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***The quest for citizen governance of energy resources***

***Abstract***

The emergence of local energy initiatives marks a new phase in the history of the energy movement, where new political demands are voiced for the democratic control of energy policies. In the Netherlands more than 500 such local initiatives seek to reshape the energy system, in the face of constraints embedded in technical, cultural, economic and political traditions.

In this paper we investigate the formation of new networks in the energy movement. We trace how they channel demands from local communities to the national government and how they negotiated the Dutch Energy Covenant.

Our analysis combines Actor-Network Theory (ANT) and Social Movement Theory (SMT), to allow a dynamic analysis of collective strategies. First, ANT is mobilized to carefully describe the local and regional networks consisting of human actors as well as institutions, buildings, energy technologies and infrastructures.

Secondly, we employ SMT to study the linkages of local initiatives to regional and national networks for community energy, positioning their activities as a quest for citizen governance of energy resources.

Our theoretical contribution is to combine SMT and ANT in the analysis of recent attempts to decentralize and decarbonize the energy system. While we used the microanalysis of ANT we also circumvented its myopia by tracing the national and regional networks that form the community energy movement. Likewise, we followed political moves with SMT without ignoring its blind spot: the technological embeddedness of social movements.

We conclude our paper with a discussion of the obduracy of the energy system and how it is challenged by new connections between communities and global networks, and by new types of energy providers that are rooted in social networks.