



# **How do policy and market contexts affect the potential for municipal energy companies in the UK?**

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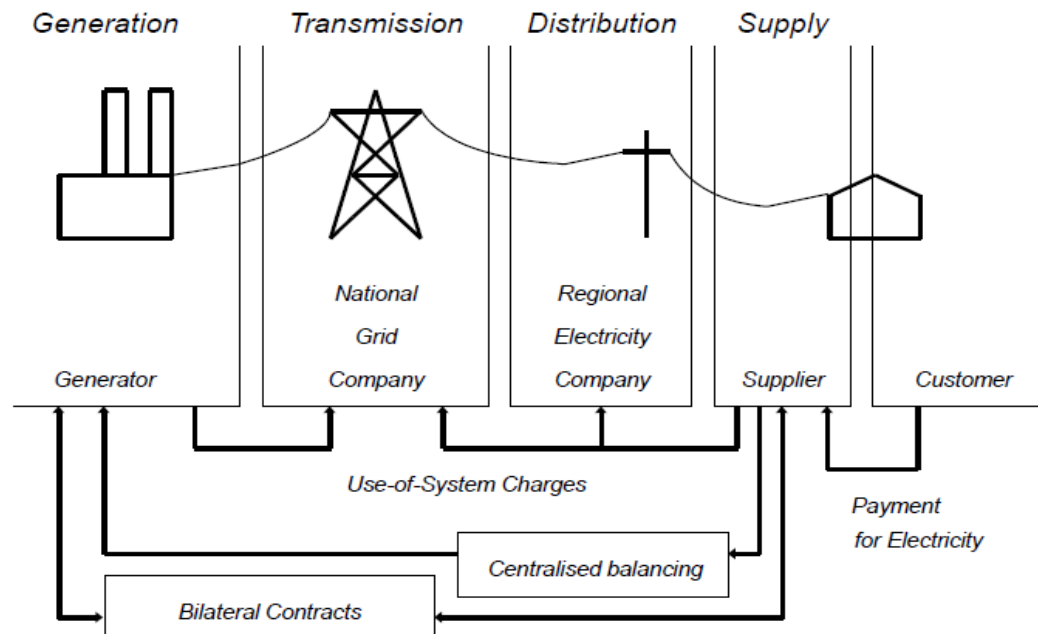


- What do I mean by Municipal Energy Companies?
- How do they interact with policy and markets?
- What does this mean for their potential to contribute to energy system transformation?

