



# Hydro Electricity Ourthe and Sambre



## Summary

Hydro Electricity Ourthe and Sambre (HOSe) develops and operates several hydroelectric power plants on two rivers in Wallonia. This enterprise was created by ten renewable energy cooperatives and the company Hydro-B to produce electricity for households.

## Why is it a case of energy citizenship?

This is a hybrid case of energy citizenship that brings together energy cooperatives and a company dealing with renewable energy projects to launch the first Walloon hydroelectric power plants (partially) financed by citizens (50%).



DIRECT ENERGY  
PRODUCTION /  
CONSUMPTION



COLLECTIVE



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101022492.



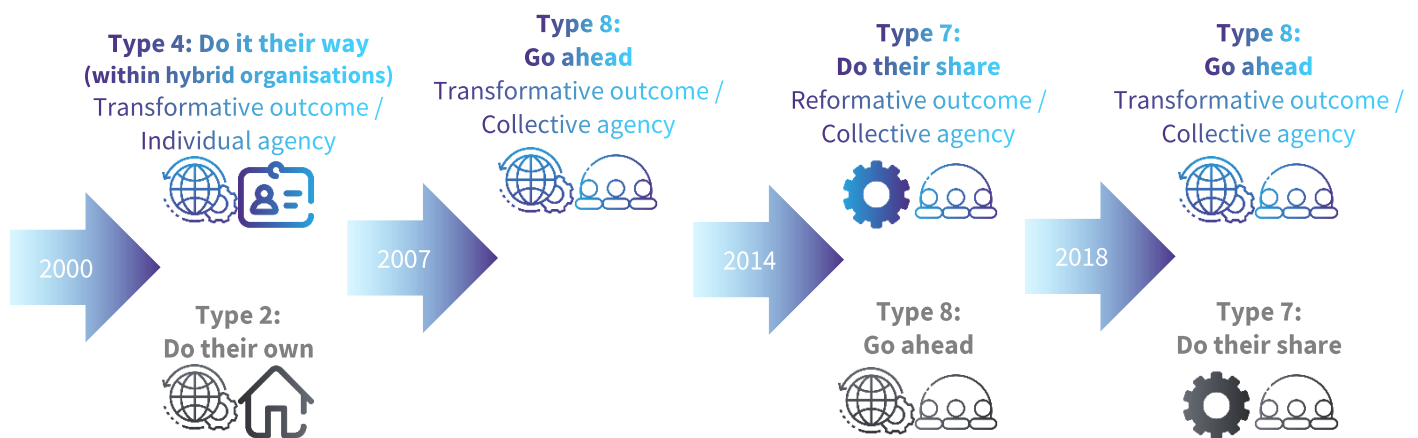
## Goals

1. Seeking to maximise Belgium's hydropower potential as a means of generating renewable, sustainable and environmentally friendly energy,
2. Introducing a profit- or return-on-investment incentive, as it involves a private sector partner, Hydro-B.
3. Promoting energy democracy, particularly through the associated cooperatives, with the explicit aim of using democratic, horizontal decision-making.

## The story and the typology

HOSe involves an interesting institutionally hybrid form of energy citizenship. From the outside, it may appear to be a regular case of an energy cooperative, but it is not a pure cooperative because 1) it involves a commercial private sector partner, and 2) it is built up of about a dozen cooperatives.

It was established in December 2018 as an institutionally hybrid and mildly transformation-oriented collective energy citizenship actor. The approach is pragmatic, seeking to develop a balance between sustainability-oriented initiatives and ensuring a solid financial bottom line.



Case history summary

For the summary methodology, click [HERE!](#)



## Phase 1: Exploiting Hydroelectricity, 2000-2014

The case started with an enlightened, societally engaged and environmentally conscious entrepreneur, a transformation-oriented citizen who has acted on his ideals throughout his professional life.

Following a call for projects (and in addition to the opening up of the development of hydroelectricity in Belgium), his small company Mérytherm (later, Hydro-B) obtained concessions to explore hydroelectricity.

