Telling (Other) Energy Stories

Nuclear Societies Research Group Symposium

Room 1.H020, Arts Complex, University of Bristol, 3-5 Woodland Rd, Bristol BS8 1UJ
9.30am 15th September 2026 – 5pm 16th September 2026

We live in a time when energy crackles on the skin of our collective social being. From the ongoing, if uneven, patterns of energy transitions across the world, to entrenched projects of neocolonial extraction for 'green' energy technologies, and to the oil shock facing the world amidst geopolitical conflict in the Strait of Hormuz, contemporary life appears bound up in endless conflicts of energy. The field of the energy humanities seems well-positioned to reflect on this moment. Over the past decade, the energy humanities have proceeded on the foundational principle that energy issues – far from being purely technical problems – are problems of 'ethics, habits, values, institutions, beliefs and power' (Boyer and Szeman, 2014: 40). By foregrounding the human, energy humanities scholars connect everyday experiences of the energetic world to profound questions of the world we want to inhabit and the values that structure that world.

Yet, more than ten years on, it might be timely to ask if the energy humanities – so wrought – continues to be fit for purpose. Interventions in recent scholarship on the Anthropocene have challenged the figure of the human, exposing what often passes for the universal 'human' as instead a specific class inhabiting a particular constellation of privileges (Malm and Hornborg, 2014; Todd, 2015). Such provocations extend to the energy humanities. One such provocation in the humanities and geosciences has highlighted the coloniality of practices informing energy regimes, including extraction, which racialise energy itself and make people into inhuman resources. Calls for an 'insurgent geophysics' (Yusoff, 2024: 41) demand accounting with the violent placement of Black, Brown and Indigenous subjects in past and present energy systems.

In this context, this symposium asks: what other energy stories ought to be told? Whose tales are brought to the fore in light of these interventions? And how are the energy humanities fit for this purpose? The event brings together scholars working on energy issues from across the disciplines (the humanities, social sciences, and STEM) to collectively take stock of the field, whilst casting an eye forward to reflect on what ***other*** stories the energy humanities ought to be telling.

Organising Team
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With support from:

University of Exeter
University of Bristol
Nuclear Waste Services
South West Nuclear Hub

Brigstow Institute
Cabot Institute for the Environment
Centre for Environmental Humanities

Programme

Monday 14th September 2026

1600H **Pre-Symposium Walking Tour of Bristol** [Optional]
1830H **Pre-Symposium Dinner** [Optional]

Tuesday 15th September 2026

0930H **Registration and Coffee/Tea**
1000H **Opening**
1010H **Keynote by Dr. Marianna Dudley**

- Marianna **DUDLEY** (University of Bristol) *Seeking Alternatives: Imagining worlds beyond fossil fuels*

1100H **Paper Session 1 | Setting the Stage**

- Martin **GREEN** (University of Reading) *Two centuries of energy exclusion: infrastructure history and the emergence of community responses to fuel poverty*
- Claire **BLENCOWE** (University of Warwick) *Religious Racism and the Extractive Frontiers of Energy Transition*
- James **PALMER** (University of Bristol) *Power Plants? Bioenergy, Vegetal Labour and the Politics of Productivity*

1200H **Lunch**
1300H **Paper Session 2 | Stories of Labour, Expertise, and Logistics**

- Florian **ABRAHAM** and Olya **FELDBERG** (Université de Haute-Alsace) *Buying Time: Temporal Power in Nuclear Fuel Supply Chains*
- Siegfried **EVENS** (University of Sussex and Linköping University) *Ageing Atoms: Nuclear Maintenance in Sweden*
- Mattin **BIGLARI** (University of Bristol) *A 'New Working Class?': Oil and Labour in the History of the Iranian Oil Industry*

1400H **Panel Discussion**

- Linda **ROSS** (Independent Researcher), Ewan **GIBBS** (University of Glasgow) and Mattin **BIGLARI** (University of Bristol) *Telling Energy, Labour, and Community Histories*

1500H **Break**
1530H **Paper Session 3 | Infrastructures, Institutions, Communities**

- Anastasiia **MARKELIUK** (University of Liverpool) *Engaging with a nuclear legacy in Cumbria: investigating the role of community cohesion building in the delivery of Geological Disposal Facility Community Partnerships*
- Marguerite **COETZEE** (University of Bristol) *Repurposing the world's largest coal port: An exploration of energy transitions through the multiple lives and fractured promises of carbon infrastructure*
- Sana **RAHIM** (Sheffield Hallam University) *The Coloniality of Digital Futures: Hidden Infrastructures, Energy Stories, and Who Powers AI*

- Diane Fidan **MIRHANOĞLU EPINETTE** (French Institute of Geopolitics) *Oil Without a State: Iraqi Kurdistan and the Colonial Afterlives of Energy Sovereignty*

1730H **Tour of the SS Great Britain** [Optional]
1900H **Symposium Dinner** [Optional]

Wednesday 16th September 2026

0900H **Registration and Coffee/Tea**
0930H **Keynote by Dr Petra Tjitske Kalshoven**

- Petra Tjitske **KALSHOVEN** (University of Manchester) *Futuring energy landscapes: imagining lifeworlds through the Dutch concept of* leefbaarheid *(liveability)*

1030H **Paper Session 4 | Mimesis, and Other Ways We Tell Energy Stories**

- Willow **ROSS** (University of Bristol) *Talkin' Up from the Rift: Indigenous-led activism and solidarity against nuclear colonialism in so-called australia and the United Kingdom*
- Jane **ROBB** (De Montfort University) *Extracting Ourselves: Re-storying Embedded and Embodied Narratives Held in A Childhood Geological Collection*
- Donal **BROWN** (Oxford University) *Gonzo Solar: Fear and Loathing in Energy Research and the Threat of the Far Right*

