

Abstract Call for Papers

STS Conference „Critical Issues in Science and Technology Studies“

Special Session 2: Energy Systems in Transition – Strategies of Incumbent Actors

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The Leading German Energy Providers and the Transformation of the German Energy System

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In my talk I will analyze the role of the big four German power companies (E.ON AG, RWE AG, EnBW AG, and Vattenfall AB) for the German energy transition. Since they are powerful actors they play an important role for the transformation of the system which so far has not been sufficiently researched from a sociological perspective. I will provide a comparing reconstruction of the actions of the companies in the time period from 1998 to 2013 based on a large-scale content analysis applying concepts from organizational sociology. The focus of the analysis will be on their investment practices, their overall business models and their external communication. These actions will be presented alongside with the most important changes in the political, economical and societal environment of the companies to give answers to their capability to adapt to a changing environment as well as their influences on the transformation process – which is important since incumbent players represent a potential obstacle towards a systems transition. Finally I seek to answer whether there are differences or similarities between the actions of the companies and how these can be explained.