



Renewable Energies (Key Ideas)

By Matthias Gross, Rüdiger Mautz

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Renewable Energy normally refers to usable energy sources that are an alternative to fuel sources, but without the negatively evaluated consequences of the replaced fuels. Although energy issues have a long tradition in sociology and other social sciences, it may now be high time to conceptualize these in sociological terms as the lynchpin in our understanding of the way societies are set to develop in the 21st century.

This concise book focuses on sociological attempts at better framing contemporary theories of energy transformations and to deliver an accessible overview on the relationships between different types of renewable energy sources and their practical usages in modern societies. A strong focus is laid upon new forms of environmental governance and unavoidable knowledge gaps triggered by attempts to transform contemporary energy systems to renewable ones.

Critical topics include the challenge of transition from centralized to decentralized system structures, the integration of renewable energies into existing energy structures or the replacement of these, coping strategies to unforeseen risks and conflict issues, and socio-cultural reservations to new technologies connected to renewable energies.

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Review

'The ongoing transition to renewable energy sources is much more than a substitution of fossil fuels by alternative energy carriers. The great merit of this book is to shed light on the interdependency of new forms of energy provision with profound changes in our societies and to show that social sciences are essential for understanding this challenge.' - *Harald Rohracher, Professor of Technology and Social Change, Linköping University*

About the Author

Matthias Gross is professor of Environmental Sociology at Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research – UFZ, Leipzig, and, by joint appointment, the University of Jena, Germany. His recent research focusses on the evolution of alternative energy systems, the centrality of ignorance in engineering, and experimental practices in society. His most recent monograph is *Ignorance and Surprise: Science, Society, and Ecological Design* (2010, MIT Press).

Rüdiger Mautz is senior research scientist at the Sociological Research Institute of Göttingen (SOFI), Germany. His recent research concentrates on energy system transitions and the social dynamics of renewable energies. His most recent book (together with A. Byzio and W. Rosenbaum) is *Auf dem Weg zur Energiewende: Die Stromproduktion aus erneuerbaren Energien in Deutschland* (2008, Universitätsverlag Göttingen).

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