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Which energy citizenship in positive energy districts? A governmentality social psychological analysis of participatory governance

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ABSTRACT

Towards low carbon energy transitions, the EU is developing Positive Energy Districts (PEDs) which produce more renewable energy than they consume. This implies more participatory governance which decentralises and democratises energy decisions to citizens, as captured in the emergent concept of 'energy citizenship'. However, it has been argued that these governmental strategies and the energy citizens they create have been co-opted by a neoliberal governmentality. This may limit citizens' rights and responsibilities as only consumers/prosumers in the private sphere. However, the neoliberal form of energy citizenship as well as potential alternative forms have seldom been empirically examined, so the main aim of this paper is to analyse which representations of energy citizenship are fostered in PED policies at EU, national, and local levels in a case study of Torres Vedras, Portugal. The analysis, which combines a governmentality approach with the critical social psychology of citizenship, unveils neoliberal energy citizenship as the hegemonic representation in these policies, and identifies emancipated representations of energy citizenship based on entrepreneurial energy activism and energy localism.

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1. Introduction

One of the primary objectives of the 2019 EU clean energy package is to accelerate low-carbon energy transitions by empowering citizens and consumers to actively participate in energy systems. One of the main initiatives in this regard is Positive Energy Districts (PED) – geographically demarcated areas which generate more renewable energy than they consume. PEDs were an object of policy-making for the first time in 2018 and the aim is to establish 100 of these districts by 2025 (baseline 2015) and for 80% of electricity consumption to be managed by consumers in 4 out of 5 households (SET-Plan Working Group, 2018). However, some authors have been highlighting that this overhaul of local energy systems raises questions about energy justice, about who bears the costs of such transformations and, thus, who are the likely winners and losers of the so-called green energy transition (Daggett, 2020; Levenda et al., 2021).

These concerns are reflected in growing debates and empirical analyses on and around the concepts of energy citizenship and energy democracy (Stephens, 2019; Szulecki, 2018). The former has been defined as an

> awareness of responsibility for climate change, equity and justice in relation to siting controversies as well as fuel poverty and … the potential for (collective) energy actions, including acts of consumption and the setting up of community renewable energy projects. (Devine-Wright, 2012, p. 72)

In turn, energy democracy has been conceived as 'the transition and search for a new governmentality with new idealized political subjects (prosumers)' (Szulecki, 2018, p. 34). These definitions highlight that two transversal dimensions to energy citizenship and energy democracy are an increased participation of citizens in

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decision-making processes – or the endorsement of a participatory governance of energy systems – and a change from citizens being only passive consumers to being active prosumers in energy projects. These are also key aspects to be promoted within PEDs and other smart city initiatives (van Wees et al., 2022) and associated policies, that can be seen as mobile technologies of governance (Lombardi & Vanolo, 2015), circulating between countries and cities to generate economic private profit through new technological solutions. This implementation of energy citizenship has thus begun to be pointed out by some researchers as too individualistic and commodified, which is to say that it is a citizenship that is often instrumentalised and co-opted by the state towards economic growth principles which translate into citizen's individual responsibility (B. Lennon et al., 2020). While this hypothesis is very plausible, given that low carbon energy transitions are inscribed in contemporary neoliberal capitalist societies and in their ethos of individuals as entrepreneurs in all domains of life (Han, 2017), it has seldom been empirically analysed. There has been a lack of research examining not only which energy citizenships are being enacted in current environmental policies, but also whether there is space for any other alternative forms of energy citizenship, as recently highlighted by critical perspectives (Pel et al., 2022).

In order to answer these questions, in this paper we apply the perspective of the critical social psychology of citizenship (Andreouli, 2019), combined with Foucault's governmentality theory (Foucault, 1991), to examine a case study of an in-progress PED. The main aim is to explore which energy citizenship(s) are being created and enacted there and with what potential consequences for citizens in terms of socio-environmental justice. To do this, we will examine the relevant PED policies at the EU, national and local levels.

