Summary of Session IV/V

The different roles of citizens and the meaning of energy conservation in order to reach Renewable Energy Self-Sufficiency (RESS)

As the session-name indicates, two topics were dealt with during the session. Concerning the role of citizens, the participants conferred on the public acceptance of renewable energies (RE) in detail and in this context discussed two dimensions of acceptance. Besides the well-known evaluation dimension – if people evaluate Renewable Energies (RE) as good or bad – another dimension called "level of activity" was also mentioned and a scale for this component – reaching from passive to active acceptance – was introduced.

Passive acceptance would be an articulated support for RE while an active acceptance means that people become really engaged financially or politically in RE-affairs. As was presented, empirical studies show that there is already a high passive acceptance of RE in Germany as well as in other countries.

One could argue that an active acceptance would be needed for a change to RESS and people should become politically or financially engaged for RE. However, empirical studies showed that there are only a small number of citizens that declare this personal need for active participation.

From these findings, open questions resulted:

- Do researchers have to prompt citizens toward active acceptance?
- Or is it possible to reach RESS through a handful of politicians and some investors making the change?

Another question addressed in the session was how to cope with conflicts, raised by minorities, which are often excluded from decision-making processes concerning RE-projects. Here the proposal was made to organize decision-making processes of those projects like community-planned village-festivals. The aim of a researcher would be to find out in different contexts, how these processes are playing out and how they could be transferred to RE-planning-processes. It was shown that financial returns to the community planning these village festivals are an important factor for success.

As a case study of a bioenergy village showed, economical benefits are also in the foreground in the context of multi-criteria decision-making processes supported by a technical decision support-system. These systems are designed to help looking at the pros and cons of RE-projects in a holistic way. The ranking of alternatives gives an idea of which alternatives are more sustainable and which are less. Here it has to be taken into account, who defines the criteria of sustainability-measurement and which weight is given – for example to financial – criteria.

As there was a consensus among the participants in the session as to the importance of the economic (side-) effects of RE-projects, a three-phase-model of a shared ownership establishing-process was discussed. The model divided the process into the phases of "initiation", "realisation",

and “establishment” and summarizes in concept form the most important aspect to take into consideration during each phase.
However, findings from bioenergy villages in Germany show that financial aspects are not the only important criteria for a successful change in the local energy system. Factors such as “visiting established renewable energy projects (best practice)”, “face-to-face contacts among local stakeholders”, and the “use of synergy effects”, like the construction of a water supply system in parallel to the infrastructure for a heating grid are also important.

As the topic of energy conservation has become more prominent in recent years, it was also addressed during the session. In this context, the economical concept of “rebound effects” was referred to. The concept describes scenarios where energy savings are used for higher consumptions of the now cheaper energy services, leading to less absolute energy demand reduction. The results of the rebound research are one basis for some scientists – also in the RESS community – to argue for taking the third of the sustainability strategies, “sufficiency”, more seriously in addition to “consistency” and “efficiency”.
The need for a more conscious dealing with energy in every day life instead of a “pure” technological reduction of energy demand carried out by some engineers was highlighted in the session. By introduction of the concept of “sufficiency” as a necessity in a successful RESS-process a discussion began among the participants of the session about the term Renewable Energy Self-SUFFICIENCY itself, SUFFICIENCY and also ENERGY-SUSTAINABILITY absolutely mean as concepts. Clarifying the implicit meanings of these concepts in a discourse could give growing communities dealing with a changing energy system at regional and local levels, the opportunity to find (normative) commonalities and differences among different research approaches.

Session IV / V

Perception

Active Acceptance

Different Roles of Citizens and Energy Conservation

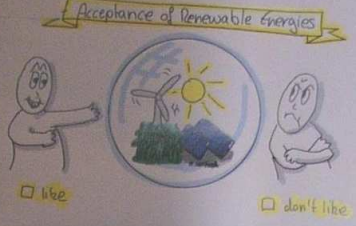
Justice/Injustice

Active Participation

Active Stakeholder – Initiator

Lack of Acceptance

Acceptable solution



Wishes ⚡ Actual Situation

Creation of Local Value

Planning Process | Professional Monitoring

Dialogic nature

Interchange of Knowledge

NIMBY

High Passive Acceptance

Economic Value

Motivation: Economical issue

Energy Conservation

Community Participation Strategy

Involvement of the Community

Rebound Effects

Focusing on heating sector

Changing Life Style

Bioenergy Village

Barriers

Success Factor

Doubts of the Inhabitant

Negative Propaganda

Interpersonal Communication

Fundings

Involvement of the Inhabitants