of social action are structured in relation to it (Fischer, 2003; Fischer and Forester, 1993). Thus, discourses have formative power in configuring shared understandings and human interactions with both the social and physical worlds. Against

this, discourse theorists assert that questions of truth and falsity should be seen as relative to the standards of authentication established by particular epistemologies. Consequently, discourse analysis shifts the focus from objective truths to a 'will to truth' (Foucault, 1976). This reflects the complex set of relationships between knowledge that is produced and the context in which such new knowledge is generated. In this manner, discourse analysis facilitates an examination of how perceptions concerning the veracity of knowledge claims are context dependent and furnishes a means for understanding how some knowledge claims gain traction among certain cohorts of interpreters while other claims are rejected. Thus, the task of the discourse analysts is not to determine whether statements are true or false in the empirical sense, but rather to study 'how' such 'truths' are mobilised.

Theories of discourse analysis maintain that agents occupied with discursive activity are positioned relative to the subject of that activity. Discourses thereby part-constitute the identities of social agents by creating particular 'subject positions' (Hajer, 1995). Hence, discourses specify the positions from which social actors can communicate and act with influence. However, the authority that comes with such subject positioning may be both constraining and enabling on the agents who seek to promulgate knowledge claims. Foucault (1972) elucidates this idea by arguing that who says what, where, when and how, and with what influence, is shaped through the evolution of expectations on what is considered legitimate knowledge claims in different contexts. Emphasis is thereby placed on the need to investigate the ways in which different agents are bestowed the mandate to speak authoritatively on issues consequent of their subject positions. Such authoritative subject positions may thereby assume epistemologically privileged positions within the discourses deployed by an agent and consequently acquire the ability to define and legitimise the focus of deliberation. In this sense, 'the question of who should have the authority to make definitional decisions amounts literally to who has the power to delineate what counts as Real' (Schiappa, 2003, 178).

Authoritative subject positioning is particularly important in contentious planning debates, such as those frequently characterising wind energy development, where the emphasis given to the consideration of different issues is often contested and the 'facts' regularly disputed (Barry, et al., 2008; Cowell, 2010; Woods, 2003). How agents negotiate the

constraints of contextual expectations in forging these authoritative positions involves convincing others that one's knowledge claims are 'true'. In this sense, establishing an authoritative position within a discourse necessitates acts of persuasion relative to the standards of authentication sanctioned by the cohort of interpreters aligned to the discourse one enters and deploys. Such different standards of authentication constitute different 'rationalities' and differences in the forms of persuasion that operate and gain currency within them are consequent on different forms of rhetoric. Accordingly, scrutinising the deployment of different rhetorical forms sheds light on how agents seek to advantageously position themselves in different discursive contexts. In this way, rhetorical analysis is a type of discourse analysis that can be employed to investigate the creation and consolidation of epistemic privilege in the mobilisation of 'truths' relative to different rationalities (Throgmorton, 1993).

As noted by Barry et al. (2008, 68), 'rhetoric concerns both the practice and study of effective and persuasive communication with a specific purpose or intent on behalf of the speaker or writer.' The deployment of different rhetorical forms has long been recognised as a potent means to persuade others about the veracity of one's knowledge claims. In particular, Aristotle's theories concerning the art of persuasive communication remain prominent in rhetorical analysis consequent on their elucidatory value. According to Aristotle,

> *Of the modes of persuasion furnished by the spoken word there are three*
> *kinds. The first kind depends on the personal character of the speaker; the*
> *second on putting the audience into a certain frame of mind; the third on*
> *the proof, or apparent proof, provided by the words of the speech itself*
> (Aristotle, 2012, 7).

These three forms of persuasion are respectively termed *ethos*, *pathos* and *logos* in rhetorical theory (Gottweis, 2007). Here, '*ethos* (in Greek, character) designates the image of self built by the orator in his speech in order to exert an influence on his audience' (Amossy, 2001, 1). *Pathos* entails an appeal to sentiment. It involves an attempt to elicit an emotional response through empathy with the speaker's state. In contrast, *logos* concerns the impartial demonstration of logical reasoning by inductive or deductive argument grounded in empirical evidence, such as statistics, reports or examples (Martin, 2013, 58).

Of these, Aristotle emphasises the role of *ethos* in noting that, 'Persuasion is achieved by the speaker's personal character when the speech is so spoken as to make us think him credible...his character may almost be called the most effective means of persuasion he possesses' (Aristotle, 2012, 7).

More contemporarily, rhetorical analysis has been developed by those of the 'New Rhetoric' school of literary and political studies who have sought to emphasis the con-substantive nature of a speaker's *ethos* with the discourse in which they are positioned and how they negotiate this con-substantiation in deploying different rhetorical forms (Amossy, 2001; Gross and Dearin, 2003). In this sense, 'the notion of *ethos* must be understood as something discursive and material' (Gottwies, 2012, 217) in which the attributes of a person's character is produced by the speaker as they enter into, extend and/or construct a discourse. Thus, whereas Aristotle identified *ethos* as a separate mode of persuasion in a triad of rhetorical elements, many contemporary analysts conceive *ethos* as moulded through the agile deployment of different rhetorical forms[i]. Consequently, a speaker's *ethos* and their subject position within a discourse will depend on the forms of rhetoric they advance in different contexts. Such rhetorical forms may vary across a spectrum of references from scientific objectivity (*logos*) to subjective emotional appeal (*pathos*). Furthermore, the traction of the knowledge claims made by a speaker within a particular discourse will be relative to the rationalities deemed legitimate by the cohort of interpreters aligned to the discourse into which the speaker enters. In this way, the degree of authority invested in a speaker is related to how they cultivate a 'sense of expertise' relative to the rationality favoured by their audience. However, fashioning perceptions of expertise need not be explicitly undertaken; it can be achieved by allusion in the forms of rhetoric employed. As conjectured by Maingueneau (1999, 194),

> *By 'ethos' Aristotle means the representation of the speaker that the addressee constructs across the production of discourse: therefore it is a representation produced by discourse, it is not what the speaker says explicitly about himself, nor the representation of the speaker that the addressee may have independent of discourse. Using pragmatic terms, it could be said that ethos is 'implied' in discourse.*

Accordingly, through inference rather than assertion, agents may strategically deploy the forms of rhetoric they perceive as most advantageous in seeking to implicitly position themselves as experts within debates over the contested 'facts' about 'reality'. The next section demonstrates the benefit of this approach through application to contentious windfarm proposals in the Irish midlands. This facilitates an interpretive analysis that both traces and discusses the relationships between the deployment of different rhetorical forms in the discursive production of different realities.

Discontent in the Irish Midlands

Overview

The European Union (EU) has been to the fore in seeking to provide leadership on the global environmental agenda. This is exemplified in the EU Renewable Energy Sources Directive 2009/28/EC (RES Directive), which aims to increase the proportion of energy consumption derived from renewables by setting mandatory targets for each member state on the percentage of energy obtained from such sources. One means for member states to meet their targets is to establish arrangements for the transfer of renewable energy from countries with a surplus to member states with a deficit. To date there has been little uptake and minimal analysis of such transfer arrangements. However, in January 2013 the Irish and UK governments signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for renewable energy trading.

