

Notions of democracy and participation strategies for the wind energy sector

'Public participation in a democratic and regulatory perspective – why and how?'

University of Copenhagen

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Outline

- Concepts of democracy
- Spaces of participation
- Participation and social acceptance of wind
- Official responses
- Alternative framings...

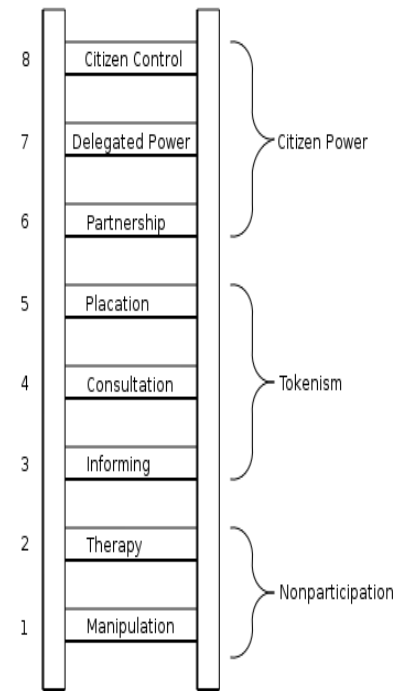
Concepts of democracy

- Liberal democracy: the rule of the majority safeguarding individual rights and freedoms;
- Recognising that this is only one form, and is culturally, socially and politically defined;
- The idea of democracy has powerful ideological and discursive resonance;
- Key operational elements:
 - Representational democracy
 - Participatory or direct democracy



Understanding Participation

- Public participation¹ takes a huge range of forms (rhetorical, 'real', formal, informal...);
- Share the principle of enhanced involvement of 'the public', to complement or replace representational forms of decision making;
- May vary according to issues such as :
 - Distribution of power; participants; scale; boundary of issues; methods; duration; rights
- Has a strong presence in planning and environmental decision-making



Arnstein's ladder

¹ Also stakeholder engagement, community participation, consultation and variations there of....

Spaces of participation

- Declining traditional forms of political participation and opening of new opportunities ('clickivism' etc)
- From *politics-policy* to *policy-politics* (Bang 2009)
- One way of understanding this is through *spaces* of participation (Cornwall):
 - Invited spaces
 - Popular spaces

Thousands protest against pylons and wind turbines

Demonstrators march through Dublin in opposition to energy plans



Controversial windfarm plans are withdrawn



Support Melton Against Rural Turbines (SMART) has fought proposals to build four turbines in the Melton area. SMART has fought proposals to build four turbines in the Melton area.

Wind energy in the Netherlands: the storm has not yet calmed down

columns

They had come to Amsterdam by the dozens, to the Wind Energy Debate, to let themselves be heard. Opponents of wind energy. Their numbers and particularly their zest testified to it that the debate on wind energy has not calmed down by far. With such motivated opponents, the realisation of the goals of last year's National Energy Agreement is by no means a done deal yet.



Eco-Blowback: Mutiny in the Land of Wind Turbines

By Matthias Schulz



Germany plans to build 60,000 new wind turbines in forests, in the foothills of the Alps and even in

Windfarm opponents to run in general election



Wednesday, October 28, 2015

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By Fíachra Ó Connail
Irish Examiner Reporter

set to run a purely negative general election campaign against sitting them from re-election.



Battle over wind turbines in the land of Sleeping Beauty

By Matt McGrath
Environment correspondent, BBC News

man



y into the most scenic parts of Germany are in across the country.

Host community opposition to wind energy projects is generally driven by:

- **Health and environmental impacts;**
 - Concerns over visual, bio-diversity, well-being impacts on local area etc;
- **Fairness of decision-making process;**
 - Lack of trust in developers, regulators and the transparency of the consenting regime;
- **Perceived distribution of costs & benefits;**
 - Fear that external companies accrue key benefits, while local communities bear main costs;



Wind energy, transitions and social acceptance @gellis23

- Social acceptance continues to be a major issue defining the extent and conditions for wind energy deployment:
- Sector-specific responses related to technology, ownership, benefits etc;
- More systemic ('political') issues unresolved, hampering wider transitions of which wind energy is a component:
- Need to look beyond the problems of 'wind' and understand wider issues of transition.

