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IMPULSES AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE ENERGY SYSTEM*

"From visions to pathways: a community perspective on localising the future energy system"

Group of common interest are forming as awareness increases about the benefits of owning renewable energy generating technologies and exporting electricity into the grid, and the changes in lifestyle needed to ameliorate the effects of global warming. Members of these groups wish to change the localities where they live as to better conform to individual and collectively negotiated visions-of-change. Energy efficiency and renewable energy generation schemes are seen as pathways towards the sought after change of their localities.

Every renewable energy project is unique because they are developed within local constraints of the renewable resource, geography, funding availability, human capital, infrastructure, etc. Local initiatives are guided by what is desired but constrained by what is feasible. The initial wide range of ideas of what to do is narrowed down as economical and physical constraints apply a selective pressure on all proposed pathways. How do groups choose a pathway, ending in technological intervention, to follow when developing projects? How does this pathway compare with the initial visions-of-change, and what can we learn about what kinds of changes are currently enabled in the UK by looking at the narrowing-down process?

This paper will discuss this process of adaptation from vision to pathway in the context of the evolution of a group of interest formed with the desire to "change" the fabric of a town. This discussion is based on the presenters' participation in a 2 year project that aimed to co-develop renewable energy projects with residents of a town in the UK.