Two privately financed companies sought to capitalise on the MoU by exclusively exporting to the UK all the energy generated by a number of sizable windfarms proposed for the Irish midlands[ii]. It was proposed that the energy produced by such windfarms would bypass the national Irish grid and connect directly into the UK grid via a submarine transmission cable. The location of the windfarms was consequent on proximity to the landfall of this electricity transmition infrastructure. Bord na Móna (Irish National Turf Board), also sought to capitalise on the opportunity presented by the MoU through the construction of windfarms on its industrially harvested cutaway bogs. Many such bogs are located in the Irish midlands. Unlike the two privately financed companies, the windfarm proposals by Bord na Móna were not solely focused on energy export to the UK.

These proposals generated considerable discussion in Ireland, including media coverage, parliamentary debate and protests. There was also media coverage and debate on this issue in the UK[iii]. Particular anger was directed by residents of the midlands towards the proposals of the two private companies, namely Element Power and Mainstream Renewable Power. Both companies furtively entered into confidential lease arrangements for the erection of turbines with individual landholders on sites distributed across the Irish midlands prior to any consultation with local communities. The final number of turbines proposed for erection was debatable[iv]. Nonetheless, Element Power indicated its intention to seek planning permission for approximately 750 turbines producing about 3000 megawatts of electricity, while Mainstream Renewable Power signalled an aspiration for the construction of approximately 400 turbines producing about 1200 megawatts of electricity (Shortt, 12 February 2013). The turbines proposed by both companies significantly exceeded the size of those found in existing Irish windfarms. This was resultant from a desire to achieve ambitious energy generation targets in an area where wind speeds are low relative to Ireland's west coast. Specifically, the turbines proposed by Element Power were to be about 180 meters (c.600 feet) high from base to blade tip (BBC, 24 January 2013), while the turbines proposed by Mainstream Renewable Power were to be slightly lower at approximately 156 meters (c. 512 feet) high from base to blade tip (Anon., 2013). In aggregate, these two proposals sought to export over twice the average output of all electricity currently generated in Ireland through renewable sources by almost doubling the number of turbines already installed in the country (Shortt, 17 February 2013).

Local opposition to the proposals became more vociferous according as greater detail emerged about what was planned following the signing of the MoU. To the fore of such opposition were concerns about the diminution of residential property prices and health impacts produced by low frequency sound vibrations (O'Farrell, 14 April 2013). Two live television debates produced and aired in February and September 2013 by the Irish national broadcaster (RTÉ) captured the variety of discourses deployed by those with differing perspectives on these proposals. Importantly, these debates included key representatives from national government, the developers and local community groups, as well as a broad spectrum of stakeholders including, the windfarm industry, the national farmers' representative body, environmental lobbyists and concerned sectors of industry. Such

debates where the only occasion where all these groups and key individuals were assembled together. Thus, these debates present unique opportunities to examine in real time the subject positioning of agents within contending and evolving discourses. Accordingly, the debates facilitate scrutiny of how participants to this contentious dispute employ rhetorical forms to position themselves as voices of authority concerning the 'facts' about wind energy broadly, and these windfarm proposals in particular.

While media discourses have been explored in relation to energy debates (see for example, Sengers et al., 2010), in this paper we focus instead on the media as a key national arena for argumentation and mobilising competing stakeholder discourses. In this approach, we recognise that the media is not a neutral arbitrator, but pursues its own interests and agendas and also has its own 'style' and 'routines' of examining and (de)constructing discourses. For example, Mercille (2014) charts the intertwining of media and development interests in supporting the 'housing bubble' in Ireland through links between the media and the political and corporate establishment with shared similar (generally neoliberal) viewpoints. In this sense, Mercille contends that the media often privilege certain discourses and knowledge, relying heavily on 'experts' from elite institutions and established development actors in reporting events. However, within these limitations, the media, and in particular the national broadcaster RTÉ, provide a key conduit through which the wind energy debate is refracted and framed.

A key rationale for drawing on these two national televised debates is the absence of both local and national democratic arenas that have enabled inclusive dialogue on the deployment of wind energy, indicative of recently introduced 'fast track' planning legislation that has increasingly rescaled decision-making from local government to a national planning body and a redefinition of the 'public interest' in planning towards the 'national interest'. At a national level, Fox-Rodgers et al. (2011) have illustrated the gradual 'entrepreneurial shift' in the legislative framework for Irish planning, leading to an increasingly overt facilitation of development and economic interests within an increasingly centralised decision-making framework. Throughout the last decade, there have been notable examples of policy shifts towards development interests, including fast track planning decision-making and reducing the opportunities for public involvement in the planning

process. Of key relevance to the deployment of wind energy, the Government introduced the *Strategic Infrastructure Act* (Oireachtas, 2006) in an attempt to secure speedier delivery of key infrastructure through providing a one step consent procedure, rather than the conventional development control process, indicative of a rescaling and centralisation of planning decision-making. Specifically, in relation to wind energy, this 2006 Act sets out the provision for windfarms that have a total output greater than 100 megawatts to be categorised as strategic infrastructure in the national interest, enabling planning permission to be sought directly from *An Bord Pleanála*, the independent planning appeals board, by-passing the involvement of local authorities and conventional procedures that facilitate statutory opportunities for public involvement and third party appeals. This legislation and threshold for wind turbine deployment was further amended under subsequent planning legislation in 2010, outlining that windfarms with output greater than 50 megawatts or which contain more than 50 actual turbines are now considered 'national infrastructure' (Oireachtas, 2010). These reduced opportunities for public involvement and local decision-making have resulted in policy actors and stakeholders positioning competing discourses within the media arena in the absence of formal opportunities for engagement within the planning system.

Televised Debate No. 1: 12 February 2013

This twenty seven minute televised debate was modulated into four sections. The first section consisted of a six minute journalistic report which sought to provide a balanced summary of the central issues for viewers. Following this summation, the second section of ten minutes commenced with the introduction of a panel of three guests. This comprised: Pat Rabbitte, the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources who signed the MoU; Yvonne Cronin of the opposition group Communities for Responsible Engagement with Wind Energy; and Kenneth Matthews, Chief Executive of the Irish Wind Energy Association, a windfarm supporting industrial lobby group. Each guest was invited to outline and justify their position with regard to the proposals through a series of introductory questions. After some probing queries that sought elaboration on particular issues, the interviewer then circulated among an invited audience of stakeholders for the third section of the debate. Here, members of the audience from differing sides of the debate were offered an opportunity to contribute to the discussion. This section was

approximately seven minutes long. The debate closed with the interviewer returning to the Minister and inviting him to briefly respond to issues raised by the audience.

The journalistic report identified concern surrounding the adequacy of contemporary planning guidelines on wind energy development. It included an interview with a married couple from the south east of Ireland who live in a house situated 380 meters from a windfarm. This couple outlined how they were suffering from noise disturbance generated by turbines located near their home. In opening the debate, the interviewer referenced this case when proposing to Minister Rabbitte that, 'It's all very well for us living in the urban environment but you wouldn't swap with them would you?' In response, Minister Rabbitte stated,

> *Well I suppose you can find a hard case in any aspect of planning, rural or urban. What I'm concerned about here is that under an EU Directive there is now the capacity to trade energy between two or more countries. In Ireland's case, we have the capacity to generate in excess of our need and the neighbouring island has a need to meet challenging, obligatory targets. So we have the capacity to create a new export sector, create jobs in the process, export that renewable energy to Britain, create jobs here and at the same time meet a deficit on the British side.*

Here, Minister Rabbitte rapidly dismisses the case presented in the preceding report and re-orientates the focus of discussion towards macroeconomic concerns through referencing an EU Directive. Having thus quickly shifted the scalar focus onto the supranational horizon (EU), he then transitions his response through an international plane (UK-Ireland relations) and down to the national scale. In this way, the Minister swiftly alters the direction of the debate by inverting the entry point to the discussion presented to him by the interviewer. This enables him to frame his support for Irish wind energy development within an international rather than local context by employing a deductively reasoned discourse (*logos*) of concern for the national interest, a framing emphasised by repetition of the words 'create jobs'. Set against the backdrop of a struggling Irish economy with high unemployment and significant emigration, such subject positioning allows the Minister to con-substantiate his character (*ethos*) as a rational guardian of the national interest simultaneous to the discourse that gives this *ethos* significance.

