

New Initiative and Project 2018



Empowering Rural Communities (ERC)

A Marshal Plan against Poverty, Hunger, Migration and Depopulation of Villages

A comprehensive plan to develop the economy, social services, education, energy and water supplies, agriculture and food supplies, environmental care and mobility

Résumé

Empowering Rural Communities (ERC) is a new initiative aimed at developing all aspects of rural community life and ensuring the sustainability of each community.

Through sharing our vision and offering a comprehensive plan of action we hope to re-kindle the hopes of the people and involve them in improving the economy, education, health care, energy and water supplies, sanitation, mobility, building construction, infrastructure and social structures, which are the most essential aspects of the community. Through actively involving the local people we let them take ownership of the project and at the same time, develop new skills, restore their pride and dignity and gain new hope in a better future.

This is a new innovative approach towards stabilizing rural areas. The combination of clean technologies and sustainable development enables us to live in peace with each other and our natural environment and avoid dependency on business giants. The implementation of sustainable survival strategies is a major step towards creating a peaceful world. Tackling poverty and mass migration, which affects a third of the world's population, remains a major priority.

Empowerment needs clear and reliable political and financial commitment that promotes the participation of people, organisations, enterprises and communities working towards the goal of increased individual and communal self-sufficiency, political efficiency, improved quality of communal life and social justice. The project Empowering Rural Communities (ERC) is not a utopic vision, but a real solution. Our model project in Wierthe can be visited and ideas discussed.

The IFEED research centre in Vechelde has documented comprehensive planning and realization strategies for empowering communities, whilst taking into consideration their specific locations and requirements. We would be happy to share our experiences and discuss ideas with you.

Come and see for yourselves! This is not only a vision, but a concrete solution! Come and enjoy the new working environment!

Background

Social wellbeing, culture and economic stability is what we have traditionally come to associate with rural communities in the past. Nowadays however, rural areas show higher rates of poverty and unemployment and are generally underserved in comparison to urban areas. The consequences, especially in developing countries are poverty, misery and mass migration.

Empowerment is a social process which promotes the participation of people, organisations and communities striving for greater individual and communal control and mutual wellbeing.

The amount of change needed is immense. In many areas of the world, poverty is a direct result of the poor supply of energy. More than 2 billion people, 600 million of them living in Africa, have no access to modern energy supplies such as electricity; most of them are living in rural areas.

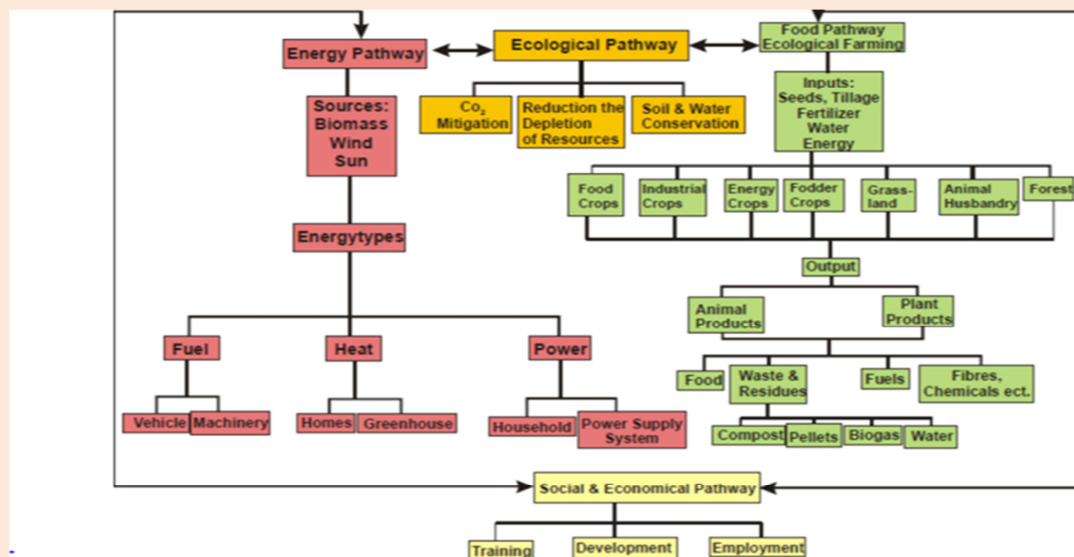
Current approaches to rural and regional development are incomplete. A more comprehensive plan is needed, which offers more than delivery services, information dissemination and the promotion of individual initiatives. Instead, it should encourage the active participation of the local community members, who should form partnerships, improve coordination and have regular communication on every level in order to inspire and motivate each other and encourage commitment, rather than allowing people to isolate themselves and feel like victims of their circumstances.

Sustainable projects which offer real perspectives are needed now, more than ever before. Ten years ago, IFEED developed the concept of "Integrated Energy Communities" for the FAO of the United Nations. The project has been continually adapted and refined to cater for the various conditions and specific needs of communities around the world.

It is a dynamic process focused on developing the energy supply which is directly related to the most critical social issues affecting sustainable development: poverty, job creation, income levels, access to social

services, gender disparity, population growth, agricultural production, climate change, the environment, security issues and migration.