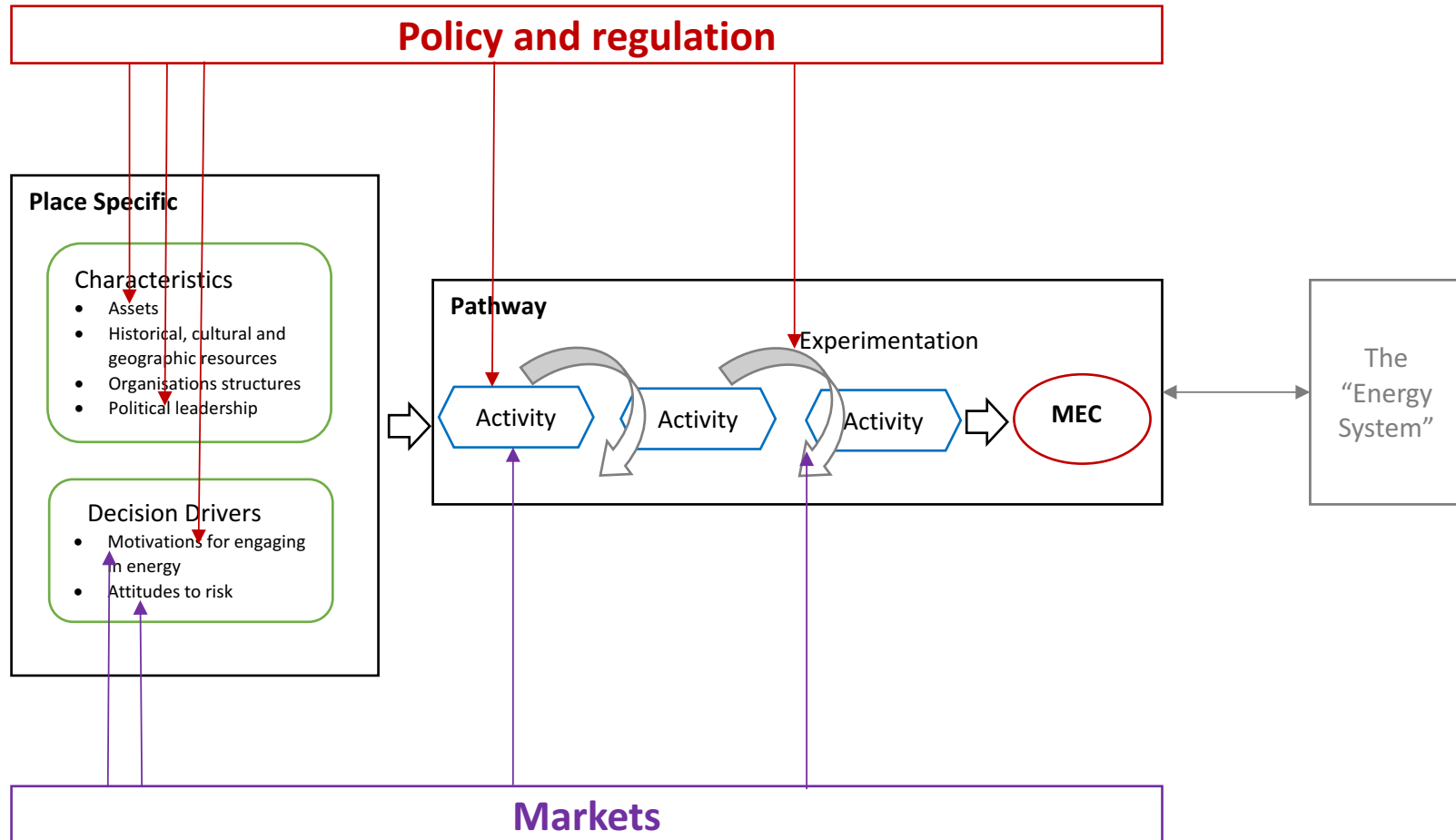
# What to do I mean by MECs?



...municipality-led initiative that involves direct supply of energy (heat or electricity), or ownership and/or management of energy infrastructure



# How do MECs interact with policy and markets?



# Understanding dynamics – a critical approach

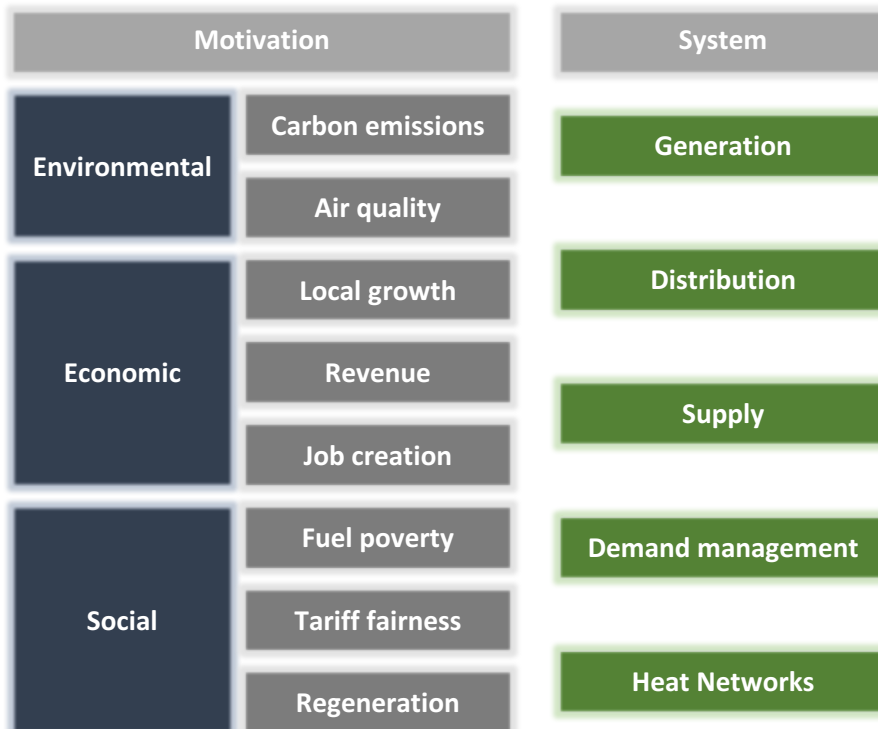
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- Meaning and function: a huge diversity
- Neoliberal context: has implications for how activities play out
- Social difference: and importance of democracy
- Ethnographic, participatory approaches
- Constructive criticism

