P241 / Narratives and temporalities in energy policy

Topic : Discourses, Ideas, and Narratives

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GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

References to time are abundant in energy policy debates (Fouquet & Pearson, 2012; Marquardt & Delina, 2021). Yet research on temporality in energy policy seem to remain fragmented across distinct lines of study. Scholars exploring temporality in policy narratives (McGovern et al., 2026), alternative memories (Feldberg, 2023), imagined futures (Christley & Ullström, 2025), and the like, speak to one another only indirectly, despite all being concerned with how pasts, presents, and futures are socially constructed in energy politics. This panel seeks to bring these conversations together and examine temporality as a central element of energy policy narratives.

Rather than treating different temporal dimensions in isolation, this panel aims to explore what patterns emerge when they are analysed together. The core question is: What does temporality actually *do* in energy policy narratives? Of particular interest is whether different temporalities do different kinds of political work. References to the past may serve to establish caution (Boscarino, 2019), narratives of the present may construct urgency (Delina & Sovacool, 2018), while imagined futures may generate support for not-yet-feasible energy solutions (Lefstad et al., 2024). In this respect, we ask: (1) Is temporality a single narrative resource, or do references to pasts, presents, and futures perform distinct functions? and (2) Under what conditions do policy actors rely on memories, urgencies, or imagined futures to mobilise support of various stakeholders, resist change, or shape public perceptions of energy transitions?

References

Boscarino, J. E. (2019). From Three Mile Island to Fukushima: The impact of analogy on attitudes toward nuclear power. *Policy Sciences*, 52(1), 21–42.

Christley, E., & Ullström, S. (2025). Desired or contested futures? Competing discourse-coalitions for sustainable aviation in Sweden. *Critical Policy Studies*, 19(3), 414–435.

Delina, L. L., & Sovacool, B. K. (2018). Of temporality and plurality: An epistemic and governance agenda for accelerating just transitions for energy access and sustainable development. Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability, *Sustainability Science*, 34, 1–6.

Feldberg, O. (2023). From dinosaurs to nuclear fallout: Multiple temporalities of scale in memory studies. *Memory Studies*, 16(6).

Lefstad, L., Allesson, J., Busch, H., & Carton, W. (2024). Burying problems? Imaginaries of carbon capture and storage in Scandinavia. *Energy Research & Social Science*, 113, 103564.

Marquardt, J., & Delina, L. L. (2021). Making time, making politics: Problematizing temporality in energy and climate studies. *Energy Research & Social Science*, 76, 102073.

McGovern, R., Soderman, C., Osei-Kojo, A., Jones, M. D., & Olofsson, K. L. (2026). Time's Sentimental Tale: Operationalizing Plot Within the Narrative Policy Framework. *Policy Studies Journal*, 54(3), e70152.

CALL FOR PAPERS

By bringing together research on pasts, presents, and futures, we seek to advance a more integrated understanding of the performative role of temporality in energy governance and energy policy processes. Therefore, this panel provides a meeting space for dialogue among scholars working on diverse aspects of temporality in all domains of energy policy.

As mentioned in the general objectives, this panel will discuss the following core question: What does temporality actually do in energy policy narratives? Consequently, we invite papers attempting to uncover the performativity of temporally embedded policy narratives. In brief, we are looking for papers exploring narratives of pasts, presents and futures in energy policy debates, energy policy documents, traditional media, social media, and more. This includes, but is not limited to, visions, anticipations, expectations, imaginaries, memories, and imaginations. In addition, we are interested in papers investigating temporally

embedded narratives in relation to political power in energy policy processes.

We welcome empirical and conceptual contributions, as well as comparative studies. Comparative analyses may, for instance, focus on different geographical contexts, energy policy domains, governance levels, or energy technologies or infrastructure. Importantly, this panel also welcomes diverse frameworks and methods, from qualitative coding of policy documents to computational analysis of large amounts of data. In addition, we are open to papers expanding the scope of policy research to fictional documents such as novels, movies, and video games.

Suggested themes

We welcome papers that explore the following (or closely related) themes:

- Narratives, imagined futures, and contested pasts in energy policy processes
- Beliefs, affect, and attitudes towards energy technologies and infrastructure
- Energy policy in fiction and speculative futures
- Energy scenarios, visions, and models as evidence in the policy process
- History of ideas in relation to energy geopolitics and energy transitions
- Temporality in energy policy narratives