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ENR-Demos The politics of energy transition in
African countries

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Energy Democracy

History of the idea of energy democracy – where it comes from?

Weak and strong energy justice

Energy democracy in the context of OECD countries versus LMIC countries

Environmental justice

Environmental justice in the USA (1960s -...)

- Native Amerindians against uranium waste in the American West
- or ethnic black minorities in urban areas against environmental hazard
 - → Industrial growth - Polluting the poor = ethnic minorities

Environmental justice in the UK (2000 - today)

- Gap with the USA
 - Civil rights movements more important in the US – better environmental regulations in the UK
 - → Industrial growth - Polluting the poor // ethnic minorities – link less obvious
 - Ethnic groups less associated with poverty
 - Less spatial segregation

Energy Justice?

Declination of environmental justice: mining justice, forestry justice, urban justice and also more related to energy, energy justice, climate justice; more rarely references to oil justice

The principles are:

- Equal access to resources and equal burden of costs/negative impact (**distributional justice**)
- Participation in the decision-process (**procedural justice**)

Energy democracy

Energy justice - static interpretation

- Most practitioners will relate more to basic distributional aspect – equity of energy access
- Hidden aspects: equity in bearing the costs

Energy democracy – dynamic approach

- Participation in energy decision
- sharing knowledge and of citizenship
- Contesting power of established stakeholders

Energy democracy in OECD countries versus LMIC countries

OECD countries

Energy access is about affordability – “energy poverty”

Central systems with passive consumers – only a minority of activists going off-grid & energy not permanently high on the political agenda (except during energy crisis)

- Exceptions: for instance, anti-nuclear movement in Germany

Debates around energy revived today by energy transition
what is a just transition?

LMIC countries

Energy access is about connexion or access to basic energy services + affordability

Physical remoteness from policy-makers / foreign agencies

Research hypotheses

Decentralised RET more “democratic” than centralised?

- But in centralised system may be not possible?
- Under authoritarian regimes?
- ➔ Technical and political context are important

Why RET supposed to be more “democratic”?

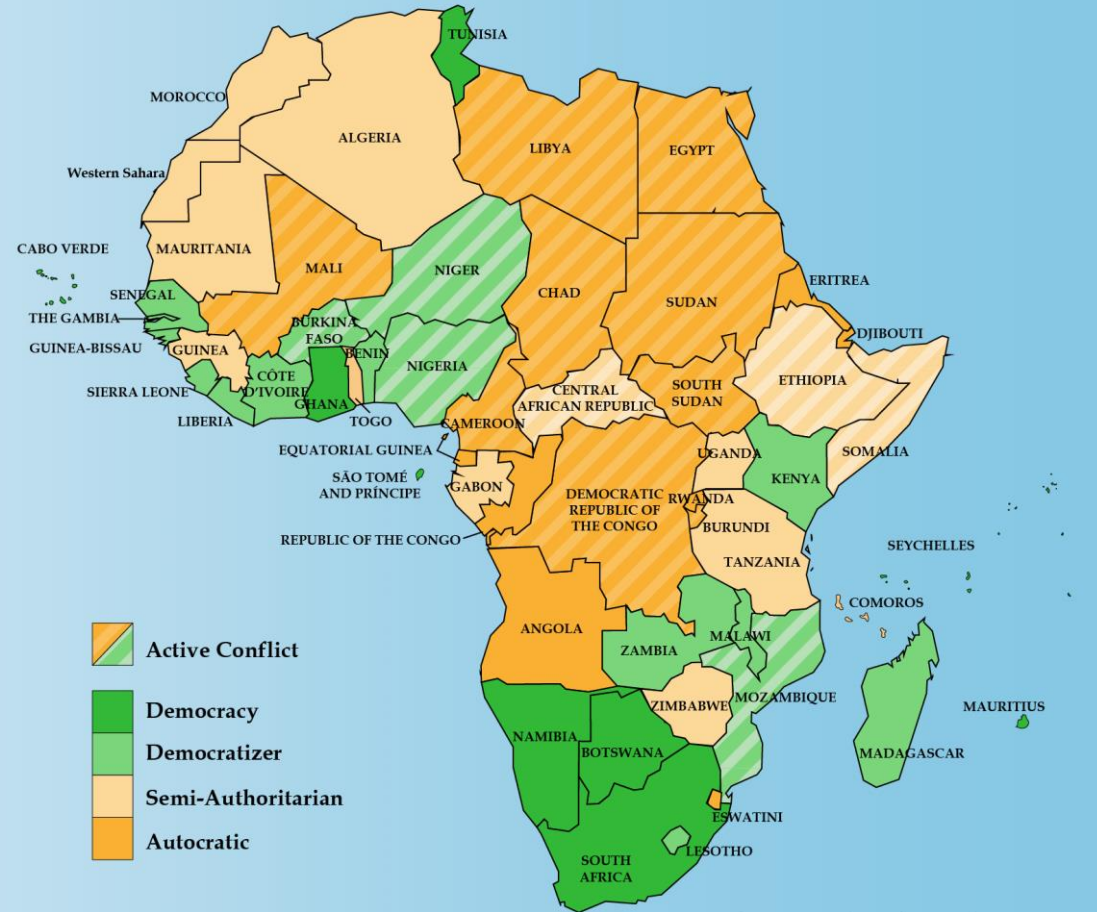
- Because smaller projects = communities can be in control?
 - Less capital intensive – communities can invest?
 - More manageable locally?

