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UNIVERSITY OF GALWAY

Placing People and Communities at the Heart of the Energy Transition

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ENERGISE (2017-2021)

Large-scale European project
launching Energy Living Labs to
develop and test options for
changing energy use in households
and communities in 8 countries
300+ households

Explored social practices - laundry
and indoor heating

Energy PROSPECTS (2021-24)



Energy Citizenship
across Europe

Survey **> 10,000** individuals across
19 European countries

Mapped **596 cases** of Energy
Citizenship

40 in-depth cases across Europe
5 in Ireland including Aran Islands
Energy Cooperative (Comharchumann
Fuinnimh Oileáin Árann), CFOAT



SHARED GREEN DEAL (2022-27)

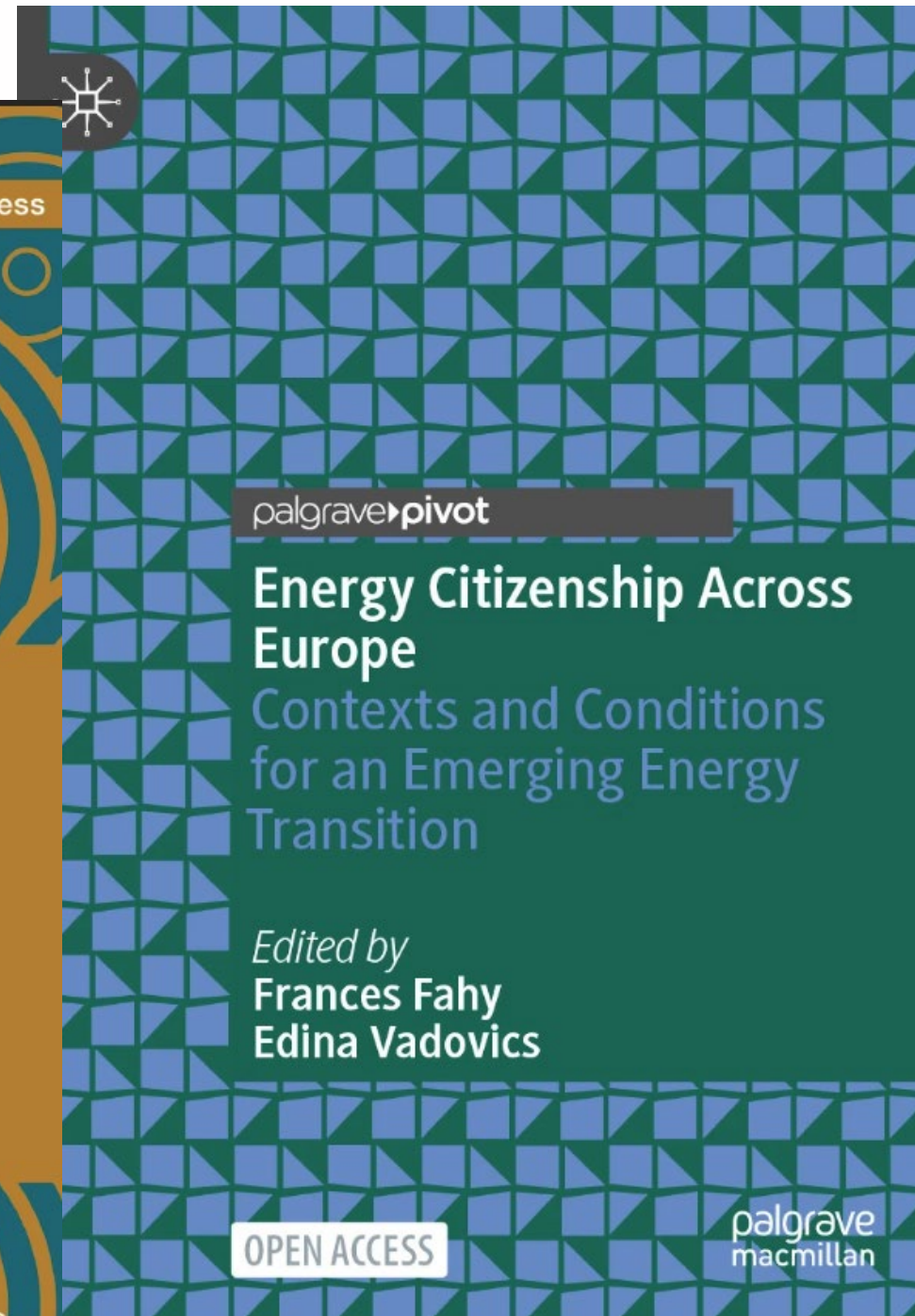
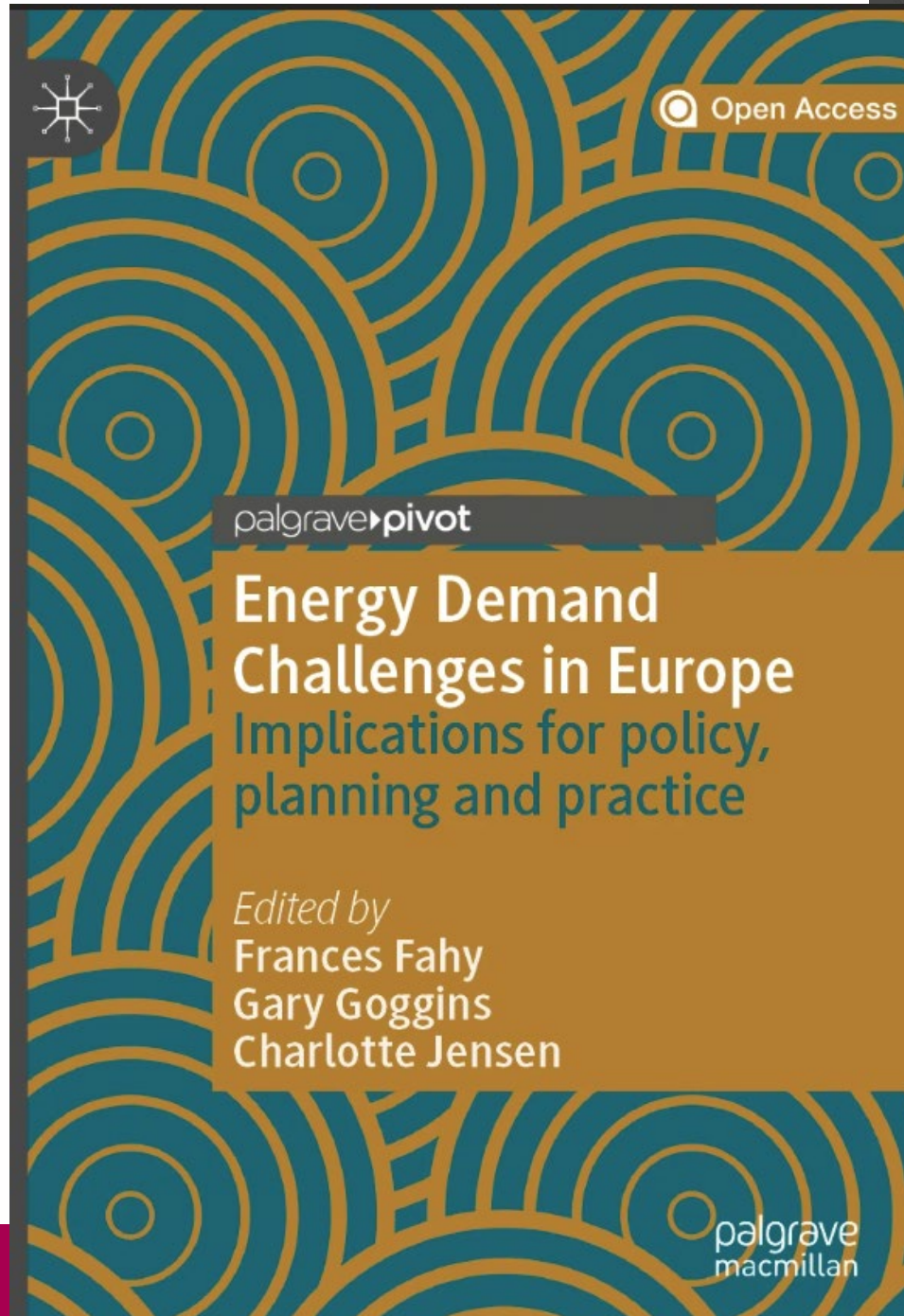
Aim to foster co-created
community visions of desirable
energy futures in four locations
across the EU



