

Publication

Rowing, steering or anchoring? Public values for geothermal energy governance

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Energy transitions require a rethinking of the role of public authorities to integrate public views and concerns. Through a case study in Geneva, Switzerland, this article examines how the public sees the role of the public authority in the transformation of a local energy system by developing a canton-wide geothermal program. We use a public values perspective, identifying public values linked to the roles and responsibilities of the state. Analyzing public values allows understanding how the public perceives state actions and consequently how the authority may adequately respond and accommodate these expectations and doing so, anchor policies in public values. We begin by exploring the concepts of public value and posing the contextual background. The article then presents the most salient public values linked to the roles and responsibilities of the authorities based on focus group data. For residents the most important function of the public authority in relation to energy transitions is to inform and raise awareness. Other important functions are providing financial support and regulating. Acknowledging the importance of communication and its associated values allows public authorities to set the anchor to then effectively roll out, plan or support energy transition projects.

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