

Energy consumption for example

Energy – like anything else – is not used out of necessity alone. In fact, if we take food production and consumption as arbitrary example, the energy necessary to fulfill our nutritious needs is outweighed by the energy which is used in order to provide variation, convenience and aesthetic experiences.

The coffee harvested far away to help me through a boring meeting, the beer enjoyed together with friends (where water would serve my organism much better), the convenience of driving a car instead of waiting for the bus, the warm bath on a cold winter day, and thousand other similarly 'unnecessary' pleasures of our daily lives they are which makes our way of life so energy intensive. We could do without them, but as research indicates, which finds a surprisingly weak connection between sustainable attitudes and sustainable practices, changing a 'way of life' is not always an easy thing to do.

Two strategies to conserve energy in order to achieve more sustainable ways of life are commonly based on this dichotomy between necessary and unnecessary energy consumption. First, some preach a more ascetic way of life, with a focus on achieving changes in what people consider convenient, joyous, and beautiful. Or one can refuse any change insisting on that our way of life is not up for change (cf. George Bush's 'The American way of life is not up for negotiation?' as response to the Rio climate convention in 1992) hoping that the problem will go away eventually.

The research project, whose approach is presented here, seeks to explore the ample space between these two extremes. It does so by visiting locales and situations where aesthetics and sustainable production, distribution and consumption meet or miss each other.

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Theories and concepts

This means that we seek to explore the spaces in between. Whereas there is research on sustainable production and (much less) research on sustainable consumption, virtually no one has explored the host of interrelated mediators which relate these to locales to each other. Based on a relational ontology, we are not searching for sustainability as it manifests itself as characteristic of entities or practices. Instead, we locate greater or lesser degrees of sustainability in the respective ways in which entities are related to each other.

Thus, we seek to

map and identify mediators and intermediaries which are located between production and consumption,

trace their shifting, multiple relations,

approach locales of production and consumption from their fringes, and

conclude by identifying constellations and movements of production, mediators, intermediaries, and consumption, which are more sustainable than others.

All this is inspired by [STS](#) theory in general and more specifically by [actor-network theory](#) (and after) and [feminist technoscience](#).

Of course, we will need a meaningful and usable definition of 'sustainability', but this is part of the investigation rather than its starting point.

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