**Call for papers:**

**“Who has shaped energy transitions? Consumers, businesses, public and social stakeholders (18th-21st century)”**

**June 13-14, 2024 in Paris-La Défense**

*Well-established international symposium held at the initiative of TotalEnergies’ archive department, in collaboration with academic history researchers.*

This scientific event follows the symposiums on the history of oil held in the 2010s, which showcased the oil and gas archives and developed recognized academic knowledge. The symposium provides an opportunity to renew encounters between the corporate world and scholarly historical research. Its aim is first to take stock of the history of energy transitions through what has been achieved in the past, in the archive department and the academic world. For over a decade, a number of initiatives in the French and European academic community have shone a light on the history of energy transitions by taking a systemic approach that draws on complex phenomena and long processes, across the energy landscape (Lamard, Stoskopf 2018; Massard-Guilbaud, Mathis 2019; Gross, Needham 2023). Synopses of this slowly emerging history will be provided for the enlightenment of a professional, non-academic audience. Second, this symposium is intended to further knowledge about the causes of changes in energies, and to contribute new information to the research by approaching energy history from a new angle. We have therefore chosen to examine how the energy mixes in societies have evolved, at a global level, from the end of the 18th century to the 21st century. Among the questions arising from this subject, the subject of oil and hydrocarbons still merits further exploration.

It is important that the role of energy in the economy not be considered the only point of interest, even if it is essential, and nor should transitions be reduced to statistical considerations of physical values (Smil, 2017). The human dimension must be central to the analysis, with particular attention paid to the stakeholders in these transitions, or non-transitions, to better understand the reasons for these changes and the way they have unfolded. The human dimension is reflected in the relationships and connections between public, social and economic stakeholders, influence networks and consumers. In the field of energy transitions, decisions have been made and implemented in the light of constraints caused by climate change, meshing with economic and social realities, and sometimes influenced by pressure groups. Based on which goals, and for which desired results, who has decided, or not, on these transitions? There are therefore four focus areas for papers. They are indicative rather than prescriptive, as there is considerable overlap, so papers may address more than one.

**Focus area 1: energy mix stakeholders**

First of all, our forum is an opportunity to reflect on the subject of energy mixes, and the way in which these development drivers reflect the stakeholder configuration. During each of humanity’s energy eras several energies have been used, with a so-called “dominant” energy in the mix (Jarrige, Vrignon 2020): was this really the case, and according to which criteria (private or common interest, economic weight in a market)? In successive transitions, have there not been more complex energy mixes? Establishing the existence of the ages of coal, oil, gas and the atom tends to set things in stone, while transitions and the dominance of different energies are more fluid, subject to causes and factors that need to be analyzed. Periods of ebb and flow of the dominant energies, abandoned efforts, and transitions that were expected but did not occur, can be identified during the major energy transitions. For example, oil became more important during the First World War, but was not dominant in the inter-war mix in France, unlike other countries. It is worth reexamining the history of coal, with its full historical and geographical significance.

An insightful reconstruction of the history of these mixes and, more specifically, their long-standing stakeholders, from region to region, from a global, international perspective, would shine a light on this field and help to inform the debate on the history of transitions.

**Focus area 2: Men, women and energy transitions**

Energy is a consumer product unlike any other. Its function is vital: for traveling, heating and cooking, etc. For a very long time, its share of the household budget was far below expenditure on food, but the weight of energy costs has gradually become predominant. Adopting an approach based on social and cultural history encourages consideration of the leading role of consumers, beyond the sole influence of energy producers in transitions of the mix. This approach draws on cultural history to explain the emergence of certain energy sources in society. “New” energies have been associated with ideas of social, scientific and technical progress. This narrative of modernity still survives, but has been considerably nuanced by historical analysis. Furthermore, the omnipresence of energies in public space, notably through distribution networks, propaganda and advertising, has deeply influenced consumption patterns and practices, as well as social roles, and has disrupted the relationship with energy phenomena.

As energy equipment, practices and choices make their way into the private sphere, they affect gender relationships. Women’s changing roles in the management of energy in the home, and their involvement in choosing the energy system, shed light on all factors affecting energy mixes in societies (Virgili, Mathis, Williot, 2021).

On a cultural level, then, it is important to take consumers’ perceptions of energy use into account: energy has long been apprehended through the ways it is used and consumed. This large-scale distribution of energy has led to the establishment of networks that provide a local service attractive to users. With cars, for example, the increased share of fuel costs in the family budget has finally offset the convenience provided and induced consumers to rationalize their use, so energy poverty is a natural part of this focus area. Examining this question allows us to understand when and in which conditions energy is supplied, while considering that it is an essential resource in society, and leads into the current issue of energy transition for people who cannot afford it.

**Focus area 3: the place of public policy**

If there is one area in which the study of energy transitions has aroused keen interest, it is government policy, where it has been adopted, shared and applied at every level of public action. For this symposium, the goal of this subject is to restore a historical context to state action, as well as to regional structures and inter-governmental organizations. Whether in the long or shorter term, government policies have demonstrably not been neutral about energy, and have been capable of either strongly incentivizing or discouarging these transitions and guiding users’ choices.

Political authorities have sought to direct energy production and use through tax incentives, regulatory frameworks and prescriptive communications. The Geneva example (Paquier, 2018) is a perfect illustration of how local authorities sought to free themselves from coal in favor of hydropower, notably to improve their finances at the end of the 19th century and during the First World War. Examining the history of public policy allows us to view past energy transitions through the prism of thought and action processes that are not necessarily focused on energy, so we also expect contributions that demonstrate the complexity and diversity of public stakeholders in energy transitions.