2. Theoretical review and framework

2.1. Energy citizenship in the context of participatory governance

In the social sciences, citizenship has been defined both as a legal status and as the everyday relationship between citizens and the state, shaped by the wider context of legal directives, policies, technologies and related norms (Isin & Nielsen, 2015). When applied to the energy domain specifically, it has been proposed that energy citizenship can take place in the private sphere through energy consumption and production, in the public sphere through direct actions, and/or in the institutional sphere through participation in energy-related policies and decisions (Sovacool & Dunlap, 2022; Walker & Cass, 2007). Nonetheless, depending on the political economy and socio-technical configurations of each energy system at any given time, certain types of engagement are presented by the state and its associated policies and legal directives as more desirable than others. 'Participatory governance' – a new configuration of citizens and stakeholders observable in governing practices that aim to be decentralised and democratised (Szulecki, 2018) – is one such desirable form that is being increasingly encouraged.

The first pillar of participatory governance is marketisation. After liberal advocates argued that the failure of the state in governing energy systems efficiently is due to a lack of market principles, a new relationship was negotiated between the state and the private sector to allow different businesses to compete in delivering energy services to the users instead of state-owned suppliers (Burger et al., 2015). Democratisation, the second pillar of participatory governance, is the culmination of decades of support by civil society and academia for more citizen participation in the decision-making processes that affect people (Arnstein, 1969).

When it comes to energy citizenship, these two pillars of participatory governance have been pushed for through 'prosumerism' – a form of energy citizenship that has been increasingly fostered, particularly within initiatives such as smart cities and PEDs. Prosumerism refers to the act of producing the energy that one consumes, and even selling the surplus and/or managing one's energy use efficiently (Campos & Marín-González, 2020). While prosumers are thus usually seen as actively and directly participating in the governing of energy, it has recently been pointed out that policy makers are mainstreaming and institutionalising 'prosumerism' only in its market form (B. Lennon et al., 2020), dismissing alternatives such as municipal and community ownership and control (Brown et al., 2020), and obscuring citizens' contribution to the collective good (Defila et al., 2018). Therefore, prosumerism might create a scenario where increased empowerment in the market domain could result in citizen disempowerment in public and institutional spheres, as well as in

democratic life of local communities. It is this tension between different forms of citizenship that will be discussed in the next section on governmentality.

2.2. Energy citizenship and governmentality

Governmentality (Foucault, 1991), can be defined as the use of systematic strategies and tactics for governing human actions by the state and its apparatus, powered by knowledge about how subjects think, behave and feel. This is exemplified by nudging techniques, i.e. changes in the environment to increase the chance that a desirable human decision is made (Cromby & Willis, 2014). The governmentality approach thus argues that in participatory governance, instead of exercising a coercive power over energy citizens by discipline and punishment to force e.g. energy saving behaviours, the contemporary state governs energy practices through policies and associated discourses that mainstream energy as a commodity, governed by market dynamics and that puts the responsibility for saving or consuming energy on individual citizens. This is then made at the expense of alternative discourses, such as energy as a social necessity or as an ecological resource (Devine-Wright, 2012).

To understand how governance practices give rise to certain types of (energy) citizenship (see also Hindess, 2002), the governmentality framework is then very useful to analyse how discourses on energy citizenship have been institutionalised and legitimised, and hence become hegemonic. This framework identifies that discourses become hegemonic through four particular processes, namely, rationalities, technologies of government, subjectivities, and technologies of the self (Rose et al., 2006). Rationalities are the underlying reasons used by governments to resolve what it defines as existential and ethical problems such as climate change or the COVID-19 pandemic. They are built upon sets of knowledge and assumptions about the world that shape social relations between actors, hence, also shaping citizenship claims and rules. Rationalities legitimise technologies of government, this is, all (policy) instruments, bureaucratic practices and material devices that seek to set boundaries for human actions, hence, embedding mechanisms of control (Inda, 2008). Technologies of the self refer to the psychological tactics that individuals adopt to enact and survey certain desirable behaviours. This creates subjectivities, which include all the practices and feelings that individuals experience and which are realised through technologies of the self.

The act of the state governing via citizens' freedom of choice and self-responsibility, thus, marks the advanced liberal or neoliberal forms of governmentality (Han, 2017; Rose et al., 2006) – not to be seen as a unified whole, but, following Ong (2007), as the interplay between global logics and situated practices, that make neoliberalism amenable and adaptable to different contexts. Energy citizenship, hence, becomes a means for the state to influence the conduct of people in everyday life without direct state interventions and to define who are to be considered energy citizens and who are not in given situations. This is a discussion that has also been at the heart of another, socio-psychological, approach to citizenship that we will present next.

