

Organizers: Moritz Ingwersen, Anja Lind, Michaela Büsse,
Orit Halpern, Özgün Eylül İçsen, Susann Wagenknecht

Hosted by the Chairs of North American Literature &
Future Studies, Digital Cultures, and Micro-Sociology
& Techno-Social Interaction

SITUATING ENERGY

PETRO CULTURES 2026



Call for Papers

PETROCULTURES 2026: SITUATING ENERGY

Confirmed Keynote Speakers:
Alexander A. Dunlap (Boston University)
Jordan B. Kinder (NYU Steinhardt)
Kathryn Yusoff (Queen Mary University of London)

Close to a third of electricity produced globally is now classified as 'renewable,' and yet CO² emissions from the energy sector are at an all-time high. Amidst surging investments in techno-utopia by an alliance of big tech and authoritarianism, the petro-nostalgia of "Drill, baby, drill!" echoes across unprecedented roll-backs of climate protection policies and new frontiers of extractive development across the planet. At the same time, local and transnational struggles are proliferating and expanding to defend lands and communities threatened by these renewed logics of extraction, articulating alternative imaginaries that challenge dominant energy regimes and open up spaces for more just and ecologically viable energy futures. Our energy present, poised between new and old constellations of technological, socio-cultural, political, affective, epistemological, environmental, and economic infrastructures, reminds us that energy relations are always at once dispersed and situated.

Under the theme of "Situating Energy," Petrocultures 2026 aims to bring these infrastructural relations to the fore and explicate energy as a matter of concern for a wide array of disciplines in the humanities and social sciences. Drawing on feminist science studies, 'situating' is a critical intervention that grounds knowledge practices in the material, ideological, and affective conditions of their production and circulation. To situate energy, then, is to resist its withdrawal into elusive immateriality or dislocated externalities and to render legible the specific contexts, places, epistemologies, and practices through which it is imagined, desired, materialized, and embodied. It is a move that foregrounds how energy is put to work across various modes of worldmaking and -unmaking, from technocapitalist progress narratives and the continued necropolitical regimes of colonialism, to struggles for environmental justice and Indigenous futurities. Framed by the interplay of new and old energy regimes, situating energy requires forms of inquiry that are transcultural, interdisciplinary, and responsive to historical continuities and disruptive futures.

It demands not only attention to the frictions, gaps, and resonances between different scales and sites of energy production, consumption, and exhaustion, but also a tracing of its articulation in the conflicting narratives, politics, and commitments of its emplaced geopolitical actors and stakeholders. Ultimately, to situate energy is to reckon with interlocking positions of critique, power, and implication—there is no outside observation of energy.

Located in a national borderland between lignite mines, Soviet-era uranium extraction, and lithium prospecting, Dresden is a palimpsest of energy cultures, uniquely triangulating nuclear pasts, fossil presents, and solar futures. A burgeoning silicon economy, political mobilizations for and against 'green' energy, post-socialist transformation (fatigue), and minority Sorbian agency all texture the site of Petrocultures 2026—affectively, geologically, socio-technically, historically, and politically. This brings to the fore myriad ways of situating energy, which we hope to see compounded, extended, troubled, contested, and put into relation.

We welcome contributions that seek to situate energy from any discipline or field within the humanities and social sciences, including sociology, literary and cultural studies, media studies, political science, history, philosophy, anthropology, design, art history, and geography. Contributions that explore artistic, practice-based, and interdisciplinary methodologies are encouraged. Consider Situating Energy across the following dimensions and beyond:

- **Geographies**, between the site-specific and the planetary: siting energy's land relations and trans-local entanglements
- **Extractivisms**, new and old: identifying legacies, memories, and remnants of extraction, or its ever-expanding frontiers
- **Transitions**, sustainable, post/socialist, gendered: anchoring the future between energy sources, ideologies, and identities

- **Aesthetics**, from the petro-sublime to ecotopia: assessing energy regimes through architecture, artistic practice, and perceptual estrangement
- **Social Movements**, between land defences and solar communes: articulating energy conflicts and post-carbon worldmaking in practice
- **Materialities**, from petrochemicals to digitality: tracing the physical substrates of energy cultures, from their geological composition to their atmospheric circulation
- **Infrastructures** of extraction, production, dissemination, and exhaustion: unraveling the networks of energy systems and their media environments
Inequalities, colonial, racial, gendered, classed, intersectional: highlighting uneven energy pasts, presents and futures, and the many imbrications of energy with in/justice
- **Temporalities**, slow and fast, historical and speculative: locating energy in ecotopian futures, ongoing accelerationisms, and deep pasts; in slow violence and long afterlives
- **Politics**, from degrowth to eco-modernism: framing new authoritarianisms, tired neoliberalisms, and alternative social ecologies
- **Affects**, from nuclear nostalgia and petromelancholia to radical hope: experiencing energy in times of rupture and transition
- **Epistemologies**, from fossil mentalities to solar philosophies: probing rationalities and regimes of energy reasoning
- **Cultures**, lived and produced: diversifying energy's ontologies, subjectivities, imaginaries, and narratives

You are welcome to submit proposals for individual presentations and preformed panels. Non-traditional, experimental, and creative formats (roundtables, artistic research, participatory formats, etc.) are encouraged. For individual presentations (20 mins), we ask for an abstract of 300 words, a bio of max 150 words, and 3–5 keywords. For preformed panels (90 mins) we require a proposal (in a single file) that includes a 300-word summary of the panel topic, abstracts of 200 words for each contribution, bio notes of max 150 words for all participants, and 3–5 keywords. Please indicate the format you envision for your contribution. Each contributor may appear only once as a presenter. You may, however, also act as a panel moderator in addition to giving one presentation. If you are listed as a presenter in a panel proposal, you may not submit a separate individual paper.

Please send all submissions to
petrocultures2026@tu-dresden.de by Dec 31, 2025.

For more information, visit the conference website
<https://petrocultures2026.com>.

Two optional field trips are being planned for August 25th, the day before the conference begins.

(1) The first will trace the enduring legacy and remnants of Soviet uranium mining in Eastern Germany. How does the region's nuclear heritage shape contemporary life and inform visions of a sustainable future?

(2) The second will situate energy in its chemical-industrial environments, inviting participants to selected companies in the region and featuring a speculative design workshop in the chemical park Bitterfeld. Organizers: Alexander Klose (European Just Transition Center, Martin Luther-Universität Halle) & Benjamin Steininger (UniSysCat Cluster of Excellence TU Berlin; Max-Planck-Institute of Geoanthropology, Jena)

TUD Conference Organizing Team

Moritz Ingwersen & Anja Lind, with Michaela Büsse, Orit Halpern, Özgün Eylül işçen, and Susann Wagenknecht.