

Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung : Energy Conference Athens – 10th 12th October 2013

Bio Karel Derveaux

Karel Derveaux holds a MSc in Applied Mechanics and Energy Conversion from the University of Leuven, Belgium. As international consultant in energy technology he has been acquiring expertise in the renewable energy sector since the early nineties. Since 1999 he is member of the board of the co-operative energy company Ecopower, actively developing renewable energy projects in the Flemish Region of Belgium. Ecopower being founding member of REScoop.eu, the European federation of renewable energy co-operatives, Karel is involved in fortering the participation of citizens in the transition towards a 100% sustainable energy system.

Friday 11 October 2013

Plenary 2: Conflicts and struggles in the energy sector: the question of democracy

The changes the energy sector is going through have to be seen in the actual context of a number of world-wide **crisis** situations:

- Financial crisis : the collapse of the traditional banking sector
- Economic crisis, in fact a “system crisis”: our economic system has to change
- Environmental crisis, i.p. the problems related to global warming in which energy is a major actor
- Social crisis: most vulnerable people are affected first by the crisis

In these world-wide crisis situations we need to realise an un precedented **energy transition**. In fact we can see that this transition towards a more sustainable energy system is already happening now as there is a change going on from:

- wasting energy towards rational use of energy and energy efficiency
- fossil and nuclear energy sources towards renewable energy sources
- large scale centralised power production toward small scale decentralised production
- few players to many players

There are **important drivers** pushing the energy transition:

First of all there is the **technological progress**. Not only the development related to energy technologies, but technological progress as a whole. Technology for avoiding energy consumption when it is not needed, for producing and using energy more efficiently, for using all kinds of locally available renewable energy sources, etc have become available, perform better, are more reliable and become cheaper year after year. In combination with the availability of technologies for measurement, monitoring and control, telecommunication and IT technologies, completely new and innovative energy solutions are possible and affordable.

Secondly there is **strong political framework** in favour for this energy transition. There are international goals for energy and climate to which governments of many countries in the world have committed themselves. On a global scale there are the UN climate conventions and protocols. On an European level there is a number of European Directives in force that should be implemented by the member states at this very moment. By 2020 the targets are set by the EU 20-20-20 climate and energy package. More recently the 2050 Energy Roadmap has been launched to set direction for the longer term.

Apart from the enormous treats and difficulties we need to overcome there are also unique **opportunities for citizens** to grasp. In any case, citizens will pay for the costs of the energy transition, as consumer, as taxpayer, as money-saver. The state of the art of energy technology is available, also at small scale. European legislation should guarantee a level playing field for all actors in the energy sector. Therefore **citizens** have now the opportunity **to take up a role** in their future energy production and supply. Renewable Energy Sources Cooperatives – REScoops – are an **appropriate type of enterprise** for citizens to join forces and take up an active role in the energy transition. They can gather in a short time enough capacity (financial, know-how) to stand next to the traditional players in the energy sector. In stead of a “conflicting” relationship, the purpose should rather be that these new actors collaborate with traditional and other new actors in the energy sector, each focussing on its own strengts, whilst keeping a sustainable energy transition as the common long term goal.

Saturday 12 October 2013:

Workshop B: Energy democracy and local energy planning – part 1

REScoops typically gather a **large number of citizens**. REScoops are democratically controlled and act locally, rather with many small size projects than with few large ones. Their purpose is to enable citizens to take initiative and invest with the purpose of providing themselves with clean energy at a correct price (=cost + margin of few%). Decisions are taken focussing on **long term sustainability**, not short term profit. Therefore REScoops are better placed to call for the engagement and active participation of citizens, including financial participation with the purpose of investing in energy infrastructures (production, as well as transport and distribution).

Involving citizens this way gives better chances to convince them to look into their own “energy behaviour”. Calling upon the responsible energy use of many citizens is a cheap and effective way to **unlock the enormous energy savings potential** that exists in every country. It is also the only way to make this shift to energy efficiency sustainable: consumers will only carry on with rational use of energy if they notice that their efforts are rewarded, also financially.

This can only be achieved if citizens through their REScoops have a say in the decision making at any moment of the energy transition. This applies not only to all the power sector where REScoops should be involved as well in production as in the transport and distribution of electricity. REScoops should also play a role in other energy sectors such as heating and transportation.

In the countries where some REScoops are already well established a dialogue between REScoops and government is ongoing in order to formalise this effective involvement of REScoops in the energy sector. For instance, in Belgium there is a demand that any new wind project should allow a minimum participation of REScoops (10% -> 50%), in Germany several REScoops have become grid operator, in Denmark REScoops hold a part of a large offshore wind farm. These are just some examples but they show the trend that is set.