# Meaning and function



## Challenges:

Policy promotes and incentivises certain motivations

Regulatory and market context favours standardisation and centralisation – not diversity and place-specificity

**Rollback** – withdrawing state support

**Rollout** – pushing market techniques and individualism

**Capturing** – co-opting activities to meet government ends

**Measurement** – prioritising what can be measured

## Challenges:

MECs need to fill the gap left by state support

MECs must compete for resources

MECs must align motivations with central government motivations

Focus away from 'doing' to measuring outcomes

## **Unchallenged assumptions:**

Motivations translate into outcomes

Outcomes of MECs are distributed evenly

MEC = democratic

## **Challenges:**

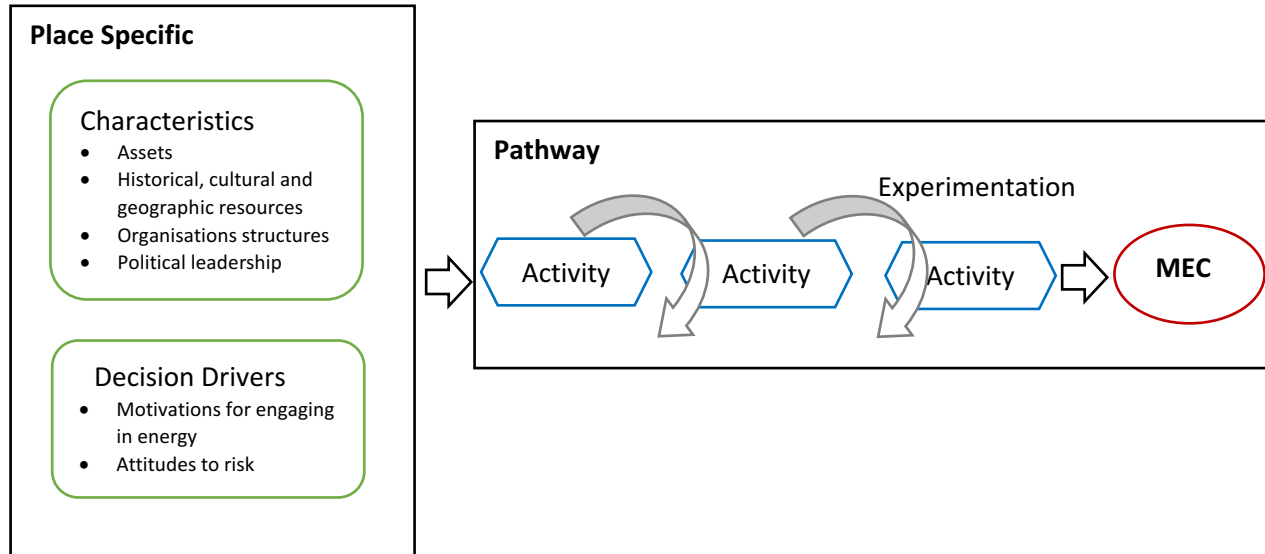
Accountability (not necessarily accountability)

