

## **Mobilizing for community energy: the emergence of citizen power plants in Austria and Germany**

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With rising concerns over ecological sustainability the energy system has come under increasing pressure and various efforts have been made aiming at a transformation towards more sustainable systems of energy provision. At the grassroots level this has included the establishment of citizen power plants – wind farms or PV plants jointly owned and operated by groups of (local) citizens. This paper focuses on the emergence of the first citizen wind farms in Austria and Germany in the 1980s and 1990s. Drawing on an adapted version of resource mobilization theory (a strand of social movement theory) the paper tries to explain why these initiatives developed at this point in time and how they succeeded in getting these first citizen power plants up and running. Apart from taking account of material resources (e.g. suitable sites) and structural resources (policy support) the paper also highlights symbolic resources – collective interpretations according to which citizen wind farms became meaningful and desirable (e.g. as a symbol of the alternatives to nuclear power). The paper argues that it was a combination of such symbolic interpretations, emerging policy support and certain material resources that explain the emergence and relative success of these initiatives. Nevertheless, apart from drawing on these ‘resource endowments’ initiatives also had to engage in a process of mobilizing further resources that were initially not readily available (e.g. development of know-how, lobbying for policy support before it was in place). Different initiatives display somewhat varying patterns of initial resource endowments and further resource mobilization.

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