



## *Power and Reliability in the SDG World*

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Connecting low-income populations to electricity is generally thought to lead to reductions in poverty-induced vulnerabilities and is considered a primary strategy for meeting sustainable development goals (SDG's). However, electricity infrastructures are complex systems. Their dynamic nature, which varies both spatially and temporarily, carries a diverse set of agents; these users, engineers, investors, and policy makers embody conditions that are socially and materially produced and reproduced. While unreliable services are a state of crisis in wealthier communities with high-levels of service standards, episodic and persistent shutoffs and brown-outages in low-income communities, particularly those throughout sub-Saharan Africa, are normal and normalized. Still, the nature of reliability, or specifically unreliability - which can literally 'leave [people] in the dark' - can compound existing vulnerabilities by increasing uncertainty and losses for already precarious populations. My talk will present ethnographic work on the island of Unguja, Tanzania - combining interviews, surveys and power systems monitoring, to investigate experiences with, and perceptions of, unreliability in low-income communities. Building off this research, the talk will also explore questions of (social) power, responsibility, and accountability in electricity systems considered fragile and failing. Understanding whose experiences get accounted for and how, and who is blamed for poor services and why, is central to building more just and equitable, energy-research agendas worldwide.

**Bio:** Vero Jacome is a human geographer and currently a President's Postdoctoral Fellow in the Environmental Studies Program at UC Santa Barbara, working with David Pellow. She earned her PhD in the Energy and Resources Group at UC Berkeley, with a designated emphasis in the Program in Critical Theory, and holds a BS in Engineering Physics from University of Illinois, at Urbana-Champaign. Beginning Fall 2021, Dr. Jacome will hold an Assistant Professor position in the Geography and Urban Studies Program at Temple University.