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- (73) Patenthaver: **General Electric Company, 1 River Road, Schenectady, NY 12345, USA**
- (72) Opfinder: **Neumann, Ulrich Werner, 300 Garlington Road, Greenville, SC 29615, USA**
Buchan, Charles Van, 300 Garlington Road, Greenville, SC 29615, USA
Fulton, Blake Allen, 300 Garlington Road, Greenville, SC 29615, USA
Kulasekera, Vishan Rashmi, 300 Garlington Road, Greenville, SC 29615, USA
Moore, Bradley Graham, 300 Garlington Road, Greenville, SC 29615, USA
Yenigun, Esat Sadi, 300 Garlington Road, Greenville, SC 29615, USA
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EP-A1- 2 369 174
US-A1- 2006 228 220
US-A1- 2012 141 280
None

DESCRIPTION

[0001] The subject matter disclosed herein relates to the art of wind turbines and, more particularly, to a method and system for replacing a wind turbine blade.

[0002] Wind generators convert energy provided by air currents into electricity. The air currents rotate large rotor blades or propellers that are mounted in nacelles at the top of a tower. The blades spin a rotor relative to a stator to generate an electrical current. The rate of rotation is controlled by varying blade pitch as well as through the use of various braking systems. During high wind conditions, the blade pitch is adjusted to spill wind energy in order to limit rotational speed. Occasionally, the braking system is employed to further prevent the blades from achieving high rotational speeds. During low wind conditions, the blade pitch is adjusted in order to capture as much wind energy as possible.

[0003] Over time, the wind generators require maintenance. Debris, hailstones and the like oftentimes impact the blades and cause damage. Replacing a worn or damaged blade generally requires the presence of one or more large ground or sea based cranes. The large cranes are used to retain and lower the blade to a surface such as the ground or a ships deck. In some cases, replacing a blade necessitates that others of the blades be moved to an off balance position. That is, a brake system is activated to position the blade being replaced in a position that is horizontal to ground. In such a case, the others of the blades are off-balance imparting forces to the braking system. In other cases, the blade is placed in a position perpendicular to ground and lowered. In such cases, multiple crews are required to rotate the blade to prevent contact between the surface and a tip portion of the blade that may result in damage.

[0004] Alternative system and techniques for replacing wind turbine blades are known, for example, from US 2006/228220, US 2012/141280 and EP 2 369 174.

[0005] In contrast, the present invention, as defined by the appended claims, is provided.

[0006] Various advantages and features will become more apparent from the following description taken in conjunction with the drawings.

[0007] The subject matter, which is regarded as the invention, is defined by the appended claims. The foregoing and other features, and advantages of the invention are apparent from the following detailed description taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings in which:

FIG. 1 is a partial perspective view of a wind turbine support hub having a system for effecting replacement of a single wind turbine blade in accordance with an exemplary embodiment;

FIG. 2 is a partial perspective view a wind turbine blade of FIG. 1 suspended a first distance from the wind turbine support hub by a plurality of support members;

FIG. 3 depicts a support member and hydraulic jack cylinder in an extended configuration in accordance with an exemplary embodiment;

FIG. 4 depicts the hydraulic jack cylinder of FIG. 3 in a retracted configuration;

FIG. 5 is a partial perspective view of a plurality of bracket members secured to the wind turbine support hub and a plurality of bracket elements secured to the wind turbine blade;

FIG. 6 depicts a plurality of cable climbing members and a plurality of support members supporting the wind turbine blade from the wind turbine support hub;

FIG. 7 depicts one of the plurality of cable climbing members supporting the wind turbine blade from the wind turbine support hub;

FIG. 8 depicts the wind turbine blade of FIG. 1, supported from the wind turbine support hub through only the plurality of cable climbing members; and

FIG. 9 depicts the wind turbine blade being lowered toward ground.

[0008] The detailed description explains embodiments of the invention, together with advantages and features, by way of example with reference to the drawings.

[0009] A wind turbine is indicated generally at 2 in FIG. 1. Wind turbine 2 includes a support hub 4 having attached thereto a first wind turbine blade 7, a second wind turbine blade 8, and a third wind turbine blade 9. Third wind turbine blade 9 includes an end or root portion 11. Of course, first and second wind turbine blades 7 and 8 also include end or root portions (not separately labeled). End portion 11 includes an array of mechanical fasteners, indicated generally at 14, that extend through a corresponding plurality of openings, one of which is shown at 16 (FIG. 3) provided on a blade receiving portion 18 of support hub 4. In accordance with an exemplary embodiment, a blade replacement system, a portion of which is indicated at 20, is provided within support hub 4.

[0010] Blade replacement system 20 includes a first support member 25, a second support member 26, and a third support member 27. Support members 25-27 take the form of threaded rods (not separately labeled) that extend through openings 16 in blade receiving portion 18 and engage with threaded openings (not separately labeled) previously provided with fasteners 14 as shown in FIG. 2. Once installed, a hydraulic jacking cylinder 34, illustrated in FIG. 3, is guided over each support member 25-27. Hydraulic jacking cylinder 34 includes a base section 36 that rests on an inner surface (not separately labeled) of blade receiving portion 18 and a plurality of telescoping sections 38-40. Base section 36 and telescoping sections 38-40 include a central passage 42 that receives a corresponding one of support members 25-27.

