Community Planning for Energy Projects: Rethinking the Community Role

Ron Pushchak
School of Urban and Regional Planning
September 26, 2013

RYERSON UNIVERSITY

The Green Energy Act 2009

- It removed from Ontario municipalities the power to approve renewable energy projects in their communities
- It has been met with sustained, vocal resistance in many communities
- Gas plant opposition
- Wind turbine facility opposition

Energy planning processes re-evaluated

OPA and IESO Report Recommendations

- Strengthen process for early and sustained engagement with local governments
- Clarify decision-making for energy planning and facility site selection
- Better planning coordination between the province and municipalities in selecting sites for new power plants
- Have municipalities assess their energy needs: The Municipal Energy Plan Program

The Assumption at the Heart of Unsuccessful Energy Facility Planning

The belief is that the objective of the energy facility planning process is to find the right site for a particular project.

The true objective is to find the 'right' community.

When a community has an 'implicit local veto'…

Any proponent needs the community first, not the site.

The Risk Society

- Ulrich Beck's assessment of post-modern public responses to man-made, energy-related environmental, and public health and safety concerns
- The Risk Society (1986; 1992)
- The Non-trust Society (Lofstedt, 2010)

Beck gave a name to the 'Zeitgeist' of the post-modern planning era

Factors leading to more cooperative, collaborative community planning

- 1. An *entitlement* to public participation: citizens expected the siting and decision process to be democratic and inclusive
- 2. The *pain and cost* of many energy siting failures; the technical planning approach; better analysis does not produce more siting successes
- 3. The *discovery* of more successful energy decision-making through public engagement, negotiation and conflict resolution (Clarington EFW Incinerator)

Inhaber's 4 Factors to Overcome NIMBY

- 1. A community must be willing to accept it (a willing host community)
- 2. The siting process and risk analysis must be simple and understandable
- 3. Compensation/benefit for the affected community must be part of the plan
- 4. People in the affected community have to be able to control the facility as little or as much as they want

Herbert Inhaber (1998) Slaying the NIMBY Dragon

Community-based Energy Planning I

NIMBY is not irrational, rather, it conveniently masks a host of issues important to communities.

Masked issues in siting:

1. need and rationale for technology
2. real risk, perceived risk and potential for losses
3. potential mismanagement - trust
4. potential failure to respond - contingency
5. stigma produced by facility
6. potential inequitable distribution of benefits or risks

Audrey Armour (1992)

Key Sources of Energy Planning Failure

1. Consultation: often too little, too late
2. Citizens want some control over what happens in their community
3. Citizens lost trust in governments, experts
4. Inequities exist between those who benefit and those live near the facility
5. Opposition often results from a facility's perceived risks and the stigma created

Community-based Planning

- Communities should be presented with an energy planning problem, not with a project they have to accept or oppose
- They have to have their interests met or have the chance to opt out
- They have to have their consent sought (fairness, transparency)
- They have to have their consent sought for technologies; energy production and transmission
- They have to share in the benefits as well as the risks

Audrey Armour (1992)

Community-based Planning

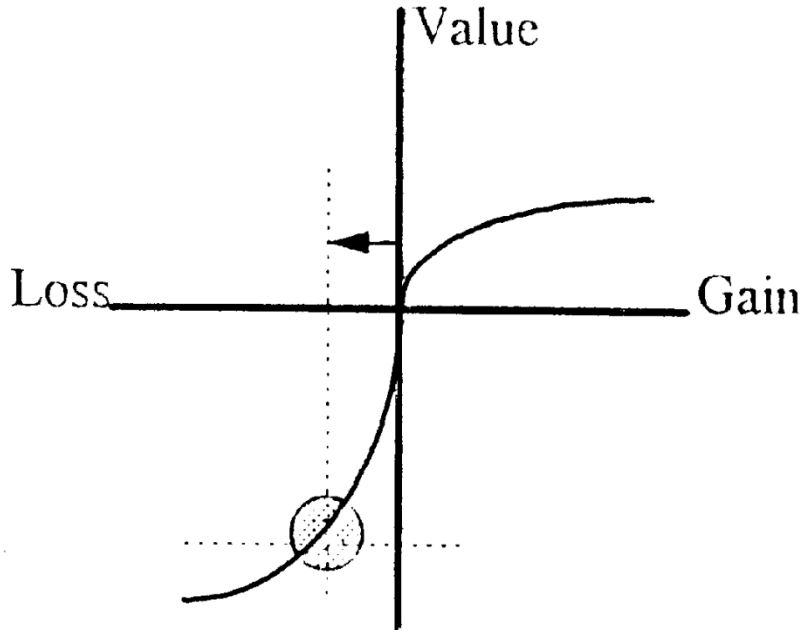
- Community energy planning takes a long time (~100 meetings for Clarington)
- No guiding theory of energy facility risk communication
- People in communities everywhere have high levels of scientific illiteracy; communicating energy risks and impacts is hard work
- No good-faith effort at community-based planning can guarantee acceptance

