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A mise-en-sens process

- Sensegiving and wind power development

Hervé Corvellec
Annette Risberg

Managing Big Cities

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School of Business, Economics and Law
GÖTEBORG UNIVERSITY

Gothenburg Research Institute
School of Business, Economics and Law
at Göteborg University
P.O. Box 600
SE-405 30 Göteborg
Tel: +46 (0)31 - 773 54 13
Fax: +46 (0)31 - 773 56 19
E-post: gri@gri.gu.se

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Abstract

This article intends to contribute to the conceptualising of organisational sensegiving. Based upon a qualitative analysis of how Swedish wind farm developers manage the permit application process for their projects, we describe in a first order analysis how they contextualise and ontologise their projects and defend them against criticisms. To emphasise the precarious conditions of agency that govern the activity of sensegivers, we introduce in a second order analysis the notion of *mise-en-sens*, a neologism that borrows both from the performing art notion of mise-en-scene and the fact that 'sens' can in French mean both meaning and direction. Mise-en-sens underscores that stage-setting and direction providing are key activities of wind farm developers. In our concluding remarks we even suggest that mise-en-sens could serve to describe the activity of others involved in sensegiving, for example project managers or entrepreneurs.

Keywords:
Mise-en-sens, sensegiving, wind power, infrastructure development

Authors

Hervé Corvellec, Gothenburg Research Institute, Handelshögskolan vid Göteborgs Universitet & Institutionen för Service Management, Campus Helsingborg, Lund Universitet.
Adress: Department for Service Management, Campus Helsingborg, Box 882, SE-251 08 Helsingborg, Sweden.

Annette Risberg, Department of Intercultural Communication and Management, Copenhagen Business School, Denmark.

Introduction

The piecemeal demise of objectivist epistemological assumptions within management studies has gone along with a rising interest in the production, diffusion and negotiation of meaning in organisational contexts. In this paper we focus on the specific process of organisational sensegiving and feature the notion of mise-en-sens to explicate the activity of the sense-giver. Mise-en-sens is a neologism that both reminds of the performing art term of mise-en-scène or putting on stage and plays on the fact that *sens* in French means meaning as well as direction, a linguistic feature singled out by argumentation theory.

The notion of sensegiving originates in the notion of sensemaking that Karl Weick (e.g. 1969/1979, et al. 1985, 2005) instituted as critical to the study of organizational activity. In the wake of his pioneering work, a steady flow of contributions have approached management and organizational behavior in terms of sensemaking, e.g. organizational change (Bean & Hamilton 2006), restructuring (Balogun & Johnson 2004), strategic learning (Thomas, Sussman & Henderson, 2001), the gendering of professions (Helms Mills 2002) and the exercise of knowledge-based power in organizations (Marshall & Rollinson 2004).

Sally Maitlis (2005: 22) distinguishes two main approaches to sensemaking in this literature. The first approach investigates "how certain groups influence others' understanding of issues", with a particular focus on when and how leaders at all levels influence the sensemaking of others toward some preferred definition of organizational reality. The second examines "the social process associated with sensemaking", particularly in situations of crisis or extreme circumstances, and puts a focus on how sensemaking depends on both organizational structure and individual patterns of interactions. Exemplary of the latter is Weick's (1993) analysis of the Mann Gulch disaster and exemplary of the former is Gioia and Chittipeddi's (1991) study of strategic change where they introduced the notion of sensegiving.

The latter authors have singled out the process of sensegiving as mirroring sensemaking. Sensemaking has to do with "meaning construction and reconstruction" by the involved parties as they attempt to develop a meaningful framework for understanding the nature of – in their case – an intended strategic change. Correspondingly, sensegiving is concerned with "the process of attempting to influence the sensemaking and meaning construction of others toward a preferred definition of organizational reality". The two processes occur in a sequential and reciprocal fashion with cognitive stages of understanding (sensemaking) alternating with active stages of influencing (sensegiving). (Gioia & Chittipeddi 1991, p.442)

Most articles on sensegiving acknowledge such a view referring to the Goia and Chittipeddi article (1991). Hill and Levenhagen, (1995) for example, claim that the activity of entrepreneurs involve making an extensive use of metaphors

both in developing a vision or mental model of their environment (sensemaking) *and* articulating that vision to others (sensegiving). Same symmetrical approach of sensemaking and sensegiving can be found in Harvey et al.'s (1999) study of how mentors can support dual career expatriates, Shankarmahesh et al.'s (2004) study of how export executives experience sale negotiations with foreign buyers, and Ravasi and Schultz's (2006) study of how top management progressively re-evaluates organisational identity. Sensegiving is hereby primarily approached as a means to influence the sensemaking of others. Kuperman (2003) views firms as sensegivers that attempt to influence the meaning construction of sensemakers and Rouleau (2005) approaches sensemaking and sensegiving as inseparable strategic micro-practices of meaning negotiation and knowledge production, e.g. in routines and conversations. Maitlis (2005) shows how organisational sensemaking results from the combined sensegiving efforts of an organisation's leader(s) and stockholder(s). Corley and Gioia (2004) elaborate on the existence of a sensegiving imperative for leaders to promote collective sensemaking. A special mention should be made here of Snell (2002) who adopts on that account a rare critical stance towards sensegiving and underscores that top managers acting as spinners of meaning risk to be trapped in their own web when they attempt to influence their sensemaking of the staff.

