

International Workshop

Electrifying the World Towards a Global History of Light and Power

March 26–27, 2018
New Orleans

Call for Papers

University of New Orleans, Center Austria and Department of History
University of Innsbruck, Department of History and European Ethnology

With the looming threat of climate change and scarcity of resources, energy issues have attracted increasing attention in recent years. Policies for securing sufficient energy supply differ widely – from notions of a “green energy transition” to the construction of new nuclear power stations or efforts to exploit (unconventional) fossil fuels. While in the Global North, many countries aim to reduce emissions and achieve more sustainable lifestyles (at least in theory), energy consumption in the Global South – far below the global average and still often dominated by biomass – is expanding rapidly to reach higher standards of living. In both these efforts, electricity production – as a main transformer of primary energy sources as well as pacemaker and symbol of modern society – is center stage. Historical research has explored in detail how electricity contributed to the shaping of new (post)industrial lifestyles, focusing on the emergence (and power-dynamics) of large sociotechnical systems as well as its effects on everyday life and its interrelation with the environment. However, most of this research has centered on Western societies and – to a lesser extent – the former Eastern Bloc. There is very little known about the history of electricity in the non-Western regions of the world. Transnational perspectives are rare as well – and often concentrate on global energy supply chains for Western societies.

The international workshop “Electrifying the World” aims to broaden this restricted view as a first step towards a truly global history of light and power. It invites papers that explore the divergent global experiences, trajectories, and energy regimes of “global electrical modernity” both in the Global North and the Global South. Contributions should address one or more of the following topics:

- Global networks and agents of transfer
- Infrastructural provision of electricity
- Power and appropriation
- Electricity, energy, and the environment
- Ethnicity, race, gender and class
- Symbolism and perceptions of (global) “electrical modernity”
- Conflicts concerning electrification
- Theories and methods

We especially invite transnational case studies and case studies with a regional focus beyond Western Europe and North America. Papers focusing on specific regional / national examples should place their findings within a global / transnational framework. We particularly encourage contributions from junior researchers (postgraduates and postdocs). Accommodation will be provided and travel costs subsidized.

Accepted authors will be required to provide papers of approximately 3000 words in advance of the conference (by end of February 2018). Selected papers will be published as part of a special issue or edited volume.

Please submit your abstract of approx. 350 words as well as a one page CV by **June 12**, to Marc D. Landry (mdlandr1@uno.edu).

For more information, contact:

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