2.3. Critical social psychology of energy citizenship

By making the 'individual hold themselves accountable for whatever does, or does not, occur to them' (Furlong, 2016, p. 232), neoliberal energy citizenship ignores the shortcomings and injustices of the dominant capitalist economy. Therefore, this rules out the potential for 'energy citizenship' to also mean engaging in meaningful decision-making processes and even overtly and directly contesting energy-related social injustices (Sadowski & Levenda, 2020). This makes us consider that citizenship does not only entail conforming to well-established political rules but also means making rights claims that disrupt prescribed, pre-existent rules and actions (Andreouli, 2019).

These alternative approaches to citizenship have been increasingly highlighted and explored by the critical social psychology approach to citizenship as necessary to help us identify and promote counter-conducts to current neoliberal governmentality (Andreouli, 2019). This approach examines how people make sense of

citizen roles and negotiate different forms of citizenship, i.e. representations that diverge from the neoliberal hegemony of representing citizenship as individual rights and duties.

To that end, it is relevant to consider the distinction between hegemonic, emancipated and polemic representations (Howarth et al., 2014). Hegemonic representations are shared knowledge and meanings that are comparatively stable across time (Moscovici, 2001). For example, the representation of individuals as self-interested, is a long-held set of ideas, affects and practices about human nature that has been produced by Psychology as a discipline and that current energy policies often draw upon (Räthzel & Uzzell, 2019). Emancipated representations are 'the outgrowth of the circulation of knowledge and ideas belonging to subgroups' (Howarth et al., 2014, p. 28). Very often, emancipated representations emerge from minority groups who struggle for their rights or their group's recognition, but make use at least to some extent of hegemonic meanings in order to negotiate and stabilise recognition throughout time (Batel & Castro, 2015; Schick, 2022). Polemic representations are conflicting values that society as a whole does not share and are often expressed through protests and other forms of collective action (Sovacool & Dunlap, 2022). They often express incompatible or even incommensurable ontologies (Schelly et al., 2021) and therefore, have the power to uproot the normalisation of dominant discourses and challenge the status quo. These representations could entail demanding that PED-related initiatives are only implemented within a degrowth ethos and that they do not lead to green gentrification (M. Lennon, 2021; Nguyen & Batel, 2021). Therefore, the main aim of this paper is to examine, based on the inputs from the critical social psychology of citizenship combined with a governmentality approach, how multi-level policies for enacting and implementing PEDs represent energy citizens.

3. Method and procedure

This study examines PED-related policy documents of the European Commission, Portugal and Torres Vedras, aiming to explore if and how meanings around energy citizenship could differ from the EU level, down to the national and local levels, closer to citizens and communities. The Torres Vedras Municipality in Portugal was chosen as a case study due to its robust sustainability plan and interest in developing as a future PED. Torres Vedras has been part of the Covenant of Mayors since 2010 and was recognised by the European Green Leaf Award in 2015. Based on data from the last Census in Portugal (2021), the municipality of Torres Vedras has around 83,000 inhabitants, of which 64% are aged between 15 and 64 years old and around 6,7% do not have Portuguese nationality. 65% have either no formal education (15%) or the basic level of formal education (50%), and the level of unemployment is around 3.5%.

The analysis was performed in October 2021 and involved examining four living documents, published between 2013 and 2019, and which are the key documents guiding the implementation of PEDs and of related regulations, at EU, national and municipal levels (Derkenbaeva et al., 2022; Koutra et al., 2023; Stojilovska et al., 2022). These are:

(1) EU level: Clean energy for all Europeans package (CEP, European Commission, 2019), based on EU Commission's new rules for consumer-centred clean energy transition 2016 and previous directives on Energy Performance in Buildings (EU 2018/844, Directive 2010/31/EU), on Renewable Energy (2018/2001/EU), and on Energy Efficiency (EU 2018/2002);
(2) EU level: European Strategic Energy Technology – SET plan action 3.2 – Implementation plan for Europe to become a global role model in integrated, innovative solutions for the planning, deployment, and replication of Positive Energy Districts, 2018 (SET-Plan Working Group, 2018) . SET Plan was established in 2007, and Action 3.2 has been developed since 2015 in alignment with EU Energy Efficiency in Buildings Directive and the CEP;
(3) National level: Portugal national energy and climate plan 2021–2030 (NECP; Portuguese Republics, 2019);
(4) Local level: Action plan for energy sustainability of Torres Vedras, 20-20-20 (PASETV; CMTV, 2013). Designed along Torres Vedras' participation in the Covenant of Mayors from 2010.