Some authors depart, however, from this symmetrical view of sensemaking and sensegiving. For example, Pratt (2000) opposes sensegiving not to sensemaking but to sensebreaking, Dunford and Jones (2000) insist on the role of narrative in sensegiving, and Huzzard (2004) calls for a re-conceptualisation of the process of sensegiving toward an acknowledgement of it as being embedded in power relationships. Yet others do not refer at all to Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991), for example Engwall et al. (2005) who claim that one of the roles of formal models for product development is to enable sensegiving, or Lamertz et al. (2003) who approach issue evolutions as sensegiving battles.

Our intent here is to add to these efforts at conceptualising organisational sensegiving, with a focus on inter-organisational sensegiving. Unfolding how Swedish wind power developers manage to obtain the necessary permits to establish wind-farms, we emphasise the precarious conditions of agency that govern sensegiving. The specific blend of contextuality, randomness, erraticism and adhocracy that characterises the process of developing a wind-farm is illustrative of the indecisiveness of sensegiving processes.

Wind farm development draws on as varied knowledge as aerodynamics, economy, engineering, ethology and law. It also involves aligning in some stable way birds, folklore associations, green certificates or grid connections. It is moreover virtually impossible to assign borders to the application process such as who is inside or outside, which topic or contexts are relevant, or if there is a specific time schedule. Under such ambiguous conditions wind farm developers put their projects into contexts, describe the technical features of the installations, and answer to potentially damaging criticisms. Their aim is to manage the project

application through the formal permission process to gain legal acceptance. We claim that setting a stage and providing a direction are their main activities, and we substantiate this claim by featuring the notion of mise-en-sens to render the character of these activities.

The paper is organised as follows. First, we briefly describe the methodology of the study and provide some background information on wind power development in Sweden. Then, we describe developers' activities in terms of contextualising and describing the project and neutralising criticisms only to later conceptualise the very same activities in terms of a mise-en-sens process. Finally, we suggest that the relevance of the notion of mise-en-sens might be extended to other organisational settings where sensegiving is involved.

Methodology

This study is part of the "Small scale renewable energy production" research program financed by the Swedish Emergency Management Agency (decision 0206/2002). It is a qualitative study based on interviews, observations and written documentation.

The research team has between 2002 and 2006 conducted three rounds of interviews with actors within the wind industry: developers, managers at turbine producers, maintenance technicians, managers at power producers and civil servants at local, regional and national authorities. In some instances, the same person has been interviewed more than once with some years in between, whether still at the same company or not. In all, 28 semi-structured interviews have been conducted, lasting from 45 minutes to 2,5 hours. All interviews have been tape-recorded, transcribed and circulated among the team for discussions.

The research team has also gathered extensive documentation on Swedish wind energy, e.g. reports from national authorities or international agencies, legal texts, bills, academic works, internal company material, web pages (many of them no longer available) or press material. For the present study, the authors have specifically collected documents about the development process such as permit applications, environmental impact assessments or decisions made by permit granting administrative authorities and courts. We have also taken part of the observation of court negotiations made by another member of the research team and personally observed public hearings and a general assembly of the shareholders for one of the independent developing companies. In all, the study is based on an extensive collection of field material.

The material has been analysed in successive stages. We have first systematically looked into it for signs, accounts or descriptions of what developers do or deem necessary to do in order to obtain the mandatory permits for their projects. We have then identified, in a first order analysis, recurrences in these signs, accounts or descriptions and clustered them into three sensegiving activities: contextualising,

ontologising and neutralising criticisms that we then have analysed. In a second order analysis, we have finally conceptualised these sensegiving activities, on the basis of e.g. performance theory or argumentation theory, as a mise-en-sens process.

Wind power development in Sweden

Some information on wind power in Sweden, how wind farm developers identify a possible site for their project and the formal permit application process will serve as a background to an understanding of how they give sense to their – in many ways erratic – projects.

Swedish Wind Power Policy

Today, wind power stands for less than a percent of Sweden's energy supply, but the Swedish national authorities have committed the country to dramatically increasing the production and consumption of renewable energy in the nearest future. The Swedish Energy Bill 2002 (Department of Industry, Employment and Communications 2002) has set "a national planning objective for wind power of 10 TWh by the year 2015" (p.17). A recent bill on wind power (Näringslivsutskottet 2006) has announced that this level is soon to be raised.