1200H **Lunch**
1300H **Keynote by Dr Jonathon Turnbull**

- Jonathon **TURNBULL** (Durham University) *Radioactive Resurgence*

1400H **Paper Session 5 | The More-than-Human and Other Good Troubles**

- Margherita **TESS** (Humboldt University of Berlin) *Tackling heat and making theory with heat: medium, energy, element*
- Helen Louise **MOORE** (University of Gloucestershire) *Beyond Petronarcosis: Illumination from the more-than-human realm in The Last Lighthouse in Rising Seas*
- Julian **WEAVER** (Independent Researcher) *Future Audition: Post Anthropocenic Power Infrastructures*

1500H **Break**
1530H **Paper Session 6 | Energy and the Everyday, the Mundane, and the Home**

- Carmen **FREED** Huici (University College London) *Energy Trajectories of Vulnerability and Care: Everyday Experiences of Energy Justice in Incremental Social Housing*
- Caitlin **MULLIN** (University of Exeter) *Temporalities of Nuclear Infrastructures: Care, Community and Living Well with Sellafield*
- Pia **PALO** (Umeä University) *Double Erasures: Temporary Workers' Housing and the Spatial Organisation of Labour in Sweden's Green Transition*
- Ed **ATKINS** (University of Bristol) *Objects of contention: how a green backlash is rooting itself in everyday energy cultures*

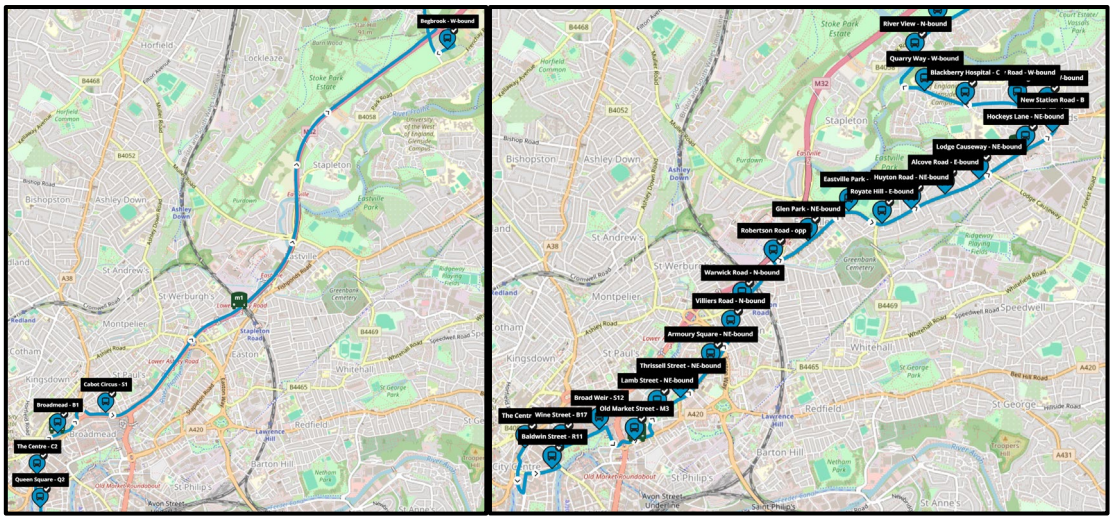
1700H **Closing Remarks and End of Symposium**

Optional Activities

Pre-Symposium Walking Tour

The organising team is glad to have Mathilde Braddock of Steps in Stone to bring interested members of our symposium on a walking tour of Bristol. Steps in Stone walks explore the role of geology in the built landscape and history of Bristol. We will head outside to situate ourselves in Bristol's urban nature and reflect with Mathilde on how the geological and the energetic intersect in Bristol. Participants should have already informed the organising team of their attendance. If you wish to participate last minute, do let the team know. The walk will begin and end at the Snuff Mills Car Park (Bristol BS16 1DL). We will be walking along the Frome in Eastville Park so please bring sturdy shoes, a hat, and a water bottle. We will meet at 1600H at the Snuff Mills Car Park and the tour will end between 1800H to 1830H.

To get to Snuff Mills
There are several buses that run from Bristol city centre to Snuff Mills. The bus journey takes around 1 hour.
(Left) From the Centre, take the m1, m3, or m4 buses and drop off at Begbrook. Walk 7mins to the car park.
(Right) From the Centre, you can also take bus 46 and drop off at River View. Walk 2mins to the carpark.



Pre-Symposium Dinner

Following the walking tour, we will be going for dinner at The Mason's Arms in Stapleton. The pub is a short walk from the nearest bus stop, and all attendees are welcome to join for a drink or a bite of food. The dinner will be at 124 Park Rd, Stapleton, Bristol BS16 1DT and we will meet at 1830H.

Tour of the SS Great Britain

The Bristol Dockyards host the museum ship the SS Great Britain. Designed by civil engineer Isambard Kingdom Brunel, it was the largest passenger steamship in the world (and largest human-made moving object on the planet) in its time. The museum has kindly offered to take interested members of our symposium on a free tour. The tour will begin at 1730H and finish before the symposium dinner. The address is Great Western Dockyard, Gas Ferry Rd, Bristol BS1 6TY. Participants interested in attending can join the organising team, who will lead the group walking down from the Arts Complex.

Symposium Dinner

The Symposium Dinner will be held at Root Bristol, which is located on the Wapping Wharf and is an approximately 30-minute walk from the Arts Complex. The address is Unit 9 Cargo 1, Gaol Ferry Steps, Bristol BS1 6WP. Root is a restaurant specialising in fresh, vegetable-focused cuisine. The menu for the dinner will be vegetarian. Special arrangements will be made for those with specific dietary requirements.

