

Energy Citizenship – bland platitude ripe for co-option, or timely vision of citizen empowerment

Dr Niall Dunphy

Environmental Research Institute and School of Engineering, University College Cork

Citizens' relationship with energy has traditionally been seen very much in transactional terms. Their expected – and really their only permitted – role was that of a customer and preferably one that was deferential to those 'who knew what was best'. However, this is changing in response to a range of geo-political, economic and environmental challenges. As a result, in recent decades there has been an increasing acceptance (albeit hesitant in places) of new roles for citizens in the energy domain, whatever form they may take. The term 'energy citizenship' is increasingly used to reflect such new roles.

The concept of energy citizenship can be understood as a social construct, a sociotechnical vision conceptualised by activists, academics, and increasingly, policymakers of the potential roles that citizens could – or perhaps should – play in the energy system. Energy citizenship, however, remains a nebulous idea; it is rather ill-defined and indeed increasingly contested. Some emphasise a normative perspective focused on responsibilities and obligations, while others concentrate on rights, arguing for more inclusive and participatory energy systems.

Importantly, not all perspectives on what energy citizenship could or should be are equally supported by those with power. There has tended to be a focus on certain 'permitted' roles for citizenship – *i.e.*, those that do not threaten the status quo. This paper explores the diversity of expressions of energy citizenship, in doing so (re)considers the nature of people relationship(s) with the emerging energy systems of the future; it poses the question have citizens legitimacy in the energy system beyond transactional arrangements for production and consumption?

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