From production level at 0,7 TWh in 2005 (Swedish Energy Agency 2006), this objective requires the capacity for wind electricity production to be multiplied by more than a factor of ten. Developing wind power projects is however not within the realm of responsibilities of the Swedish Energy Agency or any other public agency. Inspired by the neo-liberal tenet that market-based solutions are superior to bureaucratic ones, the Swedish State has opted for a get-others-to-do rather than a do-it-yourself policy (Corvellec, forthcoming). It has financed an extensive research program and introduced a series of economic incentives such as investment subsidies, fiscal measures and green certificates (e.g. Åstrand and Neij 2006). The actual responsibility for developing wind power is handed over to private wind power developers.

Identifying an adequate site

Wind power developers are not in the business of producing electricity but in the business of obtaining building and environmental permits. Schematically, their activity consists in identifying an adequate site, putting together a project application and managing it through the mandatory legal and social procedures to obtain the necessary permits.

When asked how they start developing wind farms, developers usually answer that they begin with looking for a site with good wind content as this is a key variable of a project's profitability. A wind developer declares: "The value goes with the site actually. Wind turbines are only means to exploit sites. It is

the sites that we must get at". To be of any interest, a site should for example neither be close to any dwelling, nor should it be too close to a place of Swedish national interest, for example, a military zone (national interest for defence), a Viking grave or any monument of historical value (national interest for culture) or some valuable wetland (national interest for environment). Also, the costs of development, construction and connection to the power grid should be reasonable. As one developer said:

> We have three criteria to assess the suitability of a site: first that the wind is good, second that we are not too far from the grid so that it does not become unprofitable, and third, of course, we must always make sure that it is at least 400 meters away from any habitation.

Eager to get rid of the reputation of being green idealists, developers insist that they develop only profitable wind farms.

The formal permit application process

The permit application process is mainly structured by the Environmental Code (SFS 1998:808) and the Planning and Building Act (SFS 1987:10). Several other statutes are also to be taken into account by wind power developers, e.g. the Electricity Act (SFS 1997:857), the Act on the Continental Shelf (SFS 1966:314) or the Act concerning Ancient Monuments and Finds (SFS 1988:950). These have however a lesser impact on the developing process.

The legislation determines the content and order of the different stages in the permit application processes. For example, in the Environmental Code all but the smallest wind farms are considered to have a significant impact on the environment (referred to in the Code as environmentally hazardous activities). Applications therefore must go through an environmental assessment process that consists of no less than seven steps: (i) the scoping stage; (ii) public hearings; (iii) preparation of the assessment report; (iv) review of the assessment report; (v) consultation by authorities and the public; (vi) decision on project development permission; and (vii) possible appeal of the decision by different stakeholders (Tyskeng 2006).

Noticeably, the Environmental Code and the Planning and Building Act cross-reference each other but the two permit procedures are not co-ordinated. Wind power developers need to monitor two application processes, either parallelly or sequentially. As developers observe, each permit process has an edge of its own. The same wind farm project can for example be in the hands of local free-time politicians for the municipal building permit and in the hands of environmental law experts at an Environmental court for the environmental permit. Whereas the local politician might be concerned with the project's impact on local employment, the law expert might focus on how to legally assess the turbines' visual impact. A developer underscores in this respect how essential it is

to have "a very clear idea about the whole [procedural] chain and act thereafter, with knowledge of what is coming, so that you do not limit yourself to one solution".

Moreover, as legal procedures can take up to seven years, developers may stress that an adequate timing of one's interventions is a condition to keep the project running. The head of the Swedish association of wind power developers points out how vital it is "to come to the right instance with the right information at the right time".

Developers complain about uneven or even defective competencies among officials, the fact that authorities can require additional information at any time and the numerous possibilities of appeal that exist. They also criticize the impossibility to obtain advance notification about whether specific aspects of their projects do or do not comply with the legislation.

Delusive sequentiality and linearity

The apparent sequentiality of the formal permit application process is however delusive and so is the textual linearity of the application. Wind farm developers do need to comply with the formal order of the Environmental code and Planning and Building Act. More generally, as Latour (1992) claims, large technological projects will exist if and only if someone manages to enrol and align enough human or non-human actants in solid enough networks to make these irreversible. In order to give life to their projects, developers need to enrol and align in their applications a convincing enough arrangement of bats, birds, electricity grid, energy policy objectives, fish, logistics, public opinion, shareholders and stakeholder relationships, seabed substratum, the Environmental code, turbines, waves, wind power economy, winds, zero alternatives and more. Some of these actants are given (e.g. zero alternatives) while some are not. There is however no given order for how they should be arranged. Neither is there a way to predict how actants will behave once they are brought together except that they can, and tend to, run at any time, alone or in groups, in dispersed order and varied directions. The legislation sets a series of legal obligatory passage points that can never be missed, ignored or bypassed. But it does not mean that the process is governed by logical, juridical or textual straightforwardness.

