

Ending the Energy-Poverty Nexus: An Ethical Imperative for the Low-Carbon Energy Transition

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About the Speaker

Clark A. Miller is a Professor in the School for the Future of Innovation in Society and Director of the Center for Energy & Society at Arizona State University. He is the author of *Cities of Light* (March, 2021), an exciting new book from ASU and NREL that combines speculative fiction, art, and hard-hitting analysis to explore the design possibilities for the post-carbon city. He is also a co-author of the recently released National Academies report, *Accelerating Decarbonization in the U.S. Energy Sector* (February, 2021), which maps out affordable and equitable roadmaps for technology, policy, and society to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050.

About the Talk

From electricity to automobiles and beyond, the coming transition to low-carbon energy systems in the United States and around the globe is an opportunity to do more than just change out our energy technologies for more sustainable alternatives. It's also an opportunity to rethink a range of human relationships with energy systems in ways that enhance societal benefit. To achieve this will require deliberate introduction of new criteria and metrics to transition planning that go beyond carbon neutrality and cost. This talk will present a new model of the relationship between energy systems and poverty that highlights the multiple and dynamic feedback loops that occur for families and communities between energy insecurity and economic vulnerability and insecurity. This model suggests that, rather than viewing the problem of energy poverty in terms of affordability and access to energy, energy system designers and planners should be better attuned—and look for solutions—to the ways that energy systems can exacerbate poverty and inequality over time. The talk will further suggest that a promising approach to disentangling the energy-poverty nexus is to focus on the social value of energy, i.e., the value that an energy user is able to obtain from the use of energy. Through this lens, it is possible to use new energy technologies and systems designs create positive feedback loops between energy security and economic and human security that, over time, are generative and lead to reductions in poverty and inequality.

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