

ENERGY FUTURES - EMERGING PATHWAYS IN AN UNCERTAIN WORLD?

International conference by the Leibniz Research Alliance on Energy Transitions

May 6th - 8th 2020

WZB Berlin Social Science Center

Application requirements

Please submit your 250-word abstracts to the session organizer(s) by December 15th, 2019. All abstracts must include a title, your name, institutional affiliation, and contact information.

Session title

Conflicts over Energy Futures and Common-sense Imaginations of the Good Life.

Session chair(s)

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Abstract

Conflicts over energy futures are inevitably always conflicts over different, incompatible notions of the common good. These conflicts, first of all, influence the speed and character of energy transitions. Furthermore, they also have an impact on society's political culture, i.e. on ideas of democracy and related expectations, norms, and values. Conversely, notions of the common good predefine the framework within which energy conflicts are dealt with. In other words: conflicts over energy futures are always intertwined with conflicts over imaginations of the good life.

The common sense is the central terrain on which these struggles for hegemony are conducted. The concept of 'common sense' comprises convictions, norms, values, and role models that are considered normal and are lived as a matter of course. The common sense provides practical guidance that is alleged to stem directly from life experience. It is a form of everyday thinking which offers us frameworks of meaning with which to make sense of the world. Unquestioned hegemonic assumptions of the common sense shape both professional action (in politics, economy, education, culture etc.) as well as everyday practices. As a consequence, dominant policies often correspond with the everyday orientations of many people. But, of course, strategies from business and politics can also clash with everyday orientation, especially in times of rapid change.

The success of transformation efforts depends largely on the extent to which they tie in with the common sense. In this context, it should be borne in mind that the common sense is hybrid, fragmented, and contested. Even if the common sense is based on experiences and traditions – and thus has a conservative tendency with depoliticizing effects – it is subject to permanent change. It is constantly modified and adapted to changing social conditions. In the struggle for hegemony, individuals and collectives on the one hand orient themselves by the dominant common sense and try to "normalize" themselves. On the other hand, there are always individual and collective counter-hegemonic practices that aim to (re-)politicize the status quo.

Submissions for presentations on the following issues are welcomed:

- Theoretical conceptualizations of the common sense (by Clifford Geertz, Antonio Gramsci, Stuart Hall, Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann etc.) and their potential for analyzing conflicts over energy futures
- Empirical studies on the relevance of common-sense imaginations (of the good life) in conflicts over energy futures

- The relation between professional action (by business and politics) and everyday imaginations of the good life in conflicts over energy futures
- Phenomena of uneasiness with the hegemonic common sense and counter-hegemonic practices in conflicts over energy futures
- The common-sense imaginations (of the good life) of different actors (and their sources of inspiration) in conflicts over energy futures