The application process is instead soaked with conjectures, returns, hazards, omissions, ambiguities or contradictions. Insights and serendipity flow alongside with mistakes and misunderstandings. Changes occur permanently in legislation, economic incitement systems and energy market conditions. Projects' features keep zigzagging and jumping between the various steps of the formal process, stakeholders or sides of the pro-and-con debate.

Saturated with tactical power games, unstable semiotic chains and circumstantial influences relative to the arts, sciences, social struggles and more, the application process is a collective assemblage of heterogeneous but connected

enunciations that remind of the deleuzoguattarian metaphor of the rhizome (Deleuze and Guattari 1980). The application process cannot be submitted to any single unit of measure but has to be appreciated through a multiplicity or variety of judgement that, in turn, evolves with any variation in determinations, magnitudes or dimensions of the project. And just like "a rhizome may be broken, shattered at a given spot, but it will start up again on one of its old lines, or on new lines" (page 9), a project that is stopped at some point can be deterritorialized and reterritorialized as another project on another site. The rhizome metaphor illuminates the intricate and elusive character of the wind farm application projects.

Contextualising, Ontologising, Neutralising

After these preliminary remarks on wind power development, we present in this section a first order analysis of how developers manage permit applications. This analysis is exemplified with field material and is followed, in the next section, by a second order analysis of this process featuring the notion of mise-en-sens.

Selecting backgrounds – Contextualising

The successive applications that were made for the Lillgrund windfarm, one of the largest Swedish wind farms ever, illustrate how applications involve various contextualisations of the project. The original application to the Ministry of the Environment (Örestads Vindkraftpark AB 1998) mentions as motivating factor a wish to increase the share of electricity produced from renewable and national sources, for example wind. It adds that the Öresund region where the project is located is one of the most densely populated regions in Sweden and that the planned decommissioning of the nearby Barsebäck nuclear plant needs to be compensated by the development of new power sources. This puts the project within the context of energy policy at a national and local level. In the later application to the environmental court (Örestads Vindkraftpark AB 2001) one can read that a new application has to be made in replacement of the previous one since there now exist more effective turbines than when the original application was made. This puts, in turn, the project within the context of technical development. The building permit application, finally, both restates the series of environmental permissions that have already been given to the project and underscores that the municipal comprehensive plan defines Lillgrund as an area of interest for wind power (Örestads Vindkraftpark AB 2004). This provides a legal contextualisation of the project.

Contexts do not exist as independent environments to a project, as often assumed in research on contexts (e.g. Johns 2001) in a surprising concession to objectivism. Contexts result, instead, from intentional operations of co-textualisation (Corvellec 2006) where the text of the project is connected through

exotextual (Barry et al. 2006) references to selected texts outside of it. A reference to the Kyoto protocol associates the project to the macro context of climate change; a mention of past political agreements on energy connects the project to the national context of energy policy; a reference to the municipal strategic plan for tourism links the project to the local economic context. Referential connections turn these texts into co-texts to the application and thereby create contexts to the project. Enrolling co-texts is the nerve of contextualisation. The references that are made to 'outside' texts activate selected (pre-)understanding and knowledge of the audience in an effort to orient this audience's comprehension of the text of the application in a given direction. Contextualisation of the project is as multifarious and multi-layered as there are different co-texts to connect the text of the application to.

Not all developers contextualise wind energy in the same way. Some position wind power as a way to replace nuclear power when decommissioned, others insist instead on its being a complement to existing power sources. They also change their contextualisation of projects from an audience or a social situation to another. Whereas an environmental impact assessment can provide only a cursory economic contextualisation of the project, outlining for example only the costs of the project but not future income (e.g., Wiklund 2001), the profitability of wind farm projects is carefully underlined at a shareholder assembly (Observation: Corvellec 2005a). It is not only a matter of technical relevance of the information but a strategic choice of contextualisation: whereas a high profitability is likely to strengthen the support of the shareholders for the project, it is also likely to provoke objections and demands for compensation among the local community. Developers adapt their contextualisation of the project to gain the former without risking raising the latter. Many more examples can be found in application processes of framing of projects in the sense of a careful management of meaning by selecting and highlighting for the audience the importance of certain facts or issues over others (Bean & Hamilton 2006).

