



# POWERSHIFTS

## Energy Decentralization and Political Power

Marie Claire Brisbois

Lecturer, SPRU, University of Sussex

20 November, 2018



Utrecht University

US  
UNIVERSITY  
OF SUSSEX



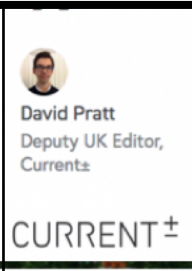
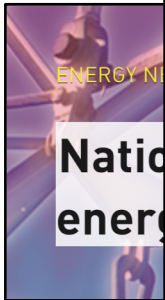
European  
Commission

Horizon 2020  
European Union funding  
for Research & Innovation

# Decentralization of energy systems is happening.

## Drivers:

- Grid stabilisation
- Local economic development
- Falling costs of wind and solar
- Decarbonisation
- Community building, participation and cohesion
- A redistribution of control and profits



# Decentralization is happening. And it's political.

≡ *RollingStone*

## The Koch Brothers' Dirty War on Solar Power

All over the country, the Kochs and utilities have been blocking solar initiatives

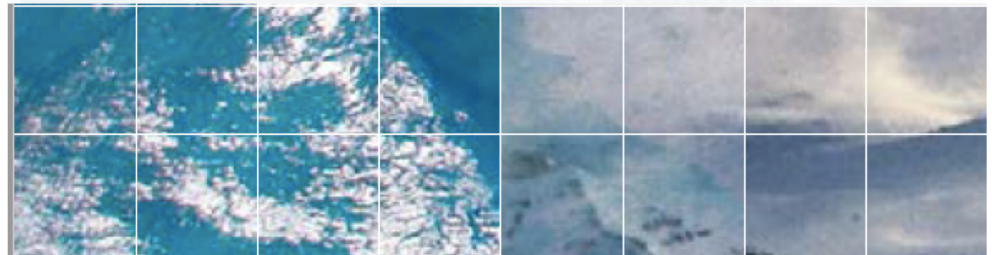
By Tim Dickinson  
February 11, 2016



# OCEANS



Influence stretches far and wide in the world of *Oceans*. Power is devolved, competing interests are accommodated and compromise is king. Economic productivity surges on a huge wave of reforms, yet social cohesion is sometimes eroded and politics destabilised.



# Key Research Questions

1. Is political power shifting?
2. What do these power shifts look like?
3. What will the consequences be?

 POWERSHIFTS

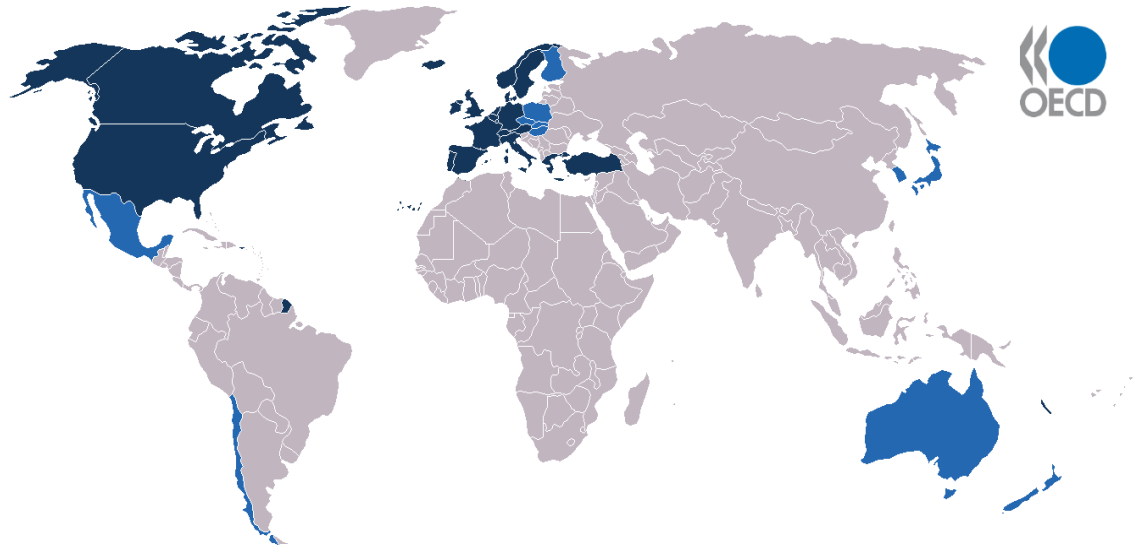
[www.power-shifts.com](http://www.power-shifts.com)





