

FROM RURAL SUCCESS TO URBAN CHALLENGES:

Critically Evaluating the Legal Framework for Energy
Prosumption in Austria from a socio-spatial perspective

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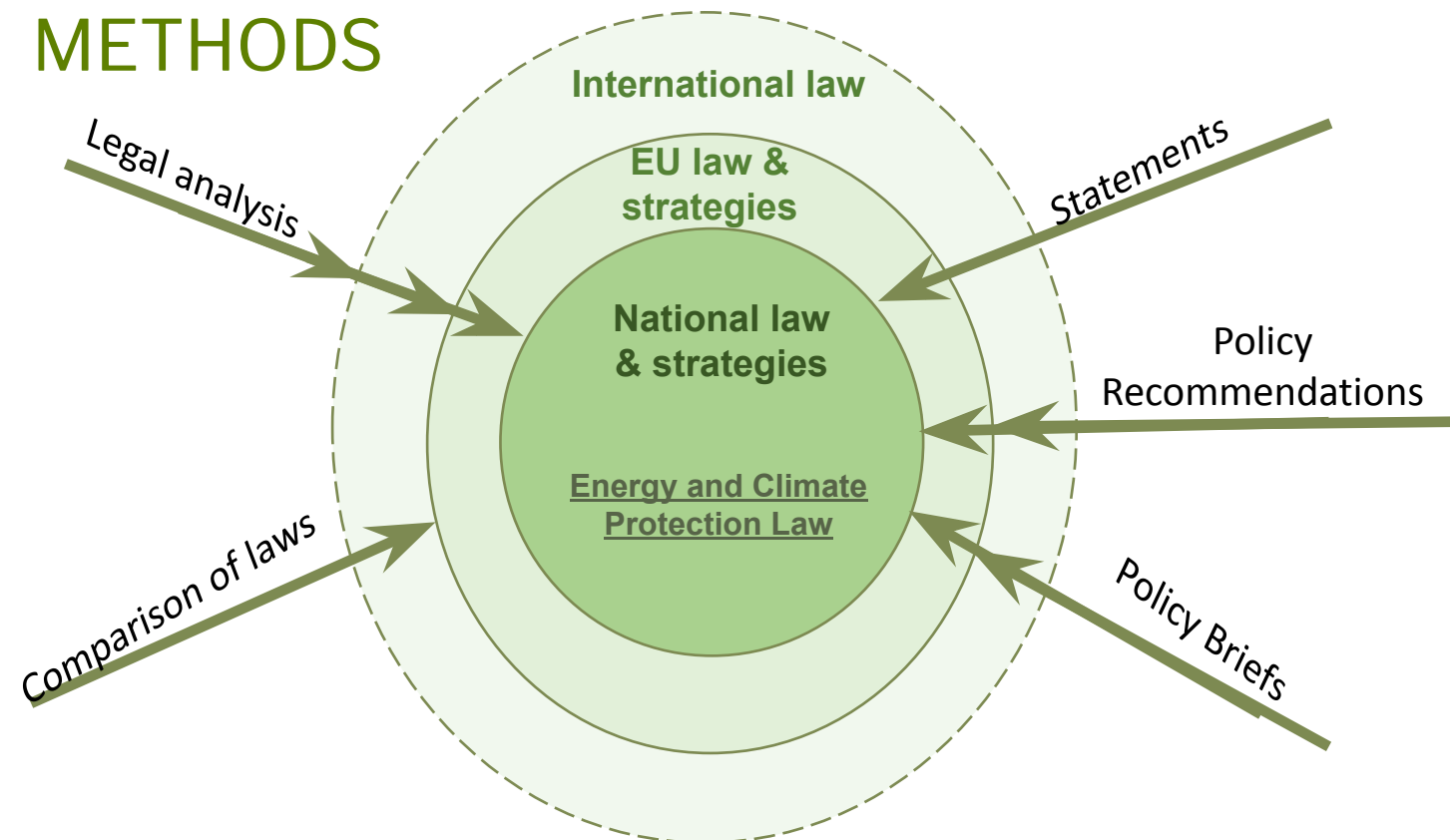
Brief introduction to our non-university research institution

