

Project acronym: EnergyPROSPECTS
Title: PROactive Strategies and Policies
for Energy Citizenship Transformation
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EMPOWERMENT TOOLKIT AND KNOWLEDGE REPOSITORY

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Fostering collective empowerment

Thus far, we have discussed the individual motivations behind many of the behavioural aspects related to energy use. We have talked about capabilities, autonomy, personal resources... This is a good start, but we can still go further!

People develop within social systems; it is through interaction with other people that many of our behavioural aspects are initially forged. If you would like to learn more about collective motivations and objectives, please consult our [EnergyPROSPECTS Factsheet Series.](#)

Thus, alongside the many individual actions that we can undertake in our day-to-day lives in our personal setting, we can add all those that are generated in our interactions with other people. In addition to the numerous individual actions that we can embark upon on daily basis in our home setting, we can also include all those that are generated in our interactions with other people, especially those that involve belonging to an organisation or social movement.

Collective energy initiatives can offer you [resources and services that contribute to your empowerment](#). For example, they can improve your access to energy through shared energy production and management, or help to amplify your voice in decision-making processes.

Collective energy initiatives can also support you by providing [relevant knowledge and fair conditions when using and buying energy](#). Equally, as part of a collective initiative you can encourage other consumers to act in the energy sector with the aim of achieving social, environmental and economic benefits on a local level. These are merely a few examples of how such energy citizenship initiatives can help you to advance your list of commitments. Thus, helping you to gain control, amplify your political voice, and act within an initiative and/or in the wider energy system. Here, of course, we are referring to the diversity of roles and functions that you, as a citizen, can exercise within the energy system, either individually or through involvement in diverse initiatives.

Below, we will provide you with the means to achieve this!

Collective participation in shaping the energy system

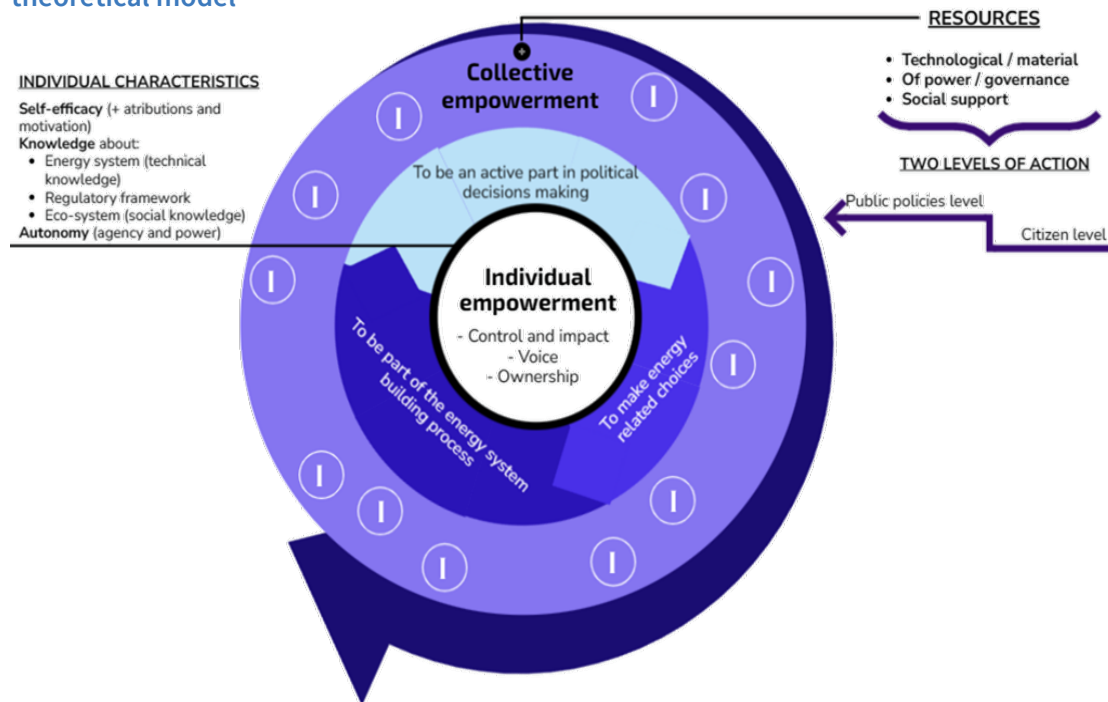
Concern regarding the pace of climate change has led to a series of transformational engagements based on the development of innovative governance approaches. This has translated into political and legal actions committed to the development of smaller-scale solutions and to the monitoring of change, plus the involvement of different actors in service delivery. In focusing on these spaces closer to people allows for decision-making to explicitly consider citizens' visions and needs.

