

Challenges for initiators of energy communities

The experience of the StartSun project

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What do we do when we initiate energy communities?

Ethnographic sideview

Research perspective „strategy as practice“ investigates what people do when they create a strategy

How to make energy community edible?

Energy community is often not a separate ,product‘, but rather a byproduct or an intermediate product of another coveted product.

It can take the face of the community initiative, means for existing joint production, sales advantage of the facility, a possibility to safeguard oneself for high energy prices, a smart business cooperation model, a feature of an apartment building, or else.

Although we tend to see energy community as a ready-made product, the process of the project made us see that it should be served on very different plates.



Should we blend it in existing forms of cooperation?

Community management—like any other social phenomenon—requires resources, thereby competing with alternative activities. People possess varied abilities to participate in social structures (issue attention, time use, skills, capacities, resources networks).

Therefore, a genuine energy community is a luxury good.

To upscale ECs, the acceleration of social time and use of resources needs to be restrained by blending ECs in already existing or forming activities and identities.

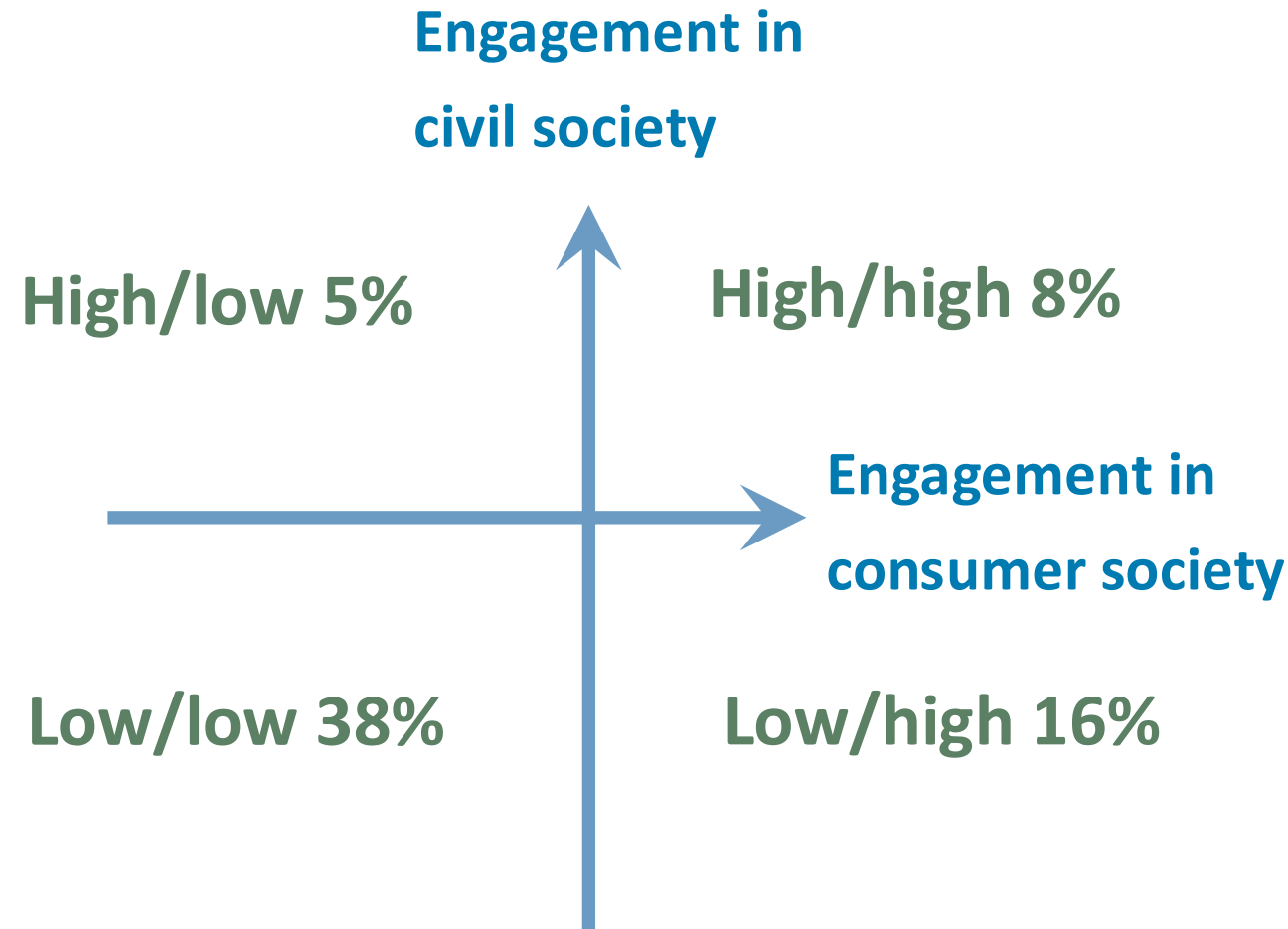


Figure. Statistical illustration of how people solve social problems

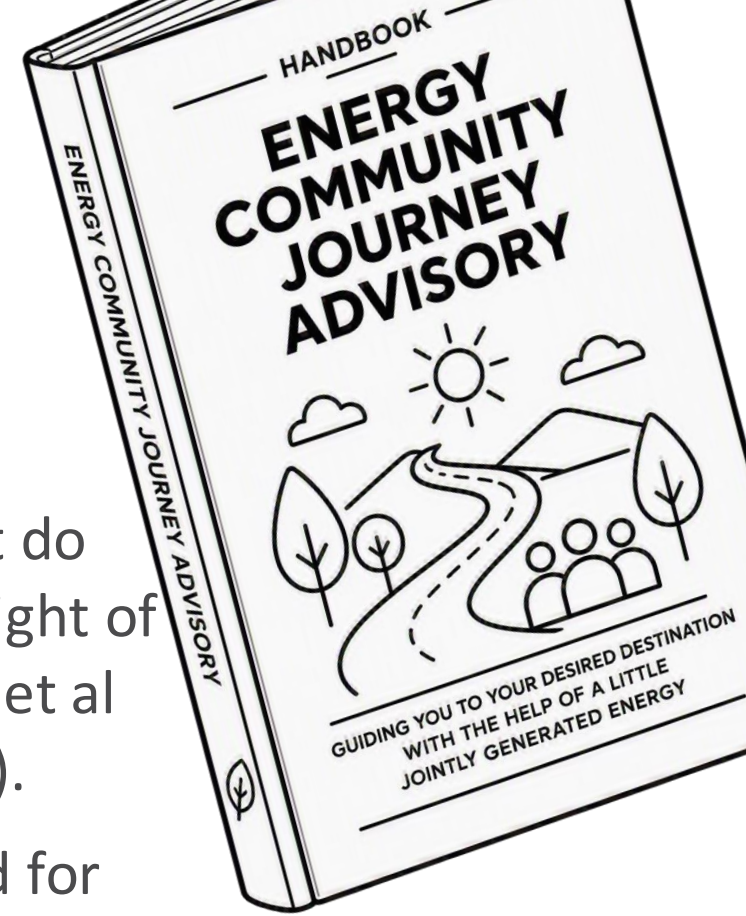
Should we shape ,terra incognitas' into roadmaps?

Our pilots could not foresee where the development journey would ultimately lead them. There could be multiple destinations, and the paths to them varied depending on the context.

It was also difficult to foresee the messiness of these journeys in the application writing process. Some cooperations failed, legislation undermined choices, wisdom ran out, the timeline was against us or the outcomes slapped financially.

Project funding tempts to follow the money and just do what you are told losing sight of innovative potential (Rice et al 2000, Franssen et al 2018).

To scale up there is a need for EC journey advisories: pathway-based consulting and innovation sensitive funding schemes, consistent reduction of pathway-specific barriers, and destination designation.



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ENERGY TRANSITION



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