# Powershifts: A Study of Conflict Over Electricity Grid Access and Use

- 3 in-depth case studies: Netherlands; UK; Ontario, Canada
- 60 in-person interviews
- 35 country OECD survey
- 175 survey responses from policy makers

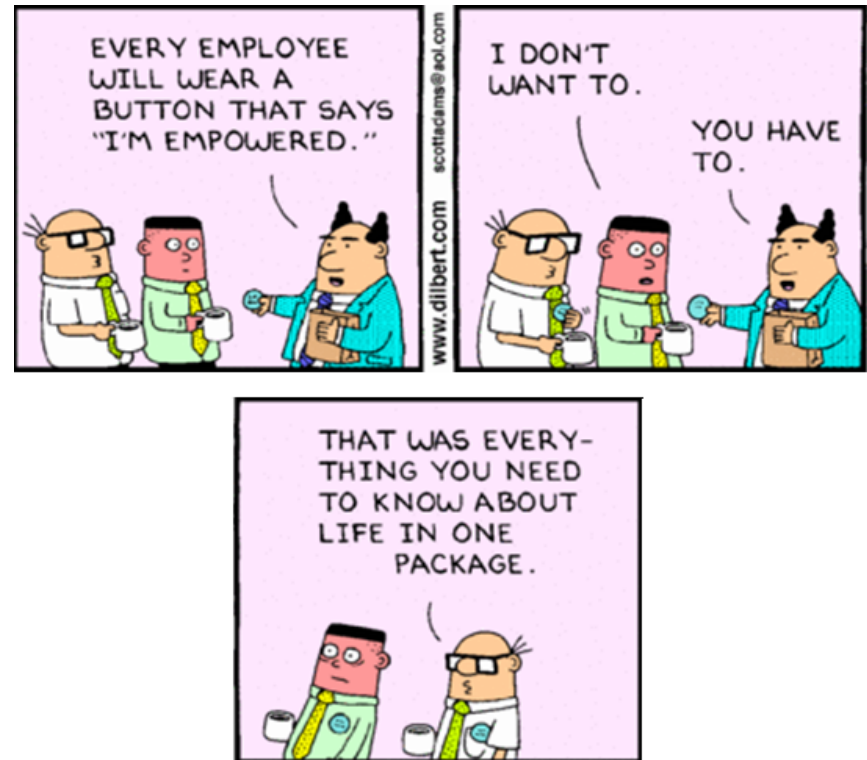


PWERSHIFTS

# The POWERSHIFTS Framework

Theory on:

- Political power
- Policy processes
- Institutional theory (logics, historical institutionalism)
- Sustainability transitions



# A (reductive) checklist of queries to assess shifting political power

1. Evidence of policy success by different actors
2. Differences in resource capacities
3. Structural justifications for policy decisions (i.e. market distribution, jobs, proportion of GDP)
4. Access to politicians and the policy process (including influence on problem framing)
5. Production and use of knowledge for policy processes
6. Interest alignment between groups
7. Character of the political discourse (e.g., political system organization, dominant decision-maker logics.)




