

Academy of Geography, Sociology and International Studies  
Department of Geography  
David C. Lam Institute for East-West Studies

Public Seminar Series

Heterogenous Infrastructure configurations, assemblage thinking and energy transition in practice in China



Speaker: Dr. Minis Liu  
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Date: 6 Dec 2024 (Friday)  
Time: 14:00 – 15:30 (HKT)  
Venue: AAB1312, HKBU

Abstract

In contrast to centralized energy systems typically found pattern in Chinese urban areas, distributed energy systems are shaped by considerable socio-technical heterogeneity both in terms of their technological design and operation. This paper identifies governance challenges to the development of distributed energy systems through assemblage thinking. This situates our in-depth case study in local energy systems, energy politics, and everyday energy practices in the context of distributed energy development. The findings illustrate two key challenges to the governance of distributed energy development. First, incumbents often have incompatible goals, resulting in notable mismatches between national government reform objectives and implementation in distributed energy pilots. Second, a lack of engagement with energy end-users leads to daily energy usage practices that reproduce a social and material order that is reluctant to sustainability transition and dominated by powerful actors. While advancements in energy technology and infrastructure are key to energy transitions and urban sustainability, our paper points to the need to reform energy institutions to change energy-related perceptions, to shift usage behavior.

Biography

Dr. Minis Liu, Associate Professor at Guangzhou Nanfang College. Dr. Liu obtained a degree from the Geography Department at Hong Kong Baptist University. She has concentrated on climate governance issues since her doctoral studies. The Sino-German Eco-Park in Qingdao represents China's low-carbon governance initiative relevant to climate governance and sustainable transition management. Dr. Liu has published several papers on the case in journals such as *Geoforum*, *Cities*, and *Environmental Innovation and Societal Transitions*. The topics relate to multilevel governance, ecological modernization, technological transfer, among others. Her research project, funded by the Young Scientists Fund of the National Natural Science Foundation of China in 2025, focuses on the governance mechanism of experimental governance in Hengqin.

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