[0011] In FIG. 3, hydraulic jacking cylinder 34 is shown mounted over a free end (not

separately labeled) of support member 25. Once in position, telescoping sections 38-40 are extended and a retaining nut 49 is threaded onto first support member 25. Once additional hydraulic jacking cylinders (not shown) are provided on first and second support members 26 and 27, retaining nuts 49 are removed from fasteners 14. At this point, telescoping sections 38-40 are shifted into base section 36 (FIG. 4) separating third wind turbine blade 9 from support hub 4 a first distance. Once separated the first distance, one at a time, retaining nuts 49 are moved away from base section 36 and telescoping sections 38-40 are again extended in preparation for further separation of third wind turbine blade 9 from support hub 4.

[0012] Blade replacement system 20 also includes a plurality of bracket members, one of which is indicated at 54 and a plurality of bracket elements, one of which is indicated at 57. When separated the first distance, bracket members 54, are mounted to blade receiving portion 18 and bracket elements 57 are mounted to select ones of fasteners 14 on third wind turbine blade 9, as shown in FIG. 5. Each bracket member 54 and bracket element 57 includes mounting structure, shown in the form of openings (not separately labeled). A number of cables 64, 65, and 66, are connected to corresponding ones of bracket members 54. Specifically, one end (not separately labeled) of each cable 64, 65, and 66 is mounted to a corresponding bracket member 54 which another, free end of each cable 64, 65, and 66 is allowed to fall toward ground. By "ground" it should be understood that the free end of each cable 64, 65 and 66 may fall towards ground, a ship's deck, or a body of water depending upon the location of wind turbine 2. Once bracket members 54 and bracket elements 57 are installed, telescoping sections 38-40 of hydraulic jacking cylinders 34 are lowered creating further separation between third wind turbine blade 9 and support hub 4.

[0013] The additional separation allows for the mounting of cable climbing members. More specifically, blade replacement system 20 further includes a plurality of cable climbing members 80, 81, and 82. Cable climbing members are connected to corresponding ones of cables 64, 65, and 66. Cable climbing members 80, 81, and 82 are controlled so as to climb from the free ends of each cable 64-66 toward bracket members 54, as shown in FIG. 6. As each winch 80, 81, and 82 is similarly formed, a detailed description will follow to FIG. 7 in describing winch 80 with an understanding that cable climbing members 81 and 82 include corresponding structure. Winch 80 includes a housing 85 that supports a motor 88, a cable climbing portion 90 and a shackle 93. Shackle 93 is connected to bracket element 57 through a coupler 96. Once all cable climbing members 80-82 are connected to corresponding bracket elements 57, telescoping sections 38-40 of hydraulic jacking cylinders 34 are further lowered transferring support of third wind turbine blade 9 from support members 25-27 to cable climbing members 80-82 as shown in FIG. 8. At this point, support members 25-27 may be removed, and cable climbing members 80-82 shifted or climbed down cables 64-66 to lower third wind turbine blade 9 from support hub 4 as shown in FIG. 9. The above steps may be revised to raise and install a new wind turbine blade.

[0014] At this point it should be understood that the exemplary embodiments describe a system for lowering and raising wind turbine blades without the need for ground-based cranes. The exemplary embodiments employ cable climbing members that are controlled to climb up

cables suspended from the support hub and subsequently climb down the cables with the wind turbine blade. It should also be understood that while the support members are described as threaded rods, other structures may be employed. Further, while the wind turbine blade is described as being stepped down through the support members using multiple, successive operations, a single step down may also be employed. Further, it should be understood that a new blade can be raised and secured to the hub by reversing the process described above.

[0015] While the invention has been described in detail in connection with only a limited number of embodiments, it should be readily understood that the invention is not limited to such disclosed embodiments. Accordingly, the invention is not to be seen as limited by the foregoing description, but is only limited by the scope of the appended claims.

REFERENCES CITED IN THE DESCRIPTION

Cited references

This list of references cited by the applicant is for the reader's convenience only. It does not form part of the European patent document. Even though great care has been taken in compiling the references, errors or omissions cannot be excluded and the EPO disclaims all liability in this regard.

Patent documents cited in the description

- [US2006228220A](#) [0004]
- [US2012141280A](#) [0004]
- [EP2369174A](#) [0004]

KRAV

1. Fremgangsmåde til at udskifte en vindmøllevinge, omfattende at:
 - 5 ophænge vindmøllevingen fra et støttenav (4) af en vindmølle (2);
sikre en første ende af ét eller flere kabler (64, 65, 66) til de tilsvarende af ét eller flere beslagselementer (54), som er forbundet med støttenavet (4), og at lade en anden ende af det ene eller flere kabler (64, 65, 66) falde under indvirkning af tyngdekraften;
10 forbinde ét eller flere kabelklatringselementer (80, 81, 82) mellem støttenavet og vindmøllevingen, hvor forbindingen af det ene eller flere kabelklatringselementer (80, 81, 82) indbefatter at koble det ene eller flere kabelklatringselementer ved den anden ende af de tilsvarende af det ene eller flere kabler, og at klatre det ene eller flere kabelklatrelementer op ad det tilsvarende ene eller flere kabler til støttenavet; og at
15 sænke det ene eller flere kabelklatringselementer (80, 81, 82) og vindmøllevingen ned fra støttenavet (4).