# Preliminary Results for Case Comparisons



UNIVERSITY  
OF SUSSEX



# 1. Who wins?



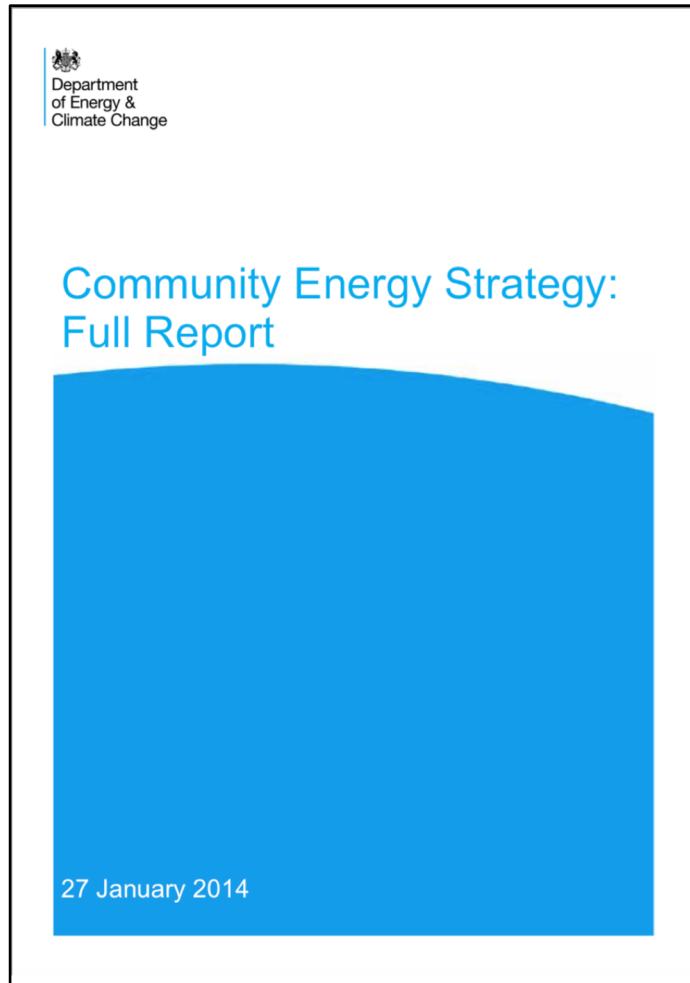
## Dutch Climate Agreement

All new renewable energy installations to be 50% community-owned

July 10, 2018 • News

POWERSHIFTS

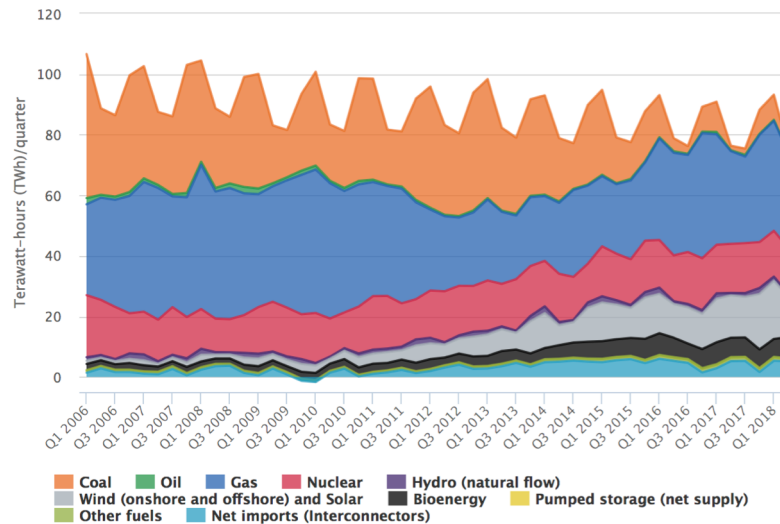
## 2. Who has resources? How has this changed?



# 3. Who controls jobs? What's the energy mix? What's coming?

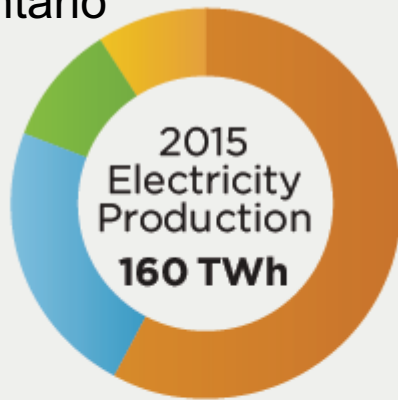
UK

Electricity generation mix by quarter and fuel source (GB)



Source: BEIS Energy trends section 5: Electricity (ET 5.1)  
Information correct as of: October 2018

Ontario



Nuclear	58%
Water	23%
Natural Gas	10%
Solar/Wind/Bioenergy	9%

Ontario Planning Outlook - IESO

US  
UNIVERSITY  
OF SUSSEX

Netherlands

Generation	2016
Gross Generation (TWh)	114.9
Of which gas	46%
Of which coal	35%
Of which wind	7%
Of which biomass/gas	6%
Of which nuclear	3%
Other generation	3%
Final Consumption (TWh)	