At first appearing similar in scalar direction of the Minister's response, Yvonne Cronin's response transitions from the international to a national horizon as she seeks to convey the inadequacy of contemporary planning guidelines for protecting homeowners from the adverse affects of windfarm development. However, following a brief prompt from the interviewer, Ms Cronin relates a narrative of her direct experience with windfarm development,

> *I'm just an ordinary person who lives in a rural area. I started reading, educating myself about what it [windfarm developments] would mean for us. So we thought, 'this is not something we want to stay here for', [we] got our home, our small farm, valued. [When they] came back with the valuation [we] said, 'well actually here are the three windfarm developments that have been granted permission in our area', and she [property auctioneer] said, 'oh, hang-on, I'll have to have a look at that.' And they actually dropped our valuation by eighty per cent!*

In contrast to the *ethos* cultivated by the Minister as the guardian of national interest, Ms Cronin frames herself as 'just an ordinary person'. In this way, she draws on a different rationality to the Minister by seeking to elicit empathy (*pathos*) from a presumed viewership of 'ordinary' citizens. Instead of producing an authoritative voice grounded in attention to abstract macro-scalar economics, as the Minister had done, Ms Cronin's authority is derived from her direct experience with windfarm developments on 'our home, our small farm'. Thus, Ms Cronin's authoritative *ethos* is con-substantiated concurrent with the discourse that gives it force. This discourse is produced by a rhetoric of *pathos* with a micro-scalar focus.

Endeavouring to ensure a balanced debate, the interviewer next turns to Kenneth Matthews. In following from Ms Cronin's comments, the interviewer references a document issued by the Irish Wind Energy Association which disputes the contention that residential property is devalued by windfarms. This provides the platform from which the interviewer seeks a response from Mr Matthews regarding the story just told by Ms Cronin. In his initial response, Mr Matthews states,

> *The current guidelines, which are under discussion here, are very similar to guidelines that we have all over Europe. The reality is that this sector in Ireland can deliver 4.5 billion of investment, just for domestic targets of 40 percent of electricity needs for the next eight years. That's 600 million. That's 11.5 million every year for the next number of years.*

Here, Mr Matthews immediately refocuses the scalar horizon of the discussion to macro level issues through comparison with the planning guidelines of other European countries and national economic development. He also shifts the focus of debate from economic loss on local residential property value to 'the reality' of national economic gain. Aware of this scalar re-orientation, the interviewer follows Mr Matthews's response by noting,

> *That's a macro promise...The micro promise to individual householder though is what? Because if you've got flicker, if you're sensitive to the low resonance noise that comes at you, what then?*

Mr Matthew calmly replies by asserting that,

> *The World Health Organisation in 2004 have stated quite categorically that there is no credible peer review research that shows that there is any relationship between ill health and distance to wind turbines. Along with that, and over the last number of years, Canada, American, the UK have published, and their governments have published, research which shows that there is no linkage between ill health and proximity.*

Thus, Mr Matthews's response to a direct question regarding the micro level of human experience is to shift the focus of debate to an international plane by reference to a United Nations institution. This focus is subsequently extended through reference to various international reports. Such rescaling enables him to frame support for Irish wind energy development within an inductively reasoned discourse (*logos*) legitimised by citation of independently produced 'evidence'. In this way, Mr Matthews is able forge an authoritative *ethos* within a discourse of scientific objectivity. Accordingly, Mr Matthews's *ethos* is constituted and given authority within a technical discourse instantaneous with the constitution of that discourse. Thus, as with Minister Rabbitte and Ms Cronin before him, Mr Matthews's authoritative *ethos* is con-substantiated with, and relevant to the discourse employed. As each *ethos* is given authoritative voice by the discourse in which it is embedded, so each discourse is given weight by the *ethos* that deploys it.

What the examination of these three responses suggests is an association between *ethos*, discourse, rhetorical forms, rationalities and scale. Specifically, how one's *ethos* is constituted and confers influence appears related to the correct alignment of varying discursive attributes, namely: the scalar focus of the discourse; the implicit rationality which underpins it; the rhetorical forms deployed; and the issues addressed. The relative configuration of these attributes was reflected in the short audience discussion that followed the panellist debate. Here, supporters of the proposed windfarms, including Eddie O'Connor, the CEO of Mainstream Renewable Power and Tim Cowhig, the CEO of Element Power Ireland, deployed discourses stressing national and regional economic benefit. Illustrative of this is how Mr O'Connor responds to a direct question regarding the adverse impact of shadow flicker[v]:

> *[Factual tone and rapidly delivered] Shadow flicker happens at a certain time during the day when the sun is very low, and there's a certain guideline per year. And it may happen like was shown in the video there. [Altering to an enthusiastic tone and slowing pace] But in overall terms, look at the wealth that we can create in this country from stuff that has no value at the moment. Look at that wealth coming to the midlands...and what's going to happen to Bord na Móna after all the power stations shut down? Where are all the people going to work? That wind above our heads can actually supply jobs for a huge number of people in the midlands.*

Observable in this response is an inversion of issue and scale similar to that employed by the Minister during the preceding panel debate. In this instance, Mr O'Connor swiftly transits his response from a locally experienced impact issue to a focus on economic benefit at the national scale. Having thus rapidly reversed the scalar direction and issue under discussion, he then slows pace to elliptically construct a storyline of future regional economic decline before implicitly presenting his proposed windfarm development as rescuing the midlands from the expectation of decay his elliptical narrative has just insinuated. In this way, Mr O'Connor fashions an *ethos* of concern similar to that forged by the Minister where he is framed as using logical reasoning (*logos*) to offer a solution to a predicted problem.

In contrast, opponents of the proposed windfarms focus on detrimental impacts to residential property prices and health using reference to the local scale and deploying narratives of personal experience. Thus, rather than seeking authority by employing macro level abstractions rooted in deductive or inductive reasoning (*logos*), these opponents ground the authority of their *ethos* in experience as ordinary citizens, and thereby seek to elicit empathy (*pathos*). This is illustrated by Mike de Jong of the Sliabh Bán Community Group, who when introduced by the interviewer as someone with a windfarm proposed near his house states,

> *Our main concern is the human story...four days ago I was rung by a couple*
> *who told me that they actually had to put padding on their bedroom walls*
> *to try and block out the sound of wind turbines.*

This alternation between scale and issue focus is again echoed in the closing section of the debate as the interviewer transfers attention from the audience back to the Minister. Immediately following a personal narrative of negative experience with the perceived inappropriate application of the Wind Energy Development Guidelines, the Minister is asked how he will ensure consistency in the application of these guidelines. In response, the Minister outlines the need for flexibility in application of the guidelines before once more con-substantiating a 'guardian' *ethos* in accordance with the deployment of a rational discourse that transits down through scales as he again mentions the opportunity offered by wind energy development to 'create jobs' at the national level.