The analysed documents informed each other over time, with national and municipal level policies referring to the documents/policies at higher levels, and EU level documents being shaped throughout time by consultation with the Covenant of Mayors that involves local municipalities. However, and given the extension of the relevant documents – 430 pages in total – and also that not all sections were directly relevant for the main goals of this study (e.g. technical information), we used the following keywords to focus our analyses only on relevant sections: 'citizen', 'consumer', 'prosumer', 'agent', 'stakeholder', 'self-consumption', 'the public', 'population', 'market', 'competition', 'commodity', 'self-regulation', 'security', 'local action', 'community', 'public utility', 'political consensus', 'democratic'. This resulted in a total of 77 pages to be analysed. As a result, we narrowed down our analysis to:

- CEP: Foreword and Section 5. Consumer at the heart of energy transition;
- SET: Executive summary and Section 4. Pathway towards PEDs;
- NECP: Section 1.1 'Summary', Section 1.3 'Consultations and involvement of national and EU entities and their outcome', Sections 2.4.3 and 2.4.4. on 'National objectives and targets' in 'Market integration' and 'Energy poverty', Sections 3.4.3 and 3.4.4. on 'Policies and measures planned' for 'Market integration' and 'Energy poverty';
- PASETV: Executive summary, Section 2. 'Framework and approach', Section 4. 'Action plan'.

Instead of seeing policies as lifeless, coherent, documents, this study adopts a critical policy analysis approach to these documents, to analyse how they are producing various, sometimes contrasting ideas and discourses (McIlvenny et al., 2016). Following that perspective, a pragmatic discourse analysis of the data was conducted (Batel & Castro, 2018). That consisted of, first, conducting a thematic analysis through an iterative process of identifying, organising, and validating themes between authors. The second step of the analysis was then to illustrate the key themes by also revealing how certain discursive and rhetorical strategies were used in the policy documents, and to what psychosocial effects. These are conveyed via underlined and bold in the presented extracts in the analysis. The pragmatic discourse analysis was also attentive to the absences in the documents – what was silenced, not present (Batel & Castro, 2018) – as will be further discussed in the next section.

4. Analysis and discussion

A summary of the main findings is displayed in Table 1. We will discuss these findings in a detailed way in the sections below.

Table 1. Summary of the findings.

Representations (and their presence in the documents)	Promoted subjectivities	Rationalities	Technologies of government (policies and interventions)	Technologies of the self (psychological tactics)
Hegemonic neoliberalism (CEP, SET, NECP, PASETV)	The smart and ethical prosumer	Sustainability Economic growth Cost effectiveness	Suppliers competition via compare tool, Dynamic pricing, Smart-meters and energy labels.	Consumer choice education, Nudges for behaviour change.
Emancipated activism (CEP, NECP, PASETV)	The activist consumer vs. the resilient, vulnerable consumer	Social equality 'European'/ modern quality of life Tackling energy poverty	Subsidies for retrofitting homes and efficiency measures, Democratisation of decision-making processes.	Energy poverty adaptation and resilience, Early participation of the active citizens in democratic decision-making processes.
Emancipated localism (PASETV, SET)	The local-global citizen	Sustainable territory Local identity Think global, act local	Public acceptance via co-design, Political consensus via Local Agenda 21.	Leadership to influence community, Local citizens' participation via consultations (e.g. Energy Lab).

