

Title: Local energy transition: revolution or illusion?

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Abstract:

Background

Despite the historic usage of wind power to drain water and grind grain, the Netherlands lags behind most EU countries in the production of energy from renewable sources. However the Association of Dutch Municipalities (VNG) reported lately that more than three hundred groups of civilians, enterprises and societal groups started initiatives with renewable energy.

Main question

Can the local initiatives in favor of renewable energy that arise in many Dutch local communities be seen as a radical innovation in the energy delivery system?

Description local energy initiatives

- How many local energy initiatives started last year? Who started these initiatives? What motives did the initiators have?
- How are these initiatives organized? What legal entity do these initiatives have? By volunteers or professionals?
- What do these local energy organizations deliver to their members or supporters? (sustainable energy, services to develop sustainable energy: wind, sun energy, biomass, electric cars)? In what stage of development are plans?
- How many households or enterprises participate as sustainable energy consumers or supporters at this moment in the local energy initiative? And in previous years?
- What were the main problems in organizing local energy initiatives? What was the nature of these problems?
- Are these initiatives financed by their members and supporters? Are there other financial resources? Are banks or governments involved?
- What phases can be discerned in the development? What do these local energy organizations expect concerning future developments?

Analysis of stimulating and inhibiting factors

- Can these energy initiatives be interpreted as forms of societal self-organization?
- What services were outsourced (administration of sustainable energy delivery)? To what extent was knowledge of other organizations used? Were other local initiatives concerning renewable energy supportive?
- Do these initiatives comply with local or energy policy or other policies of local or regional government? What forms of support regarding these local energy initiatives were offered? To what extent did local or regional government obstruct these initiatives?

- Do energy suppliers see local energy initiatives as a relevant development? To what extent did local energy suppliers respond to the local energy initiatives? Were there responses directed at energy consumers or governments? Were their reactions towards consumers or enterprises successful?
- How does national government evaluate local energy initiatives? Does this development comply with regulations concerning energy markets? How does national government affect local energy initiatives?
- Does national regulation obstruct the development of local energy initiatives?

Method:

- Six case studies of local energy initiatives (early adopters/innovators),
- Interviews with participants in the local setting or relevant organizations at the national level (20),
- Content analysis (websites of local initiatives, white papers of governments, scientific articles etc.).