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Market Power and Price Exposure: Learning from Changes in Renewable Energy Regulation

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Abstract

Given the critical role of renewable energies in current and future electricity markets, it is important to understand how they affect firms' pricing incentives. We study whether the price-depressing effect of renewables depends on their degree of market price exposure. Paying renewables with fixed prices, rather than market-based prices, is more effective at curbing market power when the dominant firms own large shares of renewables, and *vice-versa*. Our empirical analysis leverages several short-lived changes to renewables regulation in the Spanish market and shows that switching from full-price exposure to fixed prices caused a 2-4% reduction in the average price-cost markup.

Keywords: market power, forward contracts, arbitrage, renewables.

At the global level, the need to reduce carbon emissions has led to a rapid increase in renewable capacity in the power sector.¹ Investments involve high capital up-front costs, but once in place, renewable energies allow electricity to be produced at almost zero marginal costs renewable energies allow electricity to be produced at almost zero marginal costs once in place. Hence, in competitive markets, renewable energies push the supply

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¹The International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) estimates that compliance with the 2017 Paris Climate Agreement will require overall investments in renewables to increase by 76% in 2030, relative to 2014 levels. Europe expects that over two-thirds of its electricity generation will come from renewable resources by 2030 to achieve a carbon-free power sector before 2050 (European Commission, 2019). Likewise, the US plans to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050, with a 90% carbon-free electricity sector by 2035.

cost curve to the right, putting downward pressure on prices. However, market power may offset the price-depressing effect of renewables. It is therefore important to understand how renewable energies affect firms' pricing incentives when there is market power in the electricity market. This issue is critical for the success of the energy transition because if electricity prices do not fall relative to the price of fossil fuels, other sectors will lack the incentives to rely on electrification as a way to reduce their own emissions.

In this paper, we study how renewable energies impact wholesale electricity prices and how that impact depends on their regulation. In particular, we focus on two types of commonly-used regulations for renewables: whether they are paid with fixed prices or exposed to fluctuations in wholesale electricity prices. Regulators are still debating the pros and cons of these two alternatives (CEER, 2021),² but their focus is typically on the impact of these pricing schemes on firms' incentives to invest in renewables. For instance, paying renewables with fixed prices provides price certainty that helps finance the investments, while paying them with market-based prices exposes them to the same price signals as all other market players, thus contributing to investment efficiency.³ However, as we show in this paper, the choice of the pricing scheme for renewables also affects firms' pricing behavior, even when taking their investments as given.

To estimate the causal effect of these pricing schemes on firms' behavior, we leverage a quasi-experiment that took place in the Spanish electricity market. In particular, the regulator first decided to expose existing wind producers to wholesale market prices, then moved them to fixed prices, and ultimately switched them back to market-based prices. During this period, wind already represented a significant share of total output. Hence, these regulatory changes provide a unique opportunity to identify the causal effect of renewable energy regulation on market power in electricity markets.

Theoretical approach and findings. We develop a simple theoretical model showing that renewable energies depress electricity market prices. The strength of this price-depressing effect depends on the degree of market power, which in turn depends on the pricing rule in place (either *fixed prices* or *market prices*) and the ownership structure of renewable energies. As explained below, the critical difference is that paying renewables with *fixed prices* mitigates market power directly by reducing the dominant firm's incentives to raise prices. In contrast, paying renewables with *market prices* encourages the fringe firms to engage in arbitrage, which indirectly mitigates the market power of the

²In the industry jargon, these two schemes are commonly referred to as Feed-in-Tariffs (FiT) and Feed-in-Premia (FiP).

³See Fabra (2021) for a discussion of the impact of renewables pricing schemes on investment incentives.

dominant firm. Whether the direct effect is more or less powerful than the indirect effect depends on whether the dominant firm owns a larger or smaller share of the renewable capacity relative to the fringe firms.

To uncover these effects, we first consider a simple one-shot wholesale electricity market in which a dominant firm competes against a set of competitive fringe producers.⁴ The dominant firm owns both conventional (e.g., coal and gas) and renewable power plants, while the fringe firms only own renewables. An increase in renewable energy availability expands the fringe producers' supply. In turn, this reduces the residual electricity market demand faced by the dominant firm, which weakens its incentives to set high prices. The strength of this effect, which we refer to as the 'residual demand effect', depends on the share of renewable capacity in the hands of the dominant firm, i.e., on the ownership structure of renewable energies. In particular, if the dominant firm owns a large (small) share of the renewable capacity, the competitive pressure exerted by the fringe producers is weak (strong), leading to a small (large) price-depressing effect.

Since the 'residual demand effect' is at play under both pricing rules, it does not affect their comparison. Nevertheless, an additional pro-competitive effect arises when renewables are paid with *fixed prices*. In particular, *fixed prices* further reduce the dominant producer's incentives to exercise market power because only its conventional output would benefit from the increase in market prices. We refer to this as the 'forward contract effect' because *fixed prices* act as a forward contract over the firm's renewable sales (Allaz and Vila, 1993). The combination of the 'forward contract effect' and the 'residual demand effect' implies that the equilibrium outcome under *fixed prices* is the same *as if* all the renewables were in the hands of the fringe, independently of the actual ownership structure.

However, electricity markets in practice are more complex than the single one-shot market just described. Indeed, they are typically organized as a sequence of markets, with a large market that operates one day ahead of the actual delivery and several smaller markets that run closer to real-time. To mimic this market sequence, we also consider a two-stage game with a day-ahead market followed by a spot market. The possibility to trade across these markets enhances the ability of electricity firms to exercise market power, as first shown by Ito and Reguant (2016). More specifically, firms exercise market power in the day-ahead market by withholding output, which they can resell in the

⁴This simple dominant-fringe firm model gives rise to results similar to the Cournot model, which we develop in the Appendix. The reason is that the dominant firm best replies to the production decisions of its rivals. Taking these as given, or endogenizing them in equilibrium, does not change the essence of the results.

spot market without depressing the day-ahead price.⁵ As a consequence, market power pushes day-ahead prices up and spot prices down, creating a positive wedge between the two. The possibility of arbitraging these price differences gives rise to an additional pro-competitive effect of renewables. Namely, arbitrage by renewable plants mitigates the dominant firm’s attempt to exercise market power in the day-ahead market, as explained below.

When renewables are paid with *fixed prices*, they do not have incentives to arbitrage, given that they are paid the same price regardless of whether they sell their output in the day ahead or the spot market. In contrast, paying renewables with *market prices* allows them to benefit from arbitrage. They do so by selling above their available production (up to their maximum capacities) in the day-ahead market at a high price and buying back their excess commitment in the spot market at a lower price.⁶ This behavior mitigates the market power of the dominant producer because its attempts to push up the day-ahead price are met by an increase in the fringe firms’ renewable sales. This effect, which we refer to as the ‘arbitrage effect’, also depends on the ownership structure. In particular, when the dominant firm owns a large (small) share of the renewable capacity, the fringe firms’ ability to arbitrage is weak (strong). In this case, the ‘arbitrage effect’ has a small (large) contribution to the price-depressing effect of renewables.⁷

The comparison between the price-depressing effect of renewables under *fixed prices* and *market prices* depends on the relative strength of the ‘forward contract’ and the ‘arbitrage’ effects, which in turn depends on the ownership structure. Putting together the previous results, it follows that it is more (less) pro-competitive to pay renewables with *fixed prices* in markets where renewables are mainly in the hands of the dominant (fringe) players.

These differential effects have welfare and distributional implications. On the one hand, efficiency in our model is always greater when renewables are paid with *fixed prices*. The reason is that welfare depends on the final price set in the spot market,

⁵This strategy is profitable as it leads to price increases in the big market (the day-ahead market) which are only partially offset by the price reductions in the smaller market (the spot market).

⁶This arbitrage is purely financial: renewables oversell in the day-ahead market up to their maximum capacities and buy their excess commitment (above their actual availability) in the spot market. Note that the dominant firm does not have incentives to arbitrage with its own renewables as that would curb its own market power.

⁷In the electricity literature, the price-depressing impact of renewables is commonly referred to as the *merit-order effect*, which is computed under the implicit assumption that all plants bid at marginal costs. Hence, the *residual demand effect* is not equivalent to the *merit-order effect* given that the latter overlooks the impact of market power, which is the focus of our analysis.

which is closer to marginal costs under *fixed prices* than under *market prices*.⁸ On the other hand, the distributional implications between firms and consumers depend on the comparison of day-ahead prices across pricing rules, which can go either way depending on the ownership structure, as described above.⁹

Empirical approach and findings. We test the key predictions of the model using data from the Spanish electricity market. Notably, this market is characterized by a highly concentrated market structure, with the three largest firms owning 60% of the wind capacity and 80% of the non-wind capacity. This feature is present in most electricity markets around the world, as it is common for large electric utilities to own both conventional power plants as well as renewables.¹⁰

Our sample period runs from February 2012 to January 2015, and it includes three different pricing regimes for renewable energies: they were first paid with *market prices*, then with *fixed prices*, and last with *market prices* again. Our empirical approach consists of a structural analysis of bidding incentives and a quasi-experimental analysis of how arbitrage behavior responds to the pricing regimes. Using results from the structural model, we calculate the price-cost markups in the day-ahead market to assess how the renewable pricing policies affected market power in the day-ahead Spanish market.

Firstly, our structural analysis of bidding behavior in the day-ahead market validates the ‘forward contract effect’. Namely, we show that the strategic firms’ wind output reduced their own markups under *fixed prices*, but not under *market prices*. This suggests that the ‘forward contract effect’ under *fixed prices* was pro-competitive.

Secondly, we rely on a differences-in-differences approach to assess how changes in the pricing schemes affected the fringe firms’ incentives to arbitrage. Our analysis shows that wind producers stopped arbitraging after the switch from *market prices* to *fixed prices*. However, they resumed arbitrage once exposed to *market prices* again. These results validate the empirical relevance and robustness of the ‘arbitrage effect’.

⁸As explained in Section 3.3, this is mainly because arbitrage under *market prices* pushes the spot market price up, while the reduction in market power in the day-ahead market under *fixed prices* pushes it down.

⁹It is important to note that this analysis focuses on the market power impacts of renewable pricing schemes for given capacities and therefore leaves out some other factors that could also have welfare implications, such as entry and investment incentives, learning externalities, and other spillover effects, or the fiscal impacts of the various pricing mechanisms, among others. For instance, [May and Neuhoff \(2017\)](#) and [Newbery et al. \(2018\)](#) favor the use of pricing schemes with limited price exposure as a way to de-risk the investments, ultimately bringing down the costs of capital and facilitating the entry of more diverse players.

¹⁰For instance, using 2020 data, the dominant producer in the French market (EDF) had a portfolio made of 25% of renewable plants and 75% of non-renewable plants (mainly nuclear and gas). Similar results apply to Italy and Portugal, where the dominant producers, ENEL and EDP, respectively, also own large fractions of the existing renewable plants.

Thirdly, the interplay between the ‘forward contract’ and the ‘arbitrage’ effects is also confirmed by the empirical analysis of the price differences across markets. We show that, under *fixed prices*, an increase in the dominant firm’s share of wind output reduced price differences across markets, as the ‘forward contract effect’ mitigated its incentives to exercise market power. In contrast, under *market prices*, an increase in the fringe firms’ wind share enlarged price differences across markets, as their smaller idle capacity reduced their ability to arbitrage, thus weakening the ‘arbitrage effect’.

Lastly, to understand which of these two effects dominated, we leverage our structural estimates to compute price-cost markups in the day-ahead market. We find that markups were significantly lower while firms were subject to *fixed prices* as compared to *market prices*. The average markup during the *fixed price* regime was 6.3%, while it was 8.3% and 10.7% when renewables were paid with *market prices*.¹¹ Based on these findings, we conclude that, given the ownership structure in the Spanish electricity market, the ‘forward contract effect’ dominated the ‘arbitrage effect’, which led to weaker market power when renewables were paid with *fixed prices*, as opposed to when they were exposed to wholesale market price volatility.

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows. Section I describes the related literature. Section II builds and solves a model of competition in electricity markets when renewable energies are paid with either *market prices* or *fixed prices*. Section III describes the institutional setting and data used in the analysis. Section IV performs the empirical analysis and Section V concludes. Proofs and extensions are postponed until the Appendix.