2. Fremgangsmåde ifølge krav 1, hvor ophængningen af vindmøllevingen fra støttenavet (4) indbefatter at forbinde ét eller flere støtteelementer (25, 26, 27) mellem en endedel af
20 vindmøllevingen og støttenavet (4).

3. Fremgangsmåde ifølge krav 2, hvor forbindingen af et eller flere støtteelementer (25, 26, 27) omfatter at forbinde en gevindstang til endedelen af vindmøllevingen, hvor gevindstangen udstrækker sig ind i støttenavet (4).
25

4. Fremgangsmåde ifølge krav 2 eller krav 3, yderligere omfattende at:
adskille endedelen af vindmøllevingen fra støttenavet (4) med en første afstand.

5. Fremgangsmåde ifølge krav 4, hvor adskillelsen af endedelen omfatter at sænke det ene eller
30 flere støtteelementer (25, 26, 27) fra støttenavet (4) med en første afstand, hvor sænkningen af det ene eller flere støtteelementer (25, 26, 27) fortrinsvis omfatter at sænke en hydraulisk donkraftcylinder (34), der er operativt koblet til det ene eller flere støtteelementer (25, 26, 27).

6. Fremgangsmåde ifølge krav 1, yderligere omfattende at:
35 sænke det ene eller flere støtteelementer (25, 26, 27) fra støttenavet (4) med en anden afstand.

7. Fremgangsmåde ifølge krav 1, hvor kobling af det ene eller flere kabelklatrelementer (80, 81, 82) til endedelen af vindmøllevingen indbefatter at forbinde det ene eller flere kabelklatringselementer (80, 81, 82) til et beslagselement (57), som er tilvejebragt på endedelen af vindmøllevingen.
- 5
8. Fremgangsmåde ifølge krav 1 eller krav 7, yderligere omfattende at:
overføre vindmøllevingen fra én eller flere hydrauliske donkraftcylindre (34) i støttenavet (4) til ét eller flere kabelklatringselementer (80, 81, 82).
- 10
9. Fremgangsmåde ifølge krav 1, 7 eller 8, hvor sænkning af vindmøllevingen indbefatter at klatre det ene eller flere kabelklatringselementer (80, 81, 82) ned ad de tilsvarende af det ene eller flere kabler (64, 65, 66) for at sænke vindmøllevingen.
- 15
10. System til sænkning af en vindmøllevinge, der er monteret på et støttenav, hvor systemet omfatter:
- ét eller flere støtteelementer (25, 26, 27), der udstrækker sig mellem vindmøllevingen og støttenavet (4);
ét eller flere donkræftelementer (34), der er operativt koblet til de tilsvarende af det ene eller flere støtteelementer (25, 26, 27);
- 20
- ét eller flere kabler (64, 65, 66), hvor en første ende af kablerne er fastgjort til de tilsvarende af ét eller flere beslagselementer (54), som er forbundet med støttenavet (4), hvor en anden ende af det ene eller flere kabler er ladet til at falde under tyngdekraften;
- 25
- ét eller flere kabelklatringselementer (80, 81, 82), der er operativt forbundet mellem støttenavet (4) og vindmøllevingen, hvor det ene eller flere kabelklatrelementer (80, 81, 82) er indrettet til at være koblet ved den anden ende af de tilsvarende af det ene eller flere kabler, hvor kabelklatringselementerne (80, 81, 82) er indrettet til at klatre op ad det tilsvarende ene eller flere kabler til støttenavet, hvor det ene eller flere donkræftelementer (34) er indrettet og anbragt til at overføre støtten af vindmøllevingen fra det ene eller flere støtteelementer (25, 26, 27) til det ene eller flere kabelklatringselementer (80, 81, 82).
- 30
11. System ifølge krav 10, hvor det ene eller flere støtteelementer (25, 26, 27) omfatter én eller flere gevindstænger, der er operativt forbundet med vindmøllevingen, hvor den ene eller flere
- 35
- gevindstænger er fortrinsvis koblet til en endedel af vindmøllevingen.

12. System ifølge krav 10 eller krav 11, hvor det ene eller flere donkrafterelementer omfatter én eller flere hydrauliske donkraftcylindre (34), hvor det ene eller flere støtteelementer (25, 26, 27) fortrinsvis udstrækker sig gennem den ene eller flere hydrauliske donkraftcylindre (34).
- 5 13. System ifølge krav 10, 11 eller 12, yderligere omfattende:
ét eller flere beslagselementer (54), der er monteret på støttenavet (4), og ét eller flere beslagselementer (57), der er monteret på vindmøllevingen, hvor det ene eller flere kabelklatringsselementer (80, 81, 82) fortrinsvis omfatter ét eller flere kabelklatringsselementer (80, 81, 82), som fortrinsvis er direkte koblet til det ene eller flere beslagselementer (57) og indirekte
10 koblet til det ene eller flere beslagselementer (54) gennem et kabel.
14. System ifølge et hvilket som helst af kravene 10 - 13, hvor det ene eller flere donkrafterelementer er hydrauliske donkrafterelementer, hvor de hydrauliske donkrafterelementer omfatter en basissektion (36) til hvile på en overflade af en vingemodtagerdel (18) af støttenavet
15 og en flerhed af teleskopiske sektioner (38, 39, 40), hvor basissektionen (36) og de teleskopiske sektioner (38, 39, 40) indbefatter en central passage (42), der er indrettet til at modtage en tilsvarende én af støtteelementerne (25, 26, 27).