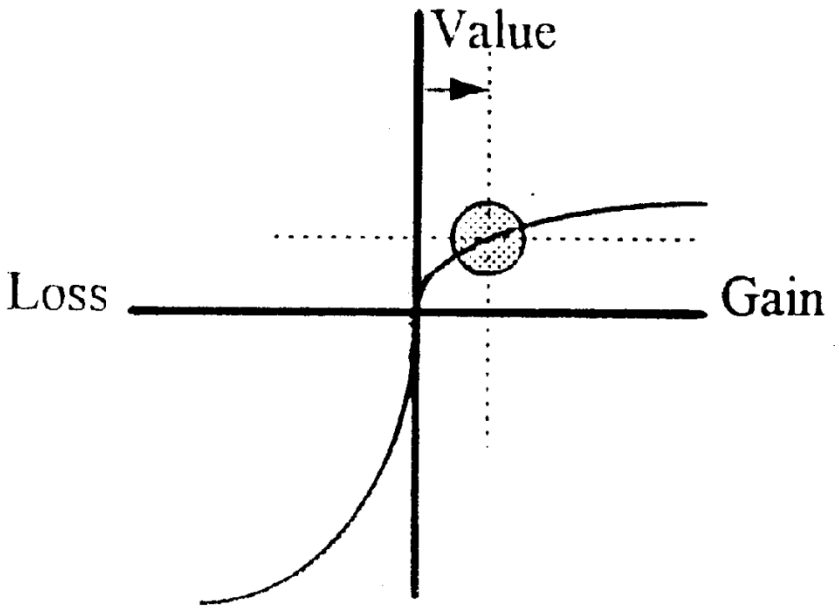
Energy Planning Context

We have to plan within a democratic, market based system where the current expectation of a fundamental public role in energy planning decisions is the norm

Revising the planning process to include communities: giving local governments and the public a greater planning role