Contextualisation can even be a matter of literary creativity, for example:

> At a magnificent waterfront location in Malmö, in southern Sweden, a new urban district is taking shape. The Västra Hamnen Project, known as the City of Tomorrow, combines a 100% locally renewable energy solution with luxury living. Sydkraft plays a key role in this project aiming to create a sustainable community for the future. Sun, wind and water play leading roles in the project with an innovative combination of technologies helping to create an integrated, sustainable system. A wind power plant – one of the largest in Sweden – takes care of most of the community's annual electricity demand. Solar cells also produce small quantities of electricity. (…) The project also includes environmentally-friendly transport: residents have access to a car pool of electric, gas-fuelled and hybrid vehicles. (Sydkraft 2004)

An evocative – and highly optimistic – narrative of success is composed here that relates the wind turbine to luxury, natural elements and environmentally friendly transport. Relying upon the recursive property of narratives (Robichaud et al. 2004), developers thereby embed wind power into the larger story about how the poor, industrious and (presumptively) dirty City of Malmö is about to become rich, knowledge-intensive and sustainable. This city renewal story can in turn be embedded in the story of how Sweden and other industrialised nations need to set the grounds for a sustainable common future. There is virtually no end to the embedding of development stories, and a new context gets born at each level. Watson (1995) observes how managers who aim at making sense of their activity and support their interest find the source of their individual statements in broader organisational discourses. Developers source likewise their stories in all sorts of narratives and play fully on the richness and efficiency of storytelling as multi-levelled communication and contextualising medium.

All contextualisations are however not freely chosen by developers. Some co-texts are given and unavoidable such as legislations. Others are hard to avoid, such as climate change, the business case for wind power or the visual impact of wind farms. Whereas some contexts result from creative inventions, others are akin to obligatory passage points in actor network theory (see e.g. Callon 1985, Latour 2005). Contextualising is the management of context, moving between creativity and compliance. It is a matter of inventive and appropriate framing and re-framing of the project, e.g. by relating the project to selected texts or by inventing narratives. It also involves taking into account not only the current stage in the formal permit application process, even future stages and absent audiences. Far from being the mechanical enactment of a learned competence, it is a matter of responsive and creative agency, the results of which are neither certain nor permanent.

Describing the project – Ontologising

After having contextualised the project, developers move on to describe the project in detail. For smaller onshore projects, developers may simply provide a computer simulation that describes the noise and shadow effects of the installation and a photomontage. For larger projects, they provide more information. The environmental impact assessment for Kriegers flak (Sweden Offshore AB 2004) is, for example, a 186 pages long document that details how the planned turbines could affect bats, fishes, birds and seals. It gives information on the waves, currents, ice formation and seabed substratum of the site and details the construction, operational and dismantling phases of the project. It compares the selected site with other alternatives, lists carefully the nature and effect of noise and vibrations, spills and pollution, and provides technical specifications for light shadows and reflexes. It also tells how climate, shipping or landscape might be influenced by the installation. Other developers provide computer animations

to render the visual impact of the project seen from various locations at various times of the day (e.g. Favonius 2006).

Parts of these descriptions are mandatory. Developers must provide a map, an assessment of the effect of the project on e.g. biological diversity, a report on the consultation process or a description of how construction material will be recycled and re-used. They also need to respond if the municipality requests a detailed plan for the project or the Environmental court demands a model for how the water flows through the wind farm. Other parts of the description are left at the discretion of the developer, for example, to assess how many households the installation would supply with electricity.

Developers try to ontologise the project, i.e. endow it with an intrinsic nature. They do so by defining it as a composite of features that are supposed to exhaust its reality. Project A is described as X many turbines, Y effect, Z average yearly production and other features, whereas project B is described as K many turbines, L effect, M average yearly production and else. At times, authorities ask that additional features be added to the project, for example when dredging limits are imposed on the project or when it is required that low sulphur content fuel oil shall be used during the construction phase (Växjö Tingsrätt, 2002). Features are exchangeable and developers may remove, add or alter some, for example the effect (Örestads vindkraftspark AB 2001) or the height of the planned turbines (Örestads vindkraftspark AB 2005). The rationale remains all the same to define the project as a composite set of features. Inversely, those who oppose the project either try to remove some positive feature from the project, for example that the project is in accordance with the Environmental code. Or, they try to add some potentially negative feature to the project, e.g. that it generates dangerous infra-sounds (see Miljööverdomstolen 2003).

The purpose of such ontologisation is to present the project for the decision makers and other audiences with a say in the process. To "present" is to be understood here in the sense of "making present" something that is yet virtual. It refers to the possible objectification of an idea on its dramatic travel of translation toward materialisation in localized time/space and globalized time/space (Czarniawska and Joerges 1995). Applications are operations of representation (except that there is no previous presentation to motivate any re-) that intend to let the not-yet-existing look real and gradually become objectified. They are present-action in the sense of actions in making the project, first idea wise and thereafter physically, present. Applications are projections into the future that let the reader enter imaginary world narratives, for example of sustainable energy provision. Geared toward turning something that is possible into something that is acceptable and thereafter existing, they are exercises in strategic real-isation of virtuality.