DRAWINGS

FIG. 1

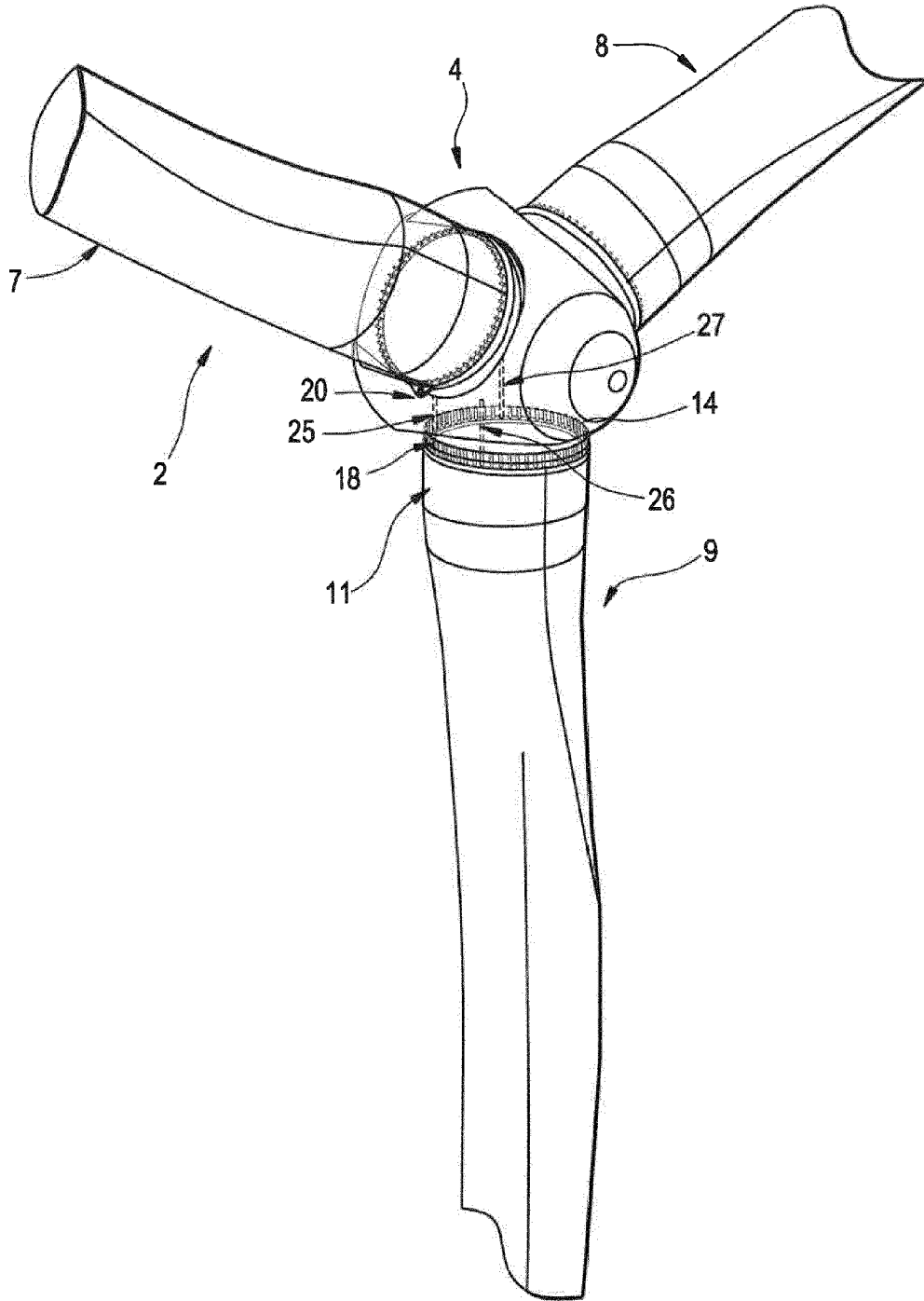


FIG. 2