I Related Literature

Our paper brings together results from the literature on competition in sequential markets (Ito and Reguant, 2016), the price-depressing effect of renewables (Acemoglu, Kakhbod and Ozdaglar, 2017), and forward contracting (Allaz and Vila, 1993).

First, from a theoretical point of view, we extend Ito and Reguant (2016)’s analysis by characterizing and comparing equilibria across sequential markets when renewable energies are paid with *fixed prices* or with *market prices*. Moreover, we shed light on how the pricing schemes for renewables affect their price-depressing effects in the presence of market power. In this sense, our work can also be viewed as extending Acemoglu, Kakhbod and Ozdaglar (2017)’s analysis, whose theoretical findings are supported by

¹¹These results are robust to alternative ways of comparing the markups (i.e., by firms, by windy *vs* less-windy hours, by peak *vs* off-peak hours).

our empirical results.

Second, we also complement the existing evidence on the market power impacts of forward contracts in electricity markets (Wolak, 2000; Fabra and Toro, 2005; Bushnell, Mansur and Saravia, 2008; Hortaçsu and Puller, 2008). We contribute to this literature by providing new evidence of the impact of firms’ price exposure on market power through structural estimates. Our results regarding market power in the Spanish electricity market are also in line with previous studies, despite differences in the focus and period of the analyses (Fabra and Toro, 2005; Fabra and Reguant, 2014; Reguant, 2014).

Third, we provide key insights into the ongoing debate about renewable pricing schemes by focusing on the largely unexplored issue of how they affect firms’ bidding incentives for given capacities. This is a required first step towards endogenizing long-run variables such as entry, exit, or the capacity and location of the new investments. To our knowledge, only a few papers explore this question. From a theoretical perspective, Dressler (2016) highlights that paying renewables at *fixed prices* (such as Feed-in-Tariffs) acts like a forward contract.¹² From an empirical perspective, Bohland and Schwenen (2021) explore the market power impacts of a voluntary change in the pricing scheme in the Spanish Electricity market during 2005, a period when renewables represented less than 10% in the energy mix.

Finally, our work complements the growing literature on the short-run and long-run effects of renewables, including their impacts on energy prices (Gowrisankaran, Reynolds and Samano, 2016; Acemoglu, Kakhbod and Ozdaglar, 2017), the nature of competition (Fabra and Llobet, 2021), emissions (Cullen, 2013; Novan, 2015), and profits earned by the conventional producers (Bushnell and Novan, 2018; Liski and Vehviläinen, 2020). Nonetheless, all these papers apply to settings in which renewables are exposed to *market prices* but do not analyze the effects under *fixed prices*.

II The Model

We develop a simple model of strategic pricing behavior in wholesale electricity markets. Our model combines ingredients in Ito and Reguant (2016), who study firms’ behavior in sequential markets, with ingredients in Acemoglu, Kakhbod and Ozdaglar (2017), who study the price impact of renewable energies in a single one-shot market. Our model further adds the analysis of alternative pricing schemes for renewables. Similar to those models, and in line with Allaz and Vila (1993), we abstract from uncertainty and risk

¹²However, Dressler (2016) abstracts from the impacts of FiT on price arbitrage and focuses instead on the impacts on forward trading. She finds that FiT might crowd out other forms of forward contracting, in line with Ritz (2016).

aversion.

Markets Electricity is traded in two sequential markets: a day-ahead market ($t = 1$) and a spot market ($t = 2$). Total forecasted demand is inelastically given by A , and it is fully cleared in the day-ahead market. The spot market allows firms to reshuffle their day-ahead commitments while total demand remains fixed at A . With demand being inelastic, total welfare only depends on productive efficiency, which is a function of spot prices, while consumers' surplus depends on day-ahead market prices only.¹³

Technologies and Firms Electricity is produced by two types of technologies (renewable and conventional) and two types of firms (one dominant firm and a set of fringe firms, respectively denoted by $i = d, f$).¹⁴ Each fringe firm owns either renewable or conventional energy, while the dominant firm (might) own both.

The dominant firm's conventional technology has constant marginal costs of production, $c > 0$, while the fringe firms' conventional technology has increasing marginal costs q/b .¹⁵ In contrast, renewables (generically referred to as *wind*) allow firms to produce at zero marginal costs up to their available capacities. We use k and w to denote wind's maximum and available capacity,¹⁶ with $k \geq w$. The dominant firm owns a fraction $\delta \in [0, 1]$ of k and w , while the fringe owns the remaining $(1 - \delta)$ share. Therefore, δ is a proxy for the ownership structure: the higher (lower) it is, the greater the share of renewables in the hands of the dominant firm (fringe players).

We assume that the conventional technology is needed to satisfy total demand, i.e., $A - bc - w > 0$, making c the relevant marginal cost.

Firms' Behavior The dominant firm sets prices in both markets,¹⁷ taking into account the production decisions of the fringe firms, which are assumed to be price-takers. In the day-ahead market, the fringe firms offer their conventional output at marginal cost,

¹³This is particularly true in the Spanish electricity market, where the default is that households pay a pass-through of the hourly day-ahead market prices (i.e., the Real Time Prices). The default contract provides the price reference for the contracts offered in the retail market for those consumers who opt out of the default. See [Fabra et al. \(2021\)](#) for a description.

¹⁴Allowing for $n > 1$ Cournot competitors leads to results similar to those reported here. See Appendix A.2 for the complete analysis.

¹⁵We could assume that marginal costs are higher in the spot market, reflecting that adjusting production tends to be costlier close to real-time. The main results remain unchanged.

¹⁶This assumes that firms are able to perfectly predict their available capacities. [Fabra and Llobet \(2021\)](#) report empirical evidence on the wind forecast errors in the Spanish electricity market and show that these tend to be small. Still, the model's results would not change if one interprets w as expected wind output rather than actual wind.

¹⁷Since we are dealing with a single dominant firm, results would be the same if the firm chose quantities instead of prices. See Appendix A.2 for details.

i.e., they supply bp_1 . In the spot market, if p_2 increases above p_1 , they find it optimal to increase their conventional output, i.e., their additional supply in the spot market is $b(p_2 - p_1)$. In contrast, if p_2 falls below p_1 , they find it cheaper to buy back some of their day-ahead commitments instead of satisfying them with their own production, i.e., they demand $b(p_1 - p_2)$ in the spot market. In turn, since renewable energies have zero marginal costs but limited capacity, the fringe firms have to decide whether to sell their output $(1 - \delta)w$ in the day-ahead market and/or in the spot market. Their incentives depend on the pricing scheme in place.

Pricing Schemes for Renewables We consider two commonly used pricing schemes: renewable producers receive *fixed prices* for their output, regardless of whether they sell it at $t = 1$ (day-ahead) or $t = 2$ (spot); or renewables are paid with *market prices*, i.e., the prices of the market in which they sell their output, plus a fixed premium.

II.A One-Shot Market

As a baseline, we first consider the case in which there is a single one-shot market with no possibility to trade afterward. Accordingly, we omit the market t subscript for now.

The profit-maximizing problem of the dominant firm depends on the pricing rule in place. Under *market prices*, renewable output is paid at p plus a fixed premium \underline{p} . Hence, the dominant firm's profit maximization problem is

$$\max_p [pD(p) - c(D(p) - \delta w) + \delta w\underline{p}], \quad (1)$$

where $D(p) = A - bp - (1 - \delta)w$ is the residual demand faced by the dominant firm, i.e., total demand A net of the fringe firms' conventional and renewable output. Importantly, an increase in w reduces this residual demand by $(1 - \delta)$, unless of course the dominant firm owns all renewables ($\delta = 1$).

Under *fixed prices*, renewable output is paid at \bar{p} . This reduces the dominant firm's price exposure, as shown in the first term of the following profit expression,

$$\max_p [p(D(p) - \delta w) - c(D(p) - \delta w) + \delta w\bar{p}]. \quad (2)$$

Using the indicator $I = 0$ for *market prices* and $I = 1$ for *fixed prices* allows us to write the solution to the first-order condition of profit maximization under both pricing

rules as follows,

$$p^* = c + [A - bp^* - (1 - \delta)w - I\delta w] \left| \frac{\partial D(p^*)}{\partial p} \right|^{-1}. \quad (3)$$

The dominant firm optimally sets p^* with a markup over its marginal cost c . This markup, captured by the second term in (3), depends on the size and slope of the residual demand and the price exposure of the dominant firm's renewables. The fringe firms' renewables $(1 - \delta)w$ reduce the residual demand of the dominant firm, which mitigates its marginal gains from increasing p . This pro-competitive effect, which we refer to as the *residual demand* effect, contributes to reducing equilibrium prices under both pricing rules. However, the markup term also depends on the pricing rule through the term $I\delta w$. In particular, the marginal gains from increasing p are lower under *fixed prices* ($I = 1$) because the dominant firm's renewable output (δw) does not benefit from the price increase. We refer to this as the *forward contract* effect, given that *fixed prices* act as a forward contract over the firm's renewable sales. Putting these two effects together implies that an increase in renewables w fully reduces the markup term under *fixed prices*. In contrast, it only reduces it by a fraction $(1 - \delta)$ under *market prices*.

Our first lemma follows immediately, where we use the super-scripts M and F to denote equilibrium outcomes under *market prices* and *fixed prices*, respectively.

Lemma 1 *Suppose there is a single one-shot market.*

(i) *The equilibrium price is (weakly) higher under market prices than under fixed prices:*

$$p^M \geq p^F > c$$

with strict inequality if and only if $\delta > 0$.

(ii) *The equilibrium price is strictly decreasing in renewable output under fixed prices, and weakly so under market prices:*

$$\partial p^F / \partial w < 0, \text{ and } \partial p^M / \partial w \leq 0$$

with strict inequality if and only if $\delta < 1$.

(iii) *The price-depressing effect of renewables is stronger under fixed prices:*

$$|\partial p^F / \partial w| > |\partial p^M / \partial w| \geq 0$$

with strict inequality if and only if $\delta < 1$.

(iv) *The price-depressing effect of renewables is independent of the ownership structure*

δ under fixed prices. In contrast, under market prices, the price-depressing effect is mitigated by an increase in δ :

$$\partial p^F / \partial w \partial \delta = 0 \text{ and } \partial p^M / \partial w \partial \delta > 0.$$

The dominant firm exercises less market power under *fixed prices* than under *market prices* thanks to the *forward contract* effect. An increase in renewables w mitigates market power under both pricing rules through the *residual demand* effect. However, the price-depressing effect of renewables is greater under *fixed prices* because of the *forward contract* effect. Under *market prices*, the dominant firm exercises more market power when more renewables are added to its portfolio (i.e., when δ is higher), given that its residual demand is less affected by an increase in w . This mitigates the price-depressing effect of renewables. Indeed, in the extreme case in which the dominant firm owns all renewables ($\delta = 1$), the dominant's firm residual demand does not depend on w , and the price-depressing effect under *market prices* is fully neutralized.¹⁸ In contrast, the pro-competitive effect of renewables under *fixed prices* remains unchanged even if δ goes up. The reason is that, with linear demand, a weaker *residual demand* effect is fully compensated by a stronger *forward contract* effect.

In what follows, we will add the possibility that firms trade across sequential markets. Since we are interested in whether the pricing rules affect the incentives of renewable owners to arbitrage across markets, we will consider two cases: either renewables are not allowed to engage in arbitrage, or they are permitted to do so up to their maximum production capacities (a limit imposed by regulation).