Abstracts (in session order)

S/N	Author	Abstract
Opening Keynote and Paper Session 1 | Setting the Stage		
1	**Dr. Marianna Dudley** University of Bristol	**Keynote: Seeking Alternatives: Imagining worlds beyond fossil fuels** We live in a world built by fossil fuels, that is fast becoming inhospitable to life. Reconfiguring the human relationship to energy requires an imaginative leap, to think new futures into being. This keynote will draw on my research on renewable energy history. It will showcase groups who have engaged in imaginative world-building, and challenged the centrality of fossil systems to society, politics, and culture. It will also reflect on some recent explorations into artistic energy imaginaries that have offered up some radically different visions of how and why we use energy. How do we harness energy imaginaries (our own or others) to move beyond the stale visions of the future sold to us as the 'green transition', that threaten to perpetuate fossil norms?
2	**Dr. Martin Green** University of Reading (with Dr. Amélie Dakoure, Prof. Libby Schweber, Dr. Mehdi Shahrestani, Prof. Stefán Smith)	**Two centuries of energy exclusion: infrastructure history and the emergence of community responses to fuel poverty** Energy poverty is conventionally approached as a contemporary policy problem, yet the patterns of exclusion it names have a long infrastructural history. Drawing on archival research into two centuries of networked energy — gas, water, electricity and telecommunications — provision in one English town alongside an ethnography of present-day community responses to fuel poverty, this paper focuses on the distributional politics of energy provision across the longue durée. The historical record shows energy exclusion to be a recurrent feature of infrastructural modernisation: each network reached affluent households first and the poorest districts late, or not at all. In earlier eras, however, the political pressure that such exclusion generated was translated into structural, universalising remedies — from the municipalisation of water to the postwar nationalisation of gas and electricity, alongside regulation and provider-led innovations such as the pre-payment meter. Against this benchmark we examine an energy champion initiative and the wider ecology of volunteer groups now emerging to tackle fuel poverty. We argue this voluntarism marks a distinctive shift in the locus of remedy: where civic mobilisation once levered public provision into being, unpaid community labour is increasingly expected to constitute the safety net itself. Situating community energy within infrastructural history, we show how the outsourcing of fuel poverty both expresses and entrenches the limits of a privatised energy landscape.
3	**Prof. Claire Blencowe** University of Warwick	**Religious Racism and the Extractive Frontiers of Energy Transition** Environmental humanities and critical social science have firmly established the importance of racism in the labour structures, dispossessions, and manifold sacrifices of modern extractive industry expansion (e.g. Yusoff 2028, 2024; Gomez-Barris 2017). I want to make the case for additional attention specifically to religion and religious racism in those processes. Extractive frontiers are

		exceptionally generative of religious movements, spiritual experiences and innovations (Rowe, Zennor, Siders 2024; Clark & Szerszynski 2020; Taussig 2010). Moreover, religious racism and persecution have been central to the establishment of new extractive regimes – quasi-sacralising extractive industry at the same time as demonising the restive spirits and earthy connections that resist extractive advance (Guydas 2016, 2018, 2020; Dochuck 2019; Blencowe 2025; Jobson 2025). In a potted history of these enduring dynamics the presentation will point to the role of religious racism in enabling the expansion of extractive industry amidst four moments that can be conceptualised as 'energy transitions/additions': the establishment of transatlantic slavery in Abya Yala/Latin America; coal powered industrialisation of mining in the British Empire; US petro-hegemony; and the current expansion of critical minerals. These histories inspire my new research programme exploring the role of religious authority in contemporary extractive industry struggles across continents and faiths.
4	**Dr. James Palmer** University of Bristol	**Power Plants? Bioenergy, Vegetal Labour and the Politics of Productivity** Across the global energy sector, efforts to identify more sustainable, climate-friendly fuels are converging on plant photosynthesis—in short, on bioenergy—as a large-scale, modern alternative to coal, oil and gas. In this talk, I will set out some of the key arguments of my recently published book, Power Plants, which attempts to subvert prevailing understandings of modern bioenergy as socially and ecologically progressive. Drawing on interviews, documentary analysis and fieldwork conducted in the UK, European Union and United States, the book examines the rapidly expanding use of plants as fuels in a range of contexts, including the blending of liquid biofuels in the road transport sector, the hotly contested use of forests to produce wood pellets for electricity generation, as well as more speculative attempts to genetically enhance crops to produce sustainable aviation fuels, and finally efforts to turn energy generation itself into a negative emissions technology. By scrutinising tensions between the roles that are played—in favourable accounts of modern bioenergy—by the vitality of vegetal lifeforms on the one hand, and the productivity of those lifeforms on the other, the book rejects a view of plants as passive resource inputs within modern bioenergy production. Instead, it advocates the concept of "vegetal labour" as a necessary conceptual entry point not just for analysing, but also for critiquing the underlying, productivist logic which serves to legitimise the pursuit of modern bioenergy writ large. Beyond this critique, however, the book also poses a more radical question: How might prevailing ideas about energy be transformed through a closer attunement to the distinctiveness of plant life itself? In listening more closely to plants, I suggest, we might yet cultivate energy cultures less concerned with growth for the sake of growth, than with alternative values of human satisfaction, wellbeing, and ultimately pleasure.
Paper Session 2 | Stories of Labour, Expertise, and Logistics		
5	**Dr. Florian Abraham and Dr. Olya Feldberg** Université de Haute-Alsace	**Buying Time: Temporal Power in Nuclear Fuel Supply Chains** Nuclear humanities and social sciences have long been preoccupied with time and temporalities, a conversation surveyed recently by Keating and Storm (2023). Looking across this body of work, two dominant concerns emerge. The first is the long afterlives of nuclear materiality: the deep time of radioactive decay and contaminated landscapes (van Wyck, 2010; Joyce, 2020), and the slow lives of nuclear infrastructures, ruins, and deindustrializing communities (Dawney, 2021; Storm et al., 2019). The second is futurity:

