



Workshop – Call for Papers

Energy States: Exploring the public regulation of electricity in history and society

Universidad Alberto Hurtado
Santiago, Chile
April 27-28, 2017

Keynote speakers: Professor **David E. Nye**, University of Southern Denmark, Denmark
Professor **Dominic Boyer**, Department of Anthropology & Center for Energy and Environmental Research in the Human Sciences (CENHS), Rice University, USA

Organizers: Sebastián Ureta & Mónica Húmeres, Departamento de Sociología, Universidad Alberto Hurtado, Santiago, Chile

Since the very beginning of its industrial production at the end of the nineteenth century, electricity has become the subject of multiple regulatory attempts. Although initially such attempts were mostly carried out by private entrepreneurs, the regulation of electricity production, distribution and consumption rapidly became a central focus of State interest and action. Especially after electricity became the central source of power for a myriad of highly critical societal processes, from industrial production to the enjoyment of free time, national states developed an increasingly sophisticated array of legislation, technical devices and institutions aimed at regulating electricity. In doing so, electricity-related issues became central for multiple kinds of governmental projects, from the understanding of the universal availability of electricity as key component of welfare-provision systems to neoliberal marketization of energy systems as a principal way to increase national economic growth.

We could say that in parallel with its usual image of being the uttermost materialization of modernity, electricity has also been from the very beginning a matter of government, both as a particular material power to be controlled and as a topic of public concern regarding the capacities of nation states. In this sense we can talk about the existence of *Energy States*, or multiple versions of the state that are enacted with the specific aim of dealing with energy-related issues. Even in our current neoliberal times, such *Energy States* can be seen as the main actors behind an ample array of energy policies, usually aiming at establishing the frames surrounding

infrastructures of energy production, distribution and consumption (and being continually challenged for doing so).

Approaching this topic from a social science perspective (sociology, anthropology, history, science and technology studies, etc.), the aim of this workshop is to explore through empirically-grounded case studies the main sociotechnical issues surrounding such *Energy States*. Some potential themes are:

- Energy States as entrepreneurs: studies critically analyzing the genealogy (and sociotechnical consequences) of different state-led infrastructural projects aiming at increasing the amount of electricity available to a certain society, including the development of particular kinds of expertise and technical devices.
- Energy States as “invisible hands”: studies analyzing the role of Energy States as regulators of energy distributions. A specific focus would be on the position that economic theory and devices have taken on such regulation, especially on the neoliberal processes of energy deregulation carried out since the 1980s.
- Energy States and its publics: studies dealing with the place of the general public in energy governance, from the initial focus on wealthy consumers to its current focus on democratizing energy governance.
- “Green” Energy States: case studies exploring the challenges and reversals facing Energy States when they try to lead and/or become involved in the transition towards more sustainable forms of energy production and consumption.
- Counter-politics of energy: attempts made by disenfranchised and/or unruly agents to challenge the dictates (or the very own existence) of particular Energy States, and the multiple reconfigurations and fractures that they caused.

With its location in Chile, this workshop will give special preference to proposals analyzing these issues based on non-western cases (or that explore their connectivities in a global fashion), with the aim of contributing to a truly global perspective on the social analysis of *Energy States*.

Proposals (300 words abstract) and a short bio (100 words) should be submitted to the email address estadosdeenergia@gmail.com until October 15, 2016. Proposals can be submitted on English or Spanish. Accepted papers will be notified before November 1, 2016.

Participation in the workshop is free of cost. Some limited funding will be available to help with lodging costs of postgraduate students and/or academics from non-OECD countries. Please state along with your abstract whether you are interested in applying to this aid.

This workshop is organized by the **Millennium Nucleus for Energy and Society Research (NUMIES)**, a multi-university research initiative established in 2015 with the aim of creating a research and intervention agenda on the social and cultural dimensions of Chilean energy production, regulation, and consumption.