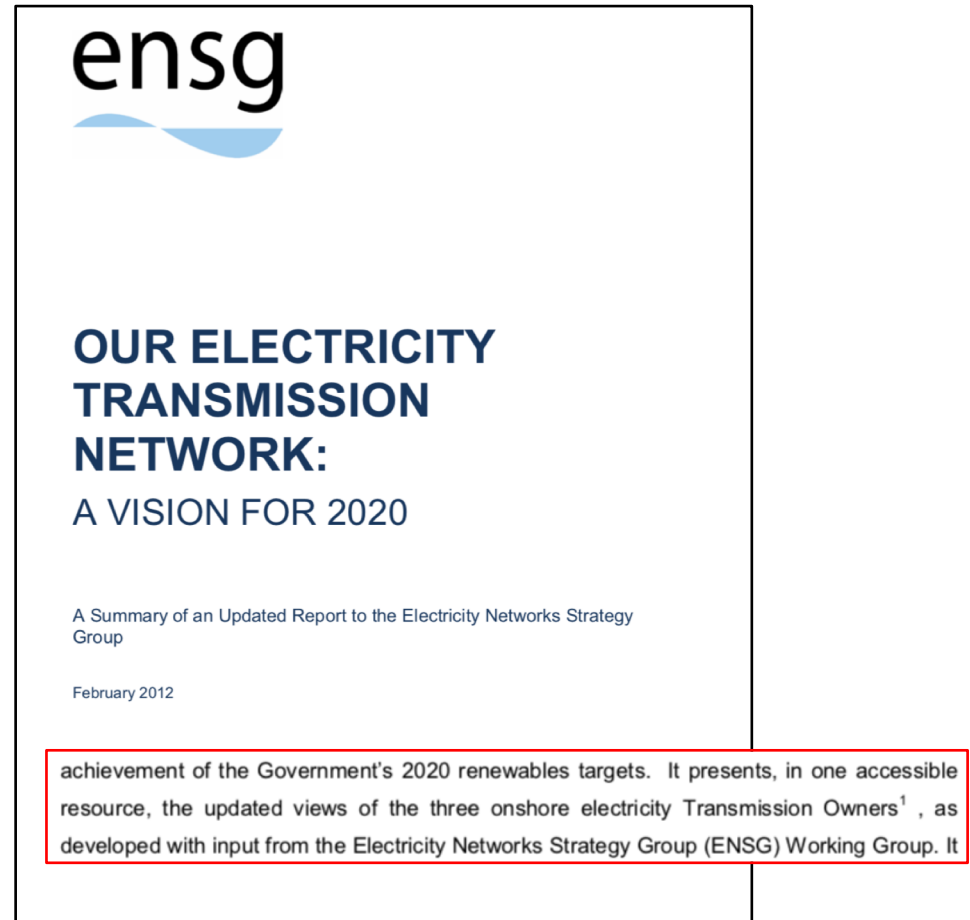
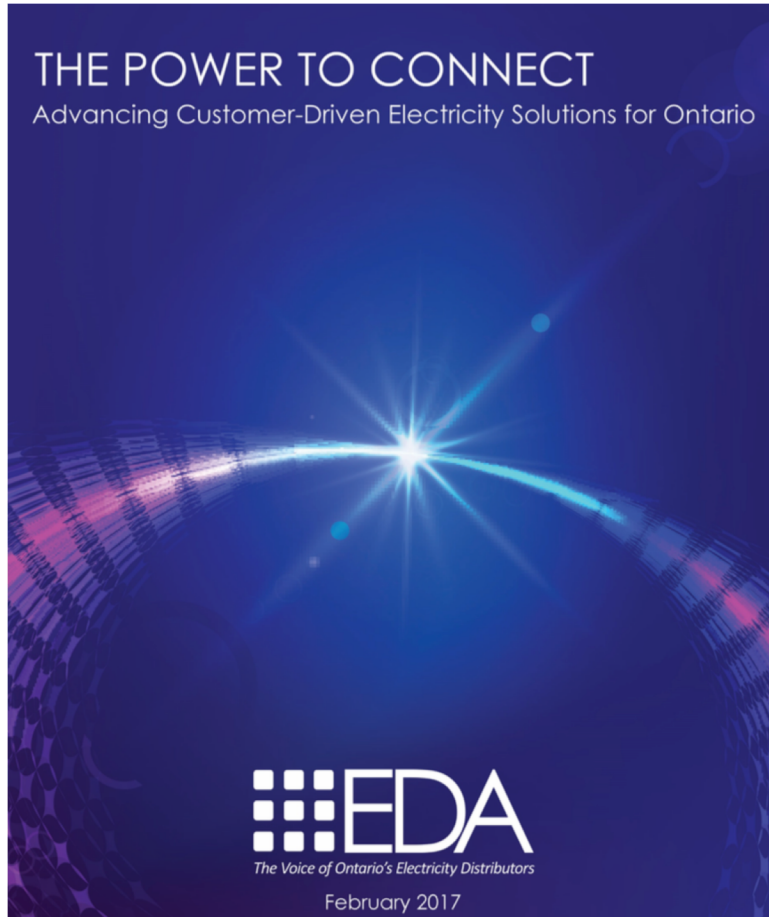
Source: International Energy Agency, CBS, & CIA Factbook

