



THE ROLE OF ENERGY COMMUNITIES IN TRANSFORMING URBAN ENERGY SYSTEMS

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FUTURE HORIZONS IN THE URBAN ENERGY TRANSITION
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Outline



- Community energy (CE)
- Social innovation
- Role of CE in energy transitions
- Need to professionalise and scale
- The SCCALE203050 project
- The SCCALE Monitoring Tool
- Q&A

- Community energy (CE)
 - Grassroots civic movement
 - To achieve sustainable energy transitions goals
 - To achieve just energy democracy goals
 - Social innovation
- Over 1900 energy cooperatives in Europe
- Over 1.25 million European citizens involved in CE
- Confined to limited number of N-W EU Member States
- Need to scale
 - ... in multiple ways



- “Changes in social relations, involving new ways of doing, organising, framing or knowing” (Haxeltine et al., 2016).
- Unlike other forms of innovation, social innovation includes the connotation of meeting social goals, i.e., new ideas that work in meeting social goals, like achieving a more equitable, just and empowered society (Martinelli, 2012).
- Community energy – or collective citizen action in sustainable energy transitions – can be understood from a social innovation perspective.

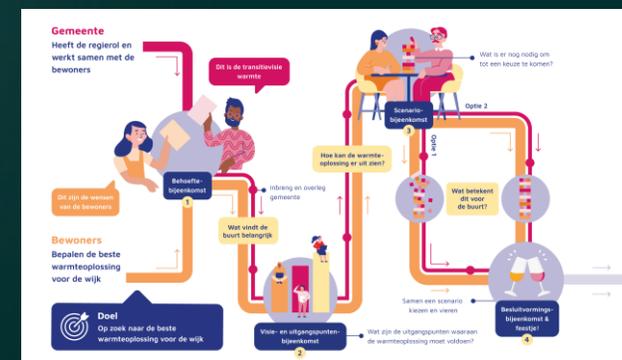


In the revised Renewable energy directive (2018/2001/EU) 'Renewable energy community' means a legal entity:

- (a) which, in accordance with the applicable national law, is based on **open and voluntary participation**, is **autonomous**, and is effectively controlled by shareholders or members that are located in the **proximity** of the renewable energy projects that are owned and developed by that legal entity;
- (b) the **shareholders** or members of which are natural persons, SMEs or local authorities, including municipalities;
- (c) the **primary purpose** of which is to provide **environmental, economic or social community benefits** for its shareholders or members or for the local areas where it operates, **rather than financial profits**.

- A source of (grassroots, and predominantly social) innovative activity contributing to a ferment of diverse, often hybridizing sustainable energy activities.
- Activities:
 - Awareness raising;
 - Promoting green consumption;
 - Education;
 - Service provision;
 - Lobbying;
 - Setting standards, counter expertise, citizen science;
 - Grassroots innovation;

Interreg North Sea II Waterwarmth project



Programma Aardgasvrije wijken

- 8 out of 14 pilot demonstrations in third tranche involving CE

The SCCALE 203050 project

- Sustainable Collective Citizen Action for a Local Europe (SCCALE)
- Fostering the creation of energy communities
- 5 pilot communities and 26 replication sites in FR, GK, HR, NL and BE
- Comprehensive methodology
- Several tools developed (methodology guide, municipal guide, monitoring tool,...)

Get involved! www.sccale203050.eu



Problem definition

- Need to better understand how CE organisations develop, grow, mature, scale and induce transformative change
- Need for tooling and empirical evidence base
 - Also demanded by policy makers nowadays
- Main question:
 - *How to develop, implement and validate a measurement tool that allows for assessing and reflecting on the development, growth, maturity, and scaling of energy communities?*



Development Progress Tool guide for Energy Communities

Images credit: iStockphoto/Rawpixel;
Vectorstock; Dreamstime

The development progress tool guide in a nutshell

Why? To **assess progress, impact and effectiveness** of different types of collective citizen actions

Who? **Energy communities** at different stages of organisational development and maturity (inspiration, preparation, implementation and/or operation)

What?