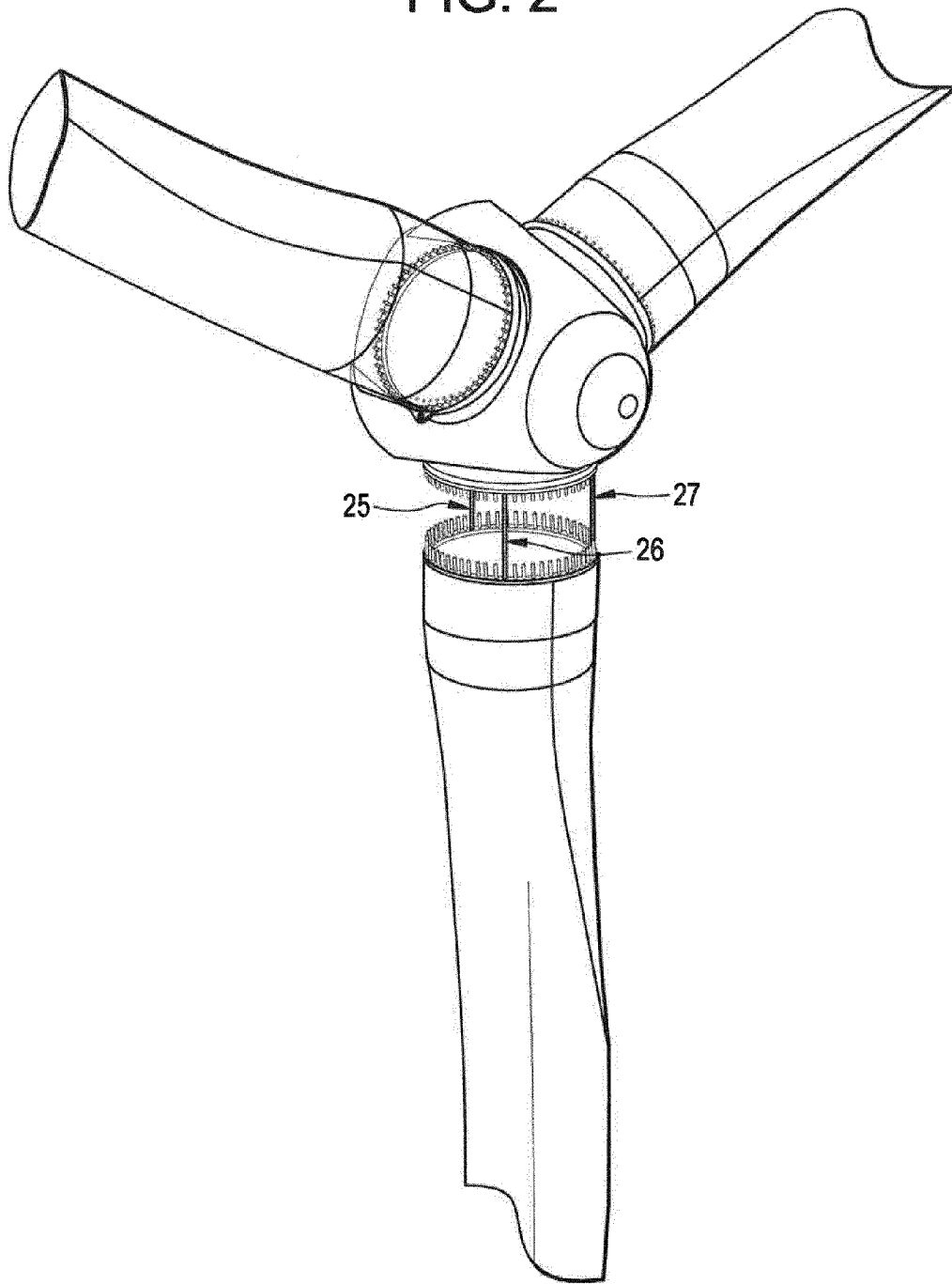


FIG. 3

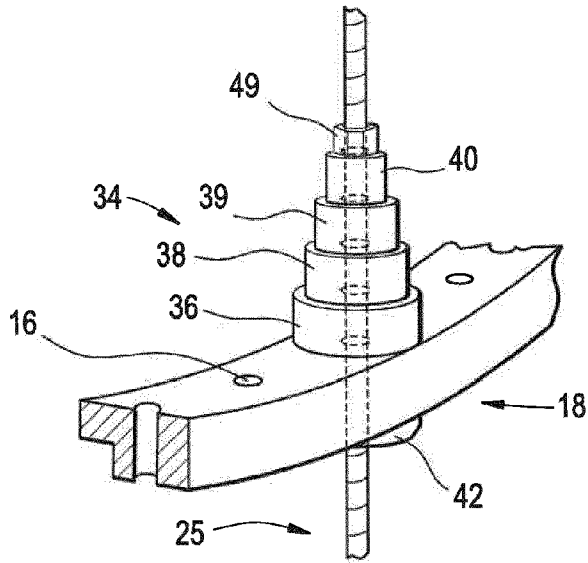


FIG. 4