Democracy is good for the sustainability of a project?

- The more intensive and deeper the participation the better it is ?

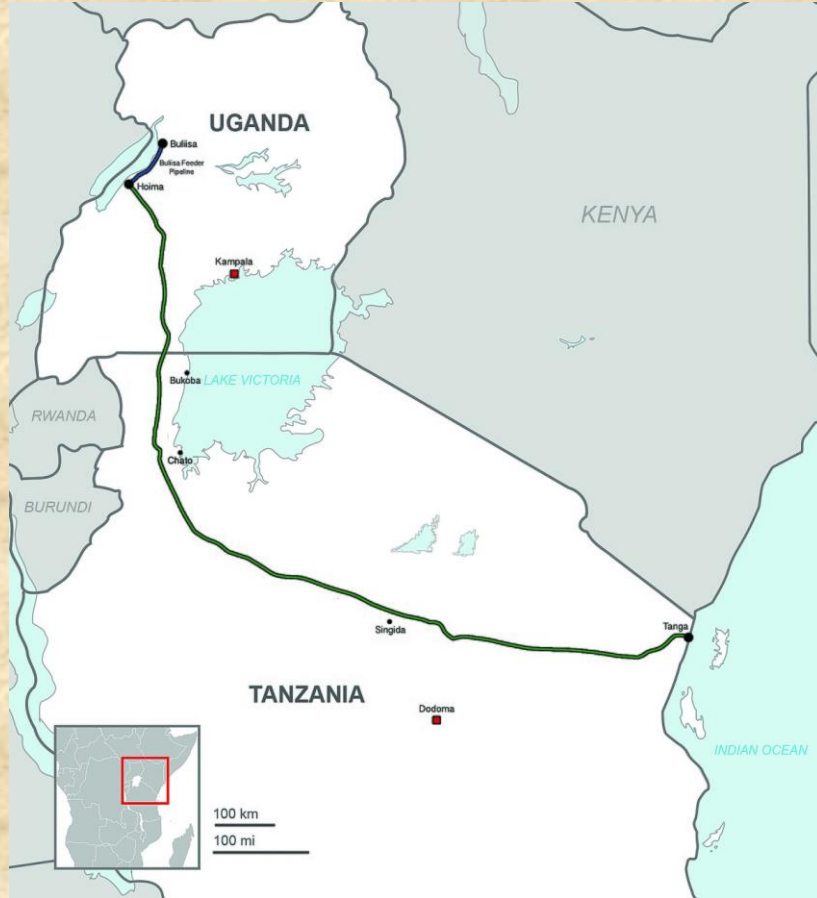
African political regimes

Lesotho; Zambia Nigeria
+ Senegal, Tanzania,
Kenya Uganda, Ghana,
South Africa



Data: Freedom House, Polity, and Center for Systemic Peace

Fossil fuels projects



Uganda, East African Crude Oil Pipeline

Heated pipeline French oil company TOTAL contested in France and Uganda

Displacement of more than 100,000 people (HRW)

Julius Nyerere Large Hydro-Power Project, Tanzania



“... the government will go ahead with the implementation of the project whether you like it or not...those who are resisting the project will be jailed” (Tanzanian environment minister, 2018)

Utility-scale renewable? Conflicts



Lake Turkana wind power, Kenya

Largest African wind farm 310 MW but land used by pastoralists communities for cattle grazing

2009: 33-year renewable lease to private investors without the informed consent of local communities.