- A tool to assist energy communities in **monitoring their development progress** on different Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)
- A set of **questions** asking about different activities undertaken by energy communities to determine their level of development progress
- Detailed information on **realistic actions** to take to improve the maturity and progress development of energy communities
- Links to the **methodology guide activities** on how to improve on certain indicators at different stages of maturity
- A **visual overview** of your energy community's development progress, per maturity stage

Stages of maturity for energy communities

INSPIRATION

First stage of development, which usually starts with a small group of people that have some ideas on starting a energy community initiative.

PREPARATION

Second stage of development whereby there is more focus on the type of energy community initiative you professionalise, and envision and to determine your governance, financial and technical needs.

IMPLEMENTATION

Third stage whereby you implement and monitor your project activities as per the plan agreed to by the members of the energy community.

OPERATION

Fourth stage - Critical evaluation and potential adjustment of the vision and goals of the energy community. At this stage, based on your progress, you can plan for scaling to replication sites.

Important stakeholders per stage of maturity

INSPIRATION

- Inspired core group of people
- Community members

PREPARATION

- Community members
- External investors
- Local government
- Policy makers
- National and international energy community federations

IMPLEMENTATION

- Community members
- Finance partners
- Suppliers
- Local government
- Professional staff

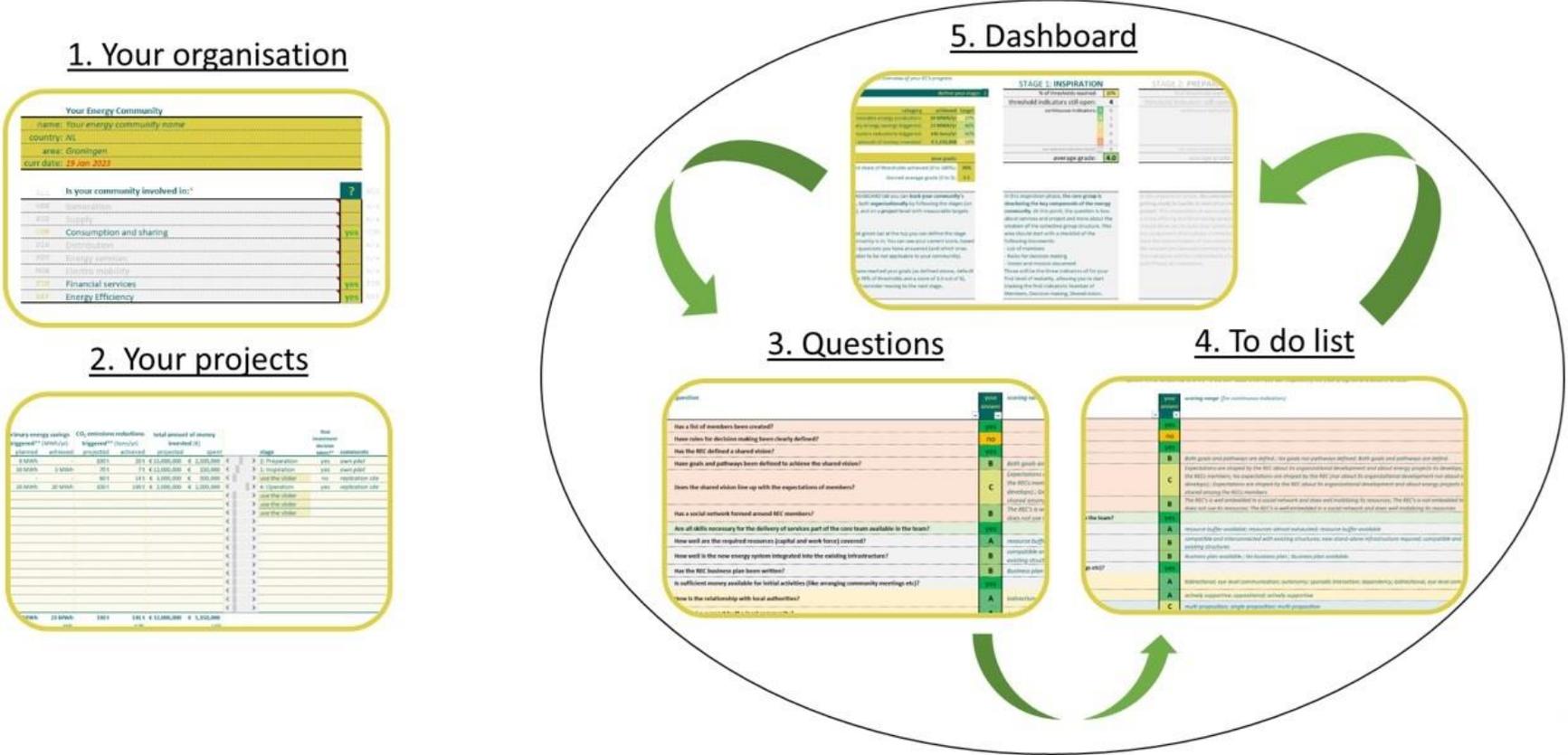
OPERATION

- Replication sites
- Professional staff
- National and/or international energy community federations

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) used to monitor progress

Acronym	KPI	Meaning
SFM	Social Factors – Members	Assessment of the integration and level of engagement of the members of the (local) community within the Energy Community
SFK	Social Factors – Key Personnel	Capability level of the staff members of the energy community organisation, such as human capital, knowledge and skills that will allow an energy community to implement their services and develop new ones.