Energieinstitut an der JKU Linz

- An organisation with **three different departments for interdisciplinary research**
 - energy economics,
 - energy law &
 - energy technology
- **Topics in Energy Law**
 - Energy citizenship
 - Sector coupling / Power-to-X
 - CCU & CCS
 - AI
 - District heating / Waste heat

Further development of **legal and regulatory frameworks** to achieve climate and energy policy goals by supporting new technologies/business models/processes

METHODS



AGENDA

- Background of the UrbEnPro Project
- An overview of the legal perspective of the prosumer
- The rise of energy communities in Austria
- Shared energy use meets housing conditions in urban areas
- A brief overview of Austrian cities
- What observations have been made so far?
- Interim results on joint energy use in urban areas

Background of the UrbEnPro Project

“Policy and governance of urban energy prosumption models – examining and co-visioning a social transformation process”

Research context

- The joint use of energy has been the subject of extensive technical and administrative research.
- The question regarding the legal implications of social and spatial factors remain outstanding.

Research perspectives:

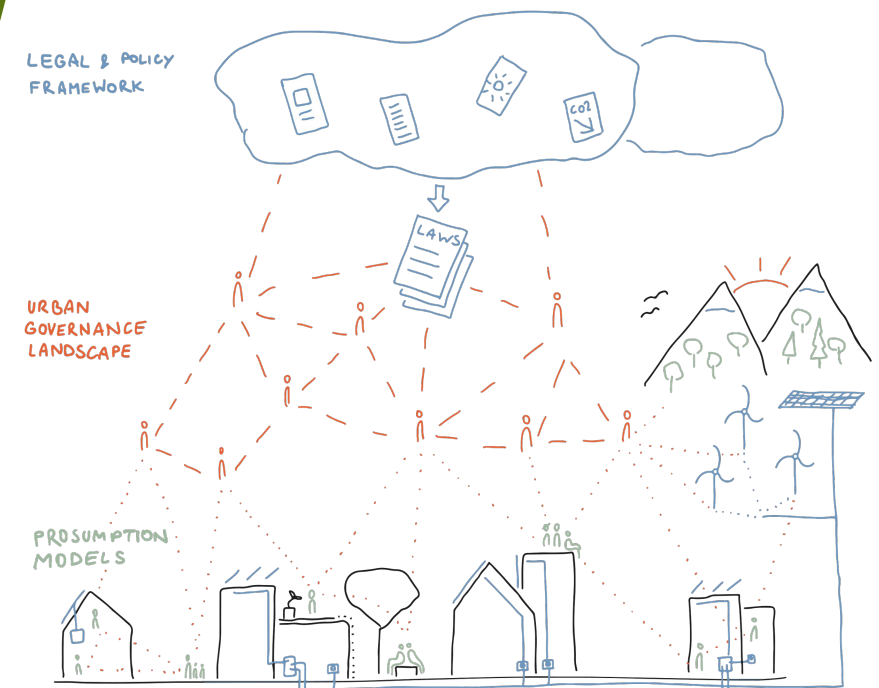
- Spatial (planning) aspects
- Sociologic aspects
- Legal framework analysis

Researche question:

- Why are energy prosumption in rural areas generally more common than in urban areas?
- What challenges exist in urban areas?

Key lesson

>> Existing findings indicate that the effects of electricity law vary depending on the socio-spatial context. <<



