

Governance | Individual communication

IC - (21005) - REPRESENTING ENERGY CITIZENSHIP IN POSITIVE ENERGY DISTRICTS: PROSUMERISM, ENHANCING LOCAL IDENTITIES OR POLITICAL PARTICIPATION?

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Background and objectives

Positive Energy Districts (PEDs) is an Europe Union's initiative aiming to build districts that produce more renewable energy than its consumption. To facilitate this, European states are shifting from a state-centric to more participatory governance where the implementations of PEDs involves different actors, including citizens. Although the relevance of energy citizenship in shaping the large societal transformations and changing people-environment relations has been increasingly highlighted in both policy and academic spheres, they are focusing mainly on individual responsibility to produce more or consume less energy. This limited definition of energy citizenship as market participation risks to perpetuate the inequalities, injustices and exclusions of and towards marginalised citizens and non-citizens in energy transitions. Thus, the objective of this research is to understand how energy citizenship is being represented by different key stakeholders and what is its implications for fairness, inclusivity and well-being in PEDs.

Process and methods (for empirical research)

For that, Torres Vedras, a planned PED town in Portugal, was selected as the case study for this research. 20 in-depth interviews with various key stakeholders in PED implementation were carried out. Interviews were then analyzed using pragmatic discourse analysis to identify as much the key representations of energy citizenship present in participants' discourses; as the discursive strategies used by participants to negotiate, promote or resist changes in the role of energy citizens.

Main results (or main arguments in the case of critical reviews)

The analyses will explore if and to what extend participants' discourses reproduce more conventional and hegemonic ideas of energy citizenship and which implications those might have for justice, inclusion and well-being in people-environment relations; and if and which alternative representations are presented and what are the potentialities for these to become more hegemonic discourses.

Implications for research and practice/policy | Importance and originality of the contribution

As such, this research will contribute to identify and unpack alternative views to energy citizenship that will be crucial to promote sustainable energy transitions that are fair and just.

Palavras-chave : Energy citizenship, Social representation, Participatory governance, Prefigurative politics, People-place relations