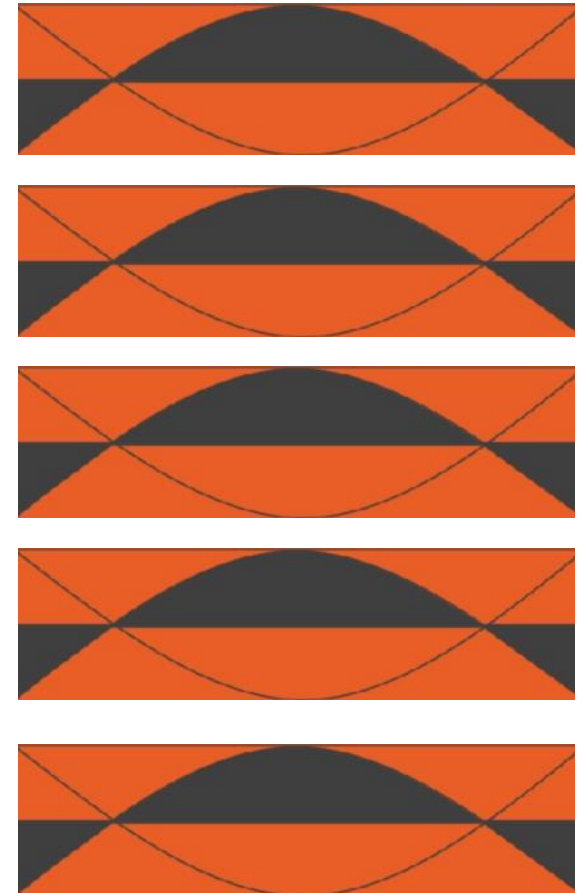


The right to energy? If so in what terms?

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科技部 Ministry of Science and Technology



A right(s) problem ...

The right to use

The right to have access

Two complexities

Rights-talk

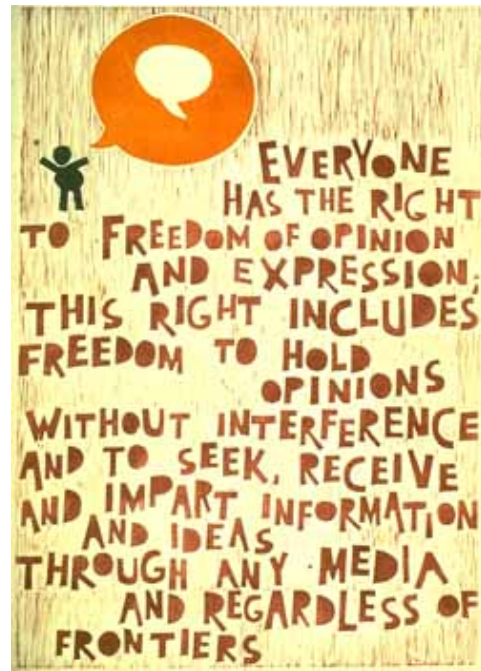


Rights-talk



- Talking about 'rights' = an established political framing and discourse
- Mode of communicating about what is important, what should be in place and protected – for individuals (for groups)
- Sense of what is right, what is essential, and what should be universal

Universal Declaration of Human Rights



EVERYONE HAS THE RIGHT TO FREEDOM OF OPINION AND EXPRESSION; THIS RIGHT INCLUDES FREEDOM TO HOLD OPINIONS WITHOUT INTERFERENCE AND TO SEEK, RECEIVE AND IMPART INFORMATION AND IDEAS THROUGH ANY MEDIA AND REGARDLESS OF FRONTIERS

A handwritten sign on a wooden background. At the top left, there is a small black stick figure holding a large orange speech bubble. The text is written in brown, hand-drawn capital letters.

ALL HUMAN BEINGS ARE BORN FREE AND EQUAL IN DIGNITY AND RIGHTS THEY ARE ENDOWED WITH REASON AND CONSCIENCE AND SHOULD ACT TOWARDS ONE ANOTHER IN A SPIRIT OF BROTHERHOOD

A handwritten sign on a wooden background. At the top right, there is a red silhouette of a dove with a small blue stick figure sitting on its back. The text is written in black, hand-drawn capital letters.

HUMAN RIGHTS ARE NOT OPTIONAL

A bold, black and white graphic with the words "HUMAN RIGHTS ARE NOT OPTIONAL" in a distressed, stencil-like font.

49. Laws that penalize the expression of opinions about historical facts are incompatible with the obligations that the Covenant imposes on States parties in relation to the respect freedom of opinion and expression.¹¹⁶ The Covenant does not permit general prohibition expressions of an erroneous opinion or an incorrect interpretation of past events. Restrictions on the right of freedom of expression must be necessary, with respect to freedom of



Waldron (1993)

- 1st generation rights – liberty rights
- 2nd generation rights – socioeconomic, welfare rights
- 3rd generation rights – attachment, minority group rights

“the practical significance of rights depends both on how we define a right and on the specific form a given right takes” (Attoh 2011)

Right to energy – relatively recent addition to rights-talk; alongside right to water, housing and food; also right to the city, right to infrastructure ...