In this scenario, a space is devised that allows new energy actors to appear. This highlights the figure of the prosumer, or consumer of self-generated (renewable) energy, either at home or through organisations, and who use energy in a smarter and more efficient way. The idea of energy consumption based on small community initiatives offers an alternative sustainable social innovation economy that goes beyond renewable energy production, as the aim is to create social capital related to new forms of shared energy generation.

ENCI initiatives are therefore a worthwhile resource to help you improve your participation in the energy system. Through them you can experiment with your personal capacities and resources. This facilitates your ability to make energy-related choices, to be part of the process of energy system building and political decision-making (see figure 4).



Figure 4. From individual to Collective empowerment: a theoretical model



A good starting point is to refer to the control you must exercise and the bearing you can have on others, both in your immediate circle and in the wider environment.

Let's take it one step at a time!

[Please stop here for doing Activity 4].



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Activity N.º 4

Let's think about myself

We have asked some questions to people who are currently involved in ENCI collective initiatives regarding their empowerment. Now we would like to invite you to reflect on the same questions before we show you what others say regarding this.

Please try to consider these questions below:

When it comes to energy-related behaviour, to what extent do you feel you have the autonomy and choice regarding your energy options?

To what extent do you feel you are able to influence what is being discussed and decided upon related to the energysystem?

To what extent do you feel that acting to shape the energy system is part of your individual and collective (within the initiative) empowerment?

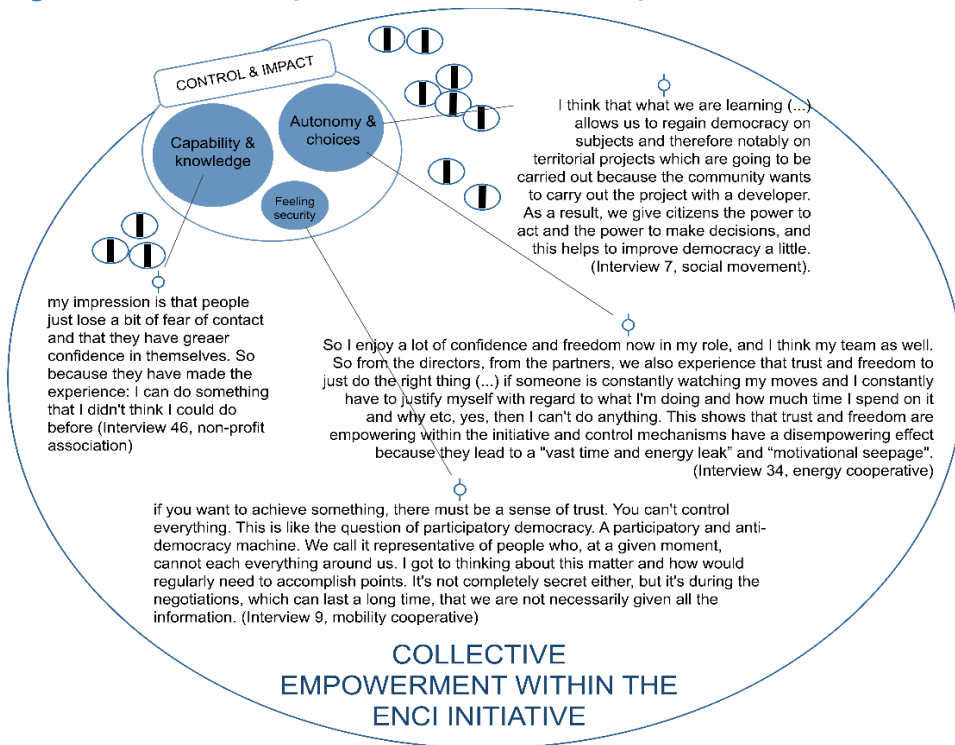


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Now that you have responded, we shall move on to discussing the autonomy and choices you can attain through an ENCI collective initiative. We will approach this by highlighting people's experiences.

- o **Autonomy and choice.** ENCI collective organisations can help you gain more widespread freedom and ownership in the decision-making processes "to act and take decisions. From the very beginning, we have cultivated the spirit of absolute freedom for all members to pursue their interests, without constraints" (Interview 20, mobility initiative)]. The autonomy and choice are related to different aspects:
- o *The forms of internal governance.* For the time being, the onus will be placed on what this functioning brings to people and what it may require from you (see figure 5).