FIN	Financial and Economic	Financial capabilities of the energy community organisation, such as market values and business indicators linked with the entity built by the community.
POL	Policy and Politics	Understanding of policies and regulations governing energy communities. It is also concerned with how well organisations form alliances with political actors and public officials to ensure support for their EC initiatives.
TEC	Technical	Knowledge and technical capabilities of the community energy organisation to provide stable energy services and techno-economic operational activities. Technical aspects of community energy projects.
LEA	Learning and Scaling	Concerns the education of the staff and community energy members through handbooks, guides, tools, as well as critical reflection on the community energy organisations' own performance.
SDE	Socio-Demographic Characteristics	Concerned with socio-economic factors, diversity and inclusivity of energy communities.
OAS	Organisation and Strategy	Refers to decision making processes and rules within the organisation, shared vision, governance structure etc., and whether management processes are clear.

The basic workflow of the progress monitoring tool



General:

- In most pilots organisational growth was observed
- Scaling observed via replication sites and intermediary actions

Reception of tool by users

- Tools helps to identify areas receiving little attention (e.g., diversity) and prioritise them in agenda-setting
- Tool helps to raise awareness and to reflect on own actions
- Tool appreciated for strategic development of organisations and projects
- Users find it difficult to determine the stage of development of their EC
- Practitioners experience difficulty in understanding academic concepts
- Tool needs translation to native language
- Need for online application of tool (i.e., for systematic data storage and analytical purposes)
- Attention predominantly to early stages of development
- Under-estimation of work in implementation and operational phases.

- 2 year iterative process of developing, validating and adjusting MT
- Development required lots of discussion with practitioners
- 3 year process of data collection and analysis
- Turbulent journey
- Would eventually allow for testing and validating propositions from EC, SNM and TSI literature in systematic longitudinal studies.
- Still needs to prove how to assist CE in process of organisational maturity and professionalization, and evaluation thereof.
- **Work in progress!**
- Need for replication



Thank you!



...Any questions?

