



Where does this seemingly universal meaning of electricity come from?




Cultures of Energy

Energy poverty as a function of the ideology of Progress

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"Electricity is arguably the central symbol of globalizing modernity and its associated urban consumption styles. Lacking it, [people] are placed in situations of both material and symbolic poverty."

Cultures of Energy: Power, Practices, and Technologies
(2013) Sarah Strauss, Stephanie Rupp and Thomas Love eds.

Tale of the Turbines

Village of Alto, Rural Cajamarca, Peru

- One of the poorest regions of Peru
- 24% of the population did not have access to electricity as recently as 2007
- Local gold mine had electricity years before, but refused to split its overhead lines to allow access to the village
- A renewable energy project by General Electric brought electricity to Alto; improving education, healthcare, water supply – creating a general feeling of connectedness and a sense of community
- “Breaking down the feeling of being too rural and disconnected from wider modern society”
- One man would only allow turbines on his property if he could dictate which villagers received power from “his” turbines



Love, Thomas and Anna Garwood.

2013 *Electrifying Transitions: Power and Culture in Rural Cajamarca, Peru* in *Cultures of Energy: Power, Practices and Technologies*. Strauss, S., Rupp, S., and Love, T., eds. Pp. 147-163. Walnut Creek: Left Coast Press.

Sociomaterial Relationships & Electricity

Rural Zanzibar

- Electricity arrived in the 1990s, representing increased well being for all, quickly becoming normalized and engrained in every day life
- The electrification of rural Zanzibar brought on moral dilemmas between Zanzibari Islamic values (purity, modesty, sharing, strict gender roles) and the desire to be modern
- Light itself becomes an object with agency, empowering men and women, increasing gender equality



Winther, Tanja.

2013 Space, Time, and Sociomaterial Relationships: Moral Aspects of the Arrival of Electricity in Rural Zanzibar in *Cultures of Energy: Power, Practices and Technologies*. Strauss, S., Rupp, S., and Love, T., eds. Pp. 164-176. Walnut Creek: Left Coast Press.

“General scarcity or dearth, or the state of one who lacks a certain amount of material possessions or money.”

“...deprivation of basic human needs, which commonly includes food, water, sanitation, clothing, shelter, health care and education.”

*“...economic
inequality in the
location or society
in which people
live.”*

Meaning of Energy

New York and Southern California



Rupp, Stephanie.
2013. Considering Energy: $E=mc^2 = (\text{magic} \cdot \text{culture})^2$ in Cultures of Energy: Power, Practices and Technologies. Strauss, S., Rupp, S., and Love, T., eds. Pp. 79-95. Walnut Creek: Left Coast Press

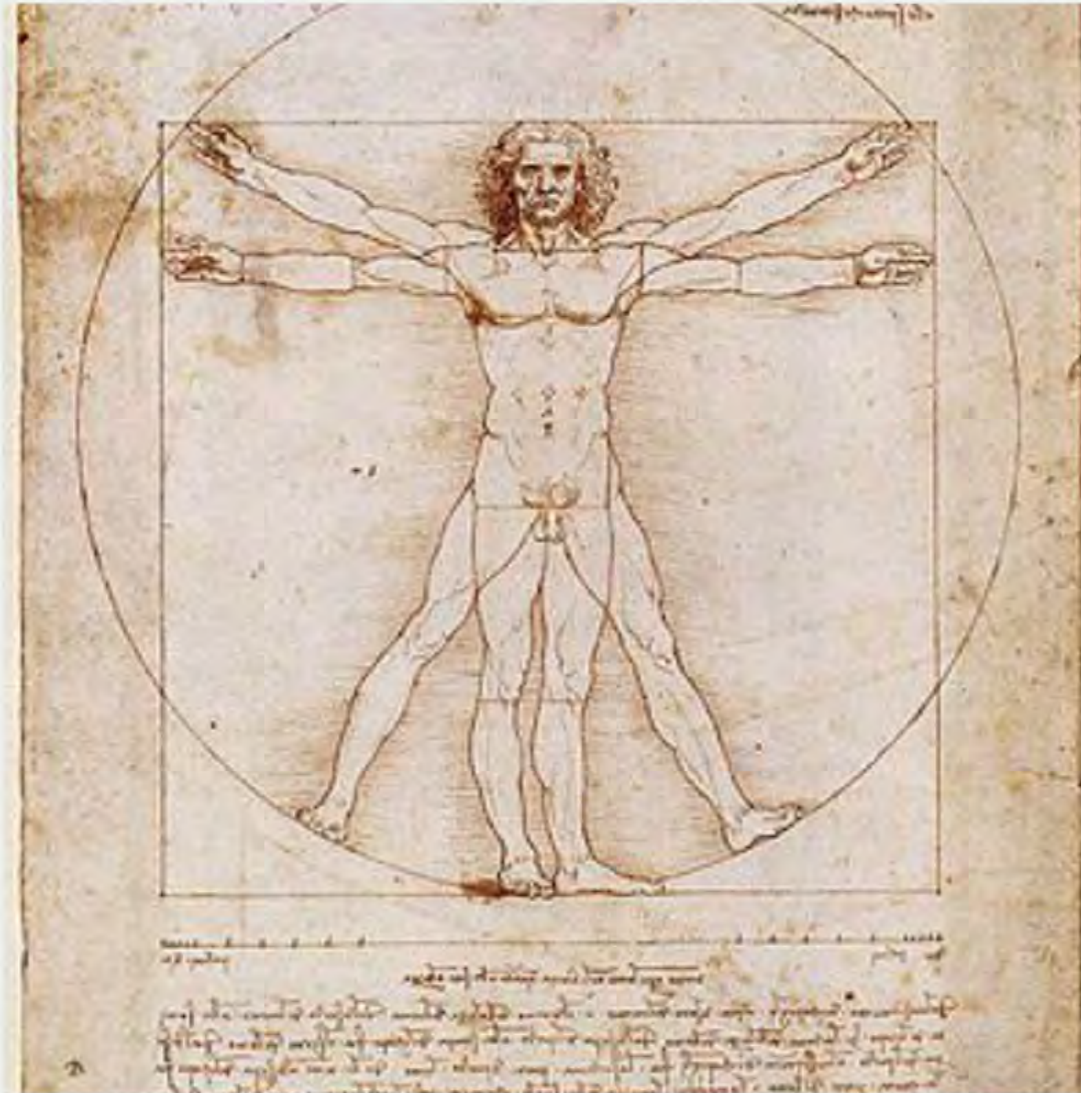
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Energy Intensification as Progress



Barbour, Ian, Harvey Brooks, Sanford Lakoff, and John Opie.
2010 [1982] Energy and the Rise of American Industrial Society in The Energy Reader. Nader, Laura., eds. Pp. 32-44. West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell

Progress as a Doctrine



Beard, Charles.

2010 [1932]. "Introduction," *The Idea of Progress: An Inquiry Into Its Origin and Growth in The Energy Reader*. Nader, Laura, eds. Pp. 149-161. West Sussex: Wiley Blackwell.