Televised Debate No. 2: 23 September 2013

Dispute concerning the windfarm proposals intensified over the ensuing months. As noted in the national press, 'The proposals to build 2,300 wind turbines in the midlands to serve the UK market is already proving to be contentious even before a single one is erected' (McGreevy, 9 April 2013). Opposition had gained significant momentum by mid-summer with approximately one thousand protesters reported to have gathered on 21st June outside Dublin Castle where an EU inter-parliamentary meeting on renewable energy and energy efficiency was occurring (Crawly, 27 June 2013). Larger, more locally focused protests followed in August. On one such occasion, several local politicians rendered politically impotent in the decision-making process by the provisions of recent 'fast track' planning

legislation (2006; Oireachtas, 2010), asserted their opposition to the windfarms in consecutive speeches to a crowd reported to number almost two thousand people (Anon., 3 August 2013).

It is against this backdrop that the second televised debate occurred. This was organised and aired seven months after the debate examined above and reveals the extent to which the issue had become polarised in the intervening period. The debate was thirty five minutes long, and was modulated into three sections. As previously, the first section consisted of a six and a half minute journalistic report which sought to provide a balanced summary of the central issues for viewers. The second section of ten minutes commenced with the introduction of a panel of four guests. This comprised: Eamonn Ryan, leader of the Green Party, who as Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources in the preceding government had established the policy framework supporting wind energy development; Eddie O'Connor, the CEO of Mainstream Renewable Power which is one of the companies seeking to develop the midlands windfarms; Henry Fingelton, chairperson of People Over Wind, which is an opposition group endorsed by several community groups opposing the proposed midlands windfarms; and David Horgan, managing director of Petrel Resources, a fossils fuel exploration company that opposes the midlands windfarm proposals. Each guest was invited to outline and justify their position with regard to the proposals through a series of introductory questions. Unlike the previous debate, discord was more pronounced during this section of the debate with some jeering from the audience audible. In the remaining section, the interviewer identified and requested particular individuals among an invited audience of stakeholders to voice their contribution. Debate during this section became especially animated with heckling and impromptu applause as the discussion alternated between the panel and audience. The debate closed with heated discussion as the interviewer abruptly and apologetically ended proceedings due to a scheduling overrun consequent on spontaneous quarrelling among the panellists and between the panellists and the audience.

The journalistic report outlined the increasing divergence of positions since the previous televised debate and how those opposite to the proposals had grown both in number and willingness to voice disapproval. Whereas the previous report had focused on differing

opinions regarding the appropriateness of the Wind Energy Development Guidelines, this report centred on fundamental disputes between health and economic arguments for and against the proposed windfarms. It included an emotional interview with Mike and Dorothy Keane who related a personal narrative of how the operation of a windfarm in proximity to their house had adversely affected their health to the point where they felt they had to move elsewhere. This narrative exemplified the rhetorical form of *pathos* as the Keanes emotionally expressed their sense of loss at having to leave their home. Opposing this, the report also included an interview with Kenneth Matthews, Chief Executive of the Irish Wind Energy Association. As with his appearance on the first televised debate, Mr Matthews deployed a technical discourse (*logos*) focused on the potential national economic benefit from wind energy development and challenged assertions regarding adverse health impacts by reference to international scientific studies. Thus, as was the case in the first televised debate, this report illustrated the role of scalar horizon, implicit rationality, rhetorical form and issues addressed in the con-substantiation of an authoritative *ethos* within a particular discourse.

Following the journalistic report, the interviewer first addressed Mr O'Connor of Mainstream Renewable Power and asked if he would like to have a turbine beside his home. Mr O'Connor responded by declaring,

> *I would if I could afford to have one in Dublin, but you can't have one in Dublin just because of the density of population. Oh ya [emphatically], I'd love to have a wind turbine. I'd like to be doing my bit for the environment. I'd love to be creating wealth in this country, genuine wealth, which is employment, profits, a chance for people to invest, a chance for people to stay in Ireland.*

Here, Mr O'Connor briskly justifies why he doesn't have a turbine beside his home, and then relates this to a personal commitment towards the environment before up-scaling his discourse to a national horizon and refocusing the discussion towards economic issues that resonate with popular anxiety regarding high unemployment, economic development and youth emigration. Thus, through linking scale and issue in a discourse of concern, Mr O'Connor cultivates an *ethos* as the conscientious citizen attentive to the environment and national interest. Following this response the interviewer then asks Mr O'Connor, 'What if

you had a turbine beside your home in the countryside in Ireland and you wanted to sell it and you couldn't sell it?' Mr O'Connor's replies,

> *Well I'd have to wonder where you got that notion from; that you can't sell your house. Like I mean there has been a definitive study done recently by the Lawrence Berkeley Library in the United States which showed that there was no correlation between the value of your house [and proximity to turbines].*

In this instance, Mr O'Connor immediately deploys a *logos* imbued rhetoric by citing an international 'definitive study' to justify his opinion as rationally informed by scientific analysis. Probing this response, the interviewer then references the journalistic report preceding the panel debate, noting that several of those interviewed stated that they could not sell their houses due to the proximity of turbines. Mr O'Connor counters,

> *Well if you don't believe you can sell your house, you probably can't. And if your auctioneer is telling you that you can't sell your house, you probably can't, or you don't want to because you're afraid of it. But the facts do not bear out. I mean Schleswig-Holstein in Germany has got a vast array of turbines. I think it's got seven or eight thousand turbines in a place not even as big as Munster[vi] and yet the value of property there is at its peak.*

Mr O'Connor's rejoin implicitly frames as irrational those who claim they cannot sell their property due to windfarm proximity. He does this by deploying a *logos*-centred rhetorical form focused on an international reference. These 'facts' are contrasted with the sentiment-centred (*pathos*) of those who claim they cannot sell their house. In this way, he constitutes an *ethos* of reason within a discourse of detached objectivity simultaneous with the implication that those who may challenge him hold illogical perspectives informed by confused subjectivity.

Following some contestation over the accuracy of the statistics presented by opposing sides to the debate, the interviewer addresses Eamonn Ryan, leader of the Green Party, and requests his contribution. Mr Ryan refocuses the debate away from the specifics of statistical dispute and onto macro-scalar issues when declaring,

> *[With enthusiasm] We have a huge opportunity in this country. There is a clean energy revolution happening across the world. People are moving towards renewables; wind power, solar power. And we have the benefit of having some of the best resources. And if we can turn them on, it gives us clean, competitive, secure power forever.*

Here, Mr Ryan further up-scales the focus of the debate in seeking to position Irish wind energy debates within a global 'clean energy revolution'. This up-scaling is then used as a platform from which to deploy a *logos*-centred rhetoric that reasons Ireland's comparative advantage for wind energy development. In this way, Mr Ryan con-substantiates an *ethos* as a reasonable voice within an internationally informed assessment of Ireland's 'huge opportunity'.