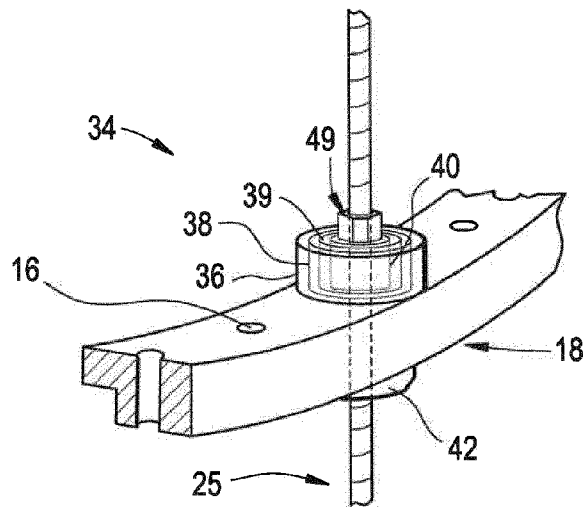


FIG. 5

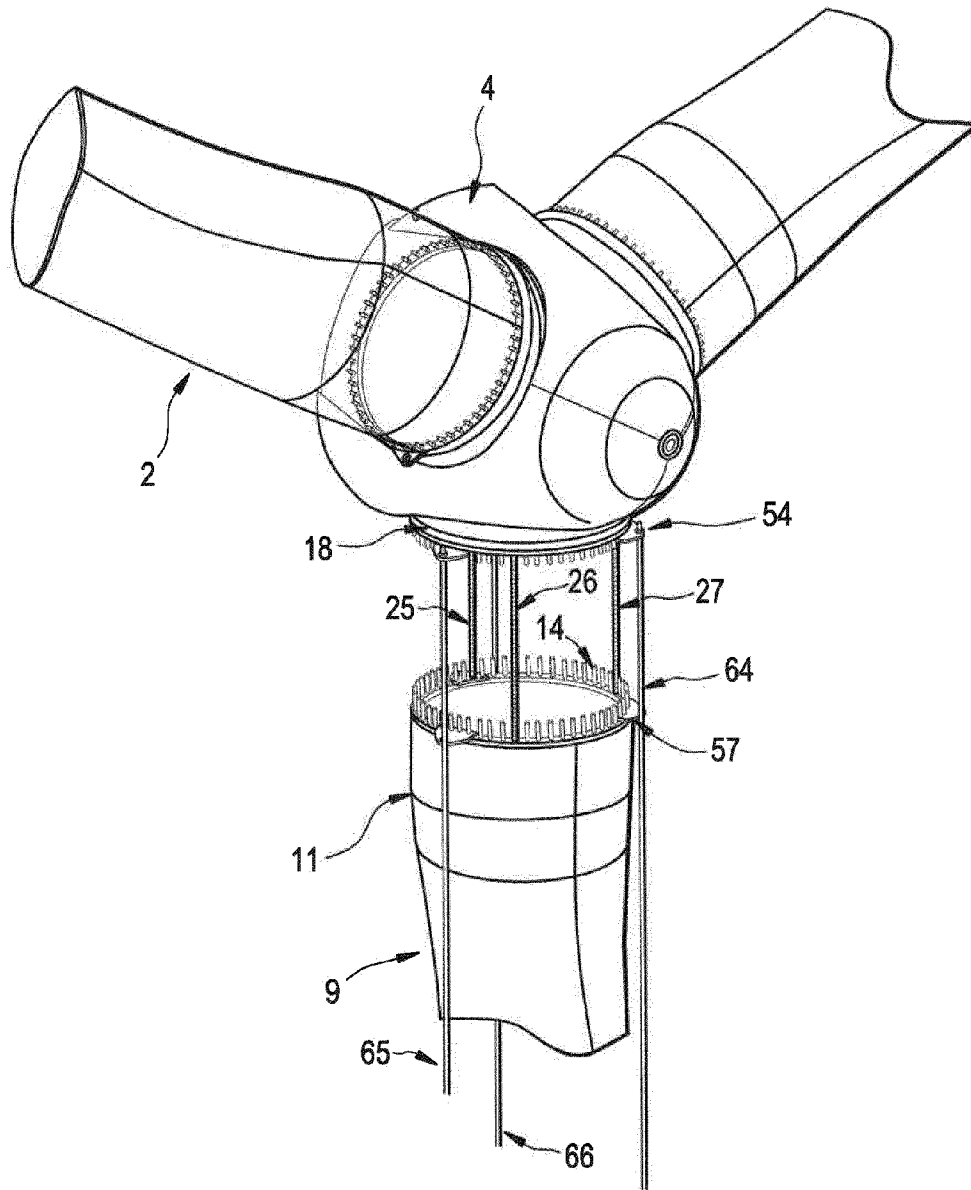