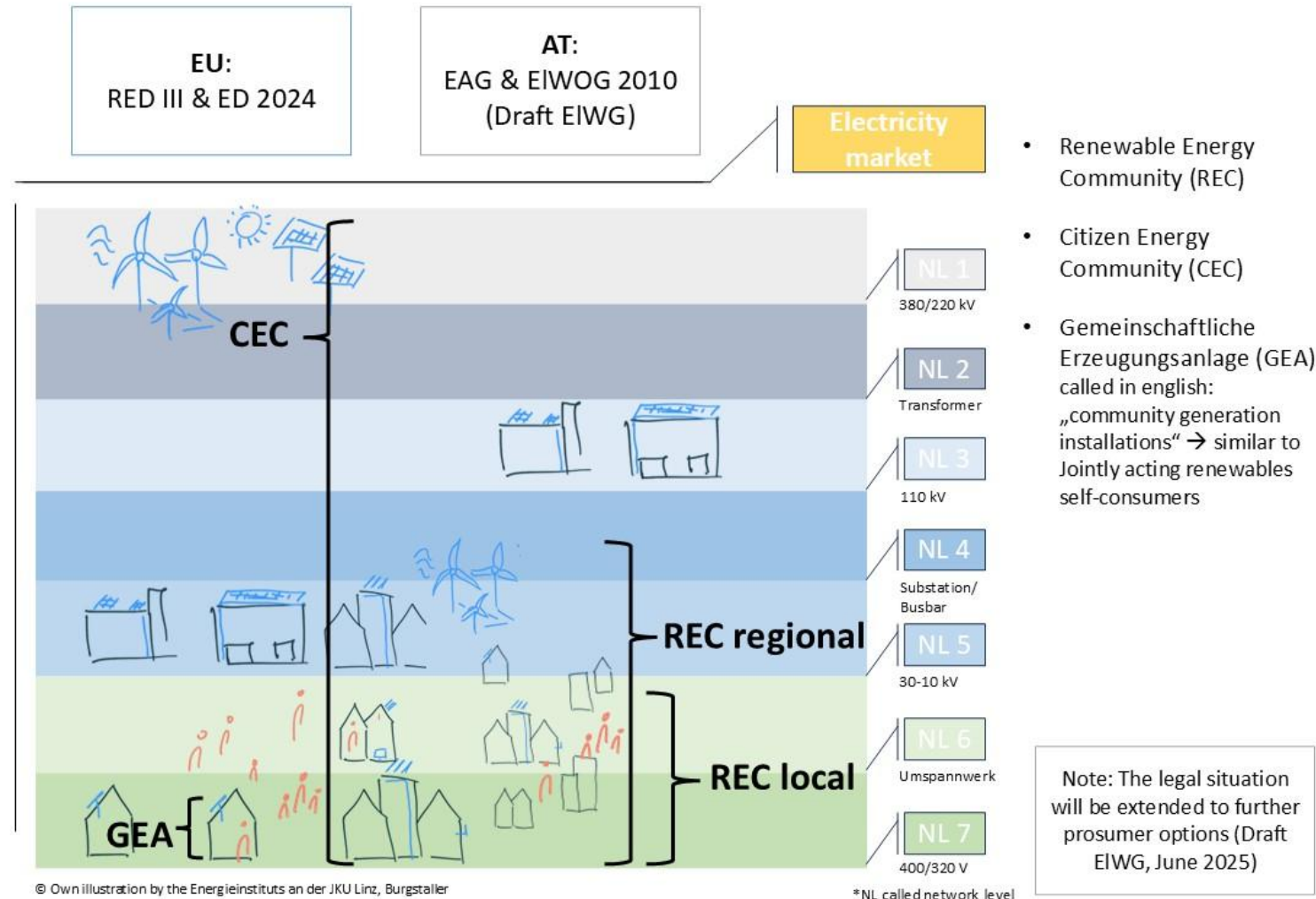
Landscape of urban energy prosumption. Andreas Bernögger, future.lab TU Wien

An overview of the legal perspective of the prosumer

Key information

- **GEA** stands for “community generation installation”
 - A power generation plant is used by several parties within a building
 - no grid fees
- **REC:** here, the ‘proximity of the renewable energy projects’ (RED II) is resolved via the electricity grid levels;
 - there is a regional REC and a local REC □ the system grid fee is reduced in each case).
- **CEC:** there are no restrictions on the range of the electricity grid, so the entire Austrian grid area can be used.