This organisationally embedded example of energy citizenship (as indicated by the main type, “Do it their way (within hybrid organisations)”) was created by engaged individuals operating as

## Phase 2: Rise of Emissions-Zero, 2007-2014

In this phase, the approach of Mérytherm (the founding company mentioned above) involved a willingness to engage in institutionally hybrid projects (as indicated by the main citizenship type for this phase) – sometimes leaning towards clever investment and sometimes involving more risk-bearing, idealistic, ‘transformation-oriented’ ventures.

Additionally, in this phase, Emissions-Zero (one of the founding cooperatives) was growing in the area of renewable energy, seeking to diversify its projects and explore hydropower. This phase

activists privately in the household (as indicated in the secondary type, “Do their own (in the household)”).

	Individual			Collective	
					
 Reformative	1. Do their bit (in the household)	3. Do their bit (within organizations)	5. Make their voice heard	7. Do their share	9. Do the job
 Transformative	2. Do their own (in the household)	4. Do it their way (within organizations)	6. Make their vote count	8. Go ahead	10. Make their claims

**Main type: Do it their way (within hybrid organisations)**  
Transformative outcome / Organisationally embedded agency

**Secondary type: Do their own (in the household)**  
Transformative outcome / Private in the household agency

indicates that the roots of HOSe are in collective, mildly transformative, citizen-based and hybrid energy citizenship.


	Individual			Collective	
					
 Reformative	1. Do their bit (in the household)	3. Do their bit (within organizations)	5. Make their voice heard	7. Do their share	9. Do the job
 Transformative	2. Do their own (in the household)	4. Do it their way (within organizations)	6. Make their vote count	8. Go ahead	10. Make their claims

**Main type: Go ahead**  
Transformative outcome / Citizen-based and hybrid agency



### Phase 3: Civic co-funding, 2014 - 2018

Emissions-Zero teamed up with Mérytherm, at first through financing. Once they had jointly founded Monceau-Hydro (a limited company), they took the first step towards more extensive (i.e., not merely financial-transactional) cooperation. At first, the collaboration involving Monceau-Hydro was rather reformative (as indicated by the main type) in nature, involving co-financing but no significant co-development. However, all the partners who are involved can be considered energy transition idealists.

	Individual			Collective	
					
 Reformative	1. Do their bit (in the household)	3. Do their bit (within organizations)	5. Make their voice heard	<b>7. Do their share</b>	9. Do the job
 Transformative	2. Do their own (in the household)	4. Do it their way (within organizations)	6. Make their vote count	<b>8. Go ahead</b>	10. Make their claims

**Secondary type: Do their share**

Reformative outcome / Citizen-based and hybrid agency

**Secondary type: Do their own (in the household)**

Transformative outcome / Citizen-based and hybrid agency








### Phase 4: HOSe, institutionally hybrid energy citizenship, 2018 -

The establishment of HOSe (a result of the further development of Monceau-Hydro) in 2018 marked the phase of upscaling to a more prominent role for the cooperatives.

HOSe acquired its character of a mildly transformative, institutionally hybrid, collective form of energy citizenship. It significantly differs from the originally somewhat more profit-seeking and environmentally oriented Hydro-B enterprise. It also pursues less profitable options and has broader transformative agency in pursuing energy democracy.

This last phase involves various dynamics associated with new projects and turbulent external circumstances (rising energy prices, major

floodings, and periods of drought). Still, HOSe appears to have achieved a relatively stable final form (in terms of energy citizenship ideal types).

	Individual			Collective	
					
 Reformative	1. Do their bit (in the household)	3. Do their bit (within organizations)	5. Make their voice heard	<b>7. Do their share</b>	9. Do the job
 Transformative	2. Do their own (in the household)	4. Do it their way (within organizations)	6. Make their vote count	<b>8. Go ahead</b>	10. Make their claims