2014-21: Court case – land acquisition declared illegal; 2023 regularization rejected
→ compensation to be paid

...and rejection



Kinangop, 60 MW

First licensed project in Kenya

2004-2015: joint-venture to financial close

2014 violent demonstrations, conflicts linked to land rights nor properly secured + court cases + health fears + hostility of communities encouraged by local opposition politicians?

Small number of farmers to get lease, no compensation for people living in informal structure

2016 cancellation

Is small-scale decentralized energy generation more democratic?

Small is beautiful? (Schumacher)

Physical proximity to communities → political control?

Actually:

Barrier 1: external stakeholders: projects developers, rural electrification agencies, private companies with their own rationality

→ Remoteness from decision centers + even daily management now tele-maintenance

Barrier 2 : local stakeholders: local authorities, representatives of local communities representing some segments of local communities (if not mainly themselves)

→ reinforce existing structure of power

Does small-scale decentralized energy generation favor energy justice?

Equal repartition of energy?

Non-transparent allocation of resources!

Political interferences in rural electrification; rentability

And even within a community

Barrier 1: Supply is constrained

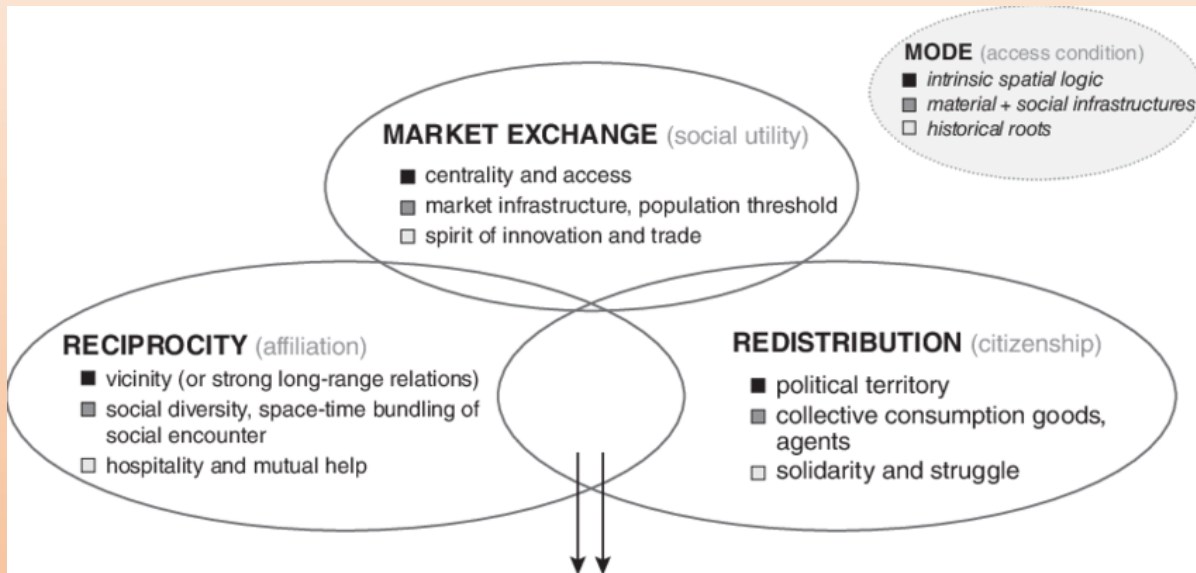
Barrier 2: Differentiated impact

- People who are connected and those who are not
 - People who can afford to pay for electricity and those who cannot or can only small amount intermittently
 - People who can maximize benefits of electricity and those who cannot (cultural, social or economic capital)

➔ increase inequalities & social exclusion



Non-embeddedness of technologies



Polanyi 's modes of socio-economic integration (1944). Source: compiled by Sonia Arbaci; adapted from Kesteloot and Meert (2000 , p. 65) .