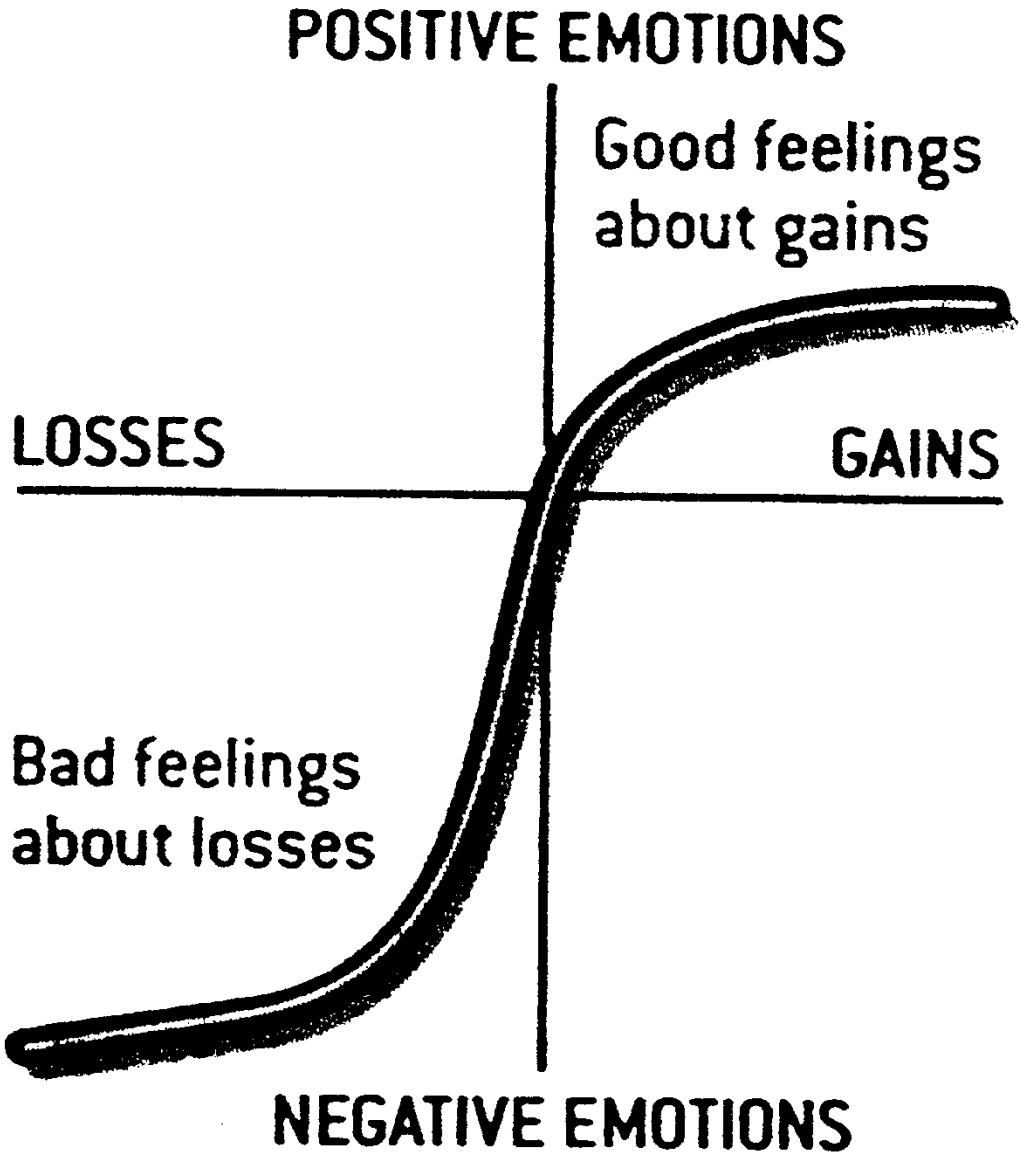
Prospect Theory Comparison





Kahneman and Tversky (1979)
'Analysis of Decision-making Under Risk'

REACTIONS TO LOSSES AND GAINS



Armour's Cooperative Siting Model…2

Cooperative Model:

- 1. Community should volunteer: it can opt-out at any time
- 2. Problem-solving: community is a partner
- 3. Compensation and reward are paid
- 4. Community has the right to select:
  -technology options
  -risk management measures
- 5. Assurance: human & environmental health are maintained for every site. No technically unacceptable sites for accepting populations

Cooperative/voluntary model I

Audrey Armour (1995): 5 principles of a democratic, cooperative planning model

1. The community should volunteer: right to "opt out at any time"
    - -does a community volunteer? Why?
    - -if it's something they fear/don't want?
    - -effect on proponent: must ask…what is the interest of the community?
    - -effect on the community?

Cooperative/voluntary model II

2. A community should be a '<u>partner</u>' in problem-solving
   - -present them with a problem, not a project
   - -community has to solve the problem:
     - Whose demand for energy is it?
     - What has been done to reduce it?
     - How should it be dealt with?
     - Where will the solution be located?

Cooperative/voluntary model III

3. The community should get compensation
   - -to offset real impacts
   - -to increase local benefits/offset losses
   - -Brooks asked: 'who should benefit?'
   - -is this re-distributive planning?
   - -is compensation a bribe?

Cooperative/voluntary model IV

4. Community Right to Select Planning Options
   - -Technology options
   - -Sites/locations
   - -Impact management measures
   - -Compensation

Determined by a public dialogue of what is in the community's interests/acceptable

Essential goal = Consensus

- Explore interests (zone of agreement)
- Allow/enable the consensus-seeking process to take place = dialogue
- Consensus is not unanimity
- Consensus is the agreement of the majority plus the acquiescence of the minority (not preferred, but not opposed)

Armour's Safeguards to Protect Community

1. Impact management options disclosed at the outset (full, transparent information)
2. Community-hired advisors (trust)
3. Site assessments and technology assessments conducted jointly with the community (trust)
4. Community representation: citizen liaison group broadly based (internal democracy leading to consensus)
5. Funding: participation paid for by the proponent

When is compensation not a bribe?

- When it's offered after the community has understood the risks
- When the Site has been shown to be safe (it meets the baseline criterion)
- When the outcome is shown to be fair
- When the compensation is used to reduce the risks rather than just increase material benefits
- When be[illegible]additional risk is rewarded

Cooperative and Voluntary Siting

Control is the exercise of free will expressed through consent.

Consent is:

- free by definition
- informed consent
- explicit consent (referendum)
- shared decision-making