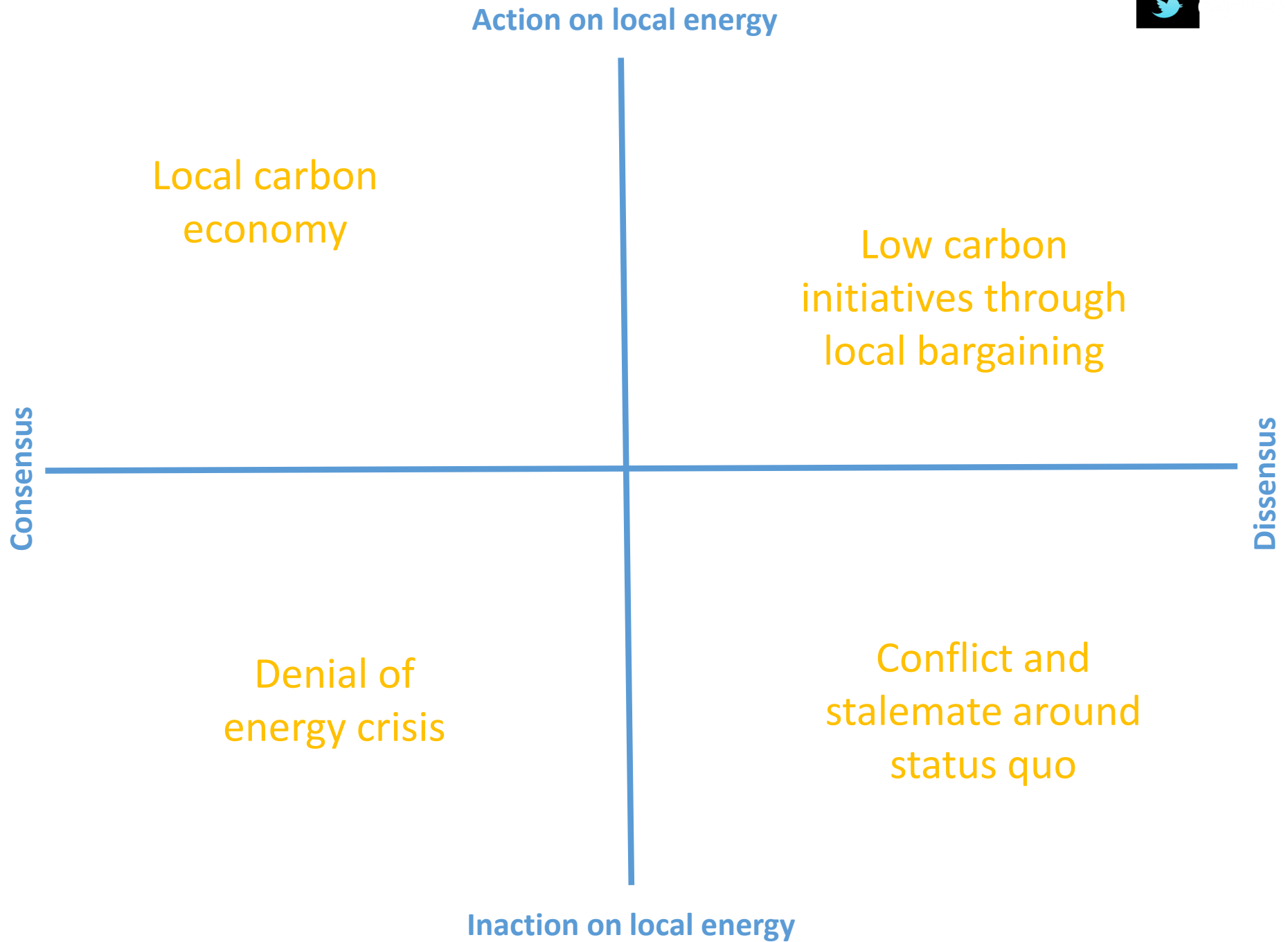
Two polarised responses

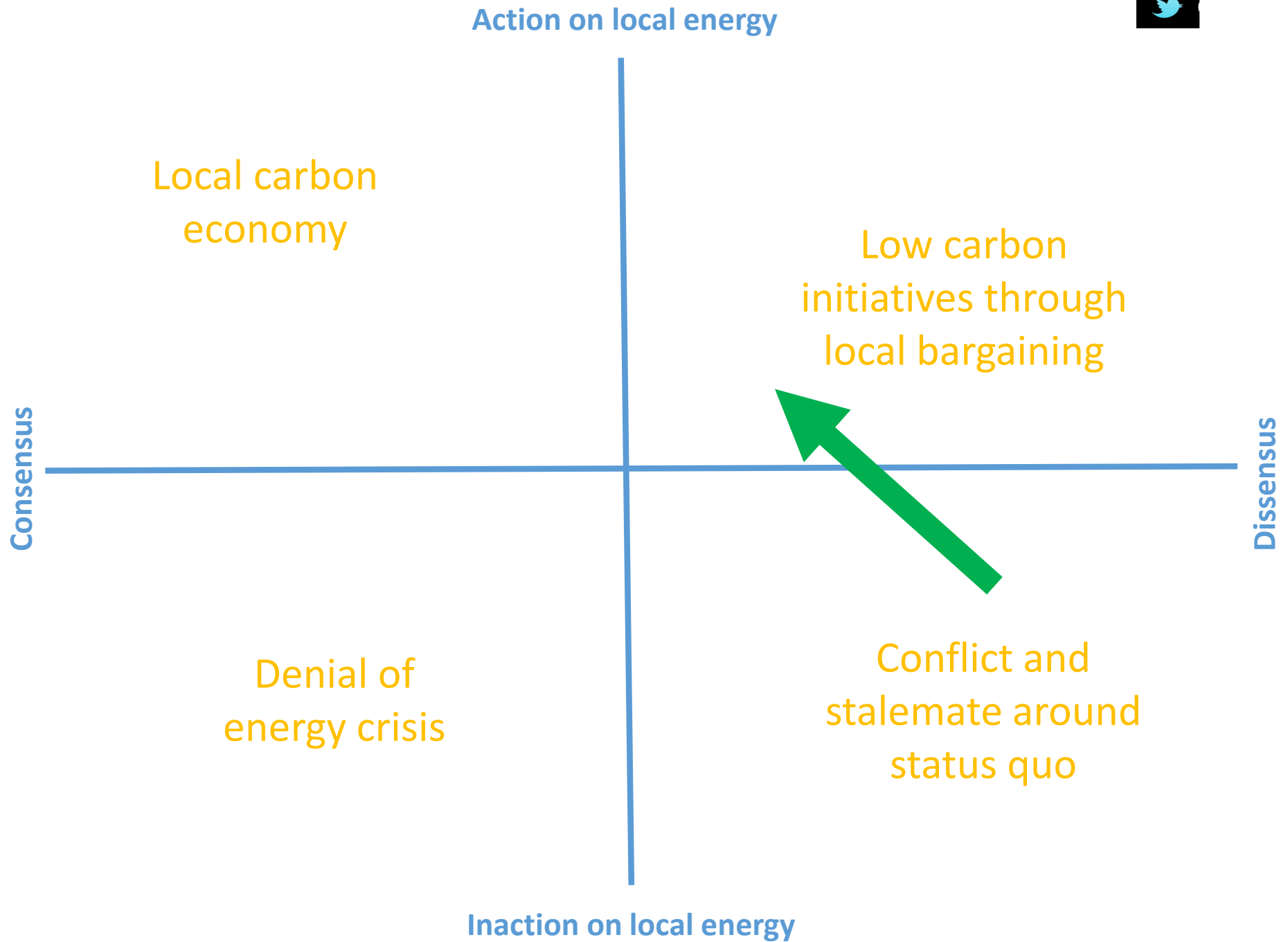
- **Deliberation and consensus –seeking**
 - Opening spaces of participation – widely and idealistically;
 - Dominance of paradigm of ‘collaborative planning’ places faith in deliberative resolutions;
 - Normative ideal that ‘more and better’ participation can help reduce objection;
- **Streamlining and demonization**
 - Closing down spaces of participation to prevent opposition emerging – speeding up decisions, creating new processes, shifting to different scale and forums.
 - Use of ‘deviancy’ – NIMBYs, ignorance, etc.
- **Are both counter-productive?**

