

Proposal for up to 3 Master's Theses**The role of individuals for organizational change
within incumbent electric utility companies**

The Swiss energy sector is currently undergoing dramatic changes. The complete liberalization of the Swiss power retail market is imminent. Moreover, the nuclear phase-out and policy schemes that promote renewable energies put additional pressure on firms. At present, electricity wholesale prices are at a historical low and typical price curves over a day no longer follow traditional patterns. Prices are less predictable and heavily influenced by low CO₂-prices and the feed-in of electricity from renewable energy sources. These developments require utilities to radically change the way they think about doing business.

In order to successfully adjust to changing environments, companies need to (a) recognize that their environment is changing, (b) assess their existing capabilities to cope with the changes, and (c) creatively develop new solutions that address the challenges they face. However, currently, we still lack a sufficient understanding of what allows organizations to complete these three steps. In particular, existing research often studies organizational change at the level of the organization, neglecting that organizations are composed of a large number of employees that may differ significantly in their ability to recognize, evaluate, and address changes. To improve our understanding of how individual employees contribute to organizational change in incumbent organization, ETH Zurich's Group for Sustainability and Technology (SusTec) offers up to 3 Master's theses that seek to investigate the following research questions: How do individual organizational members differently perceive environmental change? How do individuals assess organizational capabilities? How can organizations organize to develop creative solutions to pressing challenges?

The students' tasks comprise amongst others:

- Consolidating already collected (quantitative and qualitative) survey data
- Collecting and coding organizational archival data
- Conducting a regression analysis (with a statistical software) to answer the research questions
- Deriving implications for incumbents in the energy sector on how organizational change in the context of the energy transitions can be managed more effectively

The Master student will be an integral part of the SusTec research team and will work in close collaboration with a doctoral researcher. The analyses of the thesis are intended to result in an academic publication. Through his or her research, the student will have the opportunity to help shape the strategies of managers in a field of large societal importance.

We are looking for an excellent student with strong English and German skills who is highly motivated and able to work independently. Strong communication and project management skills, experience in data analysis as well as energy industry records are an asset. Ideally, the applicant has a background in management, engineering, economics, energy science or innovation studies.

Start date: January 2017 (negotiable)
Duration: 6 months
Location: Zurich

Your application: Please send your CV, a short letter of motivation (max. one page), and transcripts of records (with grades) via email to **Aoife Brophy Haney** (abrophy@ethz.ch). Applications from non-ETH students are welcome. We look forward to receiving your application.