FIG. 6

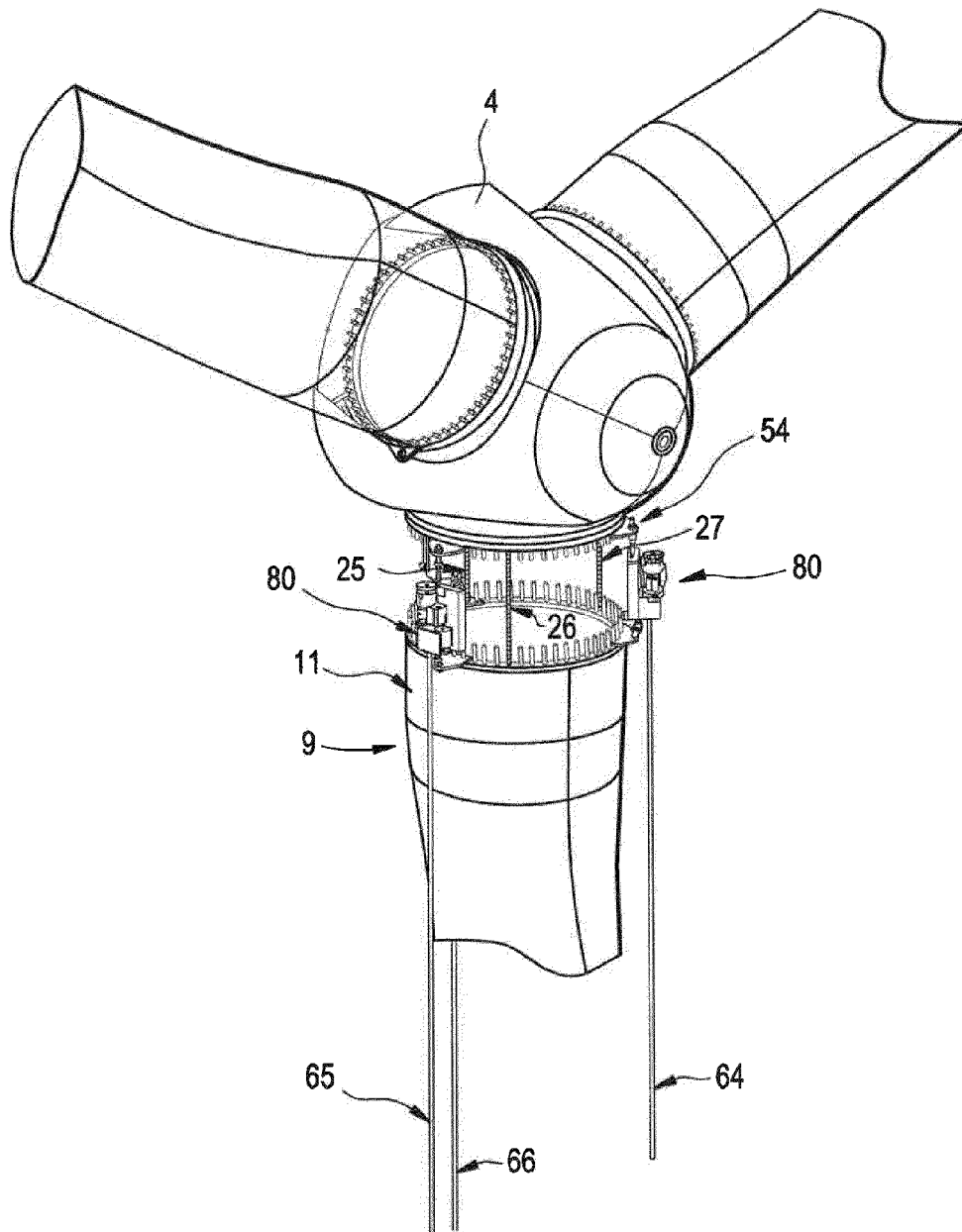


FIG. 7

