

## **Sharing the Benefits and Burdens of the Energy Transition: Learning lessons from Community Renewables**

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Tackling climate change requires a swift energy transition. Energy transitions raise complex questions associated not only with reforming existing energy systems, but also with the distribution of the related benefits and burdens (Barrera-Hernandez et al, 2016). In recent years polycentric (Ostrom, 1990) bottom-up approaches to environmental and energy governance have been put forward as a possible solution to this conundrum (Peeters and Schomerus, 2014).

At the national and subnational level, numerous states have adopted measures to stimulate local renewable energy generation, rapidly turning local and rural communities into key actors in the energy transition. This shift is echoed in a recent European Commission proposal, which includes provisions promoting renewable energy self-consumption, as well as access to energy markets for community-produced renewable energy.

The proposed research agenda considers so-called 'community renewables' as a casestudy to understand how questions concerning the distribution of benefits and burdens associated with the energy transition can be addressed and the role of law in providing solutions to these. Community renewables have been widely investigated by social scientists (e.g. Walker and Devine-Wright, 2008; Seyfang, Park and Martin, 2013) who have conceptualized it as a form of niche innovation (e.g. van der Schoor and Scholtens, 2015), and a manifestation of a bottom-up approach to the energy transition (Smith et al, 2016). Scholarly endeavours on energy justice (Jenkins et al, 2016) portray community renewables as a promising avenue to address recognition justice concerns associated with the energy transition. This literature emphasises how greater scholarly enquiry is needed to identify the regulatory tools best suited to support community renewables. Legal scholarship has so far narrowly focussed on the role of law in overcoming resistance to the development of renewable energy infrastructure and generation (Roenne, 2016) on the basis of procedural justice (Lee, 2013; Armeni, 2016). The proposed research agenda builds upon literature from a range of disciplines, including economics, geography, law, political sciences and sociology, to look at the distributive, procedural and retributive justice questions raised by community renewables and the role of law in addressing these. The objective is to establish what we know about community renewables and their suitability to address justice questions underlying energy transitions, mapping an agenda for future research.