Contacts with stakeholders – Neutralising criticisms

Developers maintain contacts with a long range of stakeholders such as power producers, The Swedish National Grid Utility, the Swedish Armed Forces or the Swedish Civil Aviation Administration. No offshore project can be launched without contacts with the Swedish board of fisheries, the Swedish Maritime Administration or local fishermen. The Swedish Environmental Protection Agency, the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation, ornithologists or the Swedish Association for the protection of Swedish landscape – an anti wind power association – seldom miss an opportunity to voice their opinions. More specifically, the formal application process requires that developers organise series of consultations with permitting authorities and the public. These consultations are intended as occasions for questions and answers, for example about the project's design or its visual impact. The legislation even requires a report about held public hearings to be attached to the application.

The content of the contacts with these stakeholders are varied. Public authorities are contacted for example to establish which technical requirements are applicable to the project, for example regarding hazard lights or obstacle markings of the turbines. Dialogues with permitting bodies can be occasions to test whether the project fits with the municipal wind policy or to decide something as mundane as where to set up a poster to inform the public (Vattenfall 2005a). The head of the Association of wind turbines material producers (VIS) underscores the importance of not waiting too long to meet the local community in order to be credible, gathering opinions and addressing concerns and objections at an early stage of the process. A wind developer representative emphasises that one must be where the local people are, enter into dialogue with them, listen to and answer their questions with the right voice and the right tone: that is, one has to stretch oneself beyond the legal requirements in order to gain acceptance for the project. However, some public hearings appear to be more of an exercise of ritualistic compliance with legal imperatives rather than an informative effort aimed at gaining acceptance for the project (observation: Corvellec 2005b).

A recurrent trait of project presentations at consultations is that one tries to depict and frame the project as mostly endowed with positive qualities. Correspondingly, developers more or less explicitly try to dismiss or neutralise any negative aspects that could be attached to their project, for example risk (observations: Boholm and Corvellec 2005; Corvellec and Risberg 2006). As developers are focused on moving the project through the next stage of the formal process, they must keep the ontological features of the project within the realm of what decision makers cannot say "no" to.

Neutralisation of criticisms can be achieved in various ways. Developers can integrate critical standpoints into the project: when neighbours find turbines ugly, they offer to paint turbines in a gray scale and use anti-reflex coating. Developers can also provide factual answers to criticisms, for example in a FAQ

page on their web-sites (e.g., Vattenfall 2006). On the other hand, they can rebuke reproaches: to taxpayers associations who resent that wind power receives public economic support developers answer that most other sources of energy, e.g. nuclear energy, have initially received public support.

Alternatively, they can simply acknowledge critical standpoints, for example if there is local dissatisfaction with the project (e.g., Vattenfall 2006), as a way to signal that they listen to the public opinion. Or they can even deflect criticisms. The developer of the Lillgrund project answered an appeal (by a villa-owner to revoke the municipal decision to grant a building permit to the project) by declaring the appeal non-receivable on the grounds that it pertained to the already granted environmental permit and not the building permit under consideration (Vattenfall 2005b). Deflecting is an effective way of neutralising the efforts of those who wish to contextualise the project in a critical, and thus potentially disruptive, manner.

The point is that criticisms do not need to be refuted in the logical sense of the term. It is enough for developers to render them neutral and innocuous enough not to alienate decisions makers. Developers are in this regard involved in argumentation as defined by New rhetoric (Perelman and Olbrech-Tyteca 1958), i.e. to gain and retain the adherence of the audiences: their contextualisation and ontologisation of their projects are ways to associate their project with some things and dissociate them from others to appeal to the value hierarchies of their audiences. A challenge, as mentioned above, is that this audience can be free-time politicians from the local construction board or environmental law experts at the Environmental court. This is where the selective character of contextualisation and ontologisation prove to be decisive for the success of a project.

Table 1: Applying for permits

Activities	**Means**	**Objectives**
Selecting backgrounds	- Linking to existing texts - Storytelling	Contextualising The project
Describing the project	- Listing project qualities	Ontologising the project
Contacting stakeholders	- Argumentation (Rhetoric)	Neutralising criticisms

To summarise, the permit application process can be described as a threefold activity that involves the selection of appropriate backgrounds to contextualise the project, descriptions of its features to ontologise it and contacts with stakeholders to neutralise potential criticisms. Various means are used for that purpose: linking the text of the project to other texts, inventing stories, listing the project's qualities or arguing to gain the audience's adherence. (See table

1). As we now intend to show, these activities can be conceptualised as being a process of mise-en-sens.