4.1. 'The right to request smart meters': neoliberal prosumerism as hegemonic representation of energy citizenship

The analysis shows that the most prevalent and dominant representation of energy citizenship in the analysed EU, national and local policies is that of promoting smart prosumers. This is exemplified in the extracts below:

Extract #1:

Indeed, through improved market efficiency and reinforced consumer rights, citizens will have ***real*** *influence over their energy footprint – whether through smart meters, taking control of household bills, or actually investing to produce their own renewable energy, which is then fed into the grid. [CEP, p. 1]*

This representation aligns with neoliberal citizenship which requires citizens-prosumer to regulate and improve their individual energy behaviours to actively participate in the liberal energy market. The emphasis on how this entails a 'real influence', or responsibility, over their 'energy footprint' and 'taking control' of their lives (Han, 2017) through household bills and investing to produce their own renewable energy is very illustrative of that. These conventional consumer and prosumer roles are reified in the EU directives – Extract 1.1, as well as in NECP and PASETV policies, as 'consumer rights'. In turn, the background knowledge for the smart prosumer subjectivity assumes that the citizen-prosumer is economically and/or ecologically self-interested in saving resources. The following extract 2.1 highlights the naturalisation of this narrative:

Extracts #2:

1. *The success of the* ***perceived*** *evolution process of PEDs is subject to attracting citizens (also the consumer) and ponder their interest by creating* ***noticeable*** *incentives which are* ***concretely*** *related to significant savings (or acceptable additional cost for those more motivated to address global causes). [SET, p. 50]*

2. ***It is important to note that*** *the energy sector and climate questions are complex and often communicated in a language that is not understood by everyone, and as a result, citizens are not aware of the options available to them. [NECP, p. 50]*

These extracts emphasise that energy consumption is an individual responsibility, and that even the motivation to 'address global causes' (Extract 2.1) through energy consumption must be self-interested. By subscribing to this self-interest assumption about smart prosumers, policies across different levels assume that any failure in decision-making as a consumer is a citizens' failure to 'understand' complex information rather than a divergence in political ideologies (Extract 2.2). This depoliticisation of the energy and climate crisis (Carvalho et al., 2017) from the capitalist economy, is typical of neoliberal rationality which legitimises the role of the state to govern the free exchange of energy as a commodity and encourage market competition. This is also reflected in the green growth discourses in the extract below and is transversal to the analysed policies at all levels:

Extract #3:

Portugal ***has strong arguments*** *to continue to build a strategy for carbon neutrality and a carbon-neutral economy based on sources of renewable energy with a focus on energy efficiency and the energy consumer … The path to the decarbonisation of the economy is an opportunity for economic growth. [NECP, p. 12]*

This coupling of economic growth and sustainability through renewable energy and energy efficiency measures is a rationality of 'environmental modernisation' which believes in economic interventions and technological fixes for social and environmental problems (Blühdorn, 2012). Meanwhile, evidence has shown that it is impossible to decouple resource use and emissions from economic growth, hence, this green growth narrative is actually confirming business-as-usual rather than changing it (Hickel & Kallis, 2020). This rationality necessitates, in turn, certain technologies of government to facilitate economic savings at the individual level but also economic growth for national and regional levels, as underlined in the extracts below:

Extracts #4:

1. *For example, dynamic pricing in electricity offers the best value (i.e. lowest prices over time) to consumers. Certified price comparison tools will help them in* ***their choice of supplier****, and switching supplier will be easier and faster. [CEP, p. 12]*

2. *They [consumers] will have the right to request a smart meter, thus being informed about their energy consumption and costs in real time […]. [CEP, p. 13]*

Smart meters, dynamic pricing, certified price comparison tools are market-driven technologies of government to materialise 'green growth' and 'environmental modernisation' within PEDs. However, for them to be effective they must be accompanied by subjectivities and technologies of the self that use and maximise them. 'The right to request smart meter', to choose suppliers and appliances to improve one's energy consumption and cost, therefore, is the internalisation and conformity to market authority. The behaviour changes that they require, specified below in national and local level policies as well, are technologies of the self that fashion energy users to meet the standard of the smart and sustainable prosumer.

Extracts #5:

1. *This is why **it is crucial** to promote energy literacy for consumers through more transparent information and to ensure greater knowledge on energy and climate, […]. [NECP, p. 50]*

2. *Education and environmental awareness **are privileged means** to promote the efficient use of energy and the use of renewable energy. **It is necessary** […] to change consumption habits and induce environmentally sustainable behaviors. [PASETV, p. 42]*

Psychological tactics to produce calculative humans who could enhance their rational decision for energy savings are based on 'transparent information' and 'energy literacy' (Extract 5.1). Embedded in this technology of the self is also a deficit perspective of the energy citizens (Wynne, 2006) which assumes that if citizens do not save energy, it is because they are ignorant, and not because of their lived experiences of energy within the contradictions of neoliberal capitalism (Batel & Devine-Wright, 2020). At the most, this calculative citizen is sometimes allowed to also be ethical and concerned with environmental impacts through the tactics of raising 'environmental awareness' to 'change consumption habit' (Extract 5.2). However, this 'neoliberal environmentalism' (Fletcher, 2010) shapes a neoliberal subjectivity that allows governments and corporations to continue to pollute and extract as usual (Türken et al., 2016). In this sense, energy citizenship should not be restricted to consumer/prosumer participation in a market-driven way in the energy system and the question of the presence of alternative representations of energy citizenship must be addressed. This is to what we will turn next.