Prosumers in the current Austrian electricity market



The rise of energy communities in Austria

Overview of energy prosumption

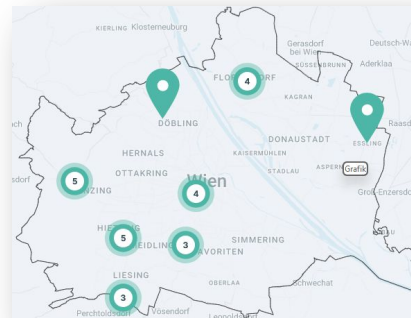
- In 2021, there were
 - 770 GEA
 - 230 REC
 - 5 CEC
- Today (July 2025) there are
 - 3.830 GEA
 - 4.600 REC
 - 850 CEC

Source: Presentation Stephan Heidler, 4 Jahre Energiegemeinschaften in Österreich

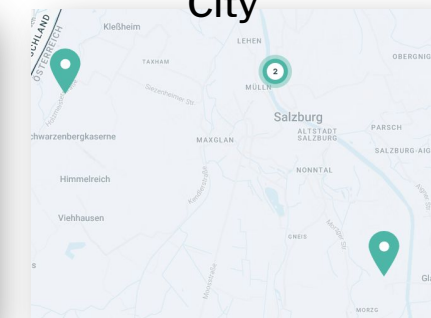


The landscape of energy communities in Austria that are voluntarily register on the website of the Coordination Office for CE. (source: <https://energiegemeinschaften.gv.at/landkarte/>)

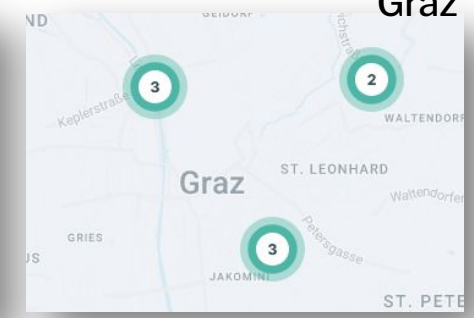
REC in Vienna



REC in and around Salzburg City



REC in and around Graz



Shared energy use meets housing conditions in urban areas

Energy sharing meets multi-party living arrangements in urban areas

■ Austrian Electricity Law

- **Energy communities** share electricity via the **electricity grid**.
- GEA does not require a power grid, but is connected to a house or internal power line (separate from the public grid).
- The main **reference point is the metering point number** for the building or parts of the building.
- The **metering point number** is a fixed point that **cannot be taken with you when you move**.

- **Rights relating to housing:** There are different laws for multi-part buildings, e.g.

Austrian Tenancy Act:

- For tenants, there is a law that regulates the legal relationship between tenants and landlords.
- **Tenants have no right to make decisions about parts of the building**, i.e. no right to demand the installation of a power generation system.

Austrian Condominium Act:

- The purpose of the Act is to regulate the rights and obligations between flat owners with regard to a property/building.
- The consent of all flat owners is required for common parts of the building (such as the roof).
- **A joint decision can be made regarding whether a PV power plant may be installed on the roof.**

