Electricity systems are in transition, driven in part by the rise of low-cost, renewable electricity sources; by the differences in system design, regulation and management that are needed to incorporate renewables; and by the impact of renewables on the roles of other generation sources. The more widespread deployment of distributed generation is also driving change, as small-scale, local generation and the rise of “the prosumer” challenge the role of large-scale plants. Electricity distribution and transmission is no longer a one-way street, and developments in data acquisition and handling are changing both how the grid can be managed and the services that consumers are provided and are demanding.

These shifts are precipitating institutional change. Utilities are now becoming providers of services to generators and consumers, rather than just sellers of volumes of electricity. The role of transmission system operators and of regulators is also having to evolve to meet these new requirements and business models, and to respond to and promote innovation and change.

This session will consider the institutional consequences of these changes and discuss the following questions:

1. What are the leading drivers for change and their likely impacts?
2. How will the role of utilities and other actors in electricity supply and demand change?
3. How should the role of regulators be adapted to meet this evolving landscape?
4. How have the pro-consumers engaged in the changes and what is their potential in leading the future energy system?