"Energy is essential for life. It is essential for achieving the Millennium Development Goals. And it is essential for safeguarding a broad range of basic human rights. The right of access to energy is, in fact, implicitly conferred by a number of international treaties and conventions, but now the time has come to make such an assumption explicit and formally declare—with the full backing and authority of the United Nations—that access to modern energy is, and shall henceforth be deemed, a basic human right" (Freling, executive director of the Solar Electric Light Fund 2014)



‘Founded in 2000, **DROIT A L’ENERGIE-SOS FUTUR (Right to Energy SOS Future)** an international nongovernmental organization with head office in France. It is in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC).

- members are 401 organizations (NGOs, national and international union organizations) from 68 countries distributed among four continents and representing more than 40 million members’

‘Objectives:

- To assemble all those wishing to **act for the recognition of the right to energy as a basic human right**, for the sharing of energy resources and for the protection of the global environment;

- To mobilize around extreme situations of energy destitution in the world;

- To initiate specific and constructive proposals in partnership with major international institutions, governments, and the key actors of global civil society’



Two complexities



Water is essentially one thing

- one chemical formulation, if coming in different flavours and purities
- quality matters



'Energy' is not one thing

- not a 'natural' category; socially made
- multiple material forms and sources
- is a right to energy, for all its forms?
- or are some more important, more necessary than others? *'modern', 'clean', 'right to electricity'*
- quality matters, but how?



Water has one primary, vital and direct contribution to well being

- consumption for survival as a (truly) universal need
- other services subsidiary

'Energy' provides multiple services

- energy has no purpose in and of itself
- the services that are 'needed' – warmth, cool, light, mobility ...
- demand is 'derived' rather than direct
- which services are more or less important or vital? The '*right to warmth*'?
- variability with nature over time and space (e.g. daylight and climate)
- service need contextual in other terms = universality is problematic ...

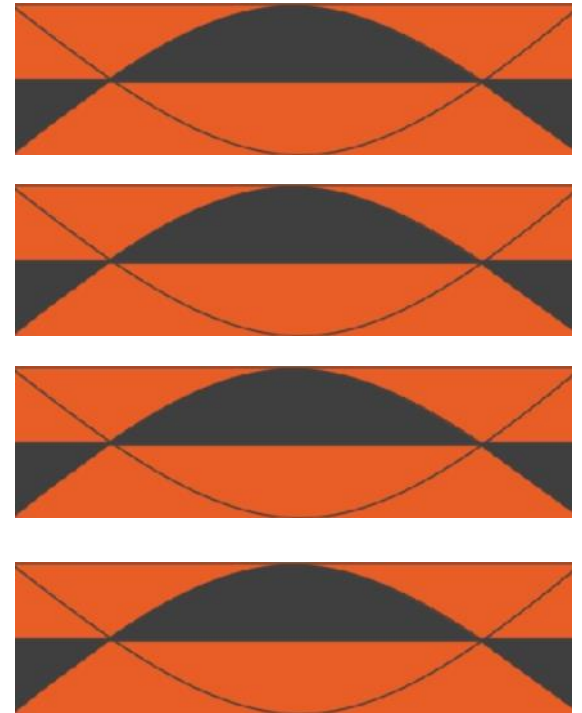


The right to access



- Right to *access* energy
 - to have an accessible supply system, to have infrastructure
 - grid connection of some form (electricity, gas) ...
or other system of distribution (petrol, LPG, wood)
... or own microgeneration
 - the *possibility* of demand, not its realisation
- maybe that's enough and no more ... or ...

The right to use



- Right to *use* energy
 - affordability; ability to pay
 - essential *services* which (all) people should be able to achieve (as a right)
 - terms of supply e.g. of disconnection

 - the *necessity* of demand, not just its possibility

A right(s) problem ...



- The 'right to energy' is 'tricky', more so than other similar forms of right (?)
 - Ambivalent; unclear and slippery meaning, multiple (sensible) alternatives ... form, service, access, use
 - Contingent; it makes sense, has practical significance in different ways in different places and contexts
 - what energy is for, why it matters
 - how much it matters for different social groups?
 - variable relation between natural and non-natural service provision
- More than 'just a commodity', but universality is hard to find
- More about rhetorical value? A 'capacious' concept?
- Tensions with carbon and demand reduction objectives

Energy for what?



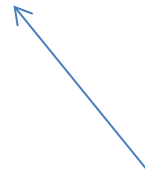
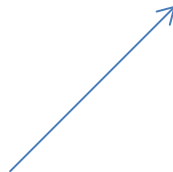
To use/consume?

To services?

Right to energy

To have access?

To necessities?



Energy use where?

Energy use for whom