

Energy bridge meeting in Berlin on 18 January 2020 : civil society advocacy and energy system analysis

25 November 2019 • Release 04 • Git version information in the PDF metadata

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An invitation to an "energy bridge meeting" and a proposal to form a mostly online open energy system analysis community.

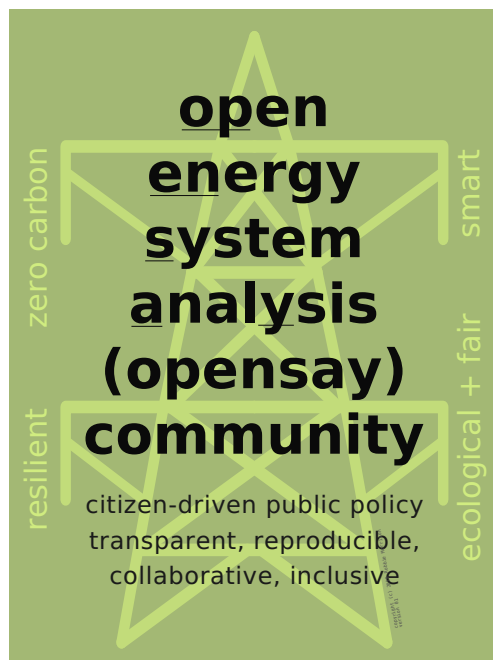
The idea of the "bridge" is to explore the intersection between:

- the open energy system modeling community
- civil society groups in need of quantitative analysis for their zero-carbon energy policy positions
- the interested public who would like to contribute relevant skills and expertise to this undertaking

Please note Saturday 18 January 2020 in your diary with registrations opening in a week.

Many civil society organizations, in Germany at least, seek **very rapid decarbonization**, with net-zero target years of 2025 (Extinction Rebellion DE), 2030 (GermanZero), and 2035 (Scientists for Future, Fridays for Future) being proposed.

There is no **quantitative analysis** on net-zero targets prior the year 2050 reported in the scientific literature, even when considering just the energy sector.



To develop feasible and consistent sets of policies requires numbers. Quantitative energy policy analysis essentially means **creating and running futures scenarios** — forming storylines, then simulations, and finally interpretations. That is exactly what energy system modelers like to do. Ideally the non-government scenarios would be determined by civil society and other stakeholders and not by the modelers themselves.

The "energy bridge meeting" is scheduled for **Saturday 18 January 2020** in Berlin, Germany. The venue has not been finalized but the event itself will run from **10:00 to 17:00**, followed by an informal restaurant meal. A charge to attend is unlikely, but if required, will be waived for those on limited means.

Civil society groups and established NGOs developing positions on energy policy should participate. This includes development NGOs working on equitable energy access in the Global South. Members of the interested public are also encouraged to attend, particularly those with numerical skills or domain knowledge.

Staff from official agencies, consulting firms, engineering companies, and start-ups are also welcome. Although the event is pitched at servicing civil society needs, we can all collaborate on the tools, data, and analytics without discriminating against any particular area of application.

This event follows from the first "energy bridge meeting" held in Berlin on 17 June 2019, in which 16 people attended, mostly energy modelers and analysts. The focus this time will be more on the needs of civil society organizations, including those pressing for ambitious target years and, in some cases also, significant changes to lifestyle and consumption.

This event will take place immediately after the three-day **Open Energy Modelling Initiative workshop** in Berlin on 15–17 January 2020. This initiative, often known as the "openmod", is a network of 600 individuals, most of whom are full-time researchers. It is expected that a good number of the energy modelers attending this workshop will also stay over for the "bridge meeting". For background on this community and its domain, see [Morrison \(2019a\)](#) and the Wikipedia articles on the [openmod](#) and on [open energy system models](#).

The formation of a predominantly online **open energy system analysis community** is on the agenda for this event, albeit somewhat less of a priority. A possible starting point for that discussion is depicted in [Morrison \(2019b\)](#). Using techniques from open source development, community data curation, and citizen science, such a community could variously formulate research questions, seek inputs, develop scenarios, collect and assemble missing data, arrange for or undertake modeling, interpret results, decimate outputs, and publicize conclusions.

Outline of the event

As currently envisaged:

- short introductory presentations on energy system modeling (including Stefan Pfenninger, ETH Zurich who offered to discuss the benefits and limitations of numerical modeling)
- presentations from civil society organizations on their needs and challenges
- possibly a discussion on citizens' assemblies
- possibly a discussion on the formation of a standalone open analysis community
- breakout groups covering technical needs, potential cooperation, next moves, and any other topics and tasks that crop up

The working language is english although the organizers will make every practical effort to help participants not fluent in that language.

Follow up

Please contact me if you need more information, **would like to contribute**, or wish to be added to the circulation list. Note that this is an entirely voluntary project on my part and thus free from institutional interests but also institutional resourcing.

I'll open **registrations** in about a week's time and circulate a PiratePad URL for entering your details. In the meantime, any and all feedback is welcome.

Further background

Since November 2018, several in the openmod community have been trying to interest NGOs and other civil society organizations in the idea that they should develop their energy policy positions using open analysis.

To that end (as mentioned earlier), the first "energy bridge meeting" was held on 17 June 2019 attracting 16 participants, as described [here](#). That event was aimed primarily at the established environment NGOs located in Europe.

Since that June 2019 meeting was conceived, political events have moved rapidly. New youth and adult protest groups have pushed **rapid decarbonization up the policy agenda**. In Germany specifically, the lack of government ambition on climate protection has driven further activity — with the recent climate package [[Klimapaket](#)] subject to widespread and sustained criticism. Consequently, a number of civil society organizations have begun working in earnest on policy development with net-zero target years well prior to 2050.

Currently available **open energy system models** cannot satisfactorily deal with the very fast but nevertheless rate-constrained transformations being proposed. Nor will most current scenarios have the kind of shifts and reductions in personal consumption that some civil society organizations believe will be necessary. In which case, here are two reasons why the open energy modeling community should reach out to civil society groups:

- to develop more diverse and arguably more legitimate **futures scenarios**
- to better understand those **model features and capabilities** most in need of development

Another aspect attracting attention are **citizens' assemblies**. There are some real opportunities to collaborate in this realm too. Dubois *et al* (2019) report their recent experiment on the use of **model-supported public consultation** concerning the Swiss electricity mix in 2035, which represents a useful and significant milestone. And certainly the idea of model-mediated processes could be taken up by civil society groups advocating that governments run citizens' assemblies on rapid decarbonization and allied issues.

References

Dubois, Alexane, Simona Holzer, Georgios Xexakis, Julia Cousse, and Evelina Trutnevyte (January 2019). "[Informed citizen panels on the Swiss electricity mix 2035: longer-term evolution of citizen preferences and affect in two cities](#)". *Energies*. **12** (22): 4231. ISSN [1996-1073](#). doi:[10.3390/en12224231](#). Open access.

Morrison, Robbie (20 November 2019a). "[An open energy system modeling community](#)". *Generation R blog*. Hannover, Germany: Leibniz Research Alliance Open Science. doi:[10.25815/ff3b-d154](#). ISSN [2512-3815](#). Creative Commons CC-BY-4.0 license.

Morrison, Robbie (30 September 2019b). "[An online community for open energy analysis: improving trust, legitimacy, and participation — Release 02 — Poster](#)". Poster for EMP-E 2019 meeting, Brussels, Belgium. Creative Commons CC-BY-4.0 license.

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