4.2. 'Energy access for all': an emancipated representation of activist energy consumerism vs. resilient energy consumerism

Despite not being as present, there were alternative representations in the analysed discourses. One of those emerged in discourses as an emancipated representation, portraying citizens as consumers/prosumers who not only focus on self-interested energy behaviours or participating in the market, but also actively use their consumer/prosumer power to enter the institutional spheres of energy decision making. This elevated consumer/prosumer agency is depicted in the extract below, also present in local policy level:

Extracts #6:

1. *A consumer at the centre of decision making is a more active consumer in the energy transition, and one which is available to participate in the structural changes required to meet the challenge leading to carbon neutrality by 2050. [NECP, p. 50]*

2. *Citizens and companies, if on the one hand, are more open to new forms of sustainable practices, are also more knowledgeable and more demanding in the service provided to them … . [PASETV, p. 45]*

By entering this institutional sphere, research has shown that political consumers can become an active agent in influencing other stakeholders such as businesses, policy makers and large corporations to resolve structural problems that may affect them and/or other less powerful groups (Extract 6.1) (Campos & Marín-González, 2020). Important in extracts 6 is that, contrarily to the hegemonic representation presented before, they do acknowledge that 'structural changes' (and not only consumption, individual changes) are needed to tackle the energy and climate crises. Also, increasing energy literacy is not seen here as the solution to fill in an

information deficit and to increase consumer responsibility for energy and the planet even more, but instead as empowering citizens through knowledge to demand more responsibility from energy companies. However, this 'activist consumerism' emerged from the analysed policies as also still anchored in the market and economic domain (Extract 6.2). It still ignores the social and political participation of people outside of the market. In fact, in the instances in which energy vulnerable citizens are discussed, they are often represented as passive and in need to be protected from energy poverty as illustrated in the extract below:

Extract #7:

With the consumer as an informed and active agent in the market, and with instruments to protect the more vulnerable consumers, a further strategic priority for 2030 will be addressed; that of fighting energy poverty and consumer vulnerability. [NECP, p. 108]

Unlike active consumers who have more agency in negotiating with the market actors, vulnerable consumers are expected to adopt pre-existing solutions/instruments such as energy efficiency measures to solve their energy poverty (DellaValle & Czako, 2022). However, aligned with hegemonic neoliberal citizenship, this still tends to naturalise the causes of social inequalities and to blame vulnerable consumers (Simcock et al., 2021; also Thomas et al., 2020). The underlying discourse for either an activistic or resilient (i.e. energy poor or vulnerable) consumer subjectivity is a claim for energy as a 'public utility' (Extract 8.1) and a cornerstone of contemporary societies' 'quality of life' (Walker & Cass, 2007) – or imperial mode of living (Dorn, 2021). This is illustrated in the extract below:

Extracts #8:

1. *Energy is central to modern life and social inclusion*: ***it is necessary for*** *education, health, security and wellbeing … .[CEP, p. 12]*

2. *Reducing emissions and transforming the energy system* ***does not imply that*** *the livelihoods of Europeans need to suffer*. ***It is possible*** *to reduce emissions while creating prosperity, high-quality local jobs, and improving quality of life. [CEP, p. 17]*

This discourse, also present in policies at the national and local levels, assumes that the high standard and hedonistic quality of life (Edwards et al., 2016) of modern societies ('Europeans') is what everyone should aspire to – including those Europeans who cannot have access to this 'quality of life' that is considered normal. Any threat to this standardisation of the human condition should, as suggested in the analysed policies, be overcome by economic and technological development. Hence, promoting fairness for all citizens in a consumerist capitalist growth model risks silencing the energy vulnerable through the denial rhetoric devices of 'does not imply that' in Extract 8.2.

