

THESys Public Lecture

Thurs, 07 December 2017, 17.15

Grimm-Zentrum, Geschwister-Scholl-Str. 1/3, Auditorium (ground floor)

Base load and its discontents

This lecture seeks to document changes in expert thinking about how electricity can and should be generated and provided in the future; and it contributes to a broader scholarly effort to surface the role that electricity has played in our modernity.

Dominic Boyer argues specifically that the relationship of electricity and modernity fundamentally involves the problem of desire—specifically the desires for modern luxury and convenience, the desire for freedom from onerous labor, but also the irrational desire of endless economic growth and wealth generation and the repetition compulsion of investment in fossil fuels even as signs of global warming and ecological disruption multiply.

Since psychoanalysis is the only domain of social theory that takes desire seriously as a political force in its own right, Freud emerges as a muse for thinking through the aspirations of wind power development and grid expansion in Mexico's Isthmus of Tehuantepec as well as the contentious politics of "baseload" and "smart grid" in the global North.

Dominic Boyer is Associate Professor at the Department of Anthropology, Rice University, USA.