Figure 5. Collective empowerment: control and impact.



The efficient running of an ENCI initiative usually requires you to feel free, with autonomy and choice, to participate. If you don't feel this way yet, this need not be cause for concern! The way these initiatives and the people who are part of them are organised often fosters the creation of horizontal relationships, where people feel listened to though not judged:

I believe that it will not be possible unless we achieve emancipation (...) It's the end of the foundation of this project, you have to be free and emancipated to be able to remain here, as if you can't be here, it's rather complicated (Interview 35, Co-housing).

- o *The levels of participation.* The role you can play within an initiative will depend on your willingness and desire to be part of it. There are different levels of participation ranging from more passive and distant forms of participation through which you can take more control and voice within the decision-making processes:

The form that a working person can take, from simply going to work and not getting involved in the management of the cooperative and doing a more distant job to a volunteer who can be in the highest spheres of decision and have their voice heard there while bringing proposals to the table (Interview 39, energy cooperative).

- **Feeling security.** Trust will be key for you to feel in control of the decisions that are made, while also developing that sense of ownership that we will refer to later. The feeling of security can be of great help at times, especially when you see that your possibilities to participate actively are decreasing. Placing your trust in other people and delegating responsibility for some of actions can keep you interested without relinquishing your power..

Afterwards, if you want it, there must be trust. In a way, too, you can't control everything. This is also a bit like the issue of participatory democracy. A participatory and anti-democracy machine. We call it representative of people who, at any given time, cannot all see everything ourselves (Interview 9, mobility cooperative).

- **Capability and knowledge.** An ENCI initiative will not *give you* control or power. However, the options for you to act independently and freely "**which can give you that strength and security because you need security**" (Interview 23, individual energy citizen). Participation in shaping the energy system begins, for many people, in feeling empowered within the initiatives. This power has often been linked to the perceived ability and knowledge to contribute to the initiative and beyond:

my impression is that people just lose a bit of fear of contact and that they have more confidence in themselves. So, because they have **taken on** the experience: I can do something that I didn't think I **would be able to** beforehand, they might now dare to do something else, which is perhaps more energy policy or whatever (Interview 46, non-profit association)

It is not a matter of starting from a deep-rooted knowledge of the energy system, as you can gain knowledge and expand your skills as you engage in interaction with others. You can offer your resources and your skills to the group. All of these come together, like a puzzle, with the enthusiasm to develop something as a team: "They have climbed on board with great verve. You need a good mix of **people with a fiscal, financial, legal, and energy-technical background**" (Interview 28, energy cooperative). This is basis for the foundation and maintenance of many ENCI initiatives:

you get into the topic, you can also work yourself, not only in your own self-construction project, while also **continuing** to support the association. There is the possibility to carry on supporting the association in any form, with advice or with work, or even financially (Interview 49, energy cooperative).

Do you remember when we asked you about autonomy and options, as well as capacity and knowledge? **Now it is time to revisit your answers, as here you will be able to complete them with the actions to be developed in group tasks.** For example, we shall look at a previous exercise and add some columns for group tasks.

[Please stop here for doing Activity 5].



Activity N.º 5

Let's think and reflect on my resources and barriers: Have I ever thought about...? Why not...?

(Here there are some questions about possible changes in your behaviour, so that you can reflect on whether they are feasible in terms of the options you have to introduce them and the barriers that prevent you from doing so)

	Individual-personal barriers & constrains	Collective-social barriers & constrains
Consuming less food and/or consume it more sustainably (in small shops, organic products, km0 consumption...)?		
Commuting to my place of work/ study by cycling or walking?		
Or by using public transport?		
Using an alternative to the private car to get around in your leisure time?		
Making fewer leisure trips?		
Reducing my heating and/or hot water consumption?		
Improving the insulation of my house?		
Changing my appliances for more efficient or energy-saving ones?		
Buying fewer products and opt for second-hand products instead?		
<p>One last task for now... Why would I do it?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I have made changes in my consumption patterns because... OR I could make changes in my energy consumption if... <p><i>(e.g. I save money, I have time at my disposal, I have enough information, I feel a personal responsibility, in my inner circle there are like-minded people that support me...)</i></p> <p><i>(Please write down all the ideas that come to mind when thinking about what might motivate you to reduce your energy consumption patterns)</i></p>		