# 4. Who can talk to decision-makers?

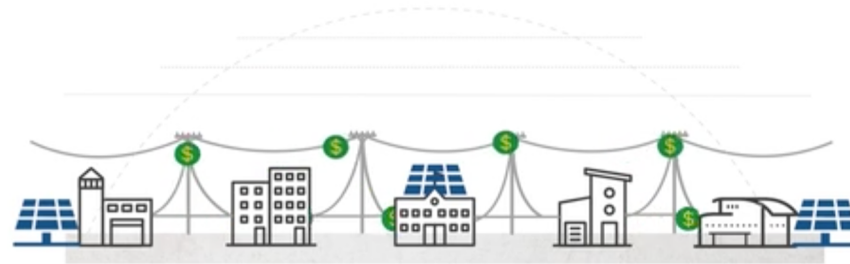




# 5. Who creates the knowledge and makes the rules?



# 6. New political friends in the new energy world



Net Metering Model

## How Net Metering Can Work For Municipalities, FCPC 2018

# 7. What role for political structures, and current issues and debate?



# Preliminary Cross Case Results

1. Is political power shifting?

- Yes, but....

2. In what ways is political power shifting?

- Different energy policies (NL)
- New partnerships
- Increasing capacity
- Increasing public and public sector support

3. What does this mean for the future?

- NL – big changes
- Canada, UK – jurisdiction hopping





# Some Emerging Questions...

- How can decentralized energy movements address equity issues over resource ownership?
  - ...and how is it different from current ownership patterns?
- With many new players, how can policy makers know who to talk to and where to get their information from?
- How to cope, analytically, with the pace of change in policy processes?

# For More Information on POWERSHIFTS...



[m.c.brisbois@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:m.c.brisbois@sussex.ac.uk); [www.power-shifts.com](http://www.power-shifts.com); @powershifts1



European  
Commission

Horizon 2020  
European Union funding  
for Research & Innovation

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Focus Areas</b>
<b>First</b>	1. Influence or control over outcomes (e.g., Lukes, 2005)
	2. Overt coercion or manipulation (e.g., Geels et al., 2016)
	3. Imbalances in resource capacities (e.g., financial, institutional, lobbying) (e.g., Fuchs, 2007; Geels et al., 2016; Lukes, 2005; Patterson et al., 2016; Smink et al., 2015)
<b>Second</b>	4. Influence on agenda setting (e.g., Shove and Walker, 2007; Smink et al., 2015)
	5. Inclusion or exclusion of actor groups from the policy process (e.g., Avelino and Wittmayer, 2016; Meadowcroft, 2009)
	6. Access to, and influence on knowledge production and system rules (e.g., industry self-monitoring, private rule-setting) (e.g., Berlo et al., 2016; Lockwood et al., 2016)
	7. Elite access to policy makers (e.g., Berlo et al., 2016; Geels et al., 2016; Hess, 2016; Lockwood et al., 2016; Smink et al., 2015)
	8. Justification for political decisions (e.g., market shares, job distribution, proportion of GDP) (e.g., Christiansen et al., 2010; Farrell, 2011; Fuenfschilling and Truffer, 2014; Geels et al., 2016; Johnstone and Newell, 2017)
<b>Third</b>	9. Influence over discursive tools such as media (e.g., Geels et al., 2016; Smink et al., 2015)
	10. Nature and evolution of competing socioeconomic and political discourse (e.g., dominant policy-maker logics) (e.g., Avelino, 2017; Fuenfschilling and Truffer, 2014; Johnstone and Newell, 2017; Lockwood et al., 2016; Raven et al., 2016)
	11. Discursive alignment between groups that enables the creation of interest-based coalitions (e.g., Bosman et al., 2014; Hess, 2016, 2014; Sabatier and Weible, 2016)

(Brisbois, forthcoming in *Energy Research and Social Science*)