For questions after the workshop, please contact:

- Thomas Hoppe // T.Hoppe@tudelft.nl

Highlights from plenary and break-out sessions

Statements discussed during the break-out groups:

1. Comparing community energy projects is like **comparing apples and oranges** (and does not make much sense). **Not necessarily true! The experience so far shows that we have to be mindful of design variables at play.**
2. Energy communities need to **professionalize** in order to scale. **Yes and No! Necessary to overcome informal management of ECs. No, This may hinder some groups from benefitting.**
3. **CO₂ reduction impact** is the most important indicator to measure community energy performance. **Not always practical! Not all projects can measure impact in numbers.**
4. The monitoring tool can also be applied to **other target groups like SMEs. Yes, to some extent. Business rules differ from community led initiatives.**

Highlights from plenary and break-out sessions

Statements discussed during the break-out groups:

5. The monitoring tool **supports policy making**. **Yes! The results can feed into policy influencing efforts.**
6. Question: Do you have experiences with **other energy community progress development tools**? **Yes! Some more relevant for later stages of the projects.**
7. Energy communities should pay more attention to **inclusivity**. **Yes! But mostly difficult at initial stages because of expertise.**

indicat	cat	i_stage	i_type	ENS	ZEZ	ELE	LEU	ENE	indicat	cat	i_stage	i_type	ENS	ZEZ	ELE	LEU	ENE	indicat	cat	i_stage	i_type	ENS	ZEZ	ELE	LEU	ENE
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Example: policy

POL001C	1	C	5	5	1	5		How would you describe the relationship with the local authority?
POL002C	2	C	5	3	5	3		To what extent is the REC a member of any national or international CE networks, federations or associations?
POL006C	2	C	4	3	5	3		How is membership of national or international CE networks, federations or associations experienced?
POL003T	2	T	yes	yes	yes	yes		Have bureaucratic barriers been identified?
POL003C	2	C	4	3	3	4		Have solutions been found to overcome the bureaucratic barriers encountered?
POL004C	1	C	4	4	3	3		How do you rate the support by the local community?
POL005C	2	C	5	5	1	5		Does the REC experience support from local officials or civil servants?

