

Governance | Individual communication

IC - (21038) - MAINSTREAMING ENERGY CITIZENSHIP THROUGH RESEARCH: HORIZON2020 PROJECTS AS ACTORS IN STRATEGIC NICHE MANAGEMENT

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Background and objectives

The EU has made allowances for a variety of actors to participate in the energy transition. Most recently, the Directive on common rules for the internal electricity market ((EU) 2019/944) introduced rules that would enable citizens and energy communities to actively participate in the energy system as energy generators, consumers, or as providers of flexibility services. Actual participation, however, is can still be considered niche-level. Through EU funding schemes like Horizon2020, a number of research and innovation projects aim to support this directive by mainstreaming energy citizenship. By applying strategic niche management theory, this paper investigates to what extent these projects engage local actors, build knowledge, and expand support networks among existing bottom-up renewable energy initiatives.

Process and methods (for empirical research)

The analysis is based on an analysis of deliverables from 37 H2020 projects in the realm of “Secure, clean and efficient energy” as well as semi-structured interviews from two case study projects. The resulting content is analyzed into order to understand how knowledge from bottom-up energy initiatives is integrated into the projects.

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

Through their research and innovation agenda, H2020 projects may have the power to represent niche-level actors – like energy communities and citizen-driven renewable energy initiatives – to the regime and integrate their knowledge into their own project. This article seeks to understand the degree to which Horizon 2020 projects aggregate and integrate learnings from local actors and foster a network that supports the further development of the niche.

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

The outcome of this research may point to ways in which innovation-focused research projects in the renewable energy domain generate visions for the energy transition amidst the work of existing bottom-up actors; this hold implications for how knowledge is created in these types of projects and what role they play in strategic niche management in the renewable energy domain.