	(with Prof. Teva Meyer)	technoscientific promises and imaginaries (Jasanoff and Kim, 2015; Lehtonen, 2023), and the temporal logic of crisis and risk prediction (Masco, 2006). Both strains of literature, however, share a focus on "exceptional" nuclear time (either too long or too sudden) that sets nuclear apart from other energy systems. This paper redirects that temporal sensitivity toward the routine workings of nuclear things. Uranium must pass through several transformations before it reaches a reactor: from geological resource to extractable ore, to traded commodity, to fabricated fuel. Each stage operates on different temporal horizons, with different tolerances for disruption. Drawing on industry reports and interviews with sector actors, we develop a three-level analytical framework to trace how multiple, often conflicting temporal regimes are held together, and at what cost. We distinguish between material temporalities, institutional temporalities, and temporal agency — the coordination work through which those regimes are aligned. Power concentrates at what we call the temporal seams of the chain: sites where the capacity to wait, to delay, or to disrupt becomes a structural advantage. For example, financial actors who withdraw uranium from circulation gain leverage precisely delaying supply and making its return unpredictable. By asking who produces coherence and who absorbs the cost when it fails, the paper offers energy humanities a vocabulary for analyzing temporal labor and power across energy systems.
6	**Dr. Siegfried Evens** University of Sussex and Linköping University	**Ageing Atoms: Nuclear Maintenance in Sweden** Nuclear power has made a remarkable comeback, as the industry and many national governments try to market new reactor designs as a solution to climate change. Yet this contrasts with the mounting reactor breakdowns and maintenance problems the industry faces. An industry obsessed with innovation is experiencing a “shock of the Old,” in the words of British historian David Edgerton, ignoring long-term path-dependencies, materialities, and processes of decay. STS scholarship is increasingly turning its attention away from invention towards maintenance and repair. Yet, scholarship on nuclear safety particularly remains characterized by nuclear exceptionalism. And while some work in Anthropology has examined working conditions in nuclear power plants, we lack a more long-term perspective that analyses long-term path-dependencies and developments in the decay of (nuclear) energy infrastructure and maintenance routines. In this paper, I will discuss how scholarship on nuclear safety, on the one hand, and maintenance and repair studies, on the other, can be better connected to each other, in order to better understand the “shock of the old” the industry is experiencing. Using the case study of nuclear maintenance work in Sweden, and relying on interviews and document analysis, I will argue that nuclear maintenance is very much characterized by long-term path-dependencies in energy systems and technologies more generally.It will particularly focus on the workers' techniques – types of knowledge on how to use or repair a technology that are not necessarily written down. I will also focus on the way the risks of maintenance work – to the workers, but also the risk of insufficient maintenance to society – are assessed, and how much ‘agency’ or capacity to work and act independently workers possess while using their maintenance techniques. Understanding nuclear maintenance in this way not only moves the scholarship on nuclear safety and technology in general forward, but it also shows how approaches from the energy humanities can provide new policy- relevant insights into how reactors can be made safer and more reliable.
7	**Dr. Mattin Biglari** University of Bristol	**A ‘New Working Class?’: Oil and Labour in the History of the Iranian Oil Industry**

		This paper interrogates the relationship between oil and labour, reflecting on a hugely influential book in the Energy Humanities, Timothy Mitchell's Carbon Democracy. Mitchell popularised the argument that transitions to oil limited the capacity for labour to intervene in politics vis-à-vis coal, especially because of the materiality of oil production and transportation. Indeed, the oil industry has figured prominently in many narratives of automation and was the site for Serge Mallet's observations in the 1960s about a 'new working class' of knowledge workers overseeing machines. This paper analyses such arguments with reference to a context that seemingly bucked such trends, the Iranian oil industry. It was here that oil workers retained much political power, exemplified most famously in 1979 through a general strike that helped topple the Shah in the Iranian revolution. By examining the history of the oil industry in Iran, the paper asks why oil workers held ongoing agency on the ground and yet were seemingly erased in dominant imaginaries of the oil industry. By focusing on the downstream sector of oil, particularly refining, the paper proposes that Carbon Democracy holds resonance in new scholarly directions (e.g. Adam Hanieh's Crude Capitalism) towards reconceptualising oil beyond energy, as feedstock for petrochemical modernity.
Paper Session 3 | Infrastructures, Institutions, Communities		
8	**Anastasiia Markeliuk** University of Liverpool	**Engaging with a nuclear legacy in Cumbria: investigating the role of community cohesion building in the delivery of Geological Disposal Facility Community Partnerships.** On the way to zero-carbon futures, some communities find themselves caught up in a series of successive and concurrent energy projects. Formally, such communities must have the opportunity to contribute to the decision-making process through a consultation process. In practice, this often results in retelling the stories of those with the louder voice. Cumbria is one of the communities saturated with energy projects. Investigating public engagement with the overhead high-voltage powerlines modernisation project by National Grid, Queen revealed how Cumbria is shaped by past and present energy developments that play out in physical settings, individuals' mundane experiences, identities, perceptions of energy initiatives and relevant planning processes, and described the various types of voices within the region (not) involved in decision-making. Imagining the region's energy futures, this project is looking at new potential development in the area – Geological Disposal Facility (GDF), which seeks to safely dispose of radioactive nuclear waste underground. This study focuses on how GDF Community Partnerships, whose declared purpose is to assist communities in making an informed decision to remain or withdraw from the project, function and whose narratives they retell. It also seeks to understand what hides behind the stories of those engaged and disengaged from the planning process and what part complicated relationships between individuals, their communities, and their places of residence play in shaping their willingness to engage with major infrastructure energy projects like GDF. The study will expand understanding of community composition and cohesion, their importance in relationship building with potential GDF sites, and inform best practices in future engagement with Community Partnerships for GDF and other major energy projects in the UK and abroad. This presentation will outline the current community engagement process with GDF siting, and it will discuss the focus of this research, touching upon the relevant literature and research methods.
9	**Dr. Sana Rahim**	**The Coloniality of Digital Futures: Hidden Infrastructures, Energy Stories, and Who Powers AI**