The organizational structures and implementation of the ERC project are similar to that of the "Integrated Energy Communities" project initiated by IFEED in 2004. IEC is a strategy to support the sustainable development of rural areas in Europe and around the world. The basic aim of the project is to provide the population with energy, water and food and end their dependency on fossil fuels by developing local sources of renewable energy. This automatically provides work for the local population and enables them to start small and medium sized enterprises, which would stabilize the economy. The project can improve many aspects of rural community life and can be implemented as a whole or in part.



Structures of the UN concept for Empowering Rural Communities (El Bassam, 2010 and 2017)

This project has already been introduced and implemented in Germany, Bulgaria, Iran and Egypt.

It comprises of the local production of renewable energy, clean water and food production to support households, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), agriculture, sanitation, mobility, storage and trade facilities. It also includes social projects to provide medical care, sanitation, climate protection and education.

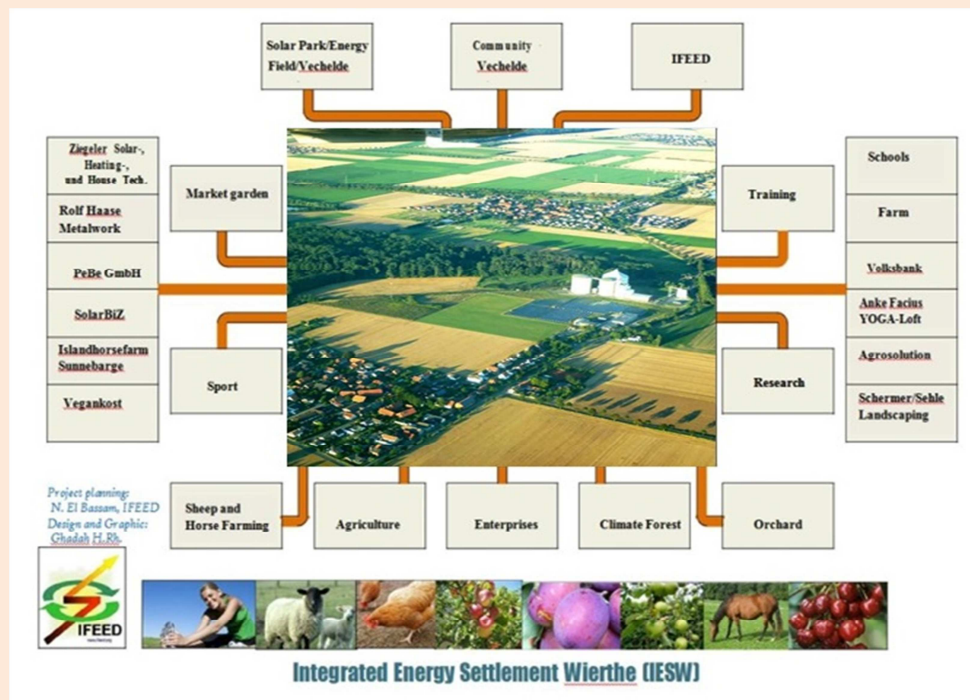
The Pilot Project in Wierthe, Germany (ERCW)

The inauguration of the completed project took place in 2015 in the Community of Wierthe, Germany. Energy was provided by the solar park which produces 1.8 MW electricity and bioenergy (400 KW thermal) for heating and aiding desalination and powering the irrigation systems. A number of enterprises are located at the project site, which employ some 100 employees and trainees. These enterprises not only serve the local community of Wierthe, but also serve the state of Lower Saxony and other parts of Germany.

Education and training are provided, together with sport and other entertainment facilities. Several hectares of land for forest, fruit and vegetable fields, bee-keeping and sheep husbandry were included for food production and climate protection purposes.

Approximately 2,000 wood trees and 4,000 assorted trees such as oak, beech, wild cherry, elderberry and hawthorn were planted. Vegetables could be grown in the orchard if necessary, to make use of the surface area. A well was drilled and pipelines and power lines were laid to supply the area with water and electricity.

The complex uses electric vehicles and electric bikes, which are powered by solar energy. Hybrid vehicles are also in use.



"Empowering the Rural Community of Wierthe", (Planning: El Bassam, Design: Ghada H. Rh, 2014)

Training must be based on the demand and can only effectively increase employment when it is part of an integrated strategy for economic development and increased employment, which in turn will automatically reduce poverty. The implementation of only parts of the integrated strategy has, until now, been unable to boost economic growth significantly, especially in the developing world.

Germany has a long and well-established tradition of vocational training, upon which this project is based. Local companies offer ongoing internships, part-time and full-time positions for workers and students.

This project can be short-, medium- and long-termed and serves the needs of rural populations in developing countries. It brings substantial results that offer the people concrete hope of a better future in their homeland, thus reducing the pressure to emigrate. This will have a positive influence on communities as they learn to work together for their mutual benefit.

The decentralized nature of the project makes its implementation suitable for different regions. Under-served communities could then become more prosperous and self-sufficient, which is the central goal of the energy transition.

Our experiences in Wierthe showed us how decisive the support of political institutions, the civil community, public organizations, various enterprises and local schools was for the success of the project.

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Some Images of the Implemented Project





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