

# **Employees' energy cooperatives: hybrid organizational structures for greening companies from within**

## **Abstract**

This paper introduces a new organizational form of employee engagement for renewable energy: 'Employees' energy cooperatives' (EEC). EECs have been recently established in nine companies in Germany. An EEC is a legal entity set up in accordance with laws and principles governing the foundation and operation of cooperatives. The EEC's purpose in most cases is to set up and operate renewable energy facilities on the company's premises. One example is the Volkswagen factory in Emden, where 150 employees teamed up and installed a 280 kWp photovoltaic system on the rooftop.

An EEC is a hybrid organization: On the one hand, it is a separate legal entity external to the company. On the other hand, it is formed by the social interaction of the company's employees, a process that is significantly influenced by the social dynamics within the company and vice versa.

In order to better understand this new phenomenon as well as its impact on corporate greening and employee motivation, we conducted in depth qualitative interviews with nearly all EECs in operation.

The aim of our study is firstly to depict the current stage of the new phenomenon of EECs in Germany. Building on the description of existing EECs, we will highlight potential perspectives and directions for further research, such as employee motivation and codetermination (management research and organization studies), pro-environmental behavior at work (environmental psychology), and business models for EECs (cooperative studies and business administration) from which to look at this new form of hybrid organization.

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