	Sheffield Hallam University	Discussion of artificial intelligence (AI) from a public standpoint focuses on the technology's novelty and capabilities, as well as its effects on productivity and innovation. AI is described in ways that emphasise its apparent self- sufficiency and independence from the systems and infrastructures that support and sustain it. In reality, autonomous, detached digital systems, from an AI standpoint, rely on a massive network of human labour, resource extraction, and data centres. AI, by its nature, consumes tremendous amounts of energy. This paper tackles the question of who powers AI? Which infrastructures fade from memory and societal consciousness when AI is primarily framed as a technology of the future? This paper examines the material and human systems obscured by the public imagination and the dominant discourse on AI and the digital futures it implies. The discourse on the environmental impact of AI has been growing recently. However, discussions often focus on the technology and its innovations, and they overlook the energetic, extractive, and labour relations that make these systems and technologies possible. This paper attempts to privilege the hidden forms of labour, such as data entry and labour mediated by platforms, that are vital to the contemporary digital infrastructures and systems. Methodologically, the paper employs critical discourse analysis of corporate communications, sustainability reports, policy documents and public-facing narratives produced by major AI companies. These materials are analysed alongside emerging scholarship on digital infrastructure, energy transitions and invisible labour to examine which stories are foregrounded in contemporary AI discourse and which remain absent. The paper contributes to debates within the energy humanities by positioning AI not simply as a technological development but as a network of interconnected energetic, environmental and labouring infrastructures. In doing so, it highlights the colonial and extractive relations that underpin digital futures and argues that understanding artificial intelligence requires greater attention to the hidden forms of energy, labour and resource extraction through which these futures are made possible.
10	**Marguerite Coetzee** University of Bristol	**Repurposing the world's largest coal port: An exploration of energy transitions through the multiple lives and fractured promises of carbon infrastructure** Under growth-oriented responses to addressing the environmental emergency, carbon infrastructures and carbon regions, are being reframed as the material enablers for new energy geographies. However, as shown by anthropological inquiries on infrastructure, material infrastructures hold multiple and conflicting promises (Larkin 2013). In this chapter I explore how the Port of Newcastle (NSW, Australia) represents both promise and destructor of a not-yet future, as the result of infrastructure functioning as a sign. Drawing from ethnographic fieldwork I show how the port is incorporated by activists as a site of contestation against coal exports, and by the port and state itself as an enabler for future, or not-yet material, clean energy export industries. These promises are separated and fractured and is the result of infrastructure functioning as a sign. Rather than unpacking the possible alternatives that can emerge through the contestation (by bringing various activist concerns into dialogue under the sign of infrastructure) (Larsen et al. 2024) or critiquing the use of clean energy projects to green wash continued fossil fuel exports and continued processes of extraction (Dunlap 2021), I situate this within a wider geographical political economy debate regarding the privatisation of energy infrastructures and the limitations of a "just transition" when material matters are matters for global capital.
11	**Dr. Diane Fidan Mirhanoglu Epinette**	**Oil Without a State: Iraqi Kurdistan and the Colonial Afterlives of Energy Sovereignty**

	French Institute of Geopolitics	This paper tells an energy story from the margins of statehood: the story of Iraqi Kurdistan, where oil has functioned simultaneously as a promise of sovereignty, an instrument of external control, and a material infrastructure of political incompletion. Rather than treating oil as a purely economic resource, the paper approaches it as a historical and geopolitical force through which borders, institutions, and forms of recognition have been produced. The paper places two moments in dialogue. The first is the post-Ottoman settlement between 1916 and 1923, when Kurdish-majority territories were incorporated into new state formations shaped by British and French imperial interests. In this period, oil was not merely a resource beneath the ground; it was part of the colonial imagination through which territory, minority status, and political futures were organised. The second moment is 2005–2017, when the Kurdistan Regional Government used oil contracts, pipelines, and relations with international companies to consolidate autonomy and claim de facto sovereignty within and against the Iraqi state. By connecting these two periods, the paper asks how energy infrastructures can produce political authority without producing recognised statehood. It argues that Iraqi Kurdistan unsettles conventional energy histories because oil appears neither simply as abundance nor curse, but as a condition through which sovereignty is continually promised, deferred, and contested. The analysis draws on French and British archival sources, diplomatic material, WikiLeaks cables, and interviews conducted during fieldwork in Iraqi Kurdistan in 2017 and 2018 with energy officials and local political actors. Theoretically, it engages with scholarship on de facto states, sovereignty, colonial extraction, and energy humanities. This paper contributes to the symposium by foregrounding a non-state energy history: one in which oil reveals the colonial afterlives of the Middle Eastern state system and the political limits of fossil-fuelled self-determination
Keynote #2 and Paper Session 4 | Mimesis, and Other Ways We Tell Energy Stories		
12	**Dr. Petra Tjitske Kalshoven** University of Manchester	**Keynote: Futuring energy landscapes: imagining lifeworlds through the Dutch concept of *leefbaarheid* (liveability)** As a cultural anthropologist working on politics, poetries, and ironies of nuclear decommissioning, I am interested in local worldviews and how these may shape (post)nuclear lifeworlds and imaginaries, and energy futures. During ethnographic fieldwork for 'Mimesis in Action', a multi-sited, environmentally-inflected, ESRC-funded interdisciplinary research project (https://www.mimesis-in-action.org, May 2022 – September 2026) that aims to explore and stimulate imaginative thinking about future landscapes in areas of nuclear decommissioning and waste management, a common theme emerged from the project's four fieldsites in Europe and Britain, namely, a strong emphasis on landscape aesthetics. Energy infrastructures, including pylons, sub-stations, cabling, turbines, or cooling towers, often came up in conversation as spoiling intimate, centuries-old human-made lifeworlds or wide-open coastal vistas. In Zeeland, the Netherlands, in particular, attachment to landscapes that bear valued traces of energy pasts and presents featured heavily in local critiques of governmental planning for a large-scale energy transition, including proposals for new nuclear build. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork, 'futuring' experiments carried out at our project workshops, and exhibitions commissioned for 'Mimesis in Action', I will share brief energy stories from our fieldsites before zooming in on Zeeland to explore a powerful concept that expresses Dutch attitudes towards future-making in cherished, human-made (energy) landscapes: *leefbaarheid*, or 'liveability'.
13	**Willow Ross**	**Talkin' Up from the Rift: Indigenous-led activism and solidarity against nuclear colonialism in so-called australia and the United Kingdom**