Already struggling to control an increasingly animated debate, the interviewer strives to ensure balanced representation by inviting Mr Fingelton of People Over Wind to make a contribution. Seeking to counter the *logos*-centred economic arguments of Mr Ryan and Mr O'Connor, he deploys a discourse with challenging international references. In doing this, Mr Fingelton asserts,

> *The reality on the ground is that the Danish with one of the highest wind energy penetrations in Europe pay thirty cent per unit of electricity. We pay twenty. So they pay half again...[Mr O'Connor vociferously interrupts pointing and saying 'No, that's all wrong', but Mr Fingelton continues]...Last week in Germany, the BDI, which is an organisation that represents a hundred thousand businesses in Germany...said to Angela Merkel 'in your first one hundred days in office you need to stop subsidising wind because it is making us uncompetitive. We are losing industry.' Wind energy makes electricity expensive and that is unfortunately the way it is.*

In citing examples from both Denmark and Germany, Mr Fingelton strategically deploys a *logos*-centred rhetoric that undermines the monopolisation of technical legitimacy by those discourses drawn on by supporters of the midland's windfarm proposals. Mr Fingelton thereby con-substantiates a countervailing authoritative *ethos* within a discourse of seemingly commensurate impartiality. This is achieved by up-scaling opposition from local references rooted in personal narratives of discontent (*pathos*) to an international plane

that references 'the reality' of electricity costs in jurisdictions where wind energy development is more advanced.

In the third section of this televised debate, the interviewer identifies a number of pre-selected individuals in the audience to make a contribution to the discussion. Following some questions concerning the economic viability of wind energy, the interviewer locates Avril Twiss and asks that she convey her 'personal story' on windfarm development. Ms Twiss then relates the following narrative,

> *My family and I live in the middle of [County] Laois. We spent more than ten years looking for the home where we now live. We sit on the side of a hill looking out over an absolute spectacular view of seven counties, uninterrupted. And on the first of August planning permission went in for eight wind turbines...So I'm going to be looking into 103 metres, tip-to-tip turbines going round, and that covers approximately four and a quarter acres. [Increasingly ardent] And that's not going to devalue my home. That's not going to endanger my family's health, their future and their inheritance. The ordinary person in Ireland is struggling to pay their bills, to pay their mortgages and everything else. And I agree, windfarm is great, it's a free energy, fantastic [now vehement], but don't do it at the detriment of the ordinary person. The ordinary person is the person that's keeping this country going.*

Here, Ms Twiss inverts the scalar direction of the debate as she refocuses the discussion from economic abstractions back to a personal narrative of home and family. Rather than the *logos*-centred rhetoric implicit in the emotionally dethatched technical discussion that preceded her story, Ms Twiss deploys an explicitly emotive rhetoric (*pathos*) that authoritatively positions her both epistemologically and morally as the injured party within a discourse of victimisation. Moreover, through constituting an *ethos* as the 'ordinary person' whose 'home' and family's 'health', 'future' and 'inheritance' are imperilled by business interests, she seeks to elicit empathy from a presumed viewership of 'ordinary' citizens. This use of *pathos* to fashion an *ethos* representative of the 'ordinary person' then allows her to up-scale her narrative in a reconfiguration from the personal to the national. This is achieved by emotionally verbalising an implicitly moralising scene where the 'ordinary person' (her) who is 'keeping this country going' has their family and home threatened by wind energy development.

The interviewer subsequently invites Mr O'Connor (CEO of Mainstream Renewable Power) to respond to Ms Twiss. As before, Mr O'Connor defends his position by moving scales to an international horizon and shifting the discussion to a *logos*-centred rhetoric resonant with the epistemic register he sees as more advantageous. He replies,

> *There is no evidence at all that health is damaged by wind turbines. This is one of the biggest studied topics around the world right now...so what you're looking at here is a global phenomenon of intense study. [Forcefully and slowing pace] Nobody gets sick from wind, except that you tell people they're going to get sick and then they get sick.*

As previously with his counter against claims that windfarms adversely affect property prices, Mr O'Connor swiftly and categorically dismisses the assertion that wind turbines pose a health risk. He does this by deploying a discourse in which he seeks to con-substantiate an *ethos* as the mouthpiece of global expertise simultaneous to portraying that international scientific accord exists on the matter. He then immediately contrasts this with the implied irrationality of a subjective psychosomatic condition where people feel sick simply because they think they should feel sick.

The discussion became increasingly heated in the remaining minutes of the debate. Here, a host of diverging opinions were expressed, including those concerning the potential for employment generation, the degree of landscape impact, effects on local tourism and the consequences for the locally significant thoroughbred horse industry. In general, those opposing the windfarm proposals deployed discourses referencing a local scale, identified a broad range of objectionable issues, and more frequently employed a *pathos*-centred rhetoric. In contrast, those supporting the proposals deployed arguments with a macro-scalar horizon, focused on a narrower suite of abstract economic issues, and employed a *logos*-centred rhetoric that sought to present impartially reasoned justifications for the opinions advanced.

The Discursive Construction of Expertise

As demonstrated in both televised debates, participants to wind energy disputes may draw on different discourses in seeking to position themselves as an authoritative *ethos*. The effort expended on this is founded on the basic assumption that 'an expert in a particular

domain of knowledge is in a special position to know about propositions in that domain, and therefore the expert's opinion...has a weight of presumption in its favor' (Walton, 1995, 64). However, the televised debates discussed above suggest that expertise is a contended and emergent construct rather than an undisputed state of being. In this sense, Hartelius (2010, 2) proposes that 'Expertise is not simply about one person's skill being different from another's. It is also grounded in a fierce struggle over ownership and legitimacy...To be an expert...is to rhetorically gain sanctioned rights to a specific area of knowledge or expertise.' Thus, a contextually sensitive interpretation of the discursive production of expertise begs the question as to 'Whose knowledge and expertise...is worth the most? Whose is credible?' (Hartelius, 2010, 2). The above analysis helps answer these questions by showing how the attribution of expertise to an *ethos* is relative to the discourse in which it is positioned. This in turn is consequent on the ways in which different speakers construct discourses that lay claim to 'reality' by seeking to resonate with different standards of authentication.

Drawing on the work of Plough and Krimsky (1987), Barry et al. (2008) elucidate this issue by demonstrating how in windfarm debates, such standards of authentication may be relative to differing technical and cultural rationalities. Here, 'technical rationality' credits verisimilitude to knowledge produced in accordance with what are perceived as objective scientific methods (Lennon, *In-press*). A *logos*-centred rhetoric focused on inductive and deductive reasoning that stresses the centrality of empirical evidence is therefore resonant with this rationality. Hence, constituting a knowledgeable *ethos* is best achieved through constructing an empiricist discourse that externalises the facts under dispute. This phenomenon was evident in both televised debates as agents seeking to present a 'rational' well-informed *ethos* referenced a variety of independently produced international scientific reports to substantiate their views on property price and health impacts. In contrast, 'cultural rationality' centres on subjective and inter-subjective experience, belief and emotional response. Consequently, cultural rationality may be conceived as, 'a form of rationality inherent to the social-life world. It is concerned with the impacts, instruments, or implications of a particular event or phenomenon on the social relations that constitute that world' (Fischer, 2000, 133). As an epistemic register allocating weight to personal and shared experiences of the social world, a *pathos*-centred rhetoric focused on emotional