II.B Sequential Markets with No Arbitrage

Suppose that firms can trade in the day-ahead and the spot markets, but renewables are not allowed to arbitrage price differences across these sequential markets. Hence, they have to offer all their output in the day-ahead market. The residual demands faced by the dominant firm in the day-ahead market and the spot market are now given by

$$D_1(p_1) = A - bp_1 - (1 - \delta)w \tag{4}$$

$$D_2(p_1, p_2) = b(p_1 - p_2). \tag{5}$$

We solve the game by backward induction. In the spot market, once p_1 is chosen, the dominant firm sets p_2 to maximize its profits. Under both pricing rules, the profit

¹⁸This result is in line with [Acemoglu, Kakhbod and Ozdaglar \(2017\)](#).

maximization problem in the spot market can be written as

$$\max_{p_2} [p_2 D_2(p_1, p_2) - c(D_1(p_1) + D_2(p_1, p_2) - \delta w)]. \quad (6)$$

Solving the first order condition for p_2 ,¹⁹

$$p_2^* = c + b(p_1 - p_2^*) \left| \frac{\partial D_2(p_1, p_2^*)}{\partial p_2} \right|^{-1}. \quad (7)$$

This shows that the firm sets a spot price above its marginal cost $p_2^* > c$. The markup is increasing in p_1 given that a higher p_1 enlarges the spot market demand.

In the day-ahead market, under *market prices*, the dominant firm's profit maximization problem is similar to (1), but it now takes into account the profits made in the spot market,

$$\max_{p_1} [p_1 D_1(p_1) + p_2^*(p_1) D_2(p_1, p_2^*) - c(D_1(p_1) + D_2(p_1, p_2^*) - \delta w) + \delta w \bar{p}]. \quad (8)$$

Similarly, under *fixed prices*, the profit maximization problem becomes

$$\max_{p_1} [p_1(D_1(p_1) - \delta w) + p_2^*(p_1) D_2(p_1, p_2^*) - c(D_1(p_1) + D_2(p_1, p_2^*) - \delta w) + \delta w \bar{p}]. \quad (9)$$

As before, we can use the indicator $I = 0$ for *market prices* and $I = 1$ for *fixed prices* to write the solution to the first order condition of profit maximization in the day-ahead market under both pricing rules,

$$p_1^* = p_2^* + [A - bp_1^* - w(1 - \delta) - Iw\delta] \left| \frac{\partial D(p_1^*)}{\partial p_1} \right|^{-1}. \quad (10)$$

This expression only differs from (3) in the first term, as the possibility to trade in the spot market implies that the opportunity cost of sales in the day-ahead market is now $p_2^* > c$. Therefore, the degree of market power in the day-ahead market is now greater than when electricity can only be traded in a one-shot market. However, compared to the equilibrium price in the one-shot market, the spot price is now closer to marginal costs, implying that total welfare is higher than under the one-shot market design.

Comparing condition (10) across pricing rules shows that there are two reasons why the markup in the day-ahead market is lower under *fixed prices* than under *market prices*. Firstly, as already discussed, for given p_2^* , the *forward contract* effect makes the second

¹⁹In the oligopoly model, the residual demands in the first-order conditions should be interpreted as net of the rivals' production.

term in (10) lower under *fixed prices* than under *market prices*. Secondly, a lower day-ahead price reduces the size of the spot market, which in turn implies that the spot price p_2^* under *fixed prices* is also lower than under *market prices*. In turn, this pushes the day-ahead price p_1^* under *fixed prices* further down.

Our following lemma summarizes these results.

Lemma 2 *Suppose that there are sequential markets but renewables are not allowed to arbitrage across them.*

(i) *Comparing equilibrium prices across sequential markets as well as with those in the one-shot market (Lemma 1),*

$$\begin{aligned} p_1^M &> p^M > p_2^M > c \\ p_1^F &> p^F > p_2^F > c. \end{aligned}$$

(ii) *Comparing equilibrium prices in each market across pricing rules,*

$$\begin{aligned} p_1^M &> p_1^F > c \\ p_2^M &> p_2^F > c. \end{aligned}$$

II.C Sequential Markets with Limited Arbitrage

There are profitable arbitrage opportunities given the positive differential across the day-ahead and spot prices. These involve selling output in the day-ahead market at a high price and re-buying it in the spot market at a lower price. If there are no limits on arbitrage, and if arbitrage is competitive, the price differential across markets is competed away until the day-ahead and the spot prices convergence, $p_1 = p_2$.

However, in many electricity markets in practice (including the one in our empirical application), market rules impose limits on arbitrage. Typically, all transactions need to be backed by physical assets, thus implying that arbitrage can only come from market agents and only up to their capacities. This leaves some scope for wind producers to engage in arbitrage as the capacity constraint $w \leq k$ is rarely binding. Even though the final production of the fringe renewable producers is fixed at $(1 - \delta)w$, they can thus gain from selling $(1 - \delta)k$ in the day-ahead market at a high p_1 and buying back their excess commitment $(1 - \delta)(k - w)$ in the spot market at a low p_2 . We refer to this strategy as *overselling*.²⁰ Throughout, we are going to assume that the arbitrage constraint is

²⁰Note that this arbitrage is purely financial. The fringe firms' renewable output is fixed at $(1 - \delta)w$, but they can gain by deciding which fraction of that output they buy or sell in each market.

binding, i.e., overselling $(1 - \delta)(k - w)$ does not lead to full price converge between the day-ahead and the spot markets.

When renewables are exposed to *market prices*, the fringe renewable producers have incentives to engage in arbitrage to increase their profits. Hence, the residual demands faced by the dominant firm in both markets are now given by

$$\begin{aligned} D_1(p_1) &= A - bp_1 - (1 - \delta)k \\ D_2(p_1, p_2) &= b(p_2 - p_1) + (1 - \delta)(k - w) \end{aligned}$$

The reduction (increase) in day-ahead (spot) demand implies that the day-ahead (spot) price goes down (up) as compared to the case with no arbitrage (Lemma 1). We refer to this as the *arbitrage effect*.

This effect is not present under *fixed prices*, given that fringe firms have no incentives to engage in arbitrage: they obtain the same price regardless of whether they sell their renewable output in the day ahead or the spot market. For this reason, and in line with the empirical evidence, we assume that they offer all their renewable output in the day-ahead market.²¹ Accordingly, the residual demands faced by the dominant firm remain as in (4) and (5), and equilibrium prices remain as in Lemma 2.

Therefore, the comparison of equilibrium prices across pricing rules essentially boils down to the comparison between the *forward contract* and the *arbitrage effects*: the former applies under *fixed prices* only, the latter applies under *market prices* only.

Proposition 1 *Under limited arbitrage, the comparison of equilibrium prices across pricing schemes shows that:*

(i) $p_1^M > p_1^F$ if and only if the ownership structure is such that

$$\delta > (k - w)/(k + w).$$

(ii) $p_2^M > p_2^F$.

Proposition 1 above shows that the comparison of day-ahead prices depends on the ownership structure δ . The *forward contract effect* under *fixed prices* depends positively on the dominant firm's renewable output (which weakens the incentives to exercise market power), while the *arbitrage effect* under *market prices* depends negatively on the fringe firms' renewable output (which weakens the ability to arbitrage). Hence, when δ is high (low) the *forward contract effect* under *fixed prices* is strong (weak) while the *arbitrage*

²¹Note that it is never in the interest of the dominant firm to engage in arbitrage, as that would only serve to mitigate its own market power.

effect under *market prices* is weak (strong). The *residual demand effect* does not affect the comparison as it applies under both pricing rules. It follows that day-ahead prices are relatively lower (higher) under *fixed prices* when δ is sufficiently high (low).²² On the extremes, if the dominant firm does not own any renewable energies ($\delta = 0$), the day-ahead market price is unambiguously lower under *market prices*. To the contrary, if it owns them all ($\delta = 1$), the day-ahead market price is unambiguously lower under *fixed prices*.

In contrast, *fixed prices* always give rise to lower spot prices, regardless of δ . Intuitively, the *arbitrage effect* under *market prices* translates into a higher spot market demand, which pushes spot prices up. Instead, the *forward contract effect* under *fixed prices* weakens the incentives of the dominant producer to raise the day-ahead price, which leads to a reduction in the spot market demand and spot prices.

Our following Proposition provides comparative static results regarding the impact of renewable output w on equilibrium prices, which might depend on the ownership structure δ .

Proposition 2 *Comparative statics of equilibrium prices with respect to renewable output show that:*

(i) *Equilibrium prices in all markets are strictly decreasing in renewable output under fixed prices, and weakly so under market prices (merit order effect): for $t = 1, 2$,*

$$\partial p_t^F / \partial w < 0, \text{ and } \partial p_t^M / \partial w \leq 0.$$

with strict inequality if and only if $\delta < 1$.

(ii) *The price-depressing effect in the day-ahead market is stronger under fixed prices:*

$$|\partial p_1^F / \partial w| > |\partial p_1^M / \partial w| \geq 0.$$

(iii) *The price-depressing effect is independent of the ownership structure under fixed prices. In contrast, under market prices, the price-depressing effect is mitigated by an increase in δ , particularly so in the spot market: for $t = 1, 2$.*

$$\partial p_t^F / \partial w \partial \delta = 0, \text{ and } \partial p_2^M / \partial w \partial \delta > \partial p_1^M / \partial w \partial \delta > 0.$$

²²In Appendix A.2 we show that with n firms, the threshold on δ is increasing n , from $(k-w)/(k+w)$ for $n = 1$ up to $(k-w)/k$ for $n \rightarrow \infty$; see expression (A.28). Therefore, the more competitors there are, the more likely it is that day-ahead prices will be relatively lower under *market prices*. In any event, note that the threshold on δ is always strictly lower than 1. Hence, even under perfect competition ($n \rightarrow \infty$), there are parameter values for which *fixed prices* lead to relatively lower day-ahead prices as compared to *market prices*.

(iv) Equilibrium price differences across markets are decreasing (increasing) in renewable output under fixed prices, but they are increasing under market prices:

$$\partial\Delta p^F/\partial w < 0, \text{ and } \partial\Delta p^M/\partial w \geq 0,$$

with strict inequality if and only if $\delta < 1$.

Points (i) to (iii) of the Proposition are similar to those in Lemma 1 under a single one-shot market, thus showing that they also extend to sequential markets. Point (iv) provides an additional result. It shows that renewable energies also affect the price differences across markets and do so in opposite directions under the two pricing rules. While wind output reduces the price differences across markets under *fixed prices*, it widens those differences under *market prices*. There are two underlying reasons: under *fixed prices* an increase in wind reduces the dominant firm's incentives to raise prices in the day-ahead market, while under *market prices* an increase in wind output reduces the fringe firms' idle capacity to engage in arbitrage.

II.D Welfare Analysis

Consumer surplus depends on day-ahead prices only,²³ while productive efficiency depends on spot prices only. Hence, the welfare analysis follows directly from Proposition 1.

Corollary 1 *The welfare comparison across pricing schemes shows that:*

(i) *Consumer surplus is higher under fixed prices than under market prices if and only if the ownership structure is sufficiently high,*

$$\delta > (k - w)/(k + w).$$

Under both pricing rules, consumer surplus increases in renewable output w . Under market prices, the increase in consumer surplus is decreasing in δ .

(ii) *The deadweight loss is always lower under fixed prices than under market prices. Under both pricing rules, the deadweight loss decreases in renewable output w . Under market prices, the reduction of the deadweight loss is decreasing in δ .*

Overall, the deadweight loss is lower (equivalently, efficiency is greater) under *fixed prices* than under *market prices*. However, the difference in consumer surplus depends

²³Consumer payments also depend on the fixed tariff \bar{p} and the fixed premium \underline{p} . To compare consumer payments, we are implicitly holding the budget commitment fixed, i.e., \bar{p} and \underline{p} are such that at the competitive solution, consumers would pay the same under both pricing policies.

on the ownership structure. When δ is low (high), prices for consumers are relatively higher (lower) under *fixed prices*, which makes consumers worse (better) off.

In the case of low δ , the choice of pricing rules is thus faced with a standard trade-off because *fixed prices* give rise to greater efficiency but lower consumer surplus. Indeed, in this case, consumers are better off when renewables are exposed to *market prices*, while firms' profits are higher when paid with *fixed prices*.

For consumers, the ideal scenario would be one in which all renewables were in the hands of the fringe and in which they were paid at *market prices*. This would weaken market power by reducing the residual demand of the dominant firm and by maximizing arbitrage. However, if δ is high (so that the dominant firm faces a large residual demand and arbitrage is weak), such a trade-off disappears as *fixed prices* would give rise to both higher efficiency and higher consumer surplus.

