

Track 2 - The smart energy system transition in cities and regions

Title of the proposed paper

Structures and relations in the UK smart grid innovation regime

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3 keywords

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Text abstract (max. 300 words)

Innovations in smart grids and related smart energy systems are set to contribute greatly to the transition to a low-carbon energy system in the UK. Consequently, they have received considerable attention, and funding, from various stakeholders in the UK. However, the interactions between the actors shaping and directing innovations around smart grids remain poorly understood. Such interactions are instrumental to the evolution to the socio-technical system around smart grids, since they are a prerequisite to the main actors agreeing on a common definition of the technology, common goal, and a common direction for innovation. Drawing on sociological approaches to understanding innovation, such as the social construction of technology approach (SCOT) and actor-network theory, the paper will identify the most important stakeholders and social groups engaged in the process of innovation in the UK smart grid regime. The paper will then examine the varying visions, priorities, strategies and capabilities each of these actors has, in relation to smart grids, and how they are seeking to influence innovation in this arena. A key aim would be to better understand the processes of negotiation that are taking place to reconcile and bring together the different meaning associated with smart grids, and examine where they currently diverge and where they converge. Finally, the paper will seek to address the issue of applicability to policy and business strategy, and the ability to use such analyses of innovation to guide decision making.