expression is thereby resonant with this form of rationality. Accordingly, constituting an authoritative *ethos* relative to a cultural rationality may be achieved through personal narratives that convey direct experience of the matter under discussion. This was observable in both televised debates when several opponents of the windfarm proposals related narratives of victimisation wherein the value of their home was reduced and/or where their health was threatened by the installation of turbines. Also evident in both televised debates was the use of macro-scalar horizons (international, supranational, national) to advance abstract *logos*-centred arguments resonant with a technical rationality and the use of micro-scalar horizons (home, family, farm) to advance *pathos*-centred arguments resonant with a cultural rationality. This relationship between rhetorical forms, rationalities and scales is represented in Figure 1.
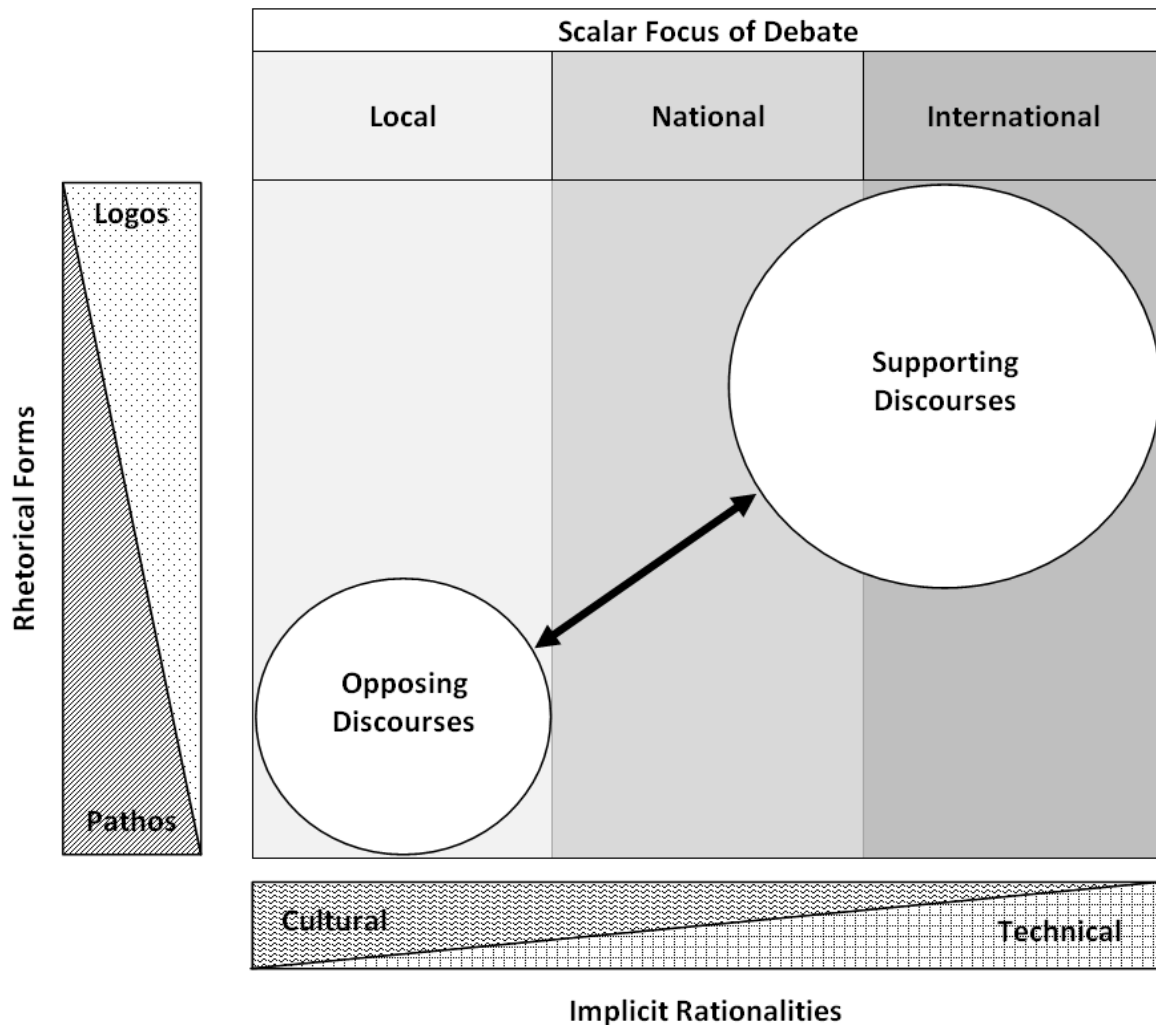

Figure 1
Trend in the relationship between rhetorical forms, rationalities and scales

Therefore, a broad trend can be observed between the deployment of specific discursive attributes and the con-substantiation of an authoritative *ethos* within a discourse. Through such discursive positioning, agents sought to accumulate authority and influence the delineation of those issues subject to legitimate consideration. Of particular note is how agents used scale to highlight and ignore different issues of potential concern. Accordingly, those advancing macro-scalar, *logos*-centred discourses resonant with technical rationalities most regularly sought to contain discussion to a generalised consideration of economic gain (export potential, jobs, energy security), while those advancing micro-scalar, *pathos*-centred discourses resonant with cultural rationalities sought to expand the array of issues emphasised, including health and local property price impacts, as well as local landscape destruction and threats to local 'rural' industries, such as thoroughbred horse breeding and tourism. This phenomenon is illustrated in Figure 2.
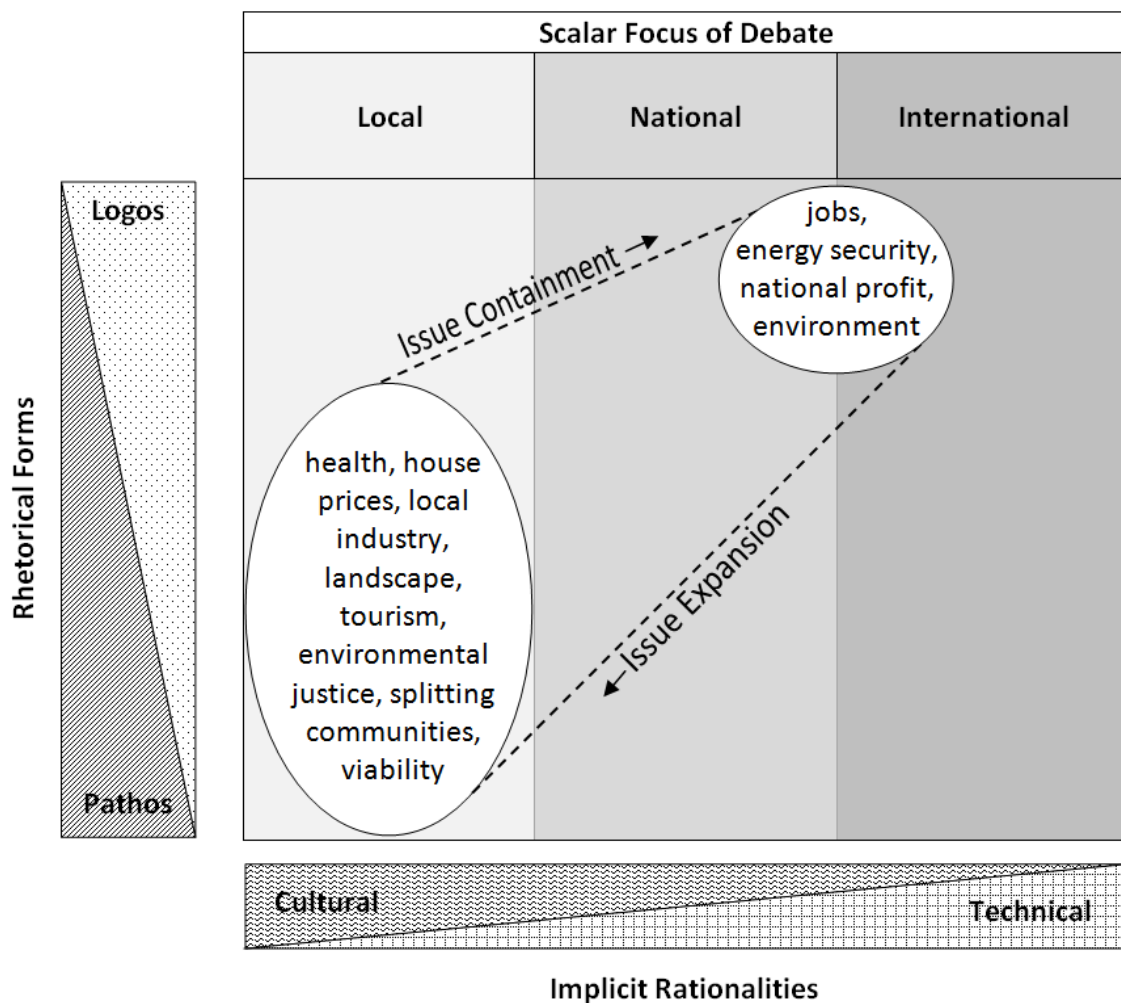

