Renewable Energy and new Public Ownership

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ABSTRACT

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The transition to renewable energy is very much a political process that involves plenty of changes: crumbling industries and lost jobs on the one side and new jobs and new industries on the other side. What is more, it has been an amplifier for a shift in ownership patterns. While the pre-renewable energy regime in EU was and still often is very much monolithic and monopolistic, the renewable regime is sometimes connected to old and new forms of public ownership in cities and the countryside and it has caused a steep increase of cooperatives across western Europe. There is thus some reason to speak of a democratisation of energy production, even if still on a small scale. Still there are many uncertainties. How robust is this development, is it really happening? And what would be the advantage of public over private ownership in energy provision? Finally, how could a desirable democratisation of the transition be possible at larger scale within the given political structures?

The speech will sketch some answers based both on empirical research in Europe and political analyses of different national energy policies.

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