



“People want to have a local impact with their green choices”

Wouter Temmerman explains how a desire by consumers to have more of a say when it comes to their energy supplier is driving radical change in the electricity market

→ **Marketers and economists** often claim that the modern consumer is in charge, but how far does an individual's economic impact actually go? When it comes to food, you can avoid wholesale and supermarkets and purchase directly from a farmer. Or with clothing, you can use the internet to cut out the middleman and buy directly from the manufacturer instead of the retailer. However, a bypass in the chain is not always possible.

The electricity market is a good example. You could produce your own energy via solar panels – an exercise that can be costly to set up – but for most people, control over their energy purchases is limited to their choice of provider and its available products.

The energy transmission network is complex, even though national grid operators around the world are working to prepare the system for the future. In Belgium, for instance, the arrival of smart meters enables customers to take more control, while an even more significant shake-up took place a few months ago.

In August, an energy

platform called Bolt, which allows people to easily purchase from local producers, launched in Brussels. Users will have access to green suppliers such as a local tennis club, a chicken farmer and an outdoor swimming pool, as well as biogas farmers and entrepreneurs with a hydroelectric power station. By supplying details of its providers, Bolt responds to an important insight: the consumer sees the word 'green' on their electricity bill, but it is difficult to trace exactly where that energy comes from.

"In addition, people want to have a local impact with their green choice," says Pieterjan Verhaeghen, co-founder of Bolt, referring to the import of green electricity.

Bolt has the capacity to supply 20,000 families with energy. Members pay a fee of €5 and, based on a model that compares production and consumption, Bolt guarantees the power supply. Want to buy electricity from the sports club around the corner? Well, now you can.

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