**Focus area 4: The role of business**

We also wish to address the role of energy-producing companies in energy transitions, businesses that have developed policies for sustainable development and CSR. Have the businesses been active in these transitions, did they identify them and how have they handled them in the past? What has their voluntary contribution been to environmental challenges and what sort of strategies have they implemented, or not, to succeed? The environmental dimension is very broad here, and cannot be restricted to the institutionalization of the last two decades. Businesses can be considered stakeholders in a public space, but also as organizations subject to internal conflicts. The environmental aspect of energy transitions is worth historicizing, particularly from a corporate viewpoint, distinguishing between what is displayed and what is the subject of strategic debate.

To this should be added the role of powerful federations, whether in coal, liquid or gas hydrocarbons or electricity. Often supported by certain political parties, they have encouraged the development or preservation of particular energy choices. Energy too has its mythology, from the dangers of the mines to the beauty of hydroelectric dams and the daring of oil prospectors. But this mythology has a counterpoint in a dark legend that taints coal, oil and the atom.

So this focus area is also a reflection on the question of corporate image and representation in society. The propaganda, marketing strategies and advertising campaigns deployed by corporations to explain how they select and use energy raise the question of consumers’ freedom of choice (knowledge, opinion, belief). Energy efficiency messaging might, or might not, have influenced their behavior during the energy “crises” or “shocks” characteristic of 20th century history. What arguments have they used to encourage one source of energy rather than another, and how have these arguments been perceived by potential users? To stand out from their competitors, energy companies have worked on their positioning and brand image, notably through sponsoring and patronage, as was the case for ELF with sport.

**Some bibliographic references:**

Basosi Duccio, *Lost in transition.* *The world’s energy past, present and future at the 1981 United Nations Conference on New and Renewable Sources of Energy*, Revue d'Histoire de l'Énergie, n°4, June 2020.

Yves Bouvier, Léonard Laborie (ed.), with the collaboration of Reynald Abad and Arielle Haakenstad, *L’Europe en transitions. Énergie, mobilité, communication. XVIIIe-XXIe siècles*, (*Europe in transition. Energy, mobility, communication, 18th–21st century*). Paris, Nouveau monde publishing, 2016.

Animesh Chatterjee, Daniel Pérez-Zapico (ed.), *Electricité et énergie en temps de transition.* *Changer les récits*, (*Electricity and energy in a time of transition. Changing the narrative*) *Revue d’histoire de l’énergie,* n°8, June 2022.

Stephen Gross, Andrew Needham (ed.), *New Energies: A History of Energy Transitions in Europe and North America*, Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press, 2023.

François Jarrige, Alexis Vrignon (ed.), *Face à la puissance. Une histoire des énergies alternatives à l’âge industriel*, (*Facing Power. A History of Alternative Energies in the Industrial Age*) Paris, La Découverte, 2020 397 p.

Pierre Lamard, Nicolas Stoskopf (ed.), *La transition énergétique, un concept historique ?* (*Energy Transition, a historical concept?*) Villeneuve d’Ascq, Presses universitaires du Septentrion, 2018.

Charles-François Mathis and Geneviève Massard-Guilbaud (ed.), *Sous le soleil. Systèmes et transitions énergétiques du Moyen Âge à nos jours*, (*Under the Sun. Energy transitions and systems from the Middle Ages to the Present Day*) Paris, Éditions de la Sorbonne, 2019.

Bruce Podobnik, *Global Energy Shifts. Fostering Sustainability in a Turbulent Age*, Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 2006 223 p.

Vaclav Smil, *Energy and Civilization. A History*, Cambridge (Mass.), The MIT Press, 2017 552 p.

Fabrice Virgili, Charles-François Mathis, Jean-Pierre Williot (ed.), *Foyers.* *Genre et énergie dans l’espace domestique, 19e-21e siècle*, (*Households. Gender and Energy in the Home*) Revue d’histoire de l’énergie, n°6, June 2021.

Marie-Christine Zélem, *Politiques de maîtrise de la demande d’énergie et résistances au changement. Une approche socio-anthropologique*, (*Policies for Controlling Energy Demand and Resistance to change. A Socio-Anthropological Approach*), Paris, L’Harmattan, 2010 323 p.

**How to submit papers and the selection process**

This symposium is open to everyone: researchers, doctoral students, etc. We are asking for proposals with an explicit historical dimension that can stretch to the present day.

Proposals for papers (no more than 500 words, with 5 key words) accompanied by a CV (covering at least one page), in either French or English, must be addressed to colloque-2024@totalenergies.com by January 15, 2024.

Each proposal must include the first and last names of the speaker, and the organization they are attached to, with a brief biography (no more than 250 words). It must also state which focus area/s of the symposium it addresses.

The scientific committee will make a choice, which will be communicated to the future participants in late January 2024. They will then be asked for a more substantial two or three page summary, as well as a PowerPoint presentation. These two final documents must be provided before May 15, 2024.

The symposium will be held in Paris-La Défense on June 13 and 14, 2024. The working languages are French and English (speeches will be translated into French and into English for English speakers). In-person participation is preferred, but video conferences can be considered if necessary.

Compensation for travel and accommodation expenses will be examined on request.

An academic publication is planned, with scientific editorial work.

**Organizing committee**

Hélène Catusseau, Monitoring, Information and Archive Manager, TotalEnergies Facilities Management Services

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**Scientific committee**

Alain Beltran, Emeritus Research Director at the CNRS

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Radouan Mounecif, UMR SIRICE historian, in charge of the Archives & History division at Perles d’Histoire

Marta Musso, researcher at the La Sapienza University in Rome, director of research and producer for Archives Portal Europe