Our model helps us understand how the pricing schemes for renewables affect day-ahead and spot prices. However, it does not aim to provide a single answer as to which pricing rule should be adopted. There are two main reasons for this. First, our model relies on comparing equilibrium outcomes across pricing rules for given capacities. However, pricing rules could also affect investment decisions (how much to invest, which technology to choose), ultimately affecting efficiency beyond the market price impacts. Among the efficiency effects, investments in various renewable technologies could have distinct impacts on the displaced carbon emissions, learning externalities, or other spillover effects. Still, the model does not capture these. Furthermore, we have not compared the prices paid by consumers to renewables, which also depend on \bar{p} under *fixed prices* and \underline{p} under *market prices*. These prices are fixed by the time firms bid in the day-ahead and spot markets and therefore do not affect their bidding behavior, which is the subject of our analysis. Nonetheless, the values of \bar{p} and \underline{p} , which we have assumed exogenous, affect how much consumers pay for renewables, possibly through fixed fees or general taxation. Last but not least, our stylized model omits some real-life nuances, which could affect market outcomes (e.g., uncertainty and risk aversion).

II.E Testable Predictions

The Spanish market (as well as electricity markets elsewhere) is more complex than our stylized model. Hence, it is important first to test whether firms actually behave as predicted by the model despite the more complicated real-world market in which they interact. Ultimately, we want to obtain empirical evidence which helps us understand whether consumers are better off or worse off when renewables are paid with *fixed prices* relative to *market prices*. Following our previous analysis, we summarize our testable

predictions in three blocks:

- (i) **Forward contract effect:** When renewables are paid with *fixed prices*, day-ahead prices should be decreasing in the strategic firms' wind output. This effect should not be present when firms are fully exposed to *market prices*.
- (ii) **Arbitrage effect:** When renewables are paid with *market prices*, fringe producers have incentives to oversell in the day-ahead market. Their incentives to do so should be greater when the expected price differential across markets gets larger. This effect should not be present under *fixed prices*. Furthermore, the comparative statics of the price differential across markets differ across the two pricing schemes: price differences should decrease (increase) in wind output under *fixed (market)* prices.
- (iii) **Effects on consumers:** Consumer surplus depends on day-ahead prices, which are higher under *market prices* relative to *fixed prices* if the *forward contract effect* dominates the *arbitrage effect*, and vice-versa, an issue that depends on the ownership structure. The empirical analysis will reveal which of the two effects dominates in the context of the Spanish electricity market.

Before we take these predictions to our empirical analysis, we first describe some of the institutional details of the Spanish electricity market.

III Context and Data

In this section, we describe the institutional setting, which is key for understanding the pricing incentives faced by Spanish electricity producers. We also describe our data sources.

III.A Market Design and Regulation

The Spanish electricity market is organized as a sequence of markets: the day-ahead market, seven intraday markets that operate close to real-time, and several balancing mechanisms managed by the electricity System Operator to make sure that demand is equated to supply at all times. In order to participate in these markets, plants must have offered their output in the day-ahead market first. Electricity producers and consumers can also enter into bilateral contracts, and they have to communicate the quantities under those contracts to the Market Operator or auctioneer, on an hourly basis, one day ahead.

In our empirical analysis, we analyze bidding in the day-ahead market and arbitrage between the day-ahead market and the first intraday market (which we refer to as the *spot market*). Both markets cover most trades, contributing to approximately 80% of the final electricity price. The day-ahead market opens at noon to determine the exchange of electricity to be delivered each hour of the day after. It is organized through a uniform-price central auction mechanism. On the supply side, producers submit price-quantity offers specifying the minimum price at which they are willing to produce with each of their plants. The demand side works as a mirror image. The auctioneer ranks the supply bids in increasing order and the demand bids in decreasing order to construct the aggregate supply and demand curves, respectively. The market clears at the intersection of the two: the winning supply (demand) plants are those that bid below (above) the market-clearing price. All winning plants receive (pay) such a price.

Because of their more significant trade volume, our empirical analysis will compare the day-ahead market and the first intraday market. The intraday markets work similarly to the day-ahead market, with the difference being that all units—regardless of whether they belong to the supply or demand side—can enter both sides of the market to fine-tune their day-ahead commitments. For instance, if a supplier wants to sell less (more) than its day-ahead commitment, it can submit a demand (supply) bid in the intraday markets. The same applies to consumers. The first intraday market opens at 4 pm on the day ahead, 4 hours after the day-ahead market. Firms face a fine if their actual production deviates from their final commitment, which provides strong incentives to avoid imbalances.

In some cases, non-strategic reasons can give rise to differences between the day ahead and the final commitments. For instance, a plant might suffer an outage after the day-ahead market has closed, forcing it to buy back whatever it committed to producing. Similarly, a renewable producer might have to buy or sell additional output if its wind or solar forecasts turn out to be wrong.

In other cases, such differences might be explained by strategic considerations. In particular, if market agents expect a positive price difference between the day-ahead and intraday markets, they might want to engage in arbitrage. Producers oversell in the day-ahead market at a high price and buy back their excess production in the intraday market at a lower price. Similarly, suppliers might prefer to delay their purchases to the intraday market as much as possible.

As we mentioned in the theoretical analysis, the Spanish electricity market rules impose some arbitrage constraints. In particular, supply (demand) bids have to be tied to a specific generation (consumption) unit and the quantity offered (demanded) cannot

exceed their maximum production (consumption) capacity. This requirement implies that renewable plants (or the big consumers and the electricity suppliers) have relatively more flexibility to engage in arbitrage than coal or gas plants, which often operate at full capacity. For instance, renewables can offer to produce at their maximum capacity in the day-ahead market even when their production forecast is below.

The regulation also introduces differences in arbitrage incentives across technologies and market agents. Renewable producers' incentives to arbitrage depend on the pricing scheme, while big customers and downstream suppliers are always encouraged to arbitrage price differences (since they face full price exposure and therefore keep any potential profits from arbitrage). We next describe the pricing schemes of Spanish renewables, which are central to our identification strategy.

III.B Pricing Schemes for Renewables

The pricing schemes for Spanish renewables have been subject to various regulatory changes.²⁴ In our empirical analysis, we will exploit the occurrence of the two most recent regulatory changes affecting wind producers.

Before February 2013, the existing regulation (Royal Decree 661/2007) gave all wind producers the ability to choose between two pricing schemes: either a market-based scheme (so-called Feed-in-Premium) or a fixed-price scheme (so-called Feed-in-Tariff). Under the market-based option, wind producers had to sell their electricity directly into the wholesale market and would receive a premium payment on top. Under the fixed price option, wind producers were obliged to bid their output at a zero price into the wholesale market and would receive a fixed price for it (RD 661/2007; article 31). Since expected payments under the market-based option were notably higher than under the fixed price option, all wind operators had opted for the former. We label this regime as Regime I - Market Prices. On 2 February 2013 (Royal Decree Law 2/2013), the Government decided to abolish the market-based option “without any former notice”,²⁵ all wind producers were *de facto* moved from receiving *market prices* to receiving *fixed prices*.

The fixed price regime—which we label as Regime II - Fixed Prices—only lasted until June 2014, when the Government published the details of a new remuneration for each type of renewable installation (the Royal Decree 413/2014 was published on June 6, and

²⁴See [del Rio \(2008\)](#) for an overview of the changes up to 2007, and [Mir-Artigues, Cerda and del Rio \(2014\)](#) for the 2013 reform.

²⁵The quotes come from ‘Pain in Spain: New Retroactive Changes Hinder Renewable Energy’, published in April 2013 at www.renewableenergyworld.com. Similar quotes can be found in other industry publications.

Ministerial Order IET 1045/2014 that came into force on June 21).²⁶ In two earlier pieces of legislation (Royal Decree 9/2013 on July 14, 2013, and Law 26/2013 on December 27, 2013), the Government had already announced the main guidelines of the new regulation, but it did not implement it until June 2014.²⁷

In general terms, the new scheme that was introduced in June 2014 (labeled as Regime III - Market Prices) moved all renewable producers to market-based prices. Under this regulation, which is still in place, renewables have to sell their production into the Spanish electricity wholesale market and receive the market price for such sales plus additional regulated payments.²⁸ The latter is based on technology and vintage-specific standards, independently of the actual market revenues made by each firm. In particular, the old wind farms (i.e., those commissioned before 2005) do not receive any additional payment because they had previously received enough revenues to cover their construction costs. Hence, there exist some differences between the pre-February 2013 regulation (Regime I) and the post-June 2014 regulation (Regime III), mainly in the level of support. Nonetheless, the two regulations have one thing in common: they expose renewable producers to market-based prices, which is our focus.

III.C Data

We use different sources of data on bids, marginal costs, renewable production (actual and forecasts), and weather data. First, we use detailed bid data from the Iberian Market Operator (OMIE), which reports all the supply and demand functions submitted by all plants every hour, in the day-ahead market, as well as in the intraday markets. We match the bid data with the plant characteristics data to obtain information on their owners and types (e.g., for supply units, we know their technology and maximum capacity; for demand units, we know whether they are big customers with direct market access, suppliers of last resort, or electricity suppliers). With these bid data, we can construct each firm's residual demand by subtracting the supply functions of all its competitors from

²⁶Various reasons explained these changes, including the regulator's lack of a forward-looking understanding of market performance and the attempt to hide payment cuts under the shift in pricing format. Before 2013, market prices were relatively higher as compared to the *fixed prices*. Hence, the regulator thought that by moving wind producers to the fixed price regime, their payments would be reduced. The opposite occurred prior to the 2014 regulatory change.

²⁷We have run placebo tests with these announcement dates, which show that these laws did not influence firms' bidding behavior.

²⁸These include a remuneration per MW of installed capacity (meant to compensate for those construction costs that cannot be reasonably recovered through the market) and a remuneration per MWh produced (meant to cover the costs of operating the plants). These two regulated payments are based not on the actual construction costs or market revenues of the plant but those of a so-called *efficient and well-managed company* subject to technology-specific standards.

the aggregate demand curve. We also observe the market-clearing price, the marginal unit that set that price, and the units that submitted prices close to the market-clearing price.

Second, we have data on the cost characteristics of all the coal and gas plants (so-called Combined Cycle Gas Turbines or CCGTs), including their efficiency rates (i.e., how much fuel they need to burn to produce one unit of electricity) and their emission rates (i.e., how much carbon they emit per unit of electricity produced). Together with Bloomberg daily data on coal prices (API2), gas prices (TTF), and CO2 prices (ETS), we compute engineering-based estimates of each coal and gas plant’s marginal cost on a daily basis.²⁹ While these are reliable cost data sources,³⁰ we cannot rule out measurement errors. For instance, the price of coal and gas in international markets need not reflect the correct opportunity cost firms face when burning their fossil fuels. This might be due to transaction costs, transportation costs, or contractual constraints on firms’ ability to resell the gas bought through long-term contracts. Indeed, large disparities between the load factors of various gas plants in the market suggest that one of the strategic firms might have had access to gas prices below the ones in the international exchanges.³¹

Third, we use publicly available data provided by the System Operator (REE) on the hourly production of all the plants in the Spanish electricity market, including the fractions that were sold through the market or bilateral contracts.³² These data allow us to compute, on an hourly basis, the market shares by technologies (including renewables) for all firms. Since we observe the supply and demand allocated to the vertically integrated firms, we can compute their hourly net positions, i.e., production net of their bilateral contracts and vertical commitments.³³ Furthermore, we can assess whether

²⁹A 7% tax was levied at the start of 2013 on all electricity producers, including conventional and renewables. We take this into account when computing marginal costs in our empirical analysis.

³⁰The cost parameters were provided to us by the Spanish System Operator (REE) and were previously used in [Fabra and Toro \(2005\)](#) and [Fabra and Reguant \(2014\)](#). We have recently updated them to include the new capacity additions. The efficiency and emission rates are in line with standard measures for each technology and incorporate finer heterogeneity across plants, e.g., reflecting their vintage, or, for the coal plants, incorporating the exact type of coal they burn, which affects both their efficiency as well as their emission rate.

