

Energy and Resources Group  
University of California Berkeley  
Spring 2008 Colloquium Series (ER295)

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PhD – Energy and Resources Group

*Public Services or Commodity Goods?  
Electricity Reforms, Access, and  
Development in Tanzania*

**110 Barrows Hall / 4:00 p.m.**



*Tanzanian Financial Times, November 3, 2004.*

Since the 1990s, power sector reforms have come to drive energy policy - catalyzing a debate in Africa about market-based provision of services and the effects of reforms on access. My research seeks to move beyond the conceptual divide by grounding debate in the actual outcomes of reforms. Using the case of Tanzania - a country known as one of the most extensive reformers and 'success stories' in Africa - I find that reforms /are /creating large burdens and barriers for access and use of services, including: increasing costs, enforcement pressures, and processes of growing 'market' discipline. However, I also find that the most significant terms of reforms are not found in direct 'market' changes, but rather how reforms are /selective, partial, and shaped by the wider needs and claims /of the institutions driving reforms. My research reveals that the terms of /how/ reforms are implemented, /how/ they are measured, /how/ they are conceived, and /who tells the story/ are as important as the policies themselves. These features point to the importance of critical empirical-ethnographic studies of energy and development, examining not only technical policy 'impacts', but also how outcomes are linked to energy as technical-political practice. It is in the grounded, institutional, and power-laden context that wider outcomes and many of the 'unexpected conditions' of development are actually revealed.