

International Workshop on Incumbent-Challenger Interactions in Energy Transitions

(September 22nd to 23rd 2014, Stuttgart/Germany)

This workshop brings together some outstanding international scholars working conceptually and empirically on energy transitions in an effort to advance our knowledge on these subjects and eventually publish a set of papers.

How do energy transitions proceed? This is the key research question guiding the collection of papers. The energy system is under stress. Successive waves of anti-nuclear protests, discussions about the environmental impact of fossil fuel, especially coal fired power plants, the climate change discourse, the liberalization of the electricity sector and the growth of new technologies (e.g. new renewables) have challenged the dominant electricity regime. Many previous papers in the tradition of innovation studies have studied the emergence and diffusion of green niche-innovations and ‘challenger actors’ (e.g. new entrants, outsiders, fringe actors). This workshop aims to broaden the debate by focusing on interactions between niche-innovations and existing regimes (Rip, Kemp, Schot, Geels), between challengers and incumbent actors (Fligstein and McAdam). These interactions can be studied from two angles:

1) from the perspective of regimes or incumbents. In spite of the aforementioned pressures the incumbent regime has proved to be surprisingly resilient. Analysis of the incumbent actors and their strategies towards external pressures and challengers has been underrepresented in the discussion so far. The patterns and outcome of these struggles between incumbents and challengers will influence the fate of transitions.

2) from the perspective of niche-innovations and challengers. How do these innovations and actors struggle against regimes, what tactics do they use, how effective are they in overthrowing or changing regimes? Smith (2007) suggested that certain characteristics of niche-innovations can be ‘translated’ and incorporated in existing regimes. Smith and Raven (2012) suggested that niche-innovations need to be ‘empowered’ in order to diffuse more widely, which can either aim at ‘fit and conform’ or ‘stretch and transform’ of existing regimes (the latter case would involve political struggles to adjust policies and selection environments to suit the needs of niche-innovations). The workshop aims to explore such issues further, both conceptually and empirically.

Funding:

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“International Workshop on Incumbent-Challenger-Interactions in Energy Transitions” - Program

Monday, September 22nd

09:30-09:45 Welcome/Introduction (*Gerhard Fuchs*)

09:45-12:00 Incumbent-Challenger Interactions – Comparative Aspects

Chair: Gerhard Fuchs

09:45-10:30 Catherine Mitchell, University of Exeter: **“Ideas, institutions and interests: governance and disruptive energy system change”**

10:30-11:15 Volkmar Lauber, University of Salzburg: **“The comparative politics of incumbent-challenger relations. Comparing constellations in Germany and at the EU level”**

11:15 – 12:00 Frank W. Geels et al., University of Manchester: **„Unleashing new entrants versus working with incumbents: A comparative multi-level analysis of the German and UK energy transitions“**

12:00-13:00 Lunch

13:00-14:30 Incumbent-Challenger Interactions and New Technologies I: Solar Technology

Chair: Frank Geels

13:00-13:45 David Hess, Vanderbilt University: **“Landscape, fields, and cultural change: Incumbent-challenger relations and distributed solar energy in the United States”**

13:45-14:30 James Meadowcroft, Carleton University: **“Framing the sun: niche-regime interactions around solar energy in Canada”**

14:30-15:00 Coffee Break

15:00-16:30 Incumbent-Challenger Interactions and New Technologies II

Chair: Gerhard Fuchs

15:00-15:45 Magda Smink, Marco Hekkert, Utrecht University: **“System-building for biomethane: the incumbents’ offensive vs. pioneers’ muddling-through”**

15:45-16:30 Michael LaBelle, European University, Budapest: **“Empowered niches or failed national innovation environments? A case study of Poland’s effort to innovate in shale gas technologies”**

16:30-17:15 Incumbent-Challenger Interactions in Sectoral Transitions

Chair: Frank Geels

16:30-17:15 Paul Nieuwenhuis, Peter Wells, Cardiff University: **“Incumbents and new entrants and the automotive industry socio-technical regime: an historical perspective”**

17:15-18:00 Discussion

Moderation: Frank Geels

19:00 Dinner at “Alte Kanzlei”, Schillerplatz 5A

Tuesday, September 23rd

09:00-10:30 Space and Incumbent-Challenger Interactions

Chair: Frank Geels

09:00 – 09:45 Miranda Schreurs, Dörte Ohlhorst, Free University of Berlin: **“The role of municipalities, regions and subnational states –laboratories, selection environments or even challengers in the multi level governance system?”**

09:45 - 10:30 Gerhard Fuchs, Nele Hinderer, University of Stuttgart: **“Energy Transitions and institutional development – local energy initiatives in Germany”**

10:30-11:00 Coffee Break

11:00-12:30 Incumbents and System Transformation

Chair: Gerhard Fuchs

11:00 – 11:45 Geert Verbong, Pim van Berlo, University of Technology, Eindhoven: **“The energy transition from an incumbent’s perspective. The case of the Netherlands”**

11:45 – 12:30 Philip Johnstone, Andrew Stirling, SPRU Sussex: **“Exploring key dimensions of nuclear incumbency: the contrasting cases of Germany’s phase-out and the UK’s enthusiastic renewal”**

12:30-13:30 Lunch

13:30-14:30 Final Discussion

Moderation: Frank Geels