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Article

"Decentralized storage installations should be available for further market interaction": Five questions for Wolf-Peter Schill

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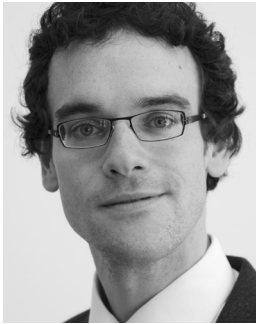
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Dr. Wolf-Peter Schill, Research Associate in the Department of Energy, Transportation, and Environment at DIW Berlin

FIVE QUESTIONS FOR WOLF-PETER SCHILL

»Decentralized storage installations should be available for further market interaction«

1. Mr. Schill, what role does decentralized prosumage with solar power and battery storage currently play in Germany? The battery-supported self-generation and consumption of electricity from solar sources is still a niche in the German market. Around 50,000 storage batteries have been installed here to date. On the whole that's not a lot. Their total storage capacity is significantly lower than that of the other storage devices in use today. The niche is growing rapidly, but starting from a rather low level.
2. What are the benefits of prosumage using photovoltaic systems and batteries? There is a range of positive aspects. First, many electricity consumers prefer to use local electricity from renewable sources that they generate themselves. And some would like to participate actively in the energy transition by investing in their own electricity generation and storage installations. In addition, storage batteries can potentially relieve distribution networks.
3. To what extent does battery storage make prosumers independent of the grid? In a way, battery storage allows prosumers to increase their rate of self-sufficiency. On average, a photovoltaic rooftop installation allows me to reach a self-generation proportion of around 30 percent. This means one can cover about one-third of a typical household's electricity demand using a photovoltaic installation without battery storage. By adding battery storage, I can raise the proportion. But becoming completely autonomous is not really the point. The installations are still connected to the distribution network. And there are many hours during which I take power from the grid and many when I feed in power that I can't use myself.
4. What are the disadvantages? From an economic viewpoint or that of the overall electricity system, the concept has obvious disadvantages when it comes to efficiency. They stem from the fact that storage capacities are being built even though the system does not actually need them – at least not today. And these superfluous storage batteries are probably not being operated in a system-oriented manner. Plus, if grid fees are energy-based, a rise in the number of prosumers means that in general, more of the grid costs will be passed on to consumers who are unable to generate their own electricity.
5. Do your findings have any significance for the energy policy objectives of the future? There are several spheres of activity in energy policy that are decisive for regulating the solar prosumage market in the future. For example, policy makers should ensure that decentralized storage batteries serve the system or the grid and ideally, that they remain available for further market interaction as well. In our opinion, the prorated EEG surcharge on self-consumed electricity should be reconsidered or, in the context of further grid fee system adjustments, abolished. With regard to solar prosumage, regulations should be created to counteract a distortion of self-consumption in ownership vs. self-consumption in rental arrangements. Tenants and homeowners should be treated as equals when it comes to self-consumption. Last but not least, solar self-consumption should be taken into consideration in all scenarios relevant to the energy industry and energy policy.

Interview by Erich Wittenberg



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