

Energy in Asia

A Conference organized and sponsored by EnviroLab at Claremont McKenna College and the UCLA Center for Korean Studies and to be held at UCLA, February 23 and February 24, 2023

Energy has been commonly viewed as a source of power for performing work. Through its many forms, such as chemical, thermal, electrical, and nuclear, energy has been a crucial component for various types of production. In this capacity, energy has been an integral, material-based resource for economic purposes and security. Beyond its value as a resource for material production, energy, from the premodern to the modern era, has assumed other meanings and been valued in different ways. In religious and spiritual traditions, for example, energy has been defined as a source of creation, living, and healing. As an abstract force, energy has been seen as a spiritual element that influences, determines, and powers location, place, space, relationships, the workings of the human body, and the make-up of nature. In terms of language, energy has been used as a metaphor or a colorful term to describe human actions, emotions, and behavior. In these different forms, energy has been long framed and defined through a variety of angles.

In whatever form it has existed, been employed or conceived of, energy cannot be understood without its connection to social context, especially different forms of authority. Political, social, cultural, economic, philosophical, and religious systems have played a role in the formation and influence of energy as a material and discursive element and force. The ways in which energy has been employed and defined have not only influenced geo-politics and international relations, but also gender relations, patterns and directions in design, paths for healthcare and well-being, and relationships between humans and non-humans. In order to understand energy's role and place in human and non-human life, it is necessary to interrogate the relationship between energy and context.

This conference examines the different meanings, values and uses of energy in Asia from the premodern to the modern era and the intersection between energy and context. It welcomes papers on energy from different periods of time, disciplines, including the sciences, and fields of study. It specifically invites paper submissions that explore the deep linkages between energy and social formations and how those relationships have been mediated and influenced by processes and entities in political economy, medicine, science and technology, religion, philosophy, culture, or design. By studying energy in Asia from different angles, the conference expects to interrogate the material and discursive aspects of energy, how those aspects have overlapped from the premodern to modern period to structure human and non-human life, and the relationship between energy, authority, and continuity/transformations in society.

For in-person attendees, please RSVP here: <https://ucla.in/3R5OhyW>.

For online Zoom attendees, please RSVP here:

https://ucla.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_gk667mJfQ9OBNIPmqEbnRA

For more information, contact Albert L. Park at albert.park@cmc.edu

Schedule

Feb 23, 2023 (All times in PST)

Opening Remarks (9:30–10:00 AM)—Albert L. Park (Claremont McKenna College) and Namhee Lee (UCLA), Co-Organizers of the conference

Panel 1 (10:00 AM–12 PM)—Making, Remaking and Renewal: Social Movements, Agency and Discipline through Practices and Systems of Energy

Energy as a concept, force and lived experience has appeared in all types of social movements and structured everyday life. How has energy shaped the routines and experience of people? What is the role of energy in relation to authority and counter-authority? How has energy been formed as a resource for constructing identity, movements, practices and beliefs?

I-Lun Shih (University of Michigan), “The Power of Ideas: Searching for Alternative Energy in Post-developmental Asia”

Su Young Choi (Stetson University), “Understanding Energy and the Creation of Complicit Energy Consumers in South Korea”

Love Kindstrand (University of Chicago), “Crowd Energetics as Legitimacy and Liability in Japan's Postdisaster Populism”

Hannah Appel (UCLA)—Discussant and Moderator

Lunch (12:00–1:00 PM)

Panel 2 (1:00–3:00 PM)—Politics, Power and the Environment: Brokering and Creating Energy through Political Systems and Exchanges

Energy as a material, ideological and symbolic resource has been mediated through political systems and different arrangements of human power. What is the relationship between political economy and the material and ideological production of energy? How do coalitions of political power and infrastructures utilize and deploy energy as a resource? How have discussions and negotiations on energy impacted the environment and the politics of renewable energy?

Bérénice Girard (University of Stavanger, Norway), “The Meaning of the Sun: Solar Energy in Contemporary Indian Politics”

William Asher (Claremont McKenna College), “Can Hydroelectric Dams Address Global Climate Change Without Destroying the Livelihoods of River-Dependent Southeast Asians?”

