

Call for Papers

The governance of sustainability energy transitions in the Global South

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The notion of purposive ‘energy transitions’ towards a more sustainable state of energy systems has started to shape global debates about the future of energy (Arimah & Ebohon 2000; Bashmakov 2007; Verbong & Geels 2007; Verbong & Loorbach 2012; Silver & Marvin 2016; Stokes & Breetz 2018). Originally coined by modellers thinking about broader systemic changes around energy (Naill 1977), the concept ‘energy transition’ has increasingly gained relevance in contexts of the Global South. It was applied to African contexts, for example, as early as 1983 (World Bank et al. 1983).

Increasingly, there is a realisation that Sustainability Energy Transitions (SET) will be required to deliver the Sustainable Development Goal 7 (Providing Sustainable Energy for All) while including every country in a global effort to contain carbon emissions. However, to date, analyses of energy transition lack both detail and nuance to explain how to implement SETs in contexts of the Global South.

One clear limitation is the lack of empirical analyses of SETs. In Africa, for example, the literature on SETs has largely focused on South Africa, the main energy consumer in the region (e.g. Baker et al. 2014; Swilling et al. 2016; McEwan 2017). The South African experience, however, is not something that can easily be exported to other countries in the region. Moreover the existing literature focuses on making prescriptive assessments without properly analysing the specificities of these contexts. Empirical analyses are often limited to sketches of the potential for renewable energy and assume a lack of access to finance for investments without fully assessing the complexities of energy governance in each context (World Bank et al. 1983; Simelane & Abdel-Rahman 2011; Delina 2018). There is less attention to the multiple roles that actors on the ground can play to foster SET in multiple African locations (but see, for example Bawakyillenuo et al. 2018).

Moreover, the governance of SETs is intrinsically linked to questions of resource sovereignty and resource conflicts. The energy justice questions raised by the SETs in the global south cannot be adequately addressed with the conceptual devices that dominate current SET literature (see Jenkins et al. 2018). For the one billion people who lack access to electricity and the three billion people who lack access to clean fuels, SETs may involve very different issues from those debated by the majority of SET scholars. New ways of understanding SETs through cooking technologies, solar home systems or electrification strategies emerge as the new frontier for delivering SETs globally (see for example Sehjpal et al. 2014).

Is there space for a perspective on SETs developed from within the experiences and concerns of people in the global south? In analogy to the caution that is due when applying the general notion of “sustainability transitions” to contexts of the global south (Wieczorek 2018) can old heterodoxies about SETs be merged with new concepts, or should SETs in the global south be built on an entirely different vocabulary of transition?

We are particularly interested on developing an African perspective on SETs, because of the need to make visible lesser-known perspectives from this continent. However, such perspective can only emerge in dialogue with other experiences of SETs. For example, other regions of the Global South

share interconnected histories of imperial and colonial domination that shape contemporary practices of resource extraction and energy use (see for example Edomah et al. 2016; Power et al. 2016). Finally, we are also interested on how localised stories of SETs interact with the broader apparatus of international development. How do donor agencies shape SETs? To what extent are local concerns about SETs reflected on international conceptualisations of sustainability and justice, in formulations as different as ILO's definition of "just transitions" or UNEP's vision of a "green economy"?

In this workshop we seek to foster a dialogue between interdisciplinary researchers, whether they are looking to develop policy-oriented research on SETs or generate critical perspectives from the social sciences. The overall objective is bringing together the next generations of scholars studying the governance of SETs in the Global South. The location of the workshop in the Merian Institute for Advanced Studies in Africa (MIASA) on the University of Ghana's Campus in Accra is intended to facilitate the participation of African scholars, but the call is open to researchers whose work is relevant to any Global South context.

We seek papers that engage with questions such as:

- What is meant by "Sustainable Energy Transitions" in different Global South contexts? Are there alternatives to the term "Energy Transition" that reflect specific local perspectives?
- Is the concept of "energy systems" relevant in contexts of the Global South? Are there alternative formulations of the idea of energy systems emerging from within different contexts?
- How do international development agendas shape SETs?
- What institutional innovations and what traditions of institutional work and social change could inform strategies for SETs?
- What could post-colonial/post-independence theories contribute to a comprehensive understanding of energy transitions?
- What sources of local knowledge and alternative epistemologies could be employed to promote truly emancipatory transformation of energy systems?

The workshop will take place on **September 16/17, 2019 at the Merian Institute for Advanced Studies in Africa (MIASA)** on the University of Ghana's Campus, Accra. Workshop and travel costs of invited speakers will be covered by the MIASA project (<http://www.mias-africa.org/>). Please send a 250 word abstract and a 250 word motivation statement to: ifg4@frias.uni-freiburg.de before April 15, 2019.

We are particularly interested in scholars interested in developing a long-term collaboration with MIASA. The Workshop will take place in conjunction with MIASA's programme of visiting fellows. After the workshop, participants will be invited to apply for a scholarship and possibly become part of the interdisciplinary fellows group that will collaborate over summer 2020 on the University of Ghana's Legon Campus in Accra.

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