	University of Bristol	Yusoff's (2020) notion of The Inhumanities is an epistemic call to refocus research in the humanities on those who have been overlooked or dehumanised in stories of writing the earth. In the myths generated by nuclear power, we rarely ask: how are the raw materials for nuclear power accumulated? Where do nuclear materials actually come from? At what cost and to what effect is uranium extracted from the land? And who resists? This paper responds to concepts of nuclear colonialism, wastelanding, and shadow places through a discussion of resistance to uranium mining in the southern continent currently known as australia. Characterised as a terra nullius (or land belonging to no one), swathes of the South Australian desert have been enclosed for uranium mining since the mid-twentieth century. I introduce my research into histories of anti-nuclear activism and solidarity in so-called australia and the United Kingdom, following the flow of tactics and relationships between land rights activists and feminist peace protesters through the 1980s and into the present day.
14	**Dr. Jane Robb** De Montfort University	**Extracting Ourselves: Re-storying Embedded and Embodied Narratives Held in A Childhood Geological Collection** Through my PhD research I aim to bring together artistic practice, critical ontologies of the geosciences and implications for how we conceptualise 'The Anthropocene'. Povinelli (2016) used 'geontopower' to describe the ways of thinking that enforce hierarchies between living and non-living, affecting extraction, use of resources and ways of governance. Yusoff (2018) coined the 'White Geology of the Anthropocene', describing the extraction implicit in geoscience, often from the subaltern to the dominant. Bringing these theoretical concepts further into the realm of geoscience, Tien and Florence (2022) introduced a 'somatechnics of geology' describing the inequalities, hierarchies, and our intimate embodiment with our environments and technologies. My investigation will involve participatory elicitation methods and material-driven explorations using my award-winning childhood geological collection, to bring these theoretical discussions on foundational philosophies of the geosciences into the professional and amateur geological community. As part of the Telling (Other) Energy Stories conference, I aim to share my research practice, including an interactive digital 'choose your own adventure' narrative game, with the aim of (re)storying the development of my collection, its meaning and context. The other purpose is to (re)present the physical geological specimens, through my use of 'imperfect' photogrammetry (an experimental technique I am developing grounded within the history of glitch art), which preserves imperfections, while maintaining traces of the body of the researcher within the image. The experience is designed to examine embedded and embodied narratives within the geological specimens — of land use, land access, accepted forms of knowledge, ownership and use of natural resources. This playful interrogation and (re)storying of a childhood collection in the context of recent critical theoretical discussions on the geosciences will inform the key questions I will be pursuing for future participatory elicitation. This contribution could take the format of a performance, talk, or workshop.
15	**Dr. Donal Brown** Oxford University (with Dr Steve Hall)	**Gonzo Solar: Fear and Loathing in Energy Research and the Threat of the Far Right** Energy research remains trapped within increasingly neoliberal forms of knowledge production: short funding cycles, impact metrics, techno-economic modelling, and a persistent pressure to translate grinding social realities into investment-ready business models. This paper argues that the methodological provocations of Gonzo journalism, associated with Hunter S. Thompson, offer a useful, if

		deliberately uncomfortable, counterpoint to dominant energy research epistemologies. Drawing on research undertaken through the Energise Grimsby project in the East Marsh of Grimsby, one of England's most deprived communities, we explore what happens when energy researchers step beyond detached observation and confront the lived contradictions of the net-zero transition. In a place where offshore wind and green industrial policy are celebrated as signs of progress, many residents experience the transition as something happening without them rather than to them, let alone for them. Distrust of institutions, insecure private renting, fuel poverty and a pervasive sense of abandonment create fertile conditions for right-wing populist narratives that frame climate action as yet another elite project. Rather than treating these dynamics as variables to be measured, Gonzo methods foreground immersion, positionality, contradiction and participation. Through encounters in community centres, market stalls, terraced streets and energy play days, the researcher becomes implicated in the story they seek to tell. The resulting account is neither objective reportage nor advocacy, but a form of epistemic resistance to what we term "spreadsheet realism": the reduction of complex political and emotional worlds into cost curves, payback periods and behavioural assumptions. The presentation contends that the rise of the far right in "left-behind" places presents not only a political challenge for energy transitions, but an epistemological one. If trust, belonging and recognition are central to energy futures, then energy researchers must develop methods capable of capturing these affective realities. A Gonzo energy research, we conclude, offers one possible route toward a more reflexive, politically engaged and democratically grounded practice of energy research.
Keynote #3 and Paper Session 5 | The More-than-Human and Other Good Troubles		
16	**Dr. Jonathon Turnbull** Durham University	**Keynote: Radioactive Resurgence** The result of nuclear energy production, weapons testing, and industrial accidents is that anthropogenic nuclear materials now permeate ecologies globally. This has caused profound mutations to nature both materially and discursively. This talk outlines a framework for studying these "nuclear natures" across contexts by drawing more-than-human, elemental, and nuclear geographies into closer conversation. Two key concepts from more-than-human geography—mobilities and metabolism—are put to work to explore nuclear natures in the Chornobyl Exclusion Zone in Ukraine, the site of the world's worst nuclear catastrophe that occurred on 26th April 1986. Drawing on several years of multispecies ethnographic work in the Zone, the notion that "nature has returned to Chornobyl" in the aftermath of the nuclear catastrophe will be problematised.
17	**Margherita Tess** Humboldt University of Berlin	**Tackling heat and making theory with heat: medium, energy, element** Energy, in the last decade, has been often described and analysed in the social sciences as what is extracted, produced, circulated, and commodified within the infrastructuration processes of modernity. Within these processes, energy has been understood as a veritable relational actor capable of assembling and disassembling the social, the political and future imaginations. Yet, such contributions to energy studies tend to point, legitimately so, mostly to energy as a resource that sustains processes of contemporary life: its eco-politics of production, its commodification, collectivisation, and its increasing scarcity. However, in this paper, I want to draw attention to heat (as energy in motion), which, in times of climate change, is rather excessive, a by-product, a waste, and a nuisance. Compared to the

		energy as a scarce and hyper-valuable resource, heat trapped in a city during summer is rather an excess of energy that agitates matter, melting and overheating things, infrastructures, architectures, humans and non-humans. This contribution aims to put energy studies into dialogue with critical heat studies, a corpus of interdisciplinary literature that recognises heat as a complex phenomenon. Beyond simply stating that heat is produced and productive of social practices, scholars have recently been interested in understanding heat as media or as an elemental force, thereby expanding the ontological properties of what we call "heat". This paper aims to explore heat and energy together: on one hand, through my ethnographic experience with climatologists and engineers, who would emically root their understanding of both phenomena in physics, reducing heat to energy; on the other hand, bringing together recent literature on energy and heat to instead multiply our understanding of both phenomena, taking into account their complex socio-materialities of scarcity and excess.
18	**Dr. Helen Louise Moore** University of Gloucestershire	**Beyond Petronarcosis: Illumination from the more-than-human realm in The Last Lighthouse in Rising Seas** In my latest ecopoetry collection, The Last Lighthouse in Rising Seas (Palewell Press, 2026), the shadow realms of our society are illuminated, with beams of light cast on Western oil addiction, 'petronarcosis'. Through multistylistic poems, I trace some of the social and cultural narratives underpinning petronarcosis, exposing the language of capitalist colonisers, and exploring the inherence of petroleum in our lives via car culture, agribusiness, and the transcorporeality of plastics into food and bodily organs / tissues. Petronarcotic extractivism and its slow violences are linked to the polycrisis, the climate and ecological emergency, forced (racialised) migration, necropolitics, and genocide in Gaza, the latter noted for its 'sizeable reservoirs of oil and natural gas wealth.' (UN Trade & Development report, 2019). Moving towards a decolonial paradigm, these ecopoems amplify the voices, perspectives and resistance of more-than-human beings – an Anglo-Saxon herb (Plantain) pushing through tarmac; Tawny Owls protesting the intrusion of generators and a sound-and-light show into their woodland territory. The more-than-human realm also suggests biomimetic and regenerative possibilities in their collective movement and organising (Starlings, Scottish Wood Ants); in dreamscapes (wild Atlantic Salmon, Dog); and via mycelial networks, which offer 'seeds of poesis.' In recognising the multiple ways we can understand and source 'energy', and its continuous transformation from one state to another, a germinating seed can become 'a powerhouse of singular intention', which orientates the human beyond petronarcosis. Thus, we may advance towards regeneration, ecosocial justice and imagined energy futures ('Climate Adaptation #3'), where 'cars have become curios' and 'rain is diamond resource.' Simultaneously, the overarching symbol of the lighthouse reflects in part this more-than-human illumination, its effect encapsulated in the lines, 'When we move with a shared power to survive / the landscapes of our vision work as one with life.'
19	**Julian Weaver** Independent Researcher	**Future Audition: Post Anthropocenic Power Infrastructures** Future Audition presents an investigation of Nuclear Fusion, its ongoing quest to become the power source of the future, and its wider implications in terms of post-natural environment and energy landscapes. Derived from field-work undertaken at Europe's leading fusion research centres during a research commission from the Centre for the Geohumanities, (Royal Holloway, UK), followed by four years working with EUROfusion (European Consortium for Fusion Energy) on their public engagement remit, Future Audition unpicks fusion's future of unlimited energy from unlimited sources by examining the infrastructures, processes and fuels required for

		experimental fusion research to pursue its energy dreams. 'Always 30 years away', as the joke would have it, Fusion energy is "a dream that haunts the future" [Pinkus, 2016]. By first putting fusion energy 'in place', thus re-entangling its mission to 'create a sun on earth' with environmental discourses around landscape and power, extractive economies, global resourcing, strong sustainability and energy equity, Future Audition will attempt to draw out those to-be-built infrastructures that the fusion energy project defers to the future. Drawing on existing fieldwork and new research exploring how emerging deals between MANGO corporations and private fusion energy companies are quietly reshaping meanings of "power" in the climate era, Future Audition will transmit some aspects of these imaginaries in the context of fusion as a perpetually forthcoming solution in the offing of energy landscapes.
Paper Session 6 | Energy and the Everyday, the Mundane, and the Home		
20	**Carmen Freed Huici** UCL	**Energy Trajectories of Vulnerability and Care: Everyday Experiences of Energy Justice in Incremental Social Housing** Incremental social housing has been promoted in Chile as a strategy to address the housing deficit by providing families with a basic dwelling designed to be expanded over time. While this model has been widely discussed in terms of housing provision and self-construction, much less attention has been paid to the long-term energy trajectories generated through the ongoing process of making home. Drawing on an understanding of the housing–energy nexus as co-constitutive, this paper argues that housing is not simply the setting in which energy vulnerability is experienced, but the space through which it is produced, negotiated and transformed. Based on mixed-methods research conducted sixteen years after the delivery of an incremental housing project in Santiago, Chile, the paper follows the long-term and everyday experiences of families, with particular attention to women household heads, as they negotiate changing family configurations, limited financial resources, care responsibilities, the material transformation of their homes, and their exposure to indoor thermal conditions. Rather than conceptualising energy vulnerability as a static household condition, the paper understands it as a trajectory co-produced through the incremental transformation of housing, changing family relations and everyday practices of care. As families progressively build, adapt and inhabit their homes, they continuously negotiate trade-offs between thermal comfort, privacy, affordability, health and care. These negotiations reveal how institutional decisions made at the moment of housing provision extend across decades, shaping everyday experiences of extreme heat and cold while gradually redistributing responsibility for achieving habitable living conditions to households. By telling everyday energy stories from incremental housing, this paper contributes to debates across energy justice and housing studies by demonstrating how energy vulnerability is produced and transformed through the long-term process of making home.
21	**Caitlin Mullin** University of Exeter	**Temporalities of Nuclear Infrastructures: Care, Community and Living Well with Sellafield** Nuclear communities are shaped by infrastructures that extend across multiple temporalities, from promises of technological progress and economic prosperity to the enduring legacies of decommissioning and waste. Sellafield, on the Cumbrian coast, embodies this complex landscape. Its nuclear infrastructure has generated employment, investment and place identity, while also producing contested experiences of risk and responsibility. This research explores how communities live with Sellafield through the theoretical lens of care. Rather than treating care as a separate object of study, it uses care to examine the everyday relationships, practices and

		material conditions through which nuclearity is maintained, negotiated and contested. It asks how Sellafield has conceptualised and performed care, how local stakeholders practise care in relation to nuclear infrastructure, and how ideas of 'living well' can be negotiated between the institution and surrounding communities. The project combines archival research, ethnography and semi-structured interviews with Sellafield workers, community representatives, local organisations and other stakeholders. It focuses on ordinary experiences and practices - including maintenance, environmental action, community participation and memory - to explore how care shapes everyday life in a nuclear community. By foregrounding care as an analytical lens for the everyday, the research contributes to debates on nuclear geographies, infrastructure and community life. It examines the ambivalent and situated ways people sustain and challenge relationships with Sellafield, while considering how care might inform future approaches to nuclear governance and responsibility.
22	**Pia Palo** Umeå University (with Dr. Daniel Movilla Vega)	**Double Erasures: Temporary Workers' Housing and the Spatial Organisation of Labour in Sweden's Green Transition** Temporary workers' housing is a key yet overlooked component of contemporary "clean" energy and industrial projects, and consequently of emerging visions of a so-called "green" transition. But despite its centrality, temporary workers' housing – defined here as accommodation conceived to be temporally limited and ultimately dismantlable, purpose-built to host mobile workforces during intensive phases of large-scale construction – remains largely absent from dominant narratives on energy and industrial transition. We argue that this invisibility erases both a process of spatialisation and a concrete material reality that, when brought into view, offer untold, or rather, unheard stories that expand, nuance, and complicate narratives of proclaimed "clean" and "green" energy extraction and production. In this paper, we approach energy from a spatial perspective, and ask: How is temporary workers' housing conceptualised and spatialised in proclaimed "clean" and "green" industrial projects? And, what socio-spatial tensions do these housing arrangements reveal within dominant visions of a green transition? We explore these questions in the context of northern Sweden, a region central to Sweden's industrial history and now positioned at the forefront of the EU's green transition. We focus on a contemporary case of temporary workers' housing established in connection with the Northvolt battery factory in Skellefteå. We examine this case through the lens of earlier industrial projects in northern Sweden, combining analysis of documents and archival research with spatial analyses of temporalities, organisational logics, and material traces and flows. This multilayered reading is intersected with everyday stories of what kinds of lives these spatial conditions afford. Throughout, a central analytical thread is multiscalarity, understood as the ways in which different scales (embodied, local, regional, national, international) relate to, influence, and mediate one another. Our contribution is threefold. First, we develop a layered spatial ethnography that traces how housing, labour and extractive logics are produced relationally at multiple scales. Second, we identify the discursive and regulatory conditions that render temporary workers' housing both necessary and marginal within "green" industrial projects. Third, we reconceptualise temporary workers' housing as a distributed infrastructural system rather than a discrete temporary settlement, showing how this shift produces fragmentation, reduces visibility, and complicates governance. Taken together, our contribution repositions temporary workers' housing as a constitutive element of the so-called green transition and exposes the socio-spatial tensions on which it depends.
23	**Dr. Ed Atkins**	**Objects of contention: how a green backlash is rooting itself in everyday energy cultures**

	University of Bristol	Climate action represents wholesale and complex change. Beyond the material questions of infrastructure and electrification, energy transitions are being lived and contested through the mundane goings-on of everyday life. A perceived tension opening between going (and being) 'green' and the cares and priorities of 'ordinary working people' often plays out through objects and practices of consumption that rarely register as 'energy' at all. In this paper, I explore how this tension has taken root in the mundane objects of everyday life. Within this, ubiquitous household objects (such as light bulbs, vacuum cleaners, or gas stoves) have become inscribed with new political meaning. In doing so, I argue that the energy humanities' attention to everyday energy cultures offers a distinct vantage point on backlash politics: taking seriously the political and symbolic importance of mundane consumption, rather than treating it as a side effect of energy transitions playing out through changing infrastructure alone. As a result, everyday energy cultures move beyond being an overlooked empirical site of backlash and, instead, provide a methodological route for telling new, different stories about who and what counts in energy transitions.