Taedong Lee (Yonsei University, Korea), “Nuclear Energy Swing: Expansion and Contraction in South Korea”

Shiran Victoria Shen (Stanford and University of Virginia)—Discussant and Moderator

Break (3:00–3:15)

Panel 3 (3:15–5:15 PM)—Representing, Expressing and Materializing: Energy and Transformation in the Everyday through Creative Works

Creative works related to energy, such as art, photography, singing and architecture, have all been forms of mediation that have negotiated the relationship between humans and nonhumans. How have these creative works represented energy and established different forms of sensory experiences? What has been the relationship between creative works, energy and expression? How have creative works used energy to reimagine and actualize alternative built environments, lived experiences and ecological networks between humans and nonhumans?

Ichigo Mina Kaneko (University of Southern California), “Fukushima’s Energetic Mushrooms: What We Learn from Homma Takashi’s Symphony”

Sunmin Yoon (University of Delaware), “Sensorial Singing and Listening Bodies in the Energetic Environment of Mongolia”

Meiqin Wang (California State University–Northridge), “Art, Energy, and the Recent Development of Ecological Art in East Asia”

Minsuk Cho (Mass Studies, Seoul, Korea), Architecture and Energy

Charlene Villaseñor Black (UCLA)—Discussant and Moderator

Concluding Remarks (5:15–5:30 PM)

Feb 24, 2023 (All Times in PST)

Panel 4 (10:00 AM–12:00 PM)—Flows, Continuity and Ruptures: Historical Processes of Energy from the Premodern to Modern

Historically, energy through its different forms has played a pivotal role in determining the make-up of society, the direction of movements and state-formations and the relationship between humans and nonhumans. What has been the role of energy in historical transitions? What has been the intersection between science, technology and energy in the history of Asia? What role does energy have in forming historical narratives, especially in capturing and articulating risks, vulnerabilities and potentiality?

Aaron Molnar (University of British Columbia, Canada), “Energy and Empire on the Steppe: Examining the Relationship Between Changes in Climate, Ecology and Imperial Practice in the Mongol Steppe during the 13th-14th Centuries”

Ajmal Khan A.T (Harvard University), “Nuclear Culture in South Asia: Protest Movements Against Nuclear Power Projects in India”

Derek Kramer (Korea University and University of Cambridge, UK), “Blackout Histories: Network Failures and Atomic Futures in North and South Korea”

David Fedman (University of California–Irvine)—Discussant and Moderator

Lunch (12:00–1:00 PM)

Panel 5 (1:00–3:00 PM)—Discourses, Representation and Power: Energy as Language and Structure

Energy has been conceptualized, defined and deployed as a source of human creativity, power, mobilization and control. How has the language of energy shaped and reshaped natural and built environments? How does energy serve as a prism through which to comprehend human experiences, the formation of revolutionary discourse and practices and systems of domination? How has the language and symbolization of energy led to new forms of perception, agency and mobilization?

Christopher K. Tong (University of Maryland–Baltimore), “Powering China’s ‘Ecological Civilization’: Energy and Ideology in PRC Discourses”

Jonghwan Yoon (Yonsei University), “Modern Poems of Korea and the Kinetic Energy of Their Words”

Nishant K. Narayanan (English and Foreign Languages University Hyderabad, India), “The Clash of Energies: Between Belief and Authority”

Xingming Wang (Rutgers University), “Fueling the Revolutionary Machine: Energy Politics in the Socialist Representation of Coal Mines”

Sunyoung Park (University of Southern California)—Discussant and Moderator

Break (3:00–3:30 PM)

Reflection and Next Steps (3:30–5:00 PM)—A Roundtable Discussion led by Victor Seow (Harvard University) and Marc Los Huertos (Pomona College)

What is energy? How should we study energy? What roles does energy serve in different disciplines? This part of the conference serves as a time to reflect over the presentations and discussions during the conference. It will also serve as a time to discuss the next steps after the conference.