Figure 2
Trend in the relationship between issues, rhetorical forms, rationalities and scales

These competing efforts to define the relevant issues of discussion are endeavours to 'ontologically gerrymander' (Potter, 1996, 184) the reality under debate. Here, issues of pertinence to a speaker are delineated (gerrymandered) as the 'facts' and then used to produce a reality (ontology) concordant with both the objectives of the speaker and the rationality of the discourse in which they are conveyed. In the case of those seeking to con-substantiate an authoritative *ethos* within a technical rational discourse, the issues used to produce a picture of reality are thereby identified and conveyed using a *logos*-centred rhetoric that operates by 'divesting agency from the fact constructors and investing it in the facts' (Potter, 1996, 158). In contrast, those seeking to con-substantiate an authoritative *ethos* within a cultural rational discourse identify issues and construct a picture of reality using a *pathos*-centred rhetoric that 'personalizes the statements so that the audience hears a "voice" and not just a series of disembodied claims' (Tindale, 2011, 344). In this way, the authoritative *ethos* of an agent is reinforced by the discourse they deploy. Figure 3 illustrates the relationship between this con-substantiation of a discursive reality simultaneously to the *ethos* that both defines it and is credited authority by it.
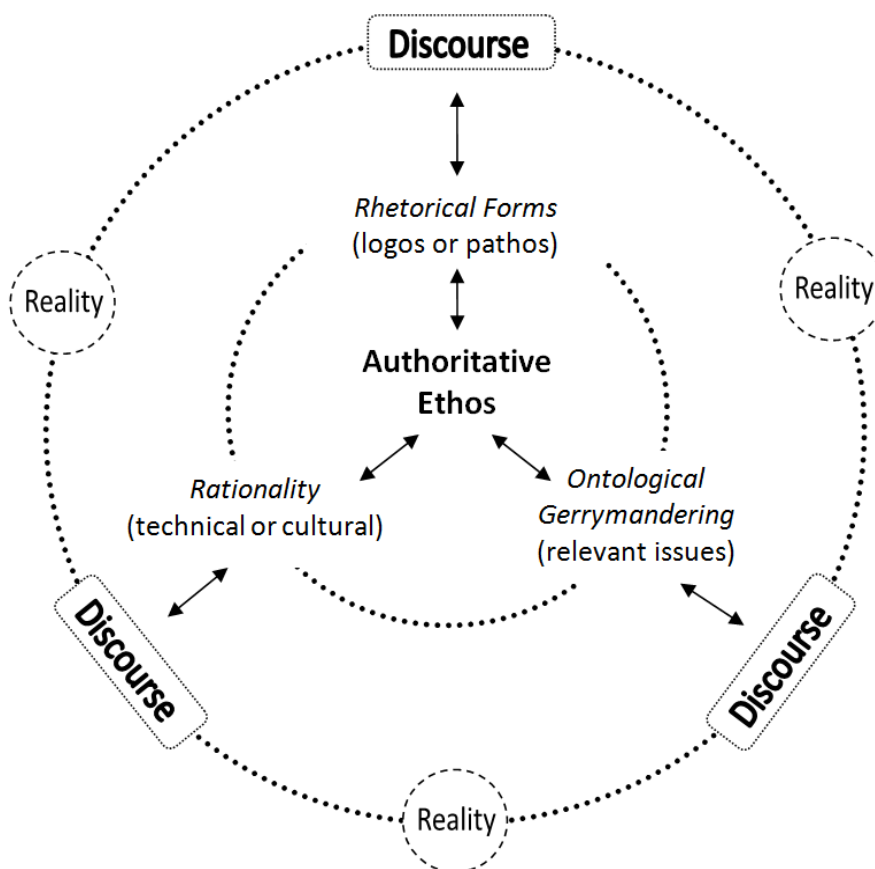

Figure 3
Con-substantiation of a Discursive Reality and authoritative Ethos

The 'Planning Problem' of Contending Realities

This analysis of reality construction and mobilisation within an Irish wind energy dispute holds relevance for broader debates regarding environmental policy and planning. In particular, it speaks to concerns about the tensions that may arise in seeking to balance democratic legitimacy, social acceptability and environmental justice with calls for the planned transition to a post-carbon economy. In this sense, it touches on thorny questions fundamental to the justification of planning as an activity; namely how is the 'public interest' indentified and given representation.

In modern western democracies, the concept of planning in the public interest is set against the backdrop of an historical legacy wherein justifiable action is seen to follow sequentially from knowledge acquisition (Fry and Raadschelders, 2008). Thus, the possession of 'valid' knowledge is a key determinant in the ability to authoritatively pronounce on an issue of governance. This 'knowledge dependence' (Gottweis, 2003, 256) of governing activity is therefore reliant on discerning the 'facts' about 'reality'. In complex planning cases, such as renewable energy development, where there are a multiplicity of issues ranging from landscape impact to the engineering details of grid connection, such facts are supplied by those deemed to posses legitimate expertise. However, what the above analysis demonstrates is that such instances may raise fundamental questions on how 'expertise' is constituted, who is an 'expert', and consequently whose opinion counts in defining the 'public interest'.

As noted by Caas and Walker (2009), planning has struggled to accommodate the intangibility of issues elevated by cultural rationalities, such as affective concern and opinions derived from qualitatively communicated subjective belief. This is largely attributable to the continued reliance on consequentialist principles to justify action in the public interest and protect planning activity from accusations of unjust partiality (Campbell and Marshall, 2002). Such consequentialist principles intrinsically favour utilitarian weighting mechanisms that seek to resolve complex problems by reduction to a comparable metric, as is evidenced by such environmental planning tools as ecological footprinting, ecosystems services assessment and cost-benefit analysis (Cowell and Lennon, 2014). This perspective privileges quantifiably measurable criteria as 'valid' forms of knowledge in

impact assessment while concurrently negating alternate forms of knowing not easily cross-comparable, such as the subjective interpretation of experience (Aitken, 2009). As a consequence, much planning activity promotes a 'general state of reason' (Foucault, 1972) set in the ability to underpin governance in an appeal to 'facts' conceived in accordance with the methods advanced by technical rationality (Owens, et al., 2004)[vii]. This commitment to seemingly post-political 'objective' modes of knowing erases the fundamental paradox that 'there is no way to fix neutrality neutrally' (Margolis, 1998, 59), and thereby conceals the bias inherent to favouring one mode of knowledge production over another when it persistently fails to resolve the 'planning problem' it seeks to address.