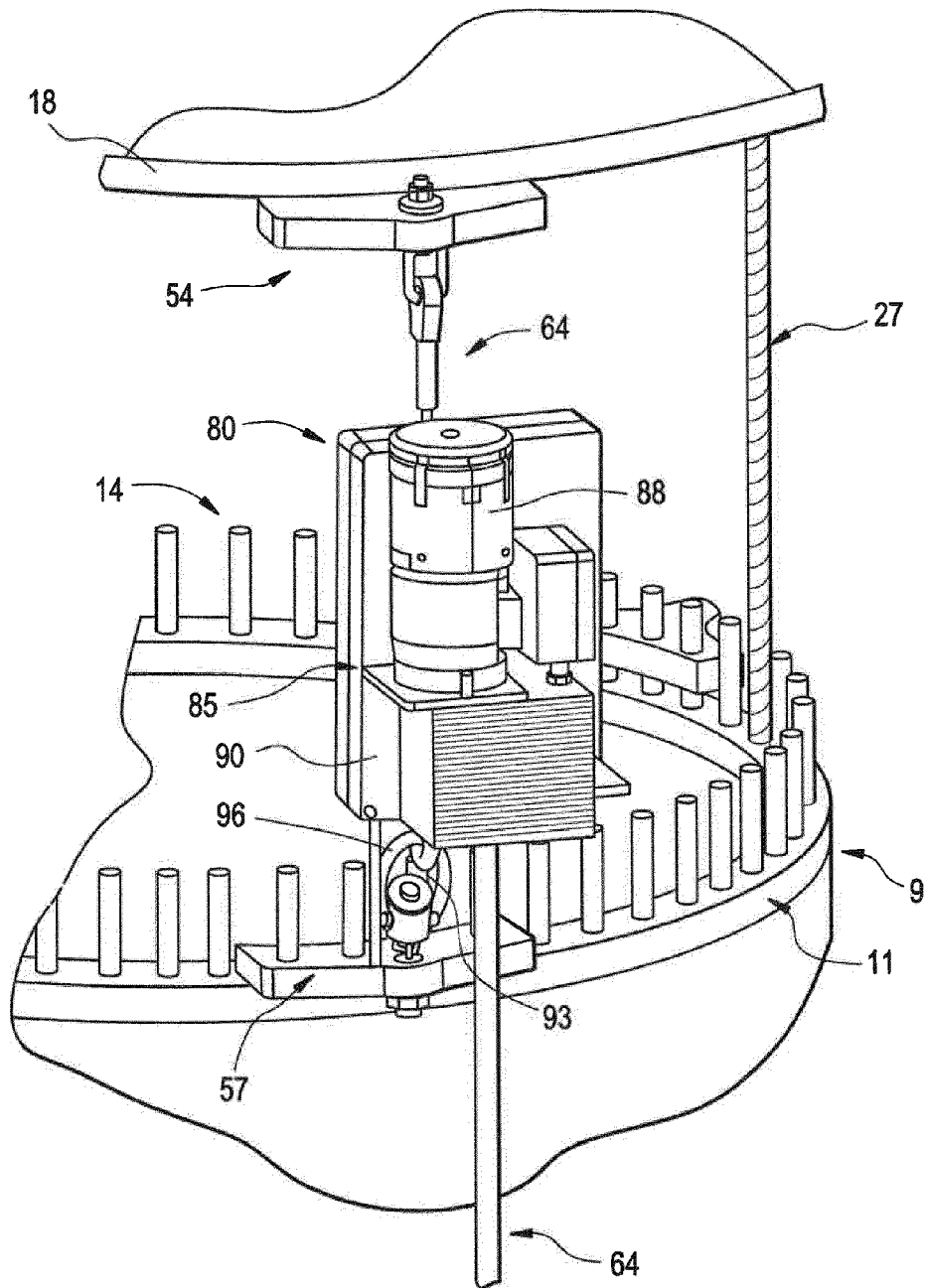


FIG. 8

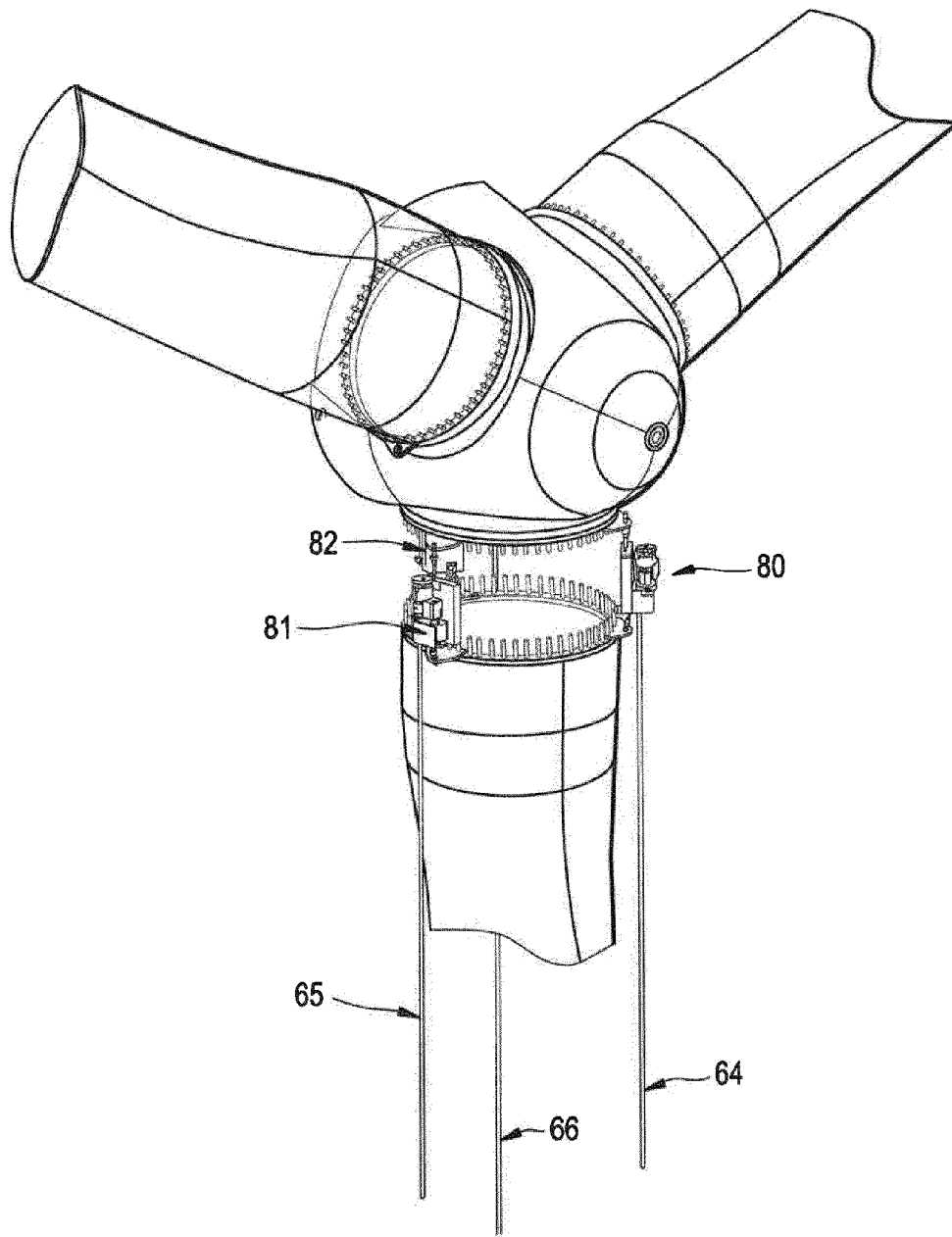


FIG. 9