The naturalisation of energy poverty in these policy measures e.g. subsidies for retrofitting house, actively silences vulnerable consumers and only focuses on energy poverty adaptation as a technology of the self, i.e. calling for citizens to be resilient by adopting prescribed technocratic interventions that are deemed to be democratic, as illustrated below:

Extracts #9:

1. *And this democratisation of energy will alleviate energy poverty and protect vulnerable citizens. [CEP, p. 12]*

2. *… reinforcing the role of the citizen as an active agent in decarbonisation and in energy transition will create equitable conditions for all, fighting energy poverty and providing instruments to protect vulnerable citizens while promoting their active involvement and territorial enhancement. [NECP, p. 50]*

To use the words of Kaika (2017, p. 89), equating democratisation with active involvement of vulnerable citizens at EU policy level (Extract 9.1) without recognising their unequal footing can be viewed as an act of *immunology* – 'it vaccinates citizens and environments so that they can take larger doses of inequality and degradation in the future'. Meanwhile, the national level policy NECP promotes the active participation of vulnerable citizens from the beginning (Extract 9.2). This technology of the self could avoid the suppression of vulnerable citizens' voices as well as of their critical perspectives on how the energy system should be

designed, following a truly democratic process. In sum, this emancipated representation unveils that vulnerable citizens are still excluded from the types of energy citizenship that emancipate other activist-consumers, even if it already acknowledges, at least to some extent, that there are inequalities and that these and the environmental crisis can only be solved through changes at more structural levels.

4.3. 'Involving the entire community': local energy citizenship as emancipated representation

Another emancipated representation of energy citizenship that was identified in the analysed policies' discourses presents citizens as emplaced, this is, as part of a local community (Devine-Wright, 2019; Di Masso, 2012). This prefigures an emancipated place-based energy citizenship as suggested in the extract below:

Extract #10:

In the future, the strategy of the Municipality of Torres Vedras is based on the concept of 'Smart City' where the integration of sustainability, technology and innovation creates territories ***endowed with*** *areas and infrastructures that facilitate and create the best living conditions for* ***those who inhabit them*** *and encourage and promote the exercise of active citizenship. [PASETV, p. 33]*

The extract 10 seems to suggest, though ambiguously, what a change from more conventional to transformative forms of energy citizenship can look like, and how this implies spatial/place embeddedness ('areas and infrastructures') and related attachments to place ('those who inhabit them'). The promotion of 'participation of citizens in active and public life' in PASETV is substantially different from the submission to 'sustainability' by changing 'consumption habits' in the hegemonic representation. It invites citizens to 'enhance a new vision' for a zero emissions territory (PASETV, p. 33) and, thus, to engage more with 'place politics' (Devine-Wright et al., 2019). According to national and local policies, the justification for such active local citizenship is to build a sustainable local identity:

Extract #11:

The mission of the Municipality of Torres Vedras is to create a 'Sustainable Territory' with more jobs, more competitive, equitable, innovative, ensuring a better quality of life. [PASETV, p. 43]

Despite the relevant focus on a sustainable territory and community to tackle the global climate crisis, the conception of energy citizenship present in extract 11 is still entangled with an economic growth focus, but in quite a distinctive way from how that was taken in the neoliberal prosumerist hegemonic representation (Levenda, 2019). Indeed, it not only focuses on 'more jobs, more competitive' but also 'equitable and innovative', which could hint a transformative social innovation aspect (Avelino et al., 2020). However, it is also unclear which meanings are associated with a 'better quality of life'. The adoption of an emancipated local-based energy citizenship is further illustrated in how citizens' and other stakeholders' participation is conceived in these discourses:

Extract #12:

1. *[…] stakeholder participation and co-design processes in the planning and implementation of PEDs could help in ensuring public acceptance and send a positive message for the whole deployment process of PEDs. [SET, p. 50]*

2. *The implementation of the A21 L [Local Agenda 21] in Torres Vedras demonstrates […]* ***the importance of*** *the active participation of the population in the initiatives and their role* ***preponderant*** *in guaranteeing the success of the actions [* ***…*** *], thus involving the entire community to achieve objectives that are assumed to be global, but whose performance takes place at a more restricted and local [level]. [PASETV, p. 47]*