Such epistemological partiality is given force in Ireland through the institutionalisation of technical-rational modes of assessment in recently introduced 'fast track' planning legislation (Oireachtas, 2006; 2010). This legislation has rescaled decision-making from local government to the national level where forms of technical rationality dominate and freedom from political interference is defended as paramount to 'proper planning and sustainable development'. However, the legislative up-scaling of decisions concerning 'strategic infrastructure' has also involved a reconceptualisation of the 'public interest' so that it is equated with a vaguely defined 'national interest'. As demonstrated in the foregoing analysis, this 'national interest' is commonly framed through political discourses referencing abstract macro-scalar issues such as 'energy security', unspecified 'job creation' and the dividend from realising electricity 'export potential'. As a consequence, this 'entrepreneurial shift' (Fox-Rogers, et al., 2011) in Irish planning has enabled a more explicit facilitation of economic interests within an increasingly centralised decision-making framework. This has effectively extirpated local democratic representation in planning concerning projects of 'national interest' by extinguishing debating fora that have traditionally channelled input to local level assessment on the development of large scale renewable energy projects - representation that has frequently proved problematic for windfarm developers.

As shown in the above analysis, supporters of wind energy development seek epistemic privilege in defining the 'public ('national') interest' through resonance with these institutionalised forms of technical rationality by confining their arguments to abstract

issues (energy security, national and regional economic benefit) justified through reference to 'independent', 'objective' and 'scientific' assessments. This allows them to implicitly frame as unfounded those beliefs formulated in a cultural rationality and conveyed in *pathos*-centred rhetorical forms. As was illustrated in both televised debates, agents seeking favourable subject positioning within a *logos*-centred 'rational' discourse thereby feel justified in casually dismissing as untrue the subjective and inter-subjective assertions of their opponents. Indeed, it was only when Mr Fingelton deployed a countering *logos*-centred discourse set in an equally technical rational logic that Mr O'Connor and Mr Ryan became vociferous in their opposition to the argument being advanced. Such an otherwise incongruously explosive response from both participants suggests a sense that their arguments where threatened and the authority of their *ethos* undermined by 'facts' produced with the very methods they employed to privilege their knowledge claims.

What we have here then is an epistemological and ontological standoff. In this sense, wind power's 'planning problem' can be reconceived as the fitness for purpose of a governance system justified on principles that corral the legitimate interpretation of reality in a world of diverging logics that produce alternative facts. Consequently, it seems that current means for reasoning and representing the 'public interest' in planning are inadequate to accommodate cultural rationality where, for example, a strong emotional response is deemed a logical reaction when one infers that one's health, home and livelihood are threatened. In such instances, appeals to 'more information' and/or 'better information' will unlikely resolve an issue should such information be produced in accordance with technical rational modes of data generation that seek to place issues of contention beyond debate. To some extent, this may help explain why opponents to the midlands windfarms have sought to voice their objections through informal channels such as protest marches, posters and social media, and politicise their concerns through radio interviews and by lobbying politicians. In essence, such activity seeks to highlight, challenge and circumvent what is perceived as the unrepresentative technocratic calculation of the 'public interest' in planning and environmental governance.

There is now a growing body of high-quality research identifying the key issues facing renewable energy development as not so much 'objective' policy blockages but rather

'clashes of values' (Ellis et al, 2007, 521). Such work reminds us that 'planning never has been and never could be neutral...it is implicitly grounded in certain conceptions of the good' (Owens and Cowell, 2011, 168). However, knowledge gaps remain as to 'if', 'why' and 'how' different arenas of planning governance privilege different values through favouring only certain versions of how 'reality' should be conceived. There are also associated knowledge deficits as to the ways participants to renewable energy debates may seek to negotiate the comparative benefits and constraints engendered by such arena related rationalities. This paper goes some why to addressing these issues by showing how participants to a debate may use discourse to mobilise a reality that justifies their views instantaneous to framing themselves as an authority regarding the 'facts' of a situation. However, further research is required on how the discursive constitution of 'facts' and 'fact makers' may produce different realities at different scales of governance and how this in turn influences the transition to a post-carbon world. Finding ways to sensitively resolve the 'planning problem' presented by such contending realities is the 'true' (!) challenge posed by wind power for environmental governance.

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[i] It is important to note here that pre-existing perceptions of somebody's character by an audience, and indeed the person themselves is not precluded. Rather, such pre-existing perceptions must be negotiated (consolidated or dissipated) through rhetoric. Thus, attention to rhetoric provides an additional dimension to an understanding of how perceptions of character may be cultivated in the audience.

[ii] The midland counties are: Kildare, Kilkenny, Laois, Meath, Offaly, Tipperary and Westmeath

[iii] For example, audio visual coverage such as a BBC 5 Live debate on 24.01.13 and coverage in the print press such as in The Telegraph on 06.09.13.

[iv] For example: the Irish Examiner newspaper reported 'more than 2,000 turbines' on 25 March 2013; the Irish Mail On Sunday newspaper reported between 1,700 and 2,400 turbines on 14 April 2013; The Telegraph newspaper (UK) reported on 06 September 2013 that the number of turbines would be 1,100; while the Irish Times newspaper quoting a senior executive from Bord na Móna reported on 19 February 2014 that the number of turbines would be 'about 1,000'.

[v] The 'Targeted Review' of the Irish Wind Energy Development Guidelines by the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, outlines 'shadow flicker' as follows:

Wind turbines, like other tall structures, can cast long shadows when the sun is low in the sky. The effect known as "shadow flicker" occurs where the rotating blades of a wind turbine cast a moving shadow which, if it passes over a window in a nearby house or other property results in a rapid change or flicker in the incoming sunlight. The effect will occur only for a short period during a given day and only under specific concurrent circumstances, namely when:

- *The sun is shining and is at a low angle (after dawn and before sunset), and*

- *There is sufficient direct sunlight to cause shadows (cloud, mist, fog or air pollution could limit solar energy levels), and*
- *A turbine is directly between the sun and the affected property, and within a distance that the shadow has not diminished below perceptible levels, and*
- *There is enough wind energy to ensure that the turbine blades are moving*

Extracted from page 18 of DoECLG, 2013 *'Targeted Review' of the Irish Wind Energy Development Guidelines* (Department of Environment, Community and Local Government [DoEHLG], Dublin, Ireland)

vi Ireland's southern province of approximately 24,680 km^2, with a population recorded as 1,246,088 persons in the 2011 Irish National Census produced by the Irish Statistics Office.

vii Flyvbjerg extends this idea by showing that it is the 'appearance' of such rationality rather than a genuine concern with its deployment that is important in governing activity - Flyvbjerg, B., 1998 *Rationality and power: democracy in practice* (The University of Chicago Press Ltd., London, UK.)