³¹For instance, as reported by REE, in 2014, Gas Natural’s CCGTs had the highest load factors (22% on average, as compared to 4% of all the other CCGTs). Notably, this was true also for twin CCGTs (i.e., at the exact location and vintage, owned by different companies). For instance, Besos 4, owned by Gas Natural, operated at a 65% load factor, while Besos 3 owned by Endesa operated at an 8% load factor. The same was true for San Roque 1 (owned by Gas Natural, 59% load factor) and 2 (owned by Endesa, 12% load factor).

³²One drawback of these data is that it does not include information on the units located in Portugal. However, as these plants were not affected by the regulatory changes implemented by the Spanish Government, we excluded them from the analysis.

³³We do not include vertical commitments due to regulated sales since these are simply passed through to final consumers.

firms engaged in arbitrage across markets by computing each plant’s day-ahead and final commitments. The System Operator also provides detailed information on the hourly demand and wind forecasts one day before the market opens.

Last, we also use publicly available daily weather data (including temperature, wind speed, and precipitation) provided by the Spanish Meteorological Agency (AEMET).

To encompass the two main regulatory changes affecting renewables in the Spanish electricity market, the time frame of our empirical study runs from February 2012 until January 2015. During this period, there were no major capacity additions or other relevant changes in the market structure. There were three leading vertically-integrated firms, which we refer to as the *strategic firms*: Iberdrola (firm 1), Endesa (firm 2), and Gas Natural (firm 3). They all owned various technologies with different weights in their portfolios. Notably, Iberdrola was the largest wind producer, while Gas Natural was the primary owner of gas plants.³⁴ There was also a fringe of conventional producers, renewable producers, and independent downstream electricity suppliers. The market share for the strategic firms was relatively lower in the renewable segment than in the conventional segment. Annual renewable production ranged from 42% to 45% of total generation, and the rest came from nuclear (19%), hydro (10% to 18%), coal (13% to 15%), and gas (3% to 9%).

Table 1 reports the summary statistics. We use hourly data in all of our analyses: there were a total of 26,280 hourly observations, split into 8,784 observations for the first period with *market prices* (Regime I, from 1 February 2012 to 31 January 2013), 12,120 observations for the period with *fixed prices* (Regime II, from 1 February 2013 to 21 June 2014) and 5,376 observations for the second period with *market prices* (Regime III, from 22 June 2014 to 31 January 2015). The day-ahead price ranged between 38 to 52 Euro/MWh, being lower on average but also more volatile during Regime II with *fixed prices*. This could partly be explained by the higher wind availability (the average hourly wind forecast was 6.5 GWh during Regime II, above the 5.7 GWh and 5.0 GWh for Regimes I and III with *market prices*).³⁵ The spot market price was consistently lower than the day-ahead price. The average price differential across the two markets ranged between 0.3 and 1.2 Euro/MWh, being smaller during Regime III with *market prices*. Demand net of wind forecasts was similar on average across all three periods, if anything only slightly higher under Regime I with *market prices*.

³⁴This explains why Gas Natural is the price-setter for a large fraction of the time. Differences could also be due to the various players’ different degrees of market power. Together with the fact that Gas Natural had long-term contracts for gas at prices below the international spot price for gas, this explains why we sometimes find negative markups in the day-ahead market prices.

³⁵Also, coal and gas prices were more volatile during Regimes II and III relative to Regime I.

Table 1: Summary Statistics

	Regime I		Regime II		Regime III	
	Market Prices		Fixed Prices		Market Prices	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Price day-ahead	50.2	(13.8)	38.2	(22.1)	52.1	(11.0)
Price intra-day 1	48.9	(14.2)	37.2	(22.1)	51.8	(11.7)
Price premium	1.2	(5.0)	0.9	(5.6)	0.3	(3.9)
Marginal Cost	47.5	(6.6)	42.3	(7.3)	37.0	(3.8)
Demand Forecast	29.8	(4.8)	28.5	(4.6)	28.1	(4.3)
Wind Forecast	5.7	(3.4)	6.5	(3.6)	4.9	(3.2)
Dominant wind share	0.6	(0.0)	0.7	(0.0)	0.6	(0.0)
Fringe wind share	0.4	(0.0)	0.3	(0.0)	0.4	(0.0)
Investment wind	22.8		23.0		23.0	
Dominant non-wind share	0.8	(0.0)	0.8	(0.1)	0.8	(0.0)
Fringe non-wind share	0.2	(0.0)	0.2	(0.1)	0.2	(0.0)
Investment non-wind	99.8		100.2		100.1	

Notes: Sample from 1 February 2012 to 31 January 2015. Regime I is from 1 February 2012 to 31 January 2013; Regime II is from 1 February 2013 to 21 June 2014; Regime III is from 22 June 2014 to 31 January 2015. Prices and marginal cost are expressed in Euro/MWh. The marginal cost refers to the marginal cost of the last unit produced. Demand and wind forecasts express the average hourly values during each regime in GWh. Installed capacities are expressed in GW.

A first look at the data. It is illustrative to provide a first look at the raw data. The upper panel of Figure 1 plots the difference between the day-ahead sales and the final output for wind plants (positive numbers reflect overselling in the day-ahead market, while negative numbers reflect withholding). The figure distinguishes between the fringe and the strategic firms. As can be seen, when paid with *fixed prices* (Regime II), the fringe wind producers did not engage in arbitrage (i.e., on average, they sold all of their output in the day-ahead market leading to net positions close to zero). They also behaved somewhat similarly to the strategic firms. Instead, when paid with *market prices* (Regimes I and III), the fringe wind producers actively engaged in arbitrage by overselling their wind output in the day-ahead market, i.e., their net positions are positive.³⁶ The smaller amount of arbitrage by wind plants during Regime III with *market prices* is likely due to price differences across markets being narrower (see Table 1).

The change in the pricing schemes also had a strong impact on the strategic producers' behavior. The strategic producers withheld more wind output across markets when

³⁶This evidence is consistent with [Ito and Reguant \(2016\)](#), who showed that fringe firms stopped arbitraging after the switch from *market prices* to *fixed prices* (from Regime I to II). Our results further show that they resumed arbitrage after the switch from *fixed* to *market prices* (from Regime II to III).

exposed to market prices, notably so after the switch from Regime II (with *fixed prices*) to III (with *market prices*), i.e., their net positions become negative.³⁷ This is paralleled by a sharp increase in the price-cost margin in the day-ahead market during Regime III with *market prices*, as can be seen in the lower panel of Figure 1.

In sum, this illustrative evidence suggests that changes in the pricing schemes substantially impacted firms’ bidding behavior. This impact also correlates with changes in the degree of market power in the day-ahead market. In the following sections, we undertake an empirical analysis to uncover the channels by which the pricing schemes for renewables affected market power in the day-ahead market and the incentives to arbitrage.

IV Empirical Analysis

In this section, we empirically analyze the market impacts of renewables pricing schemes. To disentangle the mechanisms at play, we decompose the analysis in four steps. First, we perform a structural analysis of the strategic firms’ price-setting incentives in the day-ahead market. Second, we use a differences-in-differences approach to assess the effects of pricing schemes on the fringe firms’ incentives to arbitrage. Third, we analyze whether the determinants of price differences across markets are consistent with the model’s predictions. Last, to assess the overall impact of the pricing regulation on market power in the day-ahead market, we leverage our structural estimates to construct estimates of day-ahead price-cost markups under the two pricing schemes.

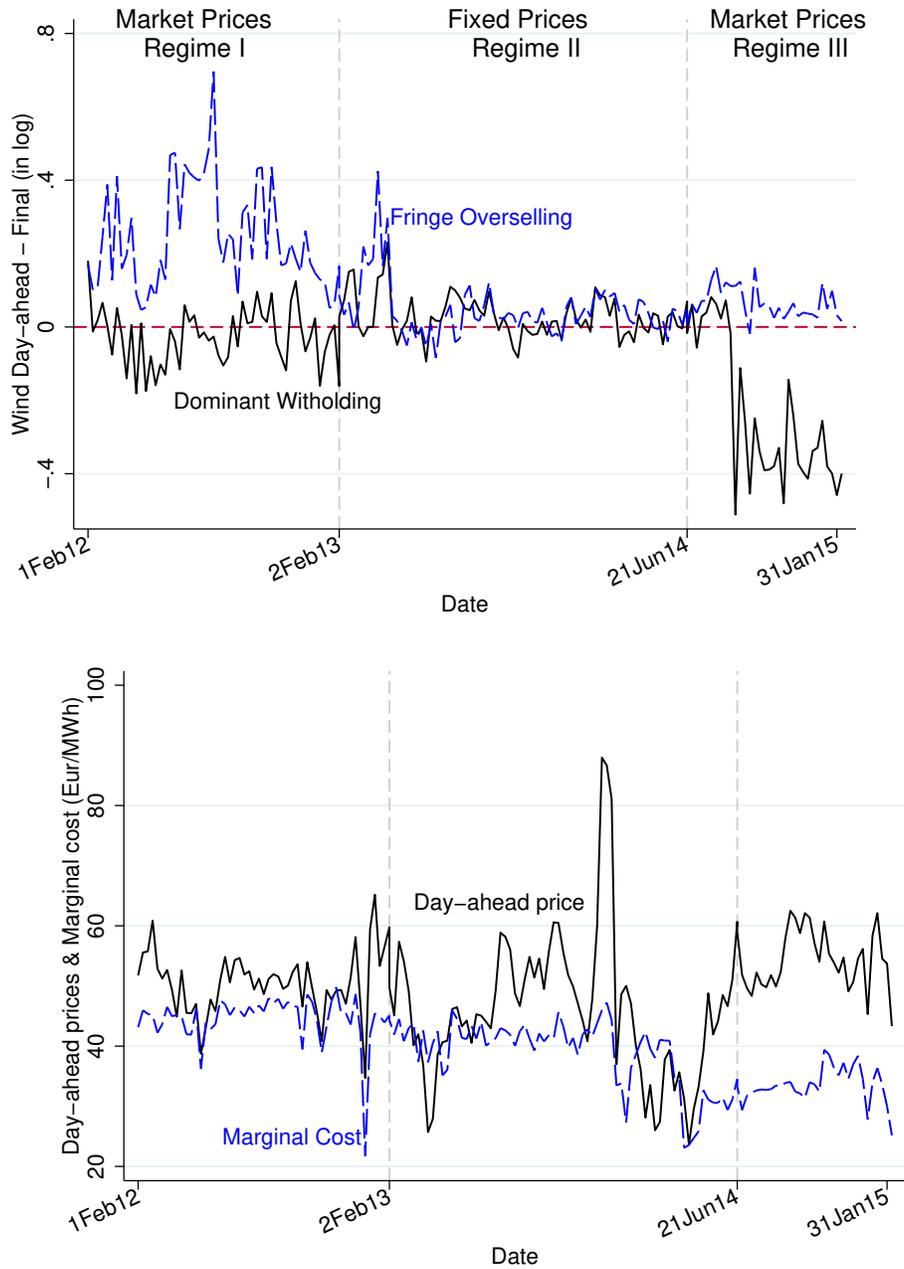
IV.A Price-Setting Incentives in the Day-Ahead Market

We use a structural approach to assess whether the changes in the pricing schemes for renewables affected the price-setting incentives of the strategic producers in the day-ahead market. Our focus is on whether the strategic firms take into account changes in their wind output when setting prices, and whether this depends on the pricing scheme in place, as predicted by our theoretical model.

Empirical Approach. Building on the first-order condition of profit maximization in the day-ahead market, equation (10), we estimate the following empirical equation in

³⁷Figure B.1 in Appendix B shows that these effects showed up not only on average but also across all hours of the day, particularly at peak times.

