

Title **Where are we going, and how are we going to get there?**
Understanding the socio-political context of our future energy systems

Speaker Dr. Leslie Mabon

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Place Meeting room, 2F, I²CNER Bldg.1,
 Ito campus, Kyushu University

Abstract

In this session I discuss how we can understand the socio-political context into which technologies required to transition to a carbon-neutral future will be deployed. Envisioning the energy systems of the future requires consideration not only of technological viability, but also of the kind of society into which new technologies will be deployed with regard to policy landscape and societal acceptance. I explore these issues through empirical research undertaken around carbon dioxide capture and storage in both Scotland and Japan, and around marine radioactive contamination post-Fukushima nuclear accident. Focusing on the underpinning wider lessons that may be learned and applied to other energy technologies, I address three broad themes: risk governance; decision-making; and scenario building. The introduction of new and unfamiliar energy technologies to society may be perceived as risky by not only citizens but also stakeholders and policymakers, hence there is a need for *risk governance* - understanding what drives perceptions of risks and developing policy that manages these differing risk perceptions. The complexity of governing future energy systems reinforces the necessity of *decision-making* aids and processes that take into account a range of different perspectives on the viability (economic, political, societal) or otherwise of specific technologies. Lastly and bringing all of the above together, I offer some thoughts onto how policy and economic initiatives and societal values may be built into technological forecasts in order to conduct more robust *scenario building* for energy futures.

About the Speaker

Dr. Leslie Mabon is a Lecturer in Sociology at Robert Gordon University in Aberdeen, Scotland, United Kingdom. His research focuses on the societal and political dimensions of low-carbon energy, in particular the governance of low-carbon energy technologies perceived as more ‘risky’ or less ethically clear-cut. Leslie is particularly interested in interdisciplinary research, and enjoys working alongside scholars from across the physical and human sciences to imagine energy outcomes that are attuned to both the scientific and engineering realities of environmental change and also ideas of what socially ‘acceptable’ solutions may look like. Born and raised on the coast of north-east Scotland, much of Dr Mabon’s research concerns energy in offshore or coastal regions. After gaining a PhD in Human Geography from the University of Edinburgh in 2012, he worked as a Post-Doctoral Research Associate at the University of Edinburgh looking at public and stakeholder perceptions of sub-seabed CCS in Scotland. Since taking up a faculty position at Robert Gordon University in Aberdeen in 2014, Leslie has been working on a CO₂-Enhanced Oil Recovery Joint Industry Project, leading a work package into scenarios for the future of the North Sea; has undertaken a Japan Foundation Fellowship researching risk governance in Fukushima fisheries and beyond after the 2011 nuclear accident; and has been awarded an International Collaboration grant from the UK CCS Research Centre to research governance of CCS in Tomakomai, Japan starting 2016.

Host: Professor Kenshi Itaoka

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