Distributional analysis of outcomes

Participation in decisions not just electing officials



# Implications for potential of MECs



Place specificity  
Diversity  
Risk  
Experimentation

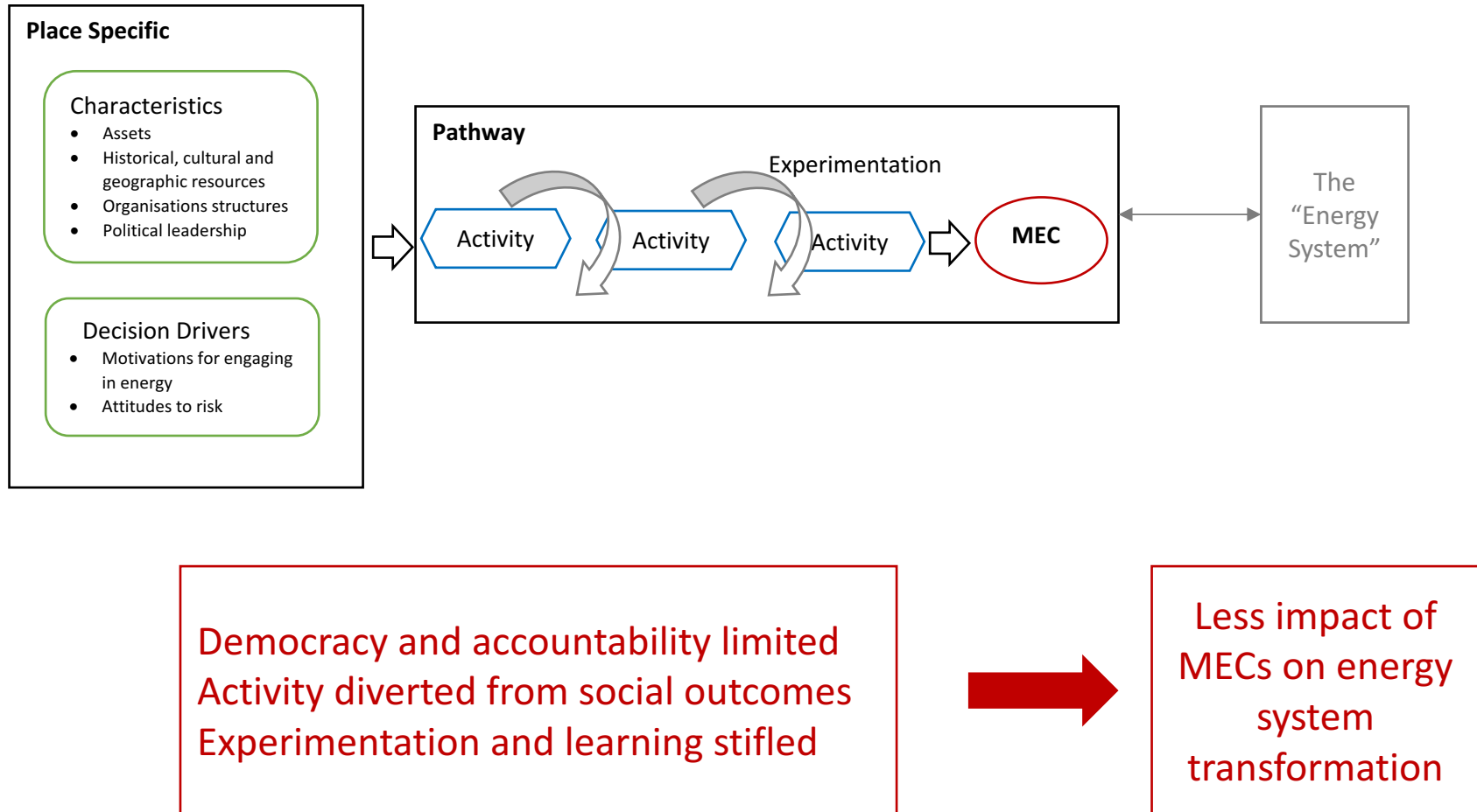


Slower progress  
to increase  
number of MECs

# Implications for potential contribution of MECs to energy system transformation



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There is potential for MECs to proliferate and transform the energy system

BUT a critical analysis shows:

- We need to be aware of significant diversity, which conflict with need for standardisation
- Neoliberal context can distract MECs from what they want/need to do
- Potential for democratic renewal should not be assumed as a given

Therefore the current system of policy and markets could limit the number of MECs and their transformative potential



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## References:

Roelich et al (2018) Institutional pathways to municipal energy companies in the UK: realising co-benefits to mitigate climate change in cities. *Journal of Cleaner Production* 182, pp.727-736. [doi: 10.1016/j.jclepro.2018.02.002](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2018.02.002)

Taylor Aiken et al (2017) Researching climate change and community in neoliberal contexts: an emerging critical approach. *WIREs Clim Change*, 8, pp.425-443. [doi: 10.1177/0261018316674851](https://doi.org/10.1177/0261018316674851)