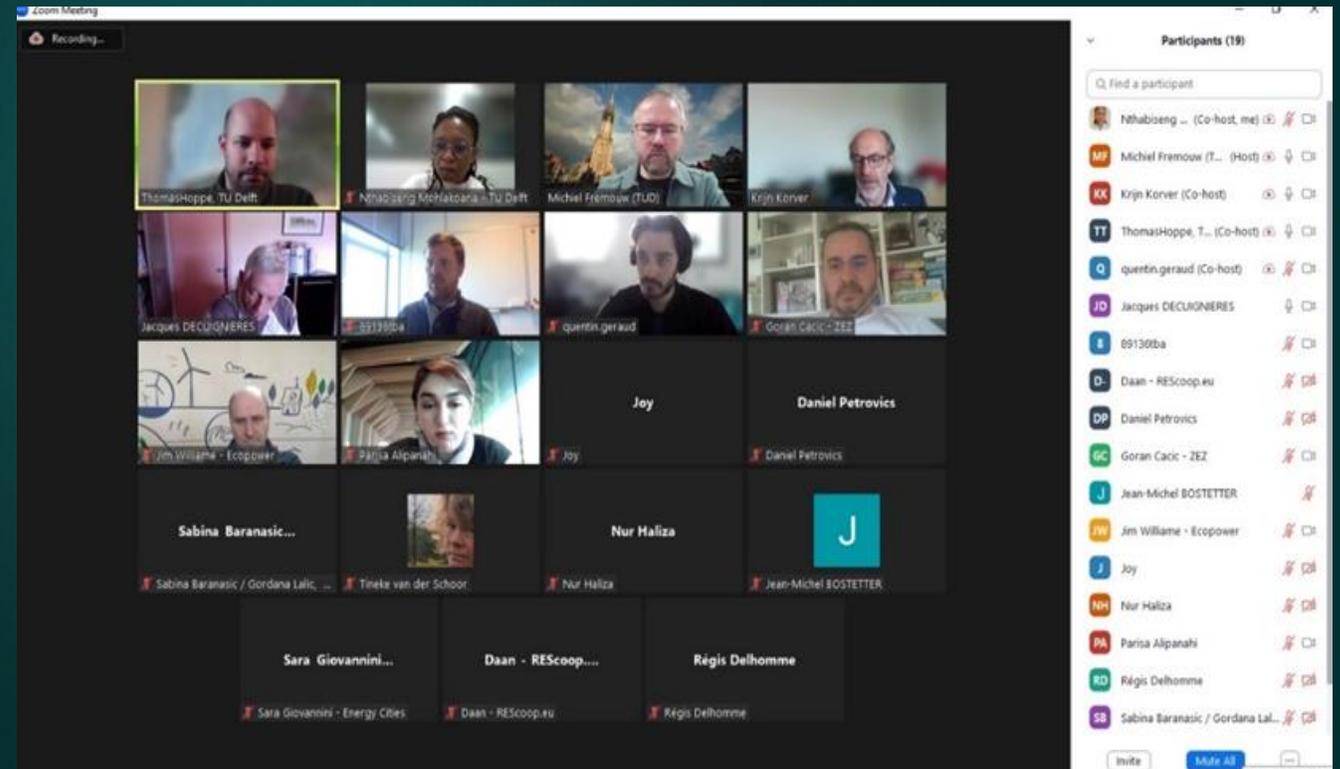
Example: diversity

SDE001T	2	T	yes	n/a	no	no		Are all income levels of the local community represented in the membership list?
SDE002T	2	T	yes	n/a	no	no		Are all age levels of the local community represented and balanced in the membership list?
SDE003T	2	T	yes	n/a	no	n/a		Are all ethnic backgrounds of the local community represented in the membership list?
SDE004C	2	C	3	n/a	1	no		To what extent are all education levels of the local community represented in the membership list?
SDE005C	2	C	5	n/a	3	1		To what extent is the membership list gender balanced?
SDE006C	2	C	5	n/a	0	2		To what extent are different education backgrounds of the local community groups represented in the REC's membership list?

Agenda

- Short project background to the SCCALE project - WP2
- Introduction to the SCCALE WP3 Community Guide and Methodology - WP3
- Introduction to the SCCALE WP6 on Replication Sites – WP6
- Introduction to the SCCALE WP2 Monitoring Tool, Responses so far – WP2
- Interactive session - Breakout rooms

Participants



The screenshot shows a Zoom meeting interface. The main window displays a grid of 16 video thumbnails. The participants listed on the right are:

- Nthabisoeng ... (Co-host, me)
- Michiel Fremouw (T... (Host)
- Krijn Korver (Co-host)
- ThomasHoppe, T... (Co-host)
- quentin.geraud (Co-host)
- Jacques DECUIGNERES
- 09130tba
- Daan - REScoop.eu
- Daniel Petrovics
- Goran Cacic - ZEZ
- Jean-Michel BOSTETTER
- Jim Williams - Ecopower
- Joy
- Nur Haliza
- Parisa Alpanahi
- Régis Delhomme
- Sabina Baranasic / Gordana Lal...

- Tool was 'captured by the EU' for instrumentalist policy reasons
 - Adjusted henceforward to serve strategic monitoring purposes using technocratic KPIs
- Gap between academic perception of CE and practitioners' understanding of CE (2 distinct communities not much aware of each other).
- EC development depending on presence of 'champions'.
- Also suffers from 'volunteer fatigue' and 'mortality'.
- Difficult for ECs to maintain sound basis of human capacity.
- EC development still depending a lot on institutional factors and gov't actors.
- Policy makers (EU, national) have high expectations, but difficult for ECs to deliver (and in due time).
 - For different reasons.