

Online Roundtable Series on the Colonial Histories of Energy
Call for Participation
Summer 2026

We welcome applications from **researchers specialising in energy and colonial history** to participate in **a series of online roundtables on the colonial histories of energy**, which will take place in **late summer 2026**. The **deadline** for submissions is **15 July** (see below for practical details).

In the 2020s, a growing number of activists and scholars have started using the term ‘green colonialism’ to describe how the burden of the ‘energy transition’ demanded at an international level is primarily borne by formerly colonised states (Hamouchene 2023; Claar 2025; Dejonghe and Van de Graaf 2025). Consequently, several scholars have attempted to develop a rigorous concept of ‘energy colonialism’ applicable to present-day examples of renewable energy mega-projects undertaken in the Global South for the benefit of the Global North (Sánchez Contreras and al. 2023; Müller 2024). By contrast, the history of energy during the heyday of European colonialism is usually examined through a geopolitical lens. Consequently, historians of energy tend to use terms such as ‘fossil imperialism’ and ‘energy imperialism’ rather than ‘energy colonialism’, even when studying former colonies (Musso and Crouzet 2019). This is problematic as if energy imperialism can take various forms, from foreign capital investments in energy production to unequal exchanges of energy, only in colonial situations does energy production and circulation come under the sovereignty of a foreign state.

Meanwhile, STS scholars and energy historians have been calling for a more pluralist and less Eurocentric history of energy for years (van der Straeten and Hasenöhr 2016; Russ and Turnbull 2025). However, despite repeated calls to provincialize Europe in energy history, comparatively few historical studies have examined issues relating to fuel, power and energy in colonized territories between the 18th and mid-20th centuries (exceptions include Hasenöhr 2018; Chatterjee 2020; Shutzer 2020; Conor 2024; Cropper 2025). Until now, the vast majority of socio-political and environmental histories of energy remain focused on Europe, the United States, and OPEC+ countries (e.g. Andrews 2010; Mitchell 2013; Malm 2016; Vergara 2021; Gross and Needham 2023; Fresso 2024; Bruisch 2025).

Outside of the Western world, energy historians have devoted much of their attention to the Middle East (Meiton 2019; Barak 2020; Malm 2024) and to some parts of Eastern Asia, especially China

and Japan (Wu 2015; Seow 2023). The majority of these regions were never formally colonised, and, in the case of states such as the Ottoman Empire and Japan were imperial powers themselves. Moreover, studies examining the socio-environmental aspects of energy production, consumption or distribution in colonial settings frequently concentrate on a particular geographical area or energy source (e.g. Chatterjee 2023; Nguyen 2025) and the history of colonial energy still tends to be written independently of that of former metropolises (e.g. Cornu and al. 2025). Considering all of this, we believe that it would be beneficial to bring together studies related to specific colonies and energy productions and circulations to help identifying transversal themes and issues pertaining to colonial energy history.

We launch today this call to participate in a series of online roundtable discussions devoted to the colonial histories of energy, aiming at sparking a dialogue amongst scholars of energy and colonial history. The proposed format is the following: during these half-day sessions, several researchers will present their ongoing research for 5 minutes each, after which there will be time for collective discussion and exchange on the transversal questions outlined below. Our aim is to bring together **scholars for whom issues of fuel, power or energy are an important part of their research in colonial history, and *vice-versa* energy historians who study colonial settings.**

This series of online roundtables will aim to answer the following questions (amongst others):

- What does the ‘colonial situation’ (Balandier 1951) make to energy production, circulation and consumption, in comparison to metