

## **Paper proposal**

SESSION 21: Energy, Society and Culture – (Sustainable) Energy Transformations as Transformations of Social Order

STS Conference Graz 2015, "Critical Issues in Science, Technology and Society Studies"

### **Titel:**

**EnergyCultures, sustainability, and epistemic governance – a framework**

### **Abstract**

This paper aims to contribute to the debate about how the relationship between energy and society needs to be reimaged in order to aid transformations towards greater sustainability. The main focus is on developing a framework for understanding energy, energy systems, and energy use as pivotal elements of socio-material order. At the centre of this framework, it suggests a conceptual repertoire for analysing 'energy cultures'. This notion is elaborated in relation to and as extension of promising discourses analysing energy transformations as questions of *sociotechnical* change. It is argued that a cultural perspective is most capable to develop and to integrate narratives about the complex and contested overlaps between energy and society.

On this basis, the discussion enquires how energy cultures could become more sustainable and the possibilities to govern such a process. At the beginning of this discussion stands another challenge that is implied by the perspective on energy cultures: If one adopts energy cultures as a novel idiom to accept and to understand the complex entanglements between energy and society, we also require new repertoires to envision alternative energy cultures and to negotiate how they could be reached. Governance is always based on particular bodies of knowledge and particular practices of knowledge creation. Governing shifting energy cultures will, therefore, also be knowledge intensive. In particular, the social sciences could play an important role in order to make energy cultures visible, to suggest alternative energy cultures and to facilitate societal debate about their respective value and potential strategies to get there.

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