

Community based energy use – two examples of individual innovations in the daily energy practice

Petra Wächter

Institute of Technology Assessment of the Austrian Academy of Sciences

petra.waechter@univie.ac.at

Abstract

Energy as the basis for daily activities on an individual level and for economic activities on a societal level gives fundamental importance to our lives. The paper wants to draw the attention on individual innovations in the daily energy practice. More concrete, two examples of the field are further explored: one deals with energy demand related to space by analysing possibilities that multifunctional settlements offer in the organisation of less energy intensive practices. In these multifunctional settlements, contact nodes are a valuable basis for the creation of a sense of community where personal contacts can be made and established which can foster the appearance of community based services aiming at less energy use. Moreover, these activities can be organized in a self-esteeming and democratic way. Multifunctional settlements provide a chance to enhance a less energy-intensive lifestyle also by different mobility patterns, different consumption habits and less energy consuming activities.

The other example focuses on the supply side of energy by analysing the engagement of communities in providing sustainable energy. Community based energy production has shown to be a valuable contribution to citizen participation in addressing sustainable energy issues. Decentralised energy models where energy is generated, stored and consumed locally provide a greater security and also quality of energy supply. Moreover, these energy projects are multi-faceted and they rarely address only one technology or one aspect of behaviour. These two examples show that the daily organisation of lives has large potentials for the shaping of energy transformations.