

[Call for papers: Home and Hearth: Gender and Energies within the Domestic Space, 19th-21st C. \(Paris, 22-23 June 2020\)](#)

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Call for Papers

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This is a call for papers for the conference "Home and Hearth: Gender and Energies within the Domestic Space, 19th-21st C.", which will take place in Paris, 22-23 June 2020. Below you will find a detailed rationale and a description of the scientific committee.

Note that the conference is a preparatory step towards the publication of a special issue on this theme of the *Journal of Energy History / Revue d'histoire de l'énergie*, planned for the spring of 2021. French, Spanish, Italian and English will be the working languages at the conference, French and English publication languages.

Please send your proposal (an abstract of 500 words max and a one page CV) to the Committee for the History of Electricity and Energy (comite.histoire.electricite@gmail.com) before the **31st of October 2019**. The scientific committee will select the proposals by the 20th of November. Proponents will be dully notified.

Rationale

The different sources of energy (wood, coal, gas and oil, electricity) increasingly changed lifestyles within the domestic space from the nineteenth century onward. The markets that included these new energy uses were amplified with the spread of multiple types of household equipment. Living conditions were transformed through the promotion of comfort, the reduction of domestic hardship, and the simplification of chores. Cooking, heating, refrigeration, hot water, and housework were all separately or collectively emphasized as sources of well-being in the household. Their promotion helped to simplify the most basic everyday practices from the bathroom to the kitchen, from lighting to cleaning. They also transformed activities outside of the home, and modified the sociabilities associated with them. They brought about the decline of collective washhouses, and reduced the provision of water and wood, both of which were synonymous with domestic drudgery. These evolutions have already been the subject of a great deal of historical and sociological research. The goal of this conference is therefore not to redo this history, but instead to explore it from new perspectives using a comparative approach.

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The emergence of new means of communication from the late nineteenth to the twenty-first century (posters, advertising images, radio conferences, television shows, audiovisual publicity, websites and social media on the internet) served as one of the privileged avenues for the diffusion of new energy uses. Means of communication especially ensured the transmission of commercial discourses and solicitations aimed at consumers, after the conception and shaping of these discourses by different actors. They sparked competition between energies (coal, coke, gas, electricity, oil) in order to boast about the advantages offered by each one, as well as the multiple types of appliances available. While other means were used to further equip domestic spaces, and the energy consumption subsequently required (for instance rates and selling price, service or equipment offers, usage demonstrations, showrooms and stores), the transmission toward consumers grew out of market analysis, as well as the needs and creation of such markets through advertising communications. Other avenues also contributed through the intervention of hygienists, consumer associations, and protest movements. The role of hardware dealers in small towns, and the diffusion of catalogs extending into rural areas, also played an important role in this diffusion.

Gas and electricity suppliers, as well as other companies in other energy sources (oil, wood, coal), quickly took advantage of new opportunities to address clients. Grid companies were more visible because they regularly purchased posters and advertising to boast of the advantages of their energy, as they benefited from the market effect connected to local and later to both regional and national networks. However, all energies will be taken into account. Did advertising targets, slogans, and graphic dramatizations significantly contribute to presenting a highly characteristic division of female and male roles in the domestic space? Commercial strategies followed the emergence of the domestic rationalization objectives that arose in the nineteenth century, and that were amplified during the interwar period. They supported the growing trend after the Second World War of the transformation of the domestic environment and mass consumption. It is important to measure the effect that the policies conducted by these companies—the choice of target audiences, slogans, and graphic imaginations—had on female and male roles in the domestic space.

These advertising mediations were accompanied by educational measures connected to uses (radio shows, conferences, demonstration workshops, domestic advisors, competitions, development of a dedicated press, television shows...). The education that grew out of this beginning in the late nineteenth century, broadly based on the Home Economics initiatives born in the United States in the circles of Cornell University, or in the movement to develop the architecture of domestic space (we are very familiar with the roles of Christine Frederick and Paulette Bernège from the 1920s onward, although this should be expanded to include, for instance, Margaret Schütte-Lihotsky and her kitchen in Frankfurt, or Erne Meyer and her kitchen in Stuttgart), helped to educate starting in childhood regarding the sharing (or not) of tasks and lifestyles. The emergence of women's associations offering an opinion about the uses of appliances—to orient their production or contest their use—contributes to an analysis of the interaction between the reception of the message and the appropriation of techniques.

The primary objective of this conference is to grasp, within the limits of the domestic space, the discourse and forms of marketing used by companies selling an energy source. Carrying coal up from the cellar, using the gas cooker, showing the refrigerator, chopping wood for the fireplace, and declaiming the advantages of hot water were so many situations that dramatized the mother, father, children, young woman, housewife, and coal deliveryman...In what ways were such messages

received? What protests were there against uses? What evolutions were imposed on companies through the acceptance or rejection of innovation on the part of consumers?

These practices reveal similarities from one country to another, relating to the sometimes international commercial strategy of energy companies, or the modelization of communication mediums that were diffused via transnational transmission. Yet different cultures and original contextualized slogans equally contributed to creating distinct choices. The second goal of this conference is connected to this approach. Comparing discourses, types of advertisements, the topics promoted by companies in each country, the educational and pedagogical practices of home economics, and the attitudes of women and men within the domestic space should shed light on the existence of national forms of communication. The latter will be analyzed both with regard to the description of energies themselves, as well as the forms of competition between energies in the fairly different economic and energy contexts in the European countries under consideration, as well as with respect to the favored uses of each energy.

Finally, if sources from energy companies enable it, a third approach could focus on the expenses and investment dedicated to commercial strategies. We are familiar with the role of credit in household equipment, which incidentally was unequal across countries, and followed variable chronologies. Yet we are less familiar with the budgets allocated by companies to create sales targets, and to adjust their strategies to uses. Similarly, should there be a focus on the budgetary approach, in conjunction with legal capacity, in order to determine who paid for energy in the household, who made choices relating to it, and who purchased the new equipment that was indispensable for its uses? What mediation occurred within couples regarding these life choices and their associated budget?

It is these similarities and differences that the conference seeks to explore, within the diffusion of material cultures relating to energy and directly involved in the definition of gender roles.

The references below, which of course do not represent an exhaustive bibliography, are fairly close to the initial conception of the conference:

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