

Round Table Discussion



German Committee
Future Earth

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As contribution to
futureearth
research for global sustainability

„Integrative social-science concepts to analyze social innovations in energy policy”

9th / 10th March 2017
in Bonn, Germany (Wissenschaftszentrum)

I Schedule

Thursday, 9th March

13:00 – 13:45	Welcome; Introduction round of participants
13:45 – 14:15	Presentation of background and goals of the round table discussion
14:15 – 15:15	Statements of all participants relating to question (1)
15:15 – 15:45	<i>Coffee break</i>
15:45 – 16:45	Statements of all participants relating to question (2)
16:45 – 17:45	Statements of all participants relating to question (3)
17:45 – 18:30	General discussion – definition of two questions taken to the next day
19:30	<i>Dinner</i>

Friday, 10th March

9:00 – 9:15	Lessons Learnt
9:15 – 10:00	In-depth group discussion: question of the day #1
10:00 – 10:45	In-depth group discussion: question of the day #2
10:45 – 11:15	<i>Coffee break</i>
11:15 – 11:45	Reports from group discussions
11:45 – 12:45	Final round: how to go forward to a priority program
12:45 – 13:00	<i>Farewell</i>

II Questions to participants

Please prepare short statements to each of the following three questions. Your statements can build upon the working brief that has been brought to the attention of all participants.

- (1) What are (two to three) good examples of social innovations in the energy domain?
- (2) Which methods do you use/do you find fruitful to assess the topic?
- (3) What are – from your perspective – the main characteristics of a social innovation?

III Working brief

„Integrative social-science concepts to analyze social innovations in energy policy“

November 2016

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Daniel Lang, Karen Pittel, Katrin Rehdanz, Ortwin Renn

On March 9-10, 2017, a DFG round table discussion in Berlin is planned to elicit fruitful research areas and methods relating to social science concepts aiming at describing and understanding social innovation in the energy domain.

Social innovation – in the view taken as the common understanding for the round table discussion – is an innovation striving for solving a social goal and driven by a collective action. It changes current social practice, and can include technical drivers, or drives technology development. These changes can be either compatible with current social institutions and norms, or be more radical.

The **round table discussion will focus** on the following phenomena:

- Social energy innovations implemented through **collective actions** of individuals, organizations or institutions.
- The **nexus of electricity/heating/mobility**, and the respective interactions and synergies.
- The **formation and spreading** of new social practices. What are the mechanisms that can be found in the context of the investigated examples? What are fostering factors? Does an innovation change its character during the process of diffusion, resp. imitation, and if so, how can this be evaluated? Does an innovation reach all social milieus in society, and how?
- The evaluation of the **effects and consequences of the innovation** judged on the three dimensions of sustainability or the SDGs. Of special interest are the interactions between the effects.
- Analyses will be carried through **from multiple perspectives**: individual, technological, on different spatial scales, societal, cultural, justice driven, economically, among others.
- Analyses include a systematic **investigation of the goal conflicts** arising, e.g. between the ecological, social and the economic dimensions.
- The analyses will not only allow for a better understanding of the mechanisms of social innovations in general, but will also aim at identifying leverage points for a more targeted fostering of new sustainable practices in the energy domain.

Examples of social innovations in the energy domain should bridge two or more domains in the nexus mentioned above, and comprise prosuming (decentralization of the energy system, empowerment of consumers), citizens' cooperatives and other risk distributing approaches, sharing of electricity or heat production and consumption, open innovation, digitalization, swarm or virtual power plants, among others.

The full set of social-science and system **methods** are believed to be fruitful to investigate social innovation. Among them are expert interviews to investigate leverage points or key persons that

accelerate social innovations, comparative case analysis, institutional analysis, surveys, psychological experiments, network analyses, and agent based or system dynamics modelling, especially to describe and understand the micro-macro linkages.