**Main type: Go ahead**

Transformative outcome / Citizen-based and hybrid agency

**Secondary type: Do their share**

Reformative outcome / Citizen-based and hybrid agency



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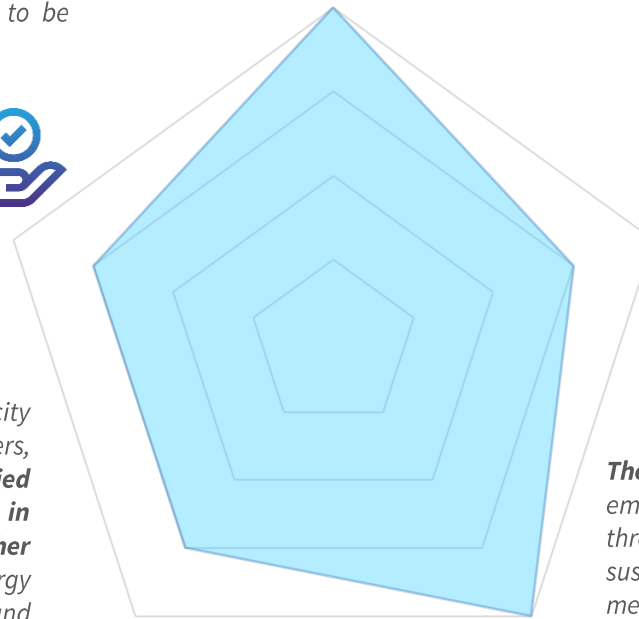


## The aspects of energy citizenship

Effective citizen control has been achieved only partly. **The cooperative model ensures a significant level of the latter and indeed the case has advanced on this front – yet there are certain limitations to citizen control.** Quite a lot of citizen agency remains delegated to specific groups of other actors such as experts, frontrunner individuals and administrators in the cooperatives, and in the various intermediaries that have allowed/helped HOSe to be successful.

### Citizen control

**Citizens can express their views, but their views are not necessarily taken into account**



HOSe has creating a more democratic future amongst its three main objectives. **This is a core concern and transmitted from the explicit commitments of its members to the cooperative model and consensual decision-making.** Democratization also involves efforts to stimulate energy literacy in society more widely, i.e., through guided visits and the communication activities of the cooperatives.



### Democratic energy future

**A more democratic energy future is a core concern of the case, and is part of the vision**

Equity and justice are somewhat implicit concerns. **The cooperative model that has been chosen and the shared commitment to environmental gains and societal surplus all indicate commitments to equity and justice.** Still, the cooperative is bounded by its membership, and the management of the cooperative/business venture is quite strongly oriented towards members/shareholders. There are efforts to recruit new members, but also a responsibility to ensure long-term viability and a return on investment for members



### Equity and justice

**Equal access is granted, but limited by various criteria**

**The name HOSe stands for hydropower itself,** and the initiative has emerged from, or revolves around, achievements – made possible through technological innovation in hydro-turbines – in environmental sustainability and clean energy. Environmental performance is measured, monitored and planned. “Hydro-electricity has a lot of advantages that compensate for its higher cost compared to wind power: The production is predictable and stable, especially during the six cold months of the year when the energy demands are high.”



### Environmental sustainability

**Environmental sustainability is a core issue, and is considered in goal setting**

### Carbon limit

**Explicit recognition of the carbon limit**



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## Further information



[facebook.com/emissionszerocoop](https://facebook.com/emissionszerocoop)



[www.emissions-zero.coop/page/hydroelectricite](http://www.emissions-zero.coop/page/hydroelectricite)



[info@emissions-zero.coop](mailto:info@emissions-zero.coop)



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## Source of images

[www.emissions-zero.coop](http://www.emissions-zero.coop)



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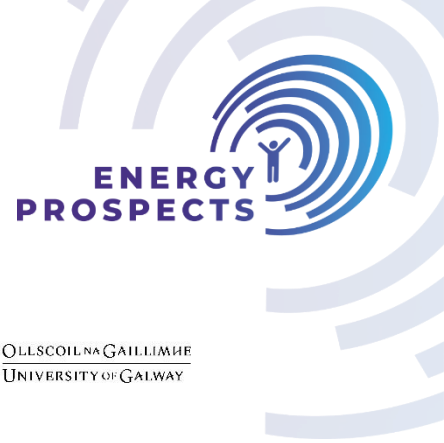
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