

INVITATION



AALBORG UNIVERSITY
DENMARK

PHD DEFENSE

Kirsten Sophie Hasberg



THESIS

Understanding carbon lock-in of energy and information systems through power/ignorance: Theorizing two case studies of potential energy system flexibility from a new economics perspective

– with an afterword on power/ignorance in the Coronavirus recession

The global use of fossil fuels and their corresponding greenhouse gas emissions are continuously increasing. All the while, the cost of renewable energy systems is plunging, and knowledge about climate change mitigation policies is ubiquitous. How can we understand this carbon lock-in?

I argue that this is a question for *new economics* combining insights of ecological and institutional economics. In two case studies, I examine how carbon lock-in takes place in the making of information and energy infrastructure. Case study A examines the approval process around the Danish-British electric interconnector project Viking Link. Case study B looks at the pursuit of peer-to-peer electricity trading enabled by the information technology blockchain. In both case studies, infrastructure—understood in a socio-material sense—acts as stored power (as in the French ‘pouvoir’ or the German ‘Macht,’ not as in ‘electrical power’), giving rise to infopower (Koopman 2019), the power inherent to information systems, and energopower (Boyer 2019), the power inherent to energy systems. I argue that infrastructured power interlocks with ignorance and becomes power/ignorance. Two elements contribute to the interdependence that this Foucauldian neologism denotes: In the blockchain case, sociotechnical imaginaries in the form of techno-utopian visions of desired futures make it possible to ignore questions of governance and power. In the Viking Link case, calculative devices like the current way of doing cost-benefit analysis act as performative tools of the discipline of mainstream economics. They determine what is to be included in and excluded from analysis. These sociotechnical veils of power/ignorance turn transition processes against themselves; to use a Derridean term, they become autoimmune.

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Please email hasberg@plan.aau.dk to get a copy of the thesis.

ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE

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TIME & LOCATION

Wednesday, June 10, 2020 – online via Zoom (link will be sent to registered participants prior to the defence via an Outlook invitation)

PHD LECTURE

15.00 – 15.45 (Danish time)

QUESTIONING

16.00 – 18.00 (Danish time)

HOST

Department of Planning, Aalborg University

REGISTRATION

Please sign up by sending an email to Helene Ulrich Pedersen, helene@plan.aau.dk no later than 5 June at noon.