A mise-en-sens process

Our contention is that wind power developers keep their rhizome-like projects together and manage the permit application procedure through a process of mise-en-sens. Mise-en-sens is a rare French locution that we actualise for that purpose[1]. It reminds of the theatrical term of mise-en-scène or stage setting, i.e. how a play or film director arranges that which appears before the audience or the camera during a scene or a shot, literally 'setting the scene' or 'putting into the scene'. It also plays on a distinctive feature of the French term *sens* to mean, among other things, not only 'meaning' but also 'direction'. Literally, mise-en-sens could be translated as 'providing a direction and putting into meaning', but such a translation would not really capture the intended dynamism of the locution's polysemy.

First, mise-en-sens evokes mise-en-scène in the sense that it is a matter of modulating the conditions upon which developers present the application text to the audience. For performance theorist Pavis (1992), this is the very nature of mise-en-scène. The development of a wind farm corresponds in more than one way to the characteristic mise-en-scène that Pavis (1992) identifies. A presentation of the project at a consultation or a public hearing is a so called "stage enunciation" (idem, p.30). On these occasions developers try "to provide the dramatic text [of their project] with a situation that will give meaning to the statements of the text" (idem, p.30), not the least through contextualisation. Their monitoring of the application through the permit application process is "reading actualized": a permit application, like the dramatic text of a play "does not have an individual reader, but a possible collective reading, proposed by the mise en scène" (idem, p.31). Developers keep emphasising that how they put together an application and present the project is decisive for how audiences react. It is "the bringing together or confrontation, in a given time and space, of different signifying systems, for an audience." (idem, 24).

Wind farm development may not correspond to the, according to Parvis (1992), last constitutive characteristics of mise-en-scène that is "to speak by showing, not by speaking" (p.31). Projects are definitely told. However, one could argue that maps, photomontages or computer animations are ways to arrange the scenery so as to "speak" the project by "showing" it.

Wind farm development is not dramaturgy in the sense that organisations

[1] Our use is independent from the use of the term made by Claude Lefort (1988) when he claims that a society is shaped [*mise en forme*] by giving meaning to social relations [*mise en sens*] and by staging them or by determining how they will appear [*mise en scène*] (1988: 218-219).

metaphorically can be considered as theatres (c.f. Schreyögg & Höpfl 2004). It is dramaturgy in the sense that it involves a series of stage settings of the project for various audiences. Developers try to direct actants in their project just like play directors try to lead how actors should move on stage. The notion of mise-en-sens intends to evoke that, whenever developers interpret legal requests, invent labels for the project, find the words that will convince or dialogue with the public, they are involved in stage setting operations.

Second, mise-en-sens is a matter of providing a direction to the project. Providing a direction should not be understood here in the managerial sense of leading the project as in traditional project management, but in the sense of orienting how it is to be perceived by the audience. Along with stage-setting, mise-en-sens is a matter of finding ways that increase the acceptability of the argument that the project should be granted permission. It is a matter of intentionally and systematically pointing the audience in the direction of acceptance of the project.

At industry level, the wind sector try to point the public in the direction of the reasonability of wind power by arguing that a) it is necessary to develop wind farms (e.g. because of climate changes); b) the wind sector knows how to build wind farms; c) wind farms that have been granted a permit are legal and thus acceptable (Corvellec, under review). The claim that one needs to increase wind power is backed-up by the Swedish commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and warranted by the low CO_2 equivalents emissions of wind energy production (after Toulmin 1958). The purpose is to produce a logically compelling reasoning that is generally valid and therefore usable when arguing for individual projects.

At project level, developers point permitting bodies and others in the direction of an acceptability of their application at every stage of the contextualising, ontologising and neutralizing activities analyzed above. These three activities share a common purpose to orient the audience's understanding in the direction of accepting the project through argumentation.

Statements signify through pointing, Anscombe and Ducrot (1983) maintain. For them, language is what enables us to determine the signification of statements and thus the privileged locus of argumentation. From an argumentation theory point of view, words can be reversed in the sense that they can be used in either positive or negative directions. Providing a direction (Anscombe and Ducrot speak of orientation) is essential to argumentation understood as influencing how audiences infer meaning, direction not being given beforehand but being suggested. Direction is an integrative part of any claim. When developers claim that wind power is a *small scale* form of energy production it can be interpreted as a statement that a wind farm is a step toward a less risky and more sustainable society. It can also be interpreted as that wind power will never be able to cover more than an infinitesimal share of our energy needs. The meaning of the claim is open and depends on whether the claim will be oriented toward praise or

criticism. Even metaphors orient. To discard the argument that a wind farm could have a barrier effect, Sweden offshore wind AB writes for example that "it is conceivable that migrating birds will act similarly to the wind farm as to an island, namely to fly over the area several hundred metres height" (Sweden Offshore AB 2004, p.131). Thanks to the metaphor, the wind farm is no longer an industrial construction but an island – and what could be more natural at sea than an island?

