



Workshop: Doing Energy History in Times of Transition

Organizers: Tensions Energy History Working Group, tensions.energy@gmail.com

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Date and time: **July 1st, 2021**, 1 pm – 5 pm CET DST

This workshop will be based on pre-circulated papers and thus have mandatory registration. Interested discussants are nevertheless welcome. Please contact tensions.energy@gmail.com beforehand to sign up and receive the Zoom link.

In recent years, many historians of energy have related their work to contemporary debates about energy transitions and examined past changes in energy provision from a variety of perspectives. Those include shifts between specific energy carriers or technologies, grand transitions between energy regimes, deep transitions, infrastructure transitions, case studies of socio-technical transitions, to name but a few. While this research has vastly increased our knowledge on past processes, structures, actors, dynamics of energy production and consumption, and patterns of transitions, there has been little systematic discussion on how historians should best deal with the – admittedly presentist – “transitions” paradigm.

This half-day online workshop seeks to facilitate discussion particularly on the following (but also other) questions:

- Which kinds of transitions should historians focus on?
- What are the pitfalls of focusing on “transitions” and not continuities?
- Which theoretical approaches and concepts have proven to be helpful when examining historical transitions (from your experience)?
- How can historians examine “transitions in scale” from low to high levels of energy consumption?
- How can we approach changes within established energy patterns, such as from low to high levels of electricity use in households?
- Should historians prioritize transitions in energy production or consumption?
- Should we only examine successful transitions, or also “failed” or “aborted” ones? What can be learned from looking at “failures”?
- Or, alternatively, should historians abandon the transitions paradigm altogether, and instead focus on continuities, energy “additions”, or “transformations”?

Program

13:00-13:15 Introduction

13:15-14:45 Parallel Panels 1 & 2

Parallel Panel 1: Inter- and Transnational Perspectives on Energy Transitions (Chair: Jan-Henrik Meyer)

- Sebastian De Pretto (Lucerne), "Reflections on a Transnational History of Dam Building in the Alps (1870-1974)"
- Dante LaRicca (Yale), "To Each Their Own: Energy Transition and Conceptual Difference in the Web on UN Institutions"
- Tsaiying Lu (Maastricht), "Energy Transition in-the-making: How Offshore Wind Energy Interacts with Local Society in Taiwan"
- Panagiotis Kazantzias and Aristotle Tympas (Athens), "Sustainability transitions and mega energy projects: The case of project Helios"

Parallel Panel 2: Shifts in Energy Regimes? (Chair: Ute Hasenöhr)

- Kristoffer Ekberg (Göteborg), "Path-dependent transitions? Climate change and nuclear power in the Swedish 1970s"
- Michiel Bron (Maastricht), "Preserving agency in energy transitions: a closer look at the position of oil actors within the development of nuclear energy"
- Nicolas Chachereau (Lausanne), "The debates around pipelines and refineries and the energy shift from coal to oil in 1960s Switzerland"
- Trish Kahle (Georgetown), "Energy Citizenship: The Coal-Fired Social Contract and the American Century"

14:45-15:00 Concluding Session 1

15:00-15:30 Break with informal chats on wonder.me

15:30-16:40 Panel 3: Conceptual Challenges and Theoretical Approaches (Chairs: Jan-Henrik Meyer and Ute Hasenöhr)

- Timothy Moss (Berlin), "Usable Infrastructure Pasts: Mobilizing History for Urban Energy Futures"
- Odinn Melsted (Maastricht), "Transitions in Scale: Incorporating the Factor Scale in Historical Energy Transition Research"
- Abigail Harrison Moore and Ruth W. Sandwell (Leeds, Toronto), "Through the Kitchen Window: Understanding Energy through Women's Domestic Experiences"

16:40-17:00 Concluding Session 2