

Solar heater self-building courses as sources of consumer empowerment and local embedding of sustainable energy technology

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Abstract

Self-building courses have been identified as a stimulus for user innovations, local embedding and diffusion of renewable energy technology. In this paper we explore the Finnish solar heat courses. Our empirical material consists of field observation on a single course, of interviews with teachers and of a survey of participants since the beginning activities in late 1990's. Our results show that course participants have started to follow energy discussions, collect information and actively advice others. Participants view themselves as increasing capable actors in renewable energy. They have also begun to engage in energy saving and renewable energy at home on a wide front. The fact that only 41% have installed the collector points to critical aspects of right timing but also to the way in which self-building courses enable easy first-step into renewable energy. Overall our results indicate that self-building courses offer possibilities for material engagement that has outcomes beyond the immediate objectives of the course.

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