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Saoránacht Fuinnimh: Cúig chás-staidéar



Pobail Fuinnimh,
Comharchumann
Thiobraid Árann (ECTC)



Achoimre

Le Pobail Fuinnimh, Comharchumann Thiobraid Árann ECTC, tugtar le chéile 14 phobal i gceantar Thiobraid Árann. Is é is aidhm dó é a chur ar a gcumas do phobail i dThiobraid Árann agus sna ceantair máguaird fostaíocht áitiúil a chruthú agus tairbhe a bhaint as a loirg charbóin a laghdú agus as fuinneamh faoi úinéireacht an phobail a ghiniúint. Éascaíonn ECTC obair éifeachtúlachta fuinnimh ar sheantithe agus ar fhoirgnimh an phobail le deontais ó Údarás Fuinnimh Inmharthana na hÉireann agus ón gCiste um



Community visioning for just, clean energy futures in Europe

Part of the Collection: Findings and Recommendations
from the SHARED GREEN DEAL Social Experiments



June 2025

Emily K. Gray • Melanie Rohse • Frances Fahy • Christophe Jost

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What are the benefits and opportunities for households and communities in the energy transition?

The co-benefits of changes in practices are also personal. In our ENERGISE Energy Living Labs, households who cut down on washing and lowered their heating didn't just reduce energy use—they reported less stress, more free time, and deeper conversations about values.

“There was less stuff around the house... and more time to ourselves.” — ENERGISE participant, Tipperary

What is needed to support their participation?

- Long-term funding—not short-term pilots
- Support for intermediary organisations—not just infrastructure
- Diverse entry points for participation—from behaviour to governance

Mapping just these 3 projects onto the barriers and opportunities outlined in this NESC report offers an opportunity to reinforce and exemplify NESC's recommendations through lived practice and empirical evidence:

Barriers

Over-Reliance on Efficiency and Tech
Inaccessibility and Limited Inclusion

Recommendations

Build an Ecosystem of Participation
Support Intermediaries and Local Capacity

Opportunities

Encourage Learning and Long-Term Engagement
Align Policy with Social Practice



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These recent EU projects highlight what the NESC report envisions:

- Real communities, facing real barriers, making real progress.
- Models of inclusion, innovation, and resilience that can inform national strategy.
- Putting people at the heart of the transition works!

People are not just passive consumers or data points—they are co-creators of energy futures



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From our European research, we've seen that:

- Community energy projects deliver social, economic, and cultural value, not just carbon savings.
- Behavioural change, when supported by reflection and dialogue, becomes cultural transformation.
- Community visioning, storytelling, and local leadership unlock agency and creativity often invisible in policy.