By underlining that mise-en-sens involves pointing in the direction of acceptance, we intend to underline the coincidence that exists between the production of direction or orientation and the production of meaning. Such a coincidence has been touched upon in several theoretical traditions. Beardsley (1950), and after him argumentation theory, emphasises the efficiency of convergent or serial arguments. From a narrative perspective, Czarniawska (2004) underscores the ordering role of emplotment, i.e. the logical sequencing of events, as constitutive of the communicative capacity of stories. Meaning and direction (or orientation) keep coinciding - as the notion of mise-en-sens intends to express.

Third, mise-en-sens is a matter of sensemaking and sensegiving, with a stress on the latter. Mise-en-sens shares some but not all properties of sensemaking (Weick 1995; Weick et al 2005). It shares of course to be about the making of sense in organisational contexts, with arguing at its core. It also shares to be an ongoing social process driven by plausible rather than accurate reasoning. And like sensemaking it is about enacting a sensible environment through authoritative acts. Differing from sensemaking, mise-en-sens is however not grounded in the sensemaker's but in the project's identity construction process. It is prospective rather than retrospective. Whereas sensemaking focuses on extracting cues, mise-en-sens is about proposing cues to the project's various audiences. Mise-en-sens is finally not as focused on the cognitive and psychological aspects of interpretation in organisations as sensemaking is. Most important, mise-en-sens is a matter of making sense for others rather than for oneself (or one's own organisation).

Mise-en-sens is in this regard closer to the process of sensegiving than sensemaking in that it pertains to the development and communication of ideas and frameworks for an audience. Both share a strong property of agency aimed at, as Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991) put it, influencing an audience and gaining support for a preferred definition of reality. However, whereas sensegiving research tends to reify meaning and consider it as a thing, mise-en-sens does not. In a mise-en-sens view, meaning is not something that someone "gives" to someone else. Mise-en-sens views meaning as the uncertain, fluctuating and hard to locate outcome of the rhizomatic connections that developers ceaselessly establish between actants, semiotic cues, temporary settlements of power, technology, contexts, circumstances or legal requirements (cf. Chia 1999).

A definitive concession or rejection of a construction permit or an environmental permit may be considered as an official closure to the mise-en-

sens process. Either of these closures do not, however, entail that meaning is stabilised. Whether realised or not, a project will always be interpreted in more than one way. Ambiguities fill the interpretation process, catering for competing, diverging and even conflicting views for years to come (Risberg 2003). Sense can under all circumstances not be controlled and developers can correspondingly never actually give, but only propose, meaning.

To summarise, mise-en-sens is a process of sensegiving in that it refers to the activity of composing arguments. It refers to the creative agency of building up and keeping together a claim in front of various audiences through contextualisation and ontologisation but also the neutralisation of eventual criticisms. This is done with the help of narratives, rhetoric, argumentation or other meaningful devices. Mise-en-sens is more generally a matter of sensegiving that involve stage setting and direction providing of a claim for debate, evaluation and eventually (official) decisions. Far from being linear and sequential, it is a recursive mesh of interwoven processes where no one has the precedence over the other but share an intention to endow the project with a meaning compelling enough so that it can become real. A definition would be that it is an intentional, systematic and creative proposal of meaning where various sorts of knowledge are gathered, braided, ordered (at least temporarily), mobilised and presented to various audiences in order to attract, convince and influence stakeholders. Needless to say, audiences and interpretations being multiple, shifting and evolving over time, mise-en-sens ends up being a process loaded with incertitude, ambiguities and instability.

Concluding remarks

A question emerges from our claim that the activity of developing wind farms can be conceptualised as a process of mise-en-sens. This question is whether the notion of mise-en-sens has an heuristic potential for other organisational activities as well? We dare to speculate that such is the case. The development of wind farms may present many distinctive traits; it is but an ordinary example of project management or more generally of entrepreneurial venture. Wind farm developers are not the only ones who need to contextualise, ontologise and defend their project against criticisms. Anyone who wishes to turn an idea into some kind of realisation is indeed likely to face the same need to stage set one's project, point at acceptance and invite others to attach positive meaning to it.

Our contention is that the notion of mise-en-sens can contribute to a more nuanced description of the practice of organisational sensegiving. Above, we have for example insisted on the role of agency, heterogeneity and uncertainty in the mise-en-sens process. Instead, we could have insisted on the fact that the process of mise-en-sens does not necessarily run along top-down hierarchical relations but can very well be the feat of people in positions of relative weak

power in relation to their audience. Alternatively, we could have delved into how arguments present in the mise-en-sens process are actually produced, diffused and received. From the conditions of enactment of discursive power to the social-psychological character of argumentation, there remain many yet un-explored aspects of the notion of mise-en-sens within organisational and management studies.

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