



CALL FOR PAPERS

‘CULTURAL LANDSCAPES OF ENERGY’: CONSTRUCTING HISTORIES IN THE AFTERMATH OF ENERGY PRODUCTION

15–16 September 2022

Mining and Technology Park in Leipzig Neuseenland, Germany

The production of energy has had a large impact on landscapes in Europe during the twentieth and the twenty-first century. The extraction of natural resources, such as coal mining and oil drilling, or the construction of large-scale infrastructure, such as dams, power plants and wind farms, have shaped what we refer to as ‘cultural landscapes of energy’. This economic utilisation of landscapes affected local societies by introducing new industrial work cultures, but it also involved the destruction of villages and small towns, due to excavation and flooding, and the resettlement of their inhabitants. Against this background, the understanding of ‘cultural landscapes of energy’ today is shaped by different attitudes towards historical processes: These range from the appreciation of technological innovation and industrial infrastructure to the critique of the negative ecological impact and finally, they are informed by personal histories of loss following destruction. In recent years, these histories have also been part of industrial heritage initiatives aiming to revalorise and revitalise the material and immaterial legacies of energy production. In this conference, we seek to enquire into the overlaps, interactions and conflicts between the different histories in ‘cultural landscapes of energy’ in Europe today.

Setting up coal mines, dams, power plants and oil derricks changed the ways people worked, resided and lived in the affected landscapes. Energy production and its downstream industries required a workforce and accommodation in new temporary or permanent settlements. The construction of new energy infrastructure and the resulting destruction of historically built environments also evoked protests and resistance, especially given the frequent power imbalances between energy production in peripheralised places, on the one hand, and the metropolitan centres that were being served, on the other. In reaction to this, already in the early twentieth century, energy infrastructure employed regionalist design (e.g., Heimatstil) to express their embeddedness in localities. Furthermore, energy producers promoted their endeavours through promotional materials such as film, merchandise and tours that projected local and regional histories leading into a prosperous future. In many places, however, the mono-structural orientation towards energy production had a long-lasting impact on the socio-economic structure that is reflected in outmigration and unemployment. Several regional development initiatives have sought to counteract these tendencies by fostering tourism, entertainment and leisure activities, such as sports and festivals. Here the provision of services, the design of souvenirs, museum exhibitions and tourist routes like the European Route of Industrial Heritage all engage in disseminating histories of energy production. While the various post-industrial activities have presented new income opportunities for local residents, the public projection of historical narratives also confronts them with the economic utilisation of individual and family histories.

Today the ‘cultural landscapes of energy’ in Europe bring together different historical perspectives surrounding work, habitation and leisure in the aftermath of energy production. In this conference, we are looking to explore the overlaps and conflicts of these histories regarding – but not limited to – the following issues:



- How are the histories of ‘cultural landscapes of energy’ constructed? How have the interactions with(in) the landscape changed over time?
- How is the concurrence of historical narratives from different perspectives negotiated at the local level? How do they engage with narratives at the national and transnational levels?
- What histories do tourism and leisure activities project and disseminate after the decommission of energy facilities?
- What role do historical narratives play in recultivation and environmental conservation?
- How do histories of energy production relate to discourses of belonging and home? How are they connected to processes of identity formation?
- What public outlets exist for histories of loss, destruction, resettlement and resistance? How are they integrated in activities relating to industrial heritage?

Please send an abstract of around 300 words and a short biographical note by **April 8, 2022**, to the organisers at corinne.geering@leibniz-gwzo.de and torsten.meyer@bergbaumuseum.de.

The conference will be hosted as an in-person event on the premises of the Mining and Technology Park close to Leipzig with an on-site exploration of the coal mining legacy in Germany and the post-industrial recultivation efforts. A shuttle from Leipzig will be provided. Depending on the pandemic situation, the conference will be organised in a hybrid format.

This conference is organised by Corinne Geering (Leibniz Institute for the History and Culture of Eastern Europe, GWZO) and Torsten Meyer (Deutsches Bergbau-Museum Bochum, Leibniz Research Museum for Geo-resources) in cooperation with the Mining and Technology Park in Leipzig Neuseenland. It is supported by the research lab “Valorisation and Commodification” within the Leibniz Research Alliance “Value of the Past”.

