

Scaling of Local Frisian Energy Initiatives

Eike van der Weele



Problem

Almost all municipalities in the Netherlands have one or more energy initiatives. The 'darkgreen frontrunners' are included.

This grassroots movement is getting more professional. The initiatives have large potential to contribute to the energy transition. But what is the next step?



Research question: How are energy initiatives in Fryslân scaling to increase their impact?

Fryslân

- Highest density of cooperatives
- 'Mienskippen'/communities
- Largest collective solar roof of NL
- 73 energy initiatives in Fryslân

But the overall collective energy production is falling behind: 2.2% of solar energy is produced or owned collectively/local.



Frisian umbrella organization

National umbrella organization

Results

Energy initiatives in Fryslân scale by:



Collaboration



"Collaborations all work pretty well. We are in contact with the alderman of sustainability, we talk with him a couple of times every year, to talk about the future."



Influencing context



"You want something, you have a dream, a plan, but that does not always work automatically. So you do everything to make it possible. You make an analysis who can contribute and who you will approach."

Changing role leads to confusion about:

- Roles and responsibilities
- What scale?
- Frictions even at the smallest scale of the Mienskip

Theory

- Insights from social/sustainable entrepreneurship on scaling
- Local energy initiatives provide benefits on social, cultural, economic and environmental level. They have huge potential for social change.
- Local energy = local & collective and participatory & open. Citizens have ownership and control.
- Energy initiatives are professionalizing, which creates a new role in society.

Conclusions

Huge puzzle that needs to be solved. Collaboration is vital in this process. At what scale this should happen is not clear.

The new role of energy initiatives makes all stakeholders confused about their roles and responsibilities. For example: energy poverty is not always included in the goals of energy initiatives.

Methods

This research is a qualitative study. I conducted 6 semi-interviews with 2 umbrella organizations and 3 initiatives. Some were via telephone, one online and one in-person.

Finding participants was challenging. The region appears to be popular for conducting research and the volunteers have limited time.

The approach is inductive and open, to be able to observe new phenomena in this dynamic and unique situation.

Acknowledgements

It was a very interesting journey to learn more about the people in Fryslân who work hard to contribute to social and environmental change. They show vision and commitment. I thank these people for their hard work and their open arms. It was very inspiring to meet you and get to know the initiatives.



university of
 groningen

campus fryslân

Eike van der Weele
 MSc Sustainable Entrepreneurship
 eike@van-der-weele.nl
 Supervisor: dr. E. C. Folmer