Co-design processes with 'stakeholders' as a way of 'ensuring public acceptance and send a positive message' (extract 12.1), might be seen as an instrumental way of fostering participation just to guarantee acceptance of a given project (Aitken, 2010). In fact, research has warned that civil society not only pioneers new social relations and practices as a 'hidden innovator', but also can be disempowered by being over-exposed to 'serve political agendas' in urban sustainability transitions (Frantzeskaki et al., 2016). On the other hand,

the implementation of the Local Agenda 21 in PASETV emphasises a more substantive (Wesselink et al., 2011) uptake of participation, in which the local population's role is 'preponderant in guaranteeing the success of the actions' (extract 12.2), with the interconnection between global and local objectives being stressed. These different approaches to technologies of government, i.e. co-design at EU level and Local Agenda 21 at municipal level, lead then to divergent technologies of the self as the following extracts also demonstrate:

Extract #13:

1. *Constant engagement and co-creation of the vision and roadmap will enable community leaders to emerge and ensure that citizens and businesses in the PEDs as well as the wider community know, understand and participate in the development of the PEDs. [SET, p. 53]*

2. *In the future, in addition to the continuation of the Energy Lab, the involvement and communication with the actors considered in PASE may also include a set of initiatives that will enable everyone to follow the process and,* ***if desired****, provide suggestions and contributions. [PASETV, p. 49]*

At the EU level (Extract 13.1), leadership is used as an emancipating technology of the self to orchestrate local energy initiatives rather than challenge the status quo (Hasanov & Zuidema, 2022). This risks delegitimising voices of project protestors and excluding other 'non-leadership' citizens, which could exacerbate social injustice (Tarhan, 2022). At the local level, pedagogical approaches to energy citizenship such as the Energy Lab enacted in Torres Vedras, create space for citizens to actively get involved in a more meaningful way (Extract 13.2). Nevertheless, even if participation is incentivised at a more collective and inclusive level ('all of the inhabitants of Torres Vedras' – Extract 13.2), it supports a type of participation mainly based on suggestions and consultations, and not on actual co-creation (Elkjær et al., 2021).

5. Conclusions

In response to the demand for a critical-constructive analysis of energy citizenship (Pel et al., 2022), this paper, by using governmentality and the critical social psychology of citizenship as an integrated framework to analyse PED-related policies at EU, national and local levels, confirms the hegemony of a neoliberal representation of energy citizenship across policy levels. The smart and ethical prosumer image proposed and reified in this neoliberal hegemonic representation has been argued to exclude people who do not have the means to obtain the new skills and resources that would enable them to become prosumers (Ryghaug et al., 2018). Importantly, this representation of energy citizenship supports an energy system that reproduces the fossil capitalist and colonial culture (Malm, 2016), even if replacing the sources of energy by renewables.

However, the analysis also shows two emancipated representations of energy citizenship based on human rights and local rights claims: the active vs. resilient vulnerable consumer and the local-global citizen. While the active vs. vulnerable consumers representation is more present at the national policy level to tackle existing and future energy poverty, the local-global citizen is grounded in local policy to tackle global (climate) issues by local (energy) actions. However, in the analysed policies, these promoted subjectivities are often instrumentalised by the government towards a green growth objective by advocating for the maintenance of an 'hedonistic quality of life' and 'sustainable territory identity' to be more competitive. In turn, the technologies of government used, such as economic subsidies and political consensus through co-design processes, legitimise experts and state's power to intervene at the expense of vulnerable consumers' voices.

The analysis has revealed then that no polemic representations were identified in these policies' discourses, this is, more radically transformative ways of representing energy citizenship. This could be expected because of the absence of direct bottom-up, community voices in these policies; but could also have been influenced by our analysis of only specific sections/pages of the selected policies. Therefore, future research should involve community and other voices beyond policy to explore if there are other alternative representations of energy citizenship being discussed (e.g. Thomas et al., 2020), implemented and/or experienced. Still, the governmentality and critical social psychology framework used in this paper has helped to make visible the dominant neoliberal assumptions that PED-related policy discourses are based on, as well as their power in shaping neoliberal subjectivities. In sum, we can say that the ambiguities that co-exist in emancipated representations

might hinder the growth of more transformative meanings of energy citizenship within PEDs, but we can also expect that they might foster debate and discussion between those different co-existing meanings.

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