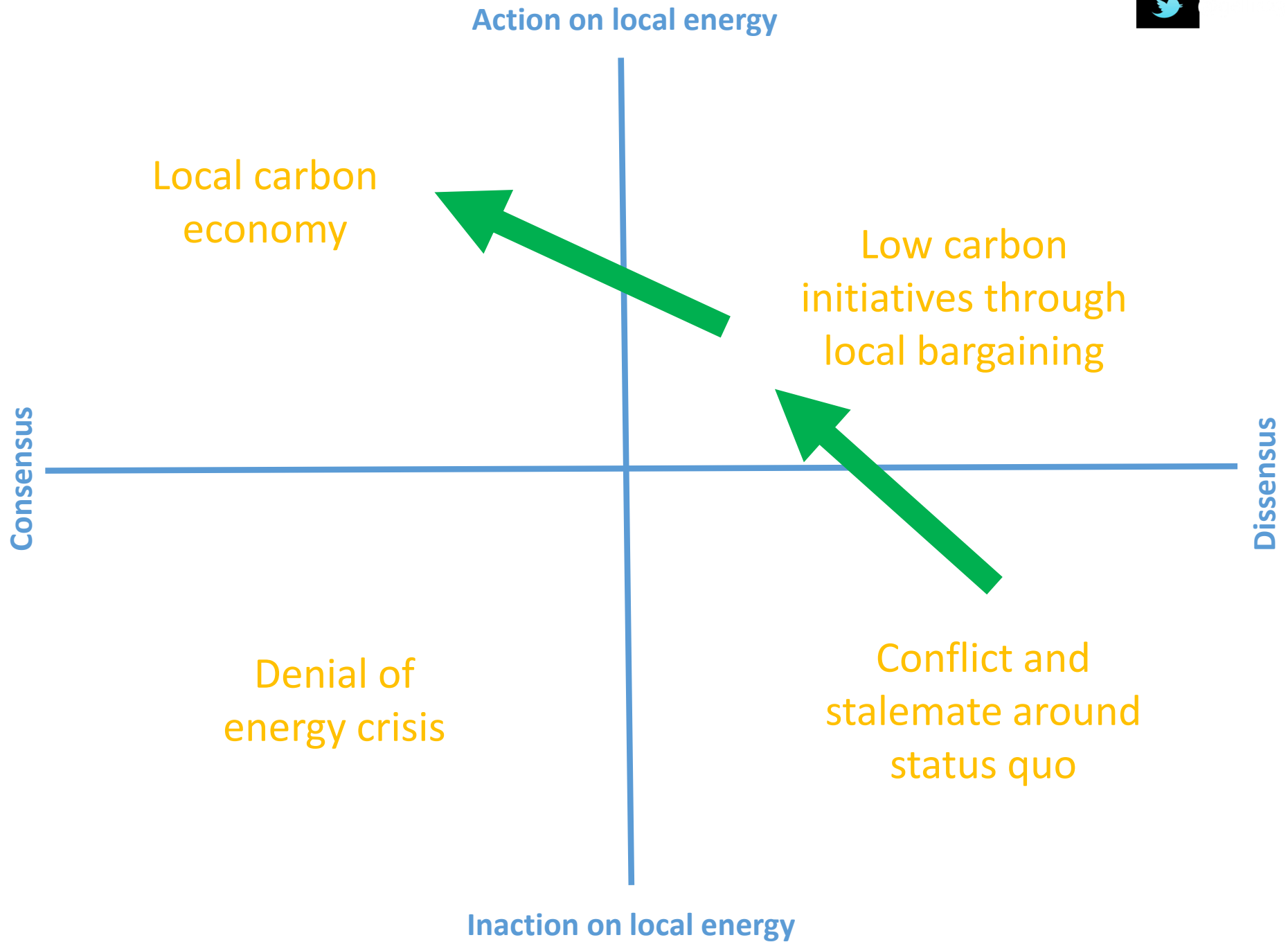


Exploring agonistic approaches

- Seeks settlement of difference, rather than consensus;
- Recognises conflict and struggles is both *inevitable* and *intrinsically good* for democracy;
- Pluralism is welcomed – citizens of good faith can agree, and disagree robustly and honestly;
- Engagement – both for and against - is welcomed and encouraged.







Final words

- Current models of participation too narrow and fail to acknowledge deeper shifts in political culture;
- The 'wind problem' too tightly framed;
- Presence in a participative space should be welcomed, and shaped with an incentive structure;
- Effective and purposeful participation *more* not *less* likely to lead to transition.

Thank you, any questions?



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John Barry and Geraint Ellis. "Beyond consensus? Agonism, republicanism and a low carbon future." in Devine-Wright, P (Ed) Renewable energy and the public: From NIMBY to participation (2011): 29-42.