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## **Energy cooperatives in sustainable energy transitions**

With rising concerns over ecological sustainability as well as security of supply, the energy system has come under increasing pressure over the last years and various efforts have been made aiming at a transition towards more sustainable systems of energy provision. At the grassroots level this has included the establishment of energy cooperatives and other forms of collective citizen ownership of renewable energy technologies. Such initiatives are operating in a field where they are dependent both on available technologies and on institutional framework conditions. This 'playing field' is, however, partly shaped by the actors in the area of energy cooperatives themselves, e.g. by pioneering technology development and by lobbying for individual projects or favourable framework conditions.

This paper seeks to explore the role of collective citizen ownership of renewable energy technologies in energy system transitions. For this purpose it will present results from country case studies concerning the emergence and development of collective citizen ownership of green electricity plants over the last 15-20 years in Austria and Germany. The case studies, based on semi-structured interviews with actors from the field, look at the different interests and rationales attached to collective citizen ownership, examine institutional barriers and incentives that have promoted or impeded its development and explore the roles of different actors in the development of such ownership models. Based on this material the paper aims to discuss how such initiatives are embedded in larger scale processes of institutional change in the energy system.

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