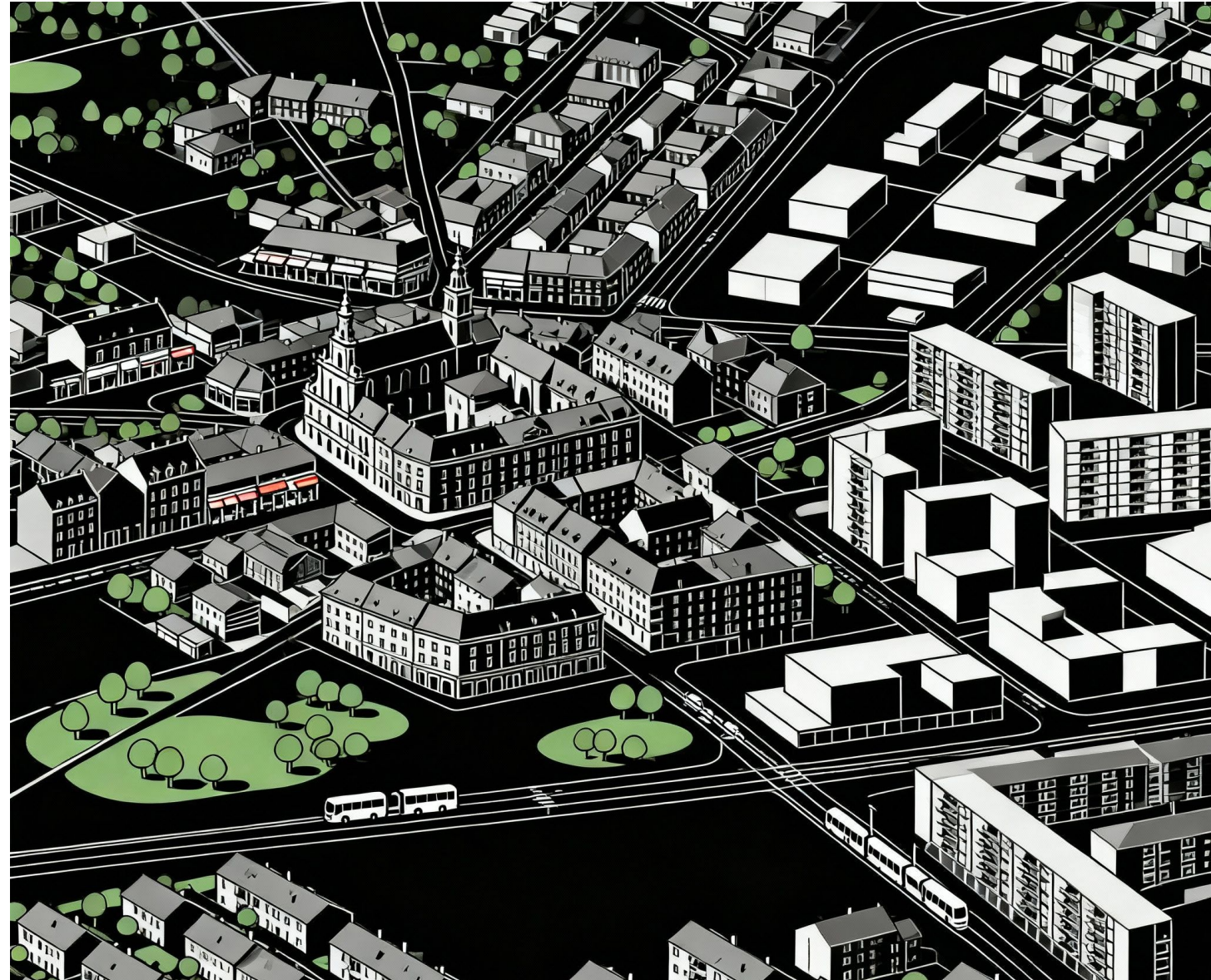
A brief overview of Austrian cities

■ Suburban versus Urban Areas in Austria

- In suburban regions, average household incomes are generally higher than in the city or rural areas.
- Rural areas in Austria generally have smaller villages with many single-family homes, but there are exceptions.

■ Property Ownership versus Rental Housing

- Many people in cities, especially bigger ones, tend to live in rented apartments or flats.
- Vienna, the capital of Austria, is both the largest city and a federal state.
- In rural areas, most people tend to live in single-family houses they own, rather than rent.



What observations have been made so far?

What challenges arise from the interaction between electricity law, housing rights and property ownership?

■ **Unclear spatial overlaps**

- The electricity grid infrastructure does not always match political or social boundaries. This is particularly pronounced in urban areas.

This means the visible area is different from the technically needed area for shared energy use.

■ **No possibility to transfer membership**

- Participation in energy communities depends on a fixed metering point that cannot be moved when changing residence. As a result, it is unclear whether a person can continue membership in the same energy community after moving.

■ **Different property rights affect participation**

- In rural and suburban areas, property owners generally have an easier position because they have the rights to decide on the installation of energy systems such as solar panels.

Tenants usually depend on landlords' decisions. In buildings with multiple owners, a majority decision is needed, for example, to install a solar system on a shared roof.

Interim results on joint energy use in urban areas

Which energy prosumer model is best suited to which situation?

- **GEA** will be able to establish itself **more in the city centre**. Because here, it only relates to the structural and legal requirements for the building and its ownership.
- **REC** is generally suitable **for smaller village and town structures** because of its limited range (via electricity grid).
In larger cities with historically grown spatial structures, it is often difficult to harmonise the visualisation of electricity infrastructure and lived space.
- **CEC** is the simplest form because **anyone can participate regardless of where the metering point is located**. This tends to make it easier to connect many consumers to electricity generation facilities in rural areas.

Back to Key Lesson
>> Existing findings indicate that the effects of electricity law vary depending on the socio-spatial context.<<

Thank you for your attention.

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