Sentiment of frustration / being powerless

- A) of inadequacies of the technology proposed
- B) of not understanding systems (black box) or get access to it
(often technicians prefer to avoid user interferences)
- C) of not being able to repair systems (parts)
or keep the systems running (cost)

Create or exacerbate conflicts intra-community or within households

Generate expenses without the possibility of generating extra-income

What can be negotiated?

Location of the plant - location of wind generator – land use – compensation

Who gets connected – explanation of extension of the mini-grid

What the project can deliver – limitations of generation

How work conducted – local employment

Tariff – flexibility of payments

Alternative

➔ informed decision of the community – accept or decline the project

Energy democracy at a community level



Promote energy citizenship



Help to manage expectations & reduce misconceptions about RE



Help to put in place communication systems to manage complaints but also permanent feedback to improve energy



Increase self-esteem & confidence by building local capacity & knowledge

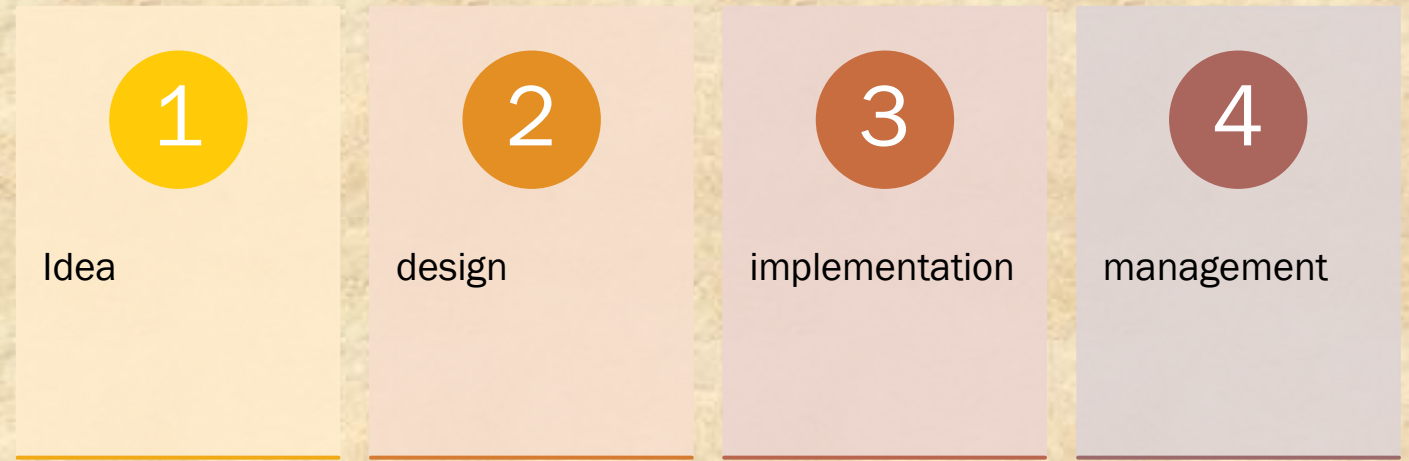


Cost ? = investment in the long-term



Integration to local narrative, embeddedness with robust institutions and *in fine* sustainability of projects

Cases
criteria –
participation
at different
stages of a
project



Degree of inclusiveness

Poverty

Gender

Marginalised ethnic groups

Children/Young people

Inclusiveness x Stages of a project

	Idea	Design	Implementation	Management	<u>Beneficiaries</u>
Poverty					
Gender		Women involved at the invitation of an NGO	Progressive takeover by elderly men	Management done by technicians	
Marginalised ethnic groups					
Children/young people					

4 dimensions of an off-grid project



1980-1990s : experimental /administrative
donor-led

2000/2010s : business models / marketing
market led

2020s/... Social / citizenship
community led

Future: Energy communities?

In the EU

Energy communities are legal entities that empower citizens, small businesses and local authorities to produce, manage and consume their own energy (EU Directive, 2018, 2019)

Legal framework transposed in EU countries

In Low-Income countries

Framework needed to promote energy communities