Figure 1: Wind sales across markets, day-ahead prices, and marginal costs



Notes: The upper figure shows the day-ahead production commitments relative to final production. If the day-ahead commitment exceeds (is lower than) the final production, the value reported is greater (lower) than 0, and we refer to this as overselling (withholding). Data are reported for the wind producers belonging to the strategic firms (solid line) and the fringe firms (dash line). The lower figure shows the weekly average of hourly day-ahead prices (solid line) and the engineering estimates of marginal costs (dashed line). The vertical lines date the changes in the pricing schemes for renewables.

hours t in which firm i is bidding at or close to the market-clearing price:

$$b_{ijt} = \rho \hat{p}_{2t} + \beta \left| \frac{q_{it}}{DR'_{it}} \right| + \sum_{R=1}^3 \theta^s \left| \frac{w_{it}}{DR'_{it}} \right| I_t^s + \alpha_{ij} + \gamma_t + \epsilon_{ijt}, \quad (11)$$

where b_{ijt} is the marginal bid of firm i when bidding at or close to the market-clearing price with unit j at time t ; \hat{p}_{2t} is the expected spot price at time t ; q_{it} is firm i 's total sales at time t ; DR'_{it} is the slope of firm i 's residual demand at time t at the market-clearing price; w_{it} is firm i 's wind output at time t ; I_t^s are three indicator variables for each pricing scheme s (Regimes I, II, and III);³⁸ α_{ij} are unit fixed effects, and γ_t are time-fixed effects. We include unit, quarter, and hour fixed-effects in all specifications, while linear and quadratic time trends are added cumulatively. Last, ϵ_{ijt} is the error term clustered at the plant level to allow errors to be correlated within the same plant.³⁹

Variables Description. On the left hand side of equation (11), we include the bids of all price-setting units belonging to one of the strategic firms,⁴⁰ plus those within a 5 Euro/MWh range (the reason is that these units have an ex-ante positive probability of setting the market price). We exclude (i) hydro units (since it is difficult to assess the true opportunity costs of using their stored water), as well as (ii) units that operate on either the first or last step in their bidding functions (since their constraints for reducing or increasing their output might be binding, invalidating the use of the first-order in equation (10)).⁴¹

On the right hand side of (11), two variables require further explanations. First, to compute the expected spot market price (\hat{p}_{2t}), we use information available to firms at the time the day-ahead market opens. In particular, we regress demand and wind forecasts, hourly dummies, and date dummies on the observed spot market price and use the estimated coefficients to predict \hat{p}_{2t} .⁴² Second, to build the realized residual demand curve faced by each firm (DR_{it}), we fit a quadratic function to the residual demand curve and calculate its slope at the market-clearing price (see Figures B.5 in Appendix B for

³⁸We define the indicator variables for Regimes I, II, III using the February 1, 2013 and June 22, 2014 cutoffs, respectively, which is when the regulatory changes were fully implemented, as described in Section III.B.

³⁹Our results are robust to several ways of clustering, such as at firm-day, firm-month-year, and firm-week levels (see Table C.1 in Appendix B).

⁴⁰If a strategic firm owns more than one unit with these characteristics, we include them all in the analysis.

⁴¹We follow a similar approach as Fabra and Reguant (2014) and Reguant (2014).

⁴²The estimating equation is $p_{2t} = \alpha D_t^{fc} + \beta w_t^{fc} + X_t + Y_t + \epsilon_t$, where the two first regressors are the demand and wind forecasts. We allow all the coefficients to vary across pricing regimes, so the relationship between the spot price, demand, and wind forecasts need not be the same across regimes. The errors are clustered within day.

an illustration).⁴³

Identification. When estimating equation (11), there are at least two identification challenges. First, the slope of the residual demand at the market-clearing price (DR_{it}) is likely endogenous, thus making the markup terms endogenous as well.⁴⁴ Second, since other factors may influence the bids, not controlling for them could lead to omitted variable bias.

To address the first challenge, we instrument DR'_{it} using wind speed and precipitation (and each of them interacted with three dummies for the pricing scheme) as residual demand shifters. The exclusion restriction holds under the assumption that conditional on unit and time fixed effects, wind speed and precipitation affect firms' marginal bids only through our markup parameters. This assumption is plausible and common in the literature (Fabra and Reguant, 2014; Ito and Reguant, 2016) because wind speed and precipitation may influence the firm's inframarginal quantity, but they are unlikely to influence the marginal bid directly. We then use Two-Stage Least Squares (2SLS) to estimate equation (11). To address the second challenge, we add a set of flexible controls, such as time and quadratic time trends, on top of a set of fixed effects discussed earlier.

Since we want to understand whether firms' markups are affected by their wind output, our parameter of interest in equation (11) is θ^s . We expect it to take a negative value under *fixed prices* (Regime II). Still, we expect it to be not significantly different from zero under *market prices* (Regimes I and III). This finding would reflect that firms do not (do) take into account the price effects on their wind output when paid with *fixed* (*market*) prices.

Results. The results are shown in Table 2. In columns (1)-(3), we constrain the coefficient on the firm's markup over its total output to be equal to one. In all specifications, the coefficients on the opportunity cost of day-ahead sales, \hat{p}_2 , are positive as expected. The signs of the coefficients on the firm's markup over its wind output, $\left| \frac{w_{it}}{DR'_{it}} \right|$, confirm that wind has a significant price-depressing effect when paid with *fixed prices*. In contrast, and consistently with our predictions, wind output has a small and noisy price

⁴³Approximating the slope of residual demand is common in the existing literature; see also Wolak (2003); Fabra and Reguant (2014) among others. To avoid the flat region of the inverse residual demand curve occurring at a zero price, which makes our linear approximation poorly predict the local slopes, we truncate the residual demand to the minimum quantity that firms are willing to serve at zero price. We also explore alternative methods such as kernel smoothing around the market price (Reguant, 2014) and fitting linear splines with 10 knots to the residual demand curve. Our conclusions are similar regardless of the method of approximation we use.

⁴⁴Since we use the predicted spot price (\hat{p}_{2t}) based on the public information available to firms at day-ahead, the price term is exogenous.

effect when paid with *market prices*. Moreover, these coefficients are stable across specifications, reassuring robustness regardless of our flexible controls. In column (4), we allow the coefficient on the firm’s markup over its total output, $\left| \frac{q_{it}}{DR_{it}} \right|$, to vary. The estimated coefficient for the firm’s markup over its wind output during Regime II is still very similar. The sign of the coefficient for the firm’s total output markup is positive as expected,⁴⁵ given that greater output and a steeper residual demand enhance market power.⁴⁶

It would be misleading to compare the coefficients on the various variables, given that their means are very different. To get some orders of magnitude of the *forward contract effect*, one can take, for instance, the mean of a strategic firm’s hourly wind production during Regime II with *fixed prices*, 317.5 MWh, over the mean of the slope of its residual demand, 404.9 Euro/MWh. Using the estimates in column (1), for instance, an increase in wind output of ten percent over its mean would imply a price reduction of 1.2 Euro/MWh (approximately a 3.1 percent reduction over the average price) during Regime II.

IV.B Arbitrage across Markets

Since day-ahead prices were systematically higher than spot prices, fringe producers could gain by engaging in arbitrage when exposed to market prices. In particular, they could gain by overselling in the day-ahead market at high prices and buying back their excess supply at the lower spot price. However, differences between the day-ahead and the final commitments (which we refer to as *overselling*) could also be explained by non-strategic factors, such as wind or demand forecast errors. What distinguishes arbitrage from those non-strategic factors is that arbitrage should respond to price differences across markets, whereas those factors should be orthogonal to the price differences. Accordingly, to understand whether pricing rules affected arbitrage, we examine whether overselling responded to the predicted price differences across markets.

⁴⁵While the sign of the coefficient is as expected, we do not attempt to interpret the magnitude of the coefficient. The coefficient of $\frac{q_{it}}{DR_{it}}$ may be inflated as $\frac{q_{it}}{DR_{it}}$ is correlated with $\frac{w_{it}}{DR_{it}}$, with a correlation coefficient equal to 0.36.

⁴⁶The firms included in this analysis are vertically integrated. Hence, one could conjecture that they set prices to maximize the profits of the vertical chain. Table C.2 in Appendix B reports the results accounting for vertical integration. Note that we observe the day-ahead sales and purchases by firms from the same vertically integrated group, but we do not have information about the forward (sale or purchase) contracts they may have. Using these data, our main predictions remain valid. However, relative to the results in Table 2, the coefficients under the regimes with *market prices* (I and III) go up, with the former becoming slightly significant. This evidence is consistent with two hypotheses: firms were only maximizing their supply-side profits as market power is under-estimated when we consider firms’ net sales or they had forward contracts (which we do not observe), that muted the effect of vertical integration.

Table 2: The Forward Contract Effect

	2SLS			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Market Prices (RI) $\times \frac{w_{it}}{DR'_{it}}$	6.35 (5.03)	9.31 (6.28)	9.10 (6.10)	5.54 (5.47)
Fixed Prices (RII) $\times \frac{w_{it}}{DR'_{it}}$	-14.2 (3.03)	-14.5 (2.88)	-14.9 (3.02)	-14.3 (3.24)
Market Prices (RIII) $\times \frac{w_{it}}{DR'_{it}}$	1.72 (4.10)	0.049 (3.42)	0.60 (3.21)	5.69 (5.24)
Expected spot price (\hat{p}_{2t})	0.77 (0.057)	0.78 (0.062)	0.77 (0.062)	0.38 (0.15)
Markup term ($\frac{q_{it}}{DR'_{it}}$)				4.81 (1.25)
Linear Trends	N	Y	Y	Y
Quad. Trends	N	N	Y	Y
Observations	19,805	19,805	19,805	19,805

Notes: This table shows the estimation results of equation (11) using 2SLS. All regressions include unit, firm, and quarterly dummies. In columns (2)-(4), we add day-of-the-week dummies, hour-fixed effects, and quadratic time trends cumulatively. We constrain the coefficient for the markup for firms' total output to be one in columns (1) to (3), and we relax this by allowing the markup coefficient to vary in column (4). We limit hourly prices to a 5 Euro/MWh range relative to the market price and exclude the outliers (bids with market prices below the 1st percentile and above the 99th percentile). We instrument our markups with wind speed and precipitation, and each interacted with the three pricing scheme indicators. The standard errors are clustered at the plant level. See Table C.1 for alternative ways of clustering.

Empirical Approach. Following a DiD approach, we regress our measure of over-selling (i.e., the differences between the day-ahead and the final output commitments) on the expected price difference across markets. We interact this response with a dummy variable for each pricing regime. Using this approach, we limit the concern that other unobservable time-variant factors may also influence arbitrage through price differences, which would lead to an omitted variable bias. Our treatment group is wind producers, and our two possible control groups are (1) non-wind renewable producers that are not affected by the regulatory changes (i.e., solar, small hydro and cogeneration units), and (2) downstream electricity suppliers.

We split the sample into two sub-periods, each containing one regulatory change. The first sample ($d = 1$), which ranges from February 1, 2012, to February 1, 2014, contains the change from *market prices* to *fixed prices* that took place on February 1,

2013. The second sample ($d = 2$), which ranges from February 1, 2013, to January 31, 2015, contains the change from *fixed prices* to *market prices* that took place on June 22, 2014.

We run three separate OLS regressions, one for each sample $d = 1, 2$ and one for each control group $g =$ non-wind renewables, downstream suppliers. Note that for sample $d = 2$, we cannot use other renewables as the control group, given that they were also affected by the regulatory change. We estimate the following equation, for $d = 1, 2$,

$$\begin{aligned} \Delta \ln q_t = & \alpha + \beta_1 W I_t^d \Delta \hat{p}_t + \beta_2 W \Delta \hat{p}_t + \beta_3 W I_t^d + \beta_4 I_t^d \Delta \hat{p}_t + \beta_5 \Delta \hat{p}_t + \\ & \beta_6 W + \beta_7 I_t^d + \rho \mathbf{X}_t + \eta_t \end{aligned} \quad (12)$$

In equation above, I_t^1 is an indicator for *fixed prices* (Regime II)— it captures the switch from *market prices* to *fixed prices*. Similarly, I_t^2 is an indicator for *market prices* (Regime III)—it captures the switch from *fixed prices* to *market prices*. For both samples, W is an indicator for wind fringe producers. We include a set of control variables such as weather controls (daily solar radiation time and precipitation), the hourly demand forecast error, the hourly wind forecast error, week of sample fixed effects, and day-of-week fixed effects, all captured in \mathbf{X}_t . Standard errors are clustered at the week of sample.

Our coefficient of interest, β_1 , captures the change in the price response of arbitrage by wind producers relative to the control group. We expect the sign of this coefficient to be negative using sample 1, reflecting the fact that the switch from *market prices* to *fixed prices* should reduce the wind producers' incentives to engage in arbitrage. On the contrary, we expect the coefficient for β_1 to be positive using sample 2, reflecting the fact the switch from *fixed prices* to *market prices* should induce wind producers to engage in arbitrage again.

A Key Variable. To capture how fringe firms reacted to changes in the price differences across markets that they could forecast at the time of bidding, we construct the forecasted price premium ($\Delta \hat{p}_t$) as follows. First, we use two exogenous variables that were available to firms before bidding: demand and wind forecasts. Similar to how we compute the expected spot price in Section IV.A, we regress demand and wind forecasts, hourly dummies, and date dummies on the price premium.⁴⁷ We then use the regression coefficients to obtain the forecasted price premium at time t , $\Delta \hat{p}_t$. Using $\Delta \hat{p}_t$ rather

⁴⁷The estimating equation is $\Delta p_t = \alpha D_t^{fc} + \beta w_t^{fc} + X_t + Y_t + \epsilon_t$, where the two first regressors are the demand and wind forecasts. We also allow all the coefficients to vary across pricing regimes. The regressions have an R-squared ranging from 0.3 to 0.4.

than the actual price difference is important to rule out potential endogeneity concerns between arbitrage and price differences.

Parallel Trends. Before we move forward with our DiD estimation in equation (12), it is important to test if the parallel trends assumption holds. Consider first the control group made of renewables other than wind. These producers were subject to *fixed prices* under Regimes I and II, and were then exposed to *market prices* under Regime III. Hence, their incentives to arbitrage should be similar to those of wind producers during Regimes II and III. For this reason, one should observe parallel trends for wind vs. non-wind renewables during these regimes. The impact of the pricing scheme on arbitrage is captured by the difference in the price responses of wind vs. non-wind renewables during Regime I.

Consider now the control group made of the downstream electricity suppliers. Because they were not subject to price regulation, they should have incentives to engage in arbitrage in all periods. Hence, we expect downstream suppliers to arbitrage like wind producers under Regimes I and III. One should thus observe parallel trends for wind vs. downstream suppliers during those regimes. The impact of the pricing scheme on arbitrage is captured by the difference in the price responses of wind vs. downstream suppliers during Regime II.

We first document the response of each group’s arbitrage to the predicted price premium every quarter. We regress the forecasted price premium, $\Delta\hat{p}_t$, on the difference between the logs of the day-ahead and the final commitments of firms in group g (wind producers, non-wind renewable producers, and downstream suppliers), $\Delta\ln q_{tg}$. Our sample includes 13 quarters, from Q1 2012 to Q1 2015. We control for demand and wind forecast errors, denoted D_t^{er} and w_t^{er} , as these could give rise to differences between day-ahead and final commitments which are unrelated to arbitrage.⁴⁸ We also control for seasonality (i.e., using dummies for days-of-the-week and week of sample), for daily solar radiation time, daily precipitation, and temperature, all captured in \mathbf{X}_t . The estimating equation is

$$\Delta\ln q_{tg} = \alpha + \sum_{q=1}^{13} \theta_{qg} \Delta\hat{p}_t + \gamma D_t^{er} + \delta w_t^{er} + \rho \mathbf{X}_t + \eta_{tg} \quad (13)$$

where η_{tg} is the error term. Our coefficients of interest are θ_{qg} , which capture the arbitrage response by group g at quarter q to the predicted price differential. We cluster standard errors at week-of-sample.

⁴⁸Demand and wind forecast errors are computed by subtracting the hourly forecast and the observed values. The forecast values are publicly available to firms the day before.

Figure 2 plots the θ_{qq} coefficients from equation (13) for each quarter.⁴⁹ As expected, in panel (a), one can observe that during Regime II with *fixed prices* (Q1 2013 to Q2 2014), the price response of arbitrage by the non-wind renewable producers is similar to that of wind producers and not significantly different from zero. This is evidence that both groups were not engaged in arbitrage. Similarly, panel (b) shows that during Regime II (Q1 2013 to Q2 2014), the price response of the downstream suppliers' arbitrage is positive and very similar to that of the wind producers during Regimes I and III with *market prices* (2012 and Q3 2014 onward). This shows that both groups engaged in arbitrage. In sum, Figure 2 serves as graphical evidence of the parallel trend between wind and each of the control groups during the relevant periods. Table C.3 in the Appendix, shows three parallel trend tests: (1) for sample $d = 1$, during Regime I, the wind producers and the downstream suppliers behave similarly in response to the predicted price differential (p-value of 0.028); (2) for sample $d = 1$, during Regime II, wind and non-wind renewables behave similarly (p-value of 0.486); (3) for sample $d = 2$, during Regime III, wind and downstream suppliers behave similarly (p-value of 0.127).⁵⁰

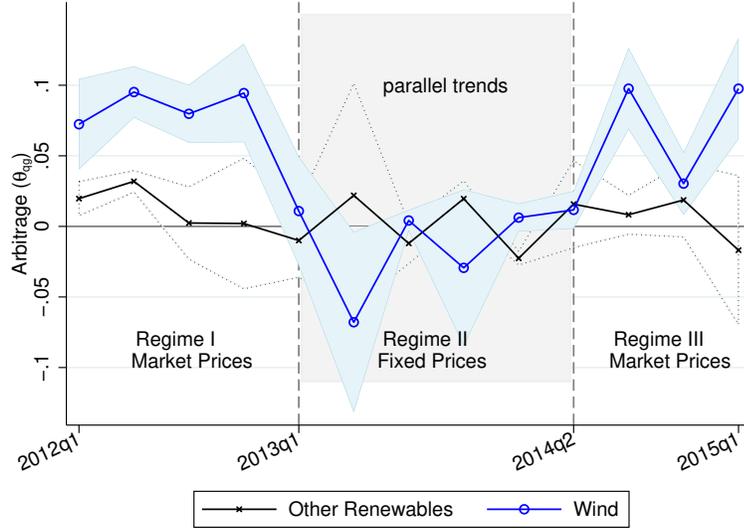
Results. We report the DiD results (β_1 coefficients from equation (12)) in Table 3. The impact of the switch from *market prices* (Regime I) to *fixed prices* (Regime II) is shown in columns (1) and (2), depending on whether we use non-wind renewables or downstream electricity suppliers as the control group, respectively. In both cases, the negative coefficients show that this switch reduced the arbitrage of wind producers relative to both control groups and by a similar magnitude. In contrast, the impact of the switch from *fixed prices* (Regime II) to *market prices* (Regime III), shown in column (3), was positive, thus indicating that this switch brought wind fringe producers back to arbitrage.⁵¹ Overall, these results are all consistent with our theoretical predictions. Having confirmed the empirical relevance of the *forward contract* and the *arbitrage* effects, we next provide further evidence showing that the resulting price differences across markets responded to changes in the shares of renewables output across firms, as predicted by the model.

⁴⁹For this graphical evidence, we exclude hours when the predicted price differential gives a poor prediction for the observed price differential (i.e., when the difference between predicted and observed price differential is above the 50th percentile). Figure B.2 in Appendix B shows that, in some hours, the predicted price differential departs substantially from the observed one, probably due to some unobservables not included in our estimating equation.

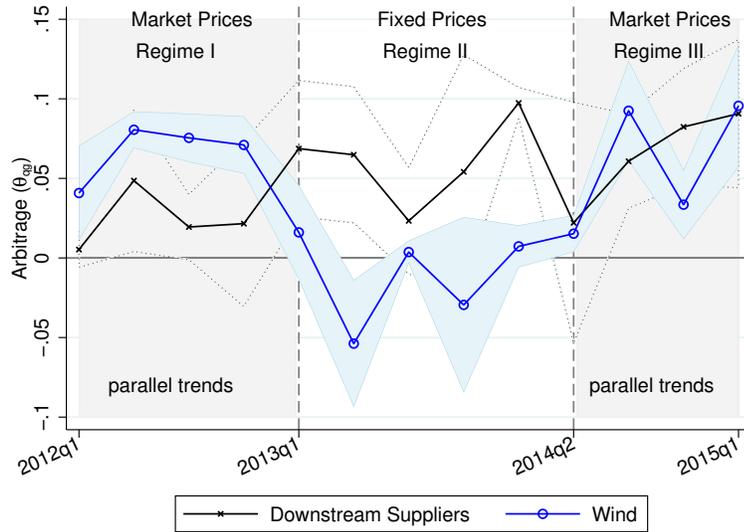
⁵⁰The complete results with the overselling response to the price premium (and its corresponding p-values) are reported in Appendix B, Table C.3.

⁵¹As mentioned earlier, during Regime III, all renewables were exposed to market prices, hence we expect to see their price responses are not very different from that of wind. Here, we do not report the effect of the move from Regime II to III, as the other renewables were also affected by it. The treatment effect is also positive but smaller than that in column (3). See Appendix B, Table C.3.

Figure 2: Arbitrage Trends by the Fringe (Wind, Non-Wind Renewables, and Downstream Suppliers)



(a) Non-Wind Renewables



(b) Downstream Suppliers

Notes: This figure plots the coefficients of the OLS regression in equation (13) for (a) wind vs. other non-wind renewable producers and (b) wind vs. downstream suppliers. It captures the response of overselling to the predicted price differential. Positive numbers suggest that overselling was increasing in the predicted price differential. A zero coefficient shows no attempt to arbitrage. The shaded areas show the parallel trends: during Regime II for (a), and during Regimes I and III for (b). The sample includes hours from January 1, 2012, to March 31, 2015, to ensure a similar number of observations in each quarter. We exclude hours when the predicted price differential is poorly predicted.

Table 3: Impacts of Changing the Pricing Schemes on Overselling by Wind

	Non-wind renewables		Downstream suppliers	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	
$\Delta\hat{p} \times \text{Wind} \times \text{Fixed Prices (RII)}$	-0.059 (0.0053)	-0.069 (0.011)		
$\Delta\hat{p} \times \text{Wind} \times \text{Market Prices (RIII)}$			0.035 (0.013)	
Observations	41,080	41,080	34,194	

Notes: This table shows the β_1 coefficients from equation (12). Each column is a different regression using the log of overselling as the dependent variable. Non-wind renewables is the control group in column (1), and downstream suppliers is the control group in columns (2)-(3). Columns (1) and (2) use sample $d = 1$ from 1 February 2012 to 1 February 2014, with the Regime II indicator equal to one for days after 1 February 2013, while column (3) uses the sample from 1 February 2013 to 31 January 2015, with the Regime III equal to one for days after 22 June 2014. All regressions include seasonality controls, hour-of-day, and week-fixed effects. Under Regime III, non-wind renewables are also affected by the regulation. Hence, we prefer not to use it as a control group in our analysis during Regime III. The standard errors are clustered at the week-of-sample.

IV.C Price Differences across Markets

Empirical Approach. Our model predicts that price differences across markets respond differently to changes in the wind output shares depending on whether wind producers are paid with *fixed prices* or with *market prices*. To test this prediction, we use 2SLS and estimate the following empirical equation for our second stage:

$$\Delta p_t = \alpha + \sum_{s=1}^2 \beta_1^s I_t + \beta_2 \frac{w_{dt}}{W_t} + \sum_{s=1}^2 \beta_3^s I_t \frac{w_{dt}}{W_t} + \alpha_1 D\hat{R}'_{1t} + \alpha_2 D\hat{R}'_{2t} + \gamma \mathbf{X}_t + \epsilon_t \quad (14)$$

where Δp_t is the price premium at time t ; I_t takes two values (1 for Regime I, 2 for Regime III, and therefore 0 for Regime II serves as the reference point); the wind share w_{dt}/W_t captures the wind share of the strategic firms, and it is computed as the ratio between the strategic firms' wind output over total wind output; $D\hat{R}'_{1t}$ and $D\hat{R}'_{2t}$ capture the (instrumented) slopes of the residual demands faced by the strategic firms in the day-ahead and intraday markets, respectively. We follow a similar approach as in Section IV.A because the slopes of the residual demands are potentially endogenous. Therefore, in our first stage regression we instrument these two slopes (DR'_1 and DR'_2) with daily and hourly weather variables (daily average, minimum, and maximum temperature and

average temperature interacted with hourly dummies).⁵² \mathbf{X}_t is a set of controls, such as demand forecasts,⁵³ wind forecasts, and dummy variables (i.e., hourly dummies, peak-hour dummies, weekend dummies); last, ϵ_t is the error term. We use bootstrap standard errors with 200 replications.

The coefficient β_1 compares how the price differences across markets differed depending on the pricing scheme in place. Coefficients β_2 and β_3 capture the impacts of changes in the wind shares on the price difference. Our theoretical model predicts that an increase in the strategic firms’ wind share should reduce the price differential across markets when renewables are paid with *fixed prices*, but it should increase the price differential when exposed to *market prices*. Regarding the other coefficients, we expect that all the variables that enhance market power—a higher demand and a steeper (flatter) demand at day-ahead (spot)—also enlarge the price differences across markets.

Results. Table 4 reports our main coefficients of interest: β_2 , β_3^1 , and β_3^2 from equation (14). The remaining coefficients are all broadly consistent with our theoretical predictions.⁵⁴ We can see that the price difference is smaller when the wind share of the strategic firms increases (see coefficients of $\frac{w_{dt}}{W_t}$ in all columns). Also, price differences are higher under the regimes with *market prices* relative to the *fixed prices* regime when the wind share of the strategic firms increases, as reflected by the positive coefficients of Regime I $\times \frac{w_{dt}}{W_t}$ and Regime III $\times \frac{w_{dt}}{W_t}$ in all columns. This evidence is consistent with the predictions of the model, giving further support to the relevance of the *forward contract effect* under *fixed prices* (which is strengthened as w_{dt} increases) and the *arbitrage effect* under *market prices* (which is weakened as w_{dt} increases).

IV.D Market Power in the Day-Ahead Market

Our results in Section IV.A showed that firms had weaker incentives to increase day-ahead prices when their renewable output was paid at *fixed prices*. However, this alone does not allow us to conclude that reducing firms’ price exposure mitigated market power in the day-ahead market, thus benefiting consumers. As our previous results indicate, the pricing schemes might have also affected firms’ residual demands through the impacts

⁵²We compute the aggregate hourly residual demand faced by the strategic firms in the day ahead and the intraday markets and their slopes using the same approach as discussed in footnote 43.

⁵³The demand forecast is predetermined before the day-ahead market opens. It is therefore exogenous.

⁵⁴The complete list of coefficients is in Appendix B, Table C.4. The sign of the other coefficients, such as those on total demand and the slopes of the residual demands in the day ahead and in the intraday markets are respectively positive, negative, and positive, as expected. Similar results are obtained if we instead define the market share variable as a ratio between the strategic firms’ wind output and the fringe firms’ wind output (w_{dt}/w_{ft}).

Table 4: The Impact of Pricing Schemes on Price Differences across Markets

	2SLS			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Dominant Wind Share ($\frac{w_{dt}}{W_t}$)	-0.59 (0.18)	-0.50 (0.17)	-0.59 (0.18)	-0.50 (0.18)
Market Prices (RI) $\times \frac{w_{dt}}{W_t}$	0.44 (0.21)	0.46 (0.19)	0.44 (0.21)	0.46 (0.21)
Fixed Prices (RII) $\times \frac{w_{dt}}{W_t}$	0.46 (0.18)	0.41 (0.17)	0.46 (0.16)	0.41 (0.17)
Weekend FE	N	N	Y	Y
Peak Hour FE	N	Y	N	Y
Observations	25334	25334	25334	25334

Notes: This table shows only our coefficients of interest: β_2 and β_3 from equation (14). The complete list of coefficients is in Appendix B, Table C.4. Fixed Prices period (RII) is the reference period. We use bootstrap standard errors with 200 replications.

on arbitrage across markets. Therefore, taking into account the changes in the residual demands, in this section, we compute and compare firms’ markups across pricing regimes to evaluate the overall impact of the pricing schemes on competition in the day-ahead market.

Using the first-order condition of profit maximization —represented by equations (10) in the theory analysis and (11) in the empirical analysis— we can express markups in the day-ahead market as

$$\frac{p_{1t} - \hat{p}_{2t}}{p_{1t}} = \left| \frac{\partial DR_{i1t}}{\partial p_{1t}} \right|^{-1} \frac{q_{i1t} - I_t w_{i1}}{p_{1t}} \quad (15)$$

where leveraging on the structural estimates obtained in Section IV.A, we set $I_t = 1$ under Regime II (*fixed prices*) and $I_t = 0$ under Regimes I and III (*market prices*).

Results. The first and third rows of Table 5 report firms’ average markups in the day-ahead market (using either the simple average or the demand-weighted average). Figure 3 shows their distribution. Markups are always relatively lower under *fixed prices*: the average markup during Regime II was 6.3%, while it was 8.3% and 10.7% under Regimes I and III regimes, respectively. A two-sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test rejects at 1% significance level the hypothesis that the markup distributions are the same across pricing regimes. A similar conclusion applies when comparing the markups of each strategic firm

individually for off-peak versus on-peak hours or more windy or less windy hours.⁵⁵ This evidence is also consistent with the slopes of the residual demands being relatively larger under *fixed prices*, thus indicating that the weaker incentives to exercise market power induced firms to submit flatter supply functions (see the last row of Table 5). This effect seems to have played a stronger role than the absence of significant arbitrage.

Table 5: Average markups across pricing regimes

	Regime I		Regime II		Regime III	
	Market Prices		Fixed Prices		Market Prices	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Markups (in %) – Simple average						
Day-Ahead (structural)	8.3	(3.3)	6.3	(3.3)	10.7	(3.7)
Overall (engineering)	8.6	(23.1)	8.1	(29.4)	29.7	(14.0)
Markups (in %) – Demand weighted average						
Day-Ahead (structural)	8.3	(3.2)	6.4	(3.3)	10.7	(3.6)
Overall (engineering)	10.0	(22.8)	9.2	(29.6)	30.4	(13.5)
Slope of day-ahead residual						
demand (in MWh/euros)	524.2	(78.2)	553.6	(120.7)	418.2	(73.0)

Notes: It reports the mean and standard deviation of markups and slopes of the day-ahead residual demand using the sample from February 2012 to February 2015. For the markups: day-ahead markups are computed using Equation (15), and overall markups are computed using marginal bids - marginal cost. It only includes marginal bids around a 5 Euro/MWh range and bids with prices above 25 Euro/MWh. A similar table by three strategic firms is in Table C.5 in Appendix B.

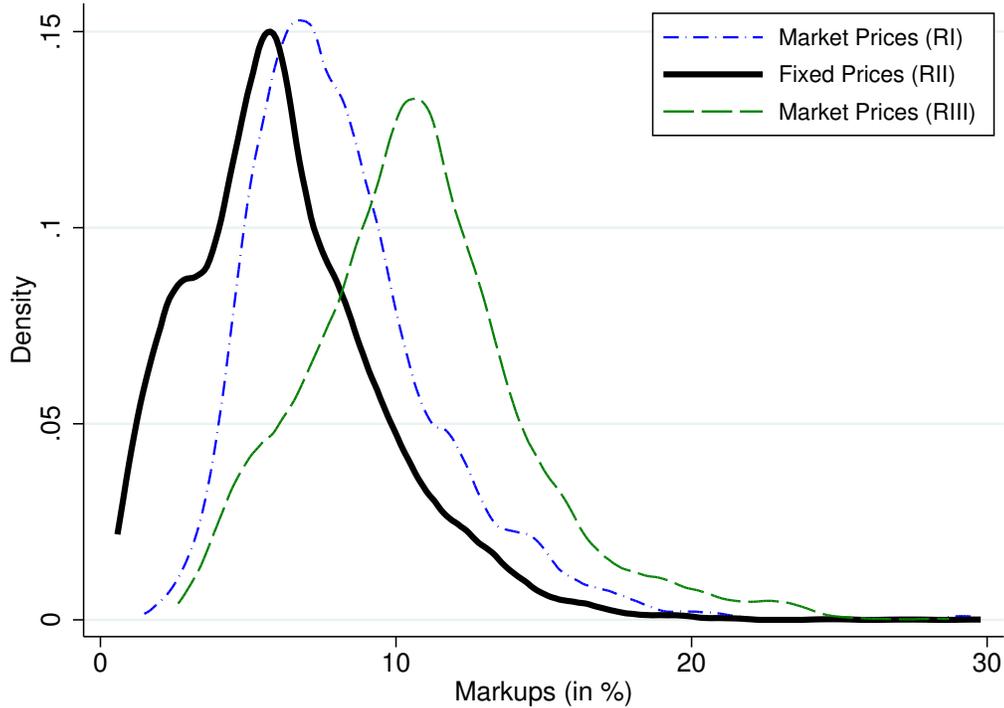
These results are a lower bound on the degree of market power actually exercised by firms, given that the expected spot market price (which we have used as the shadow cost of day-ahead sales) might also include a markup over the firm’s marginal costs. To compute firms’ markups over their actual marginal costs, we rely on engineering estimates for marginal costs. This approach, which is common in the literature,⁵⁶ leads to noisier markups due to potential measurement errors in the marginal cost estimates.⁵⁷ Nonetheless, as shown in Table 5, the results are consistent with our main result; namely, market power (as measured by the price-cost markups) was weaker when renewables were paid with *fixed prices*. Also, note that the price-cost markups are larger on average than the markups in the day-ahead market, given that the expected spot market price includes a markup over marginal costs.

⁵⁵See Figures B.3 and B.4 in Appendix B.

⁵⁶For example, see Borenstein, Bushnell and Wolak (2002), Fabra and Toro (2005), or Fabra and Reguant (2014), among others.

⁵⁷For instance, we see some negative markups which could be explained by firms buying coal and gas through long-term bilateral contracts at prices below the spot market price, which we use to compute our marginal cost estimates.

Figure 3: Distribution of day-ahead markups



Notes: This figure plots the distributions of day-ahead markups for all firms by pricing regimes for hours with prices above 25 Euro/MWh. Plots by firms (Figure B.3) in Appendix B show a similar pattern. To absorb some seasonal variation in the markups, Figure B.4 by wind quartiles in Appendix B suggests that markups are indeed lower during Regime II.

V Conclusions

In this paper, we have analyzed the extent to which renewable energies depress electricity market prices and how that depends on their degree of price exposure, taking into account two countervailing incentives. On the one hand, in line with [Allaz and Vila \(1993\)](#), reducing renewables price exposure mitigates firms' incentives to increase prices (*forward contract effect*). On the other hand, if renewables are insulated from price changes, firms face weaker incentives to arbitrage price differences, which enhances the strategic producers' market power (*arbitrage effect*).

This trade-off is particularly relevant for a key policy debate in electricity markets; namely, how to pay for renewables. Since compliance with environmental targets requires massive investments in renewables, it is paramount to understand how alternative renewable pricing schemes impact market prices and efficiency. One of the key messages of the paper is that understanding the impact of renewable policy requires an analysis of the interaction between conventional and renewable generation technologies, and not just of

renewables alone. The interplay between the two very much depends on the ownership structure, which drives the market outcomes and efficiency results of the paper.

We have used the Spanish electricity market as a laboratory to explore the trade-off between the *forward contract* and the *arbitrage* effects. Our empirical analysis confirms that the strategic producers attempted to exercise market power by withholding output in the day-ahead market. When exposed to *market prices*, independent wind producers made the withholding strategy more costly by overselling their idle capacity in the day-ahead market to arbitrage price differences across markets. Instead, paying renewables according to *fixed prices* reduced arbitrage and mitigated the dominant producers' incentives to withhold output in the first place. The latter effect dominated, giving rise to relatively lower markups in the day-ahead market when renewables were not exposed to *market prices*. This was particularly important for consumers, allowing them to pay lower electricity prices.

There are reasons to expect that market power concerns in electricity markets will diminish over time (as demand response and storage facilities become more widespread). However, there are also compelling reasons to remain vigilant (Fabra and Llobet, 2021), and the expansion of renewable energies will make it increasingly important to understand how renewables pricing schemes affect market performance.⁵⁸ The long-run effects of such differences on investment decisions are left for future research.

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⁵⁸Furthermore, there might be concerns regarding the market power impact of storage depending on who owns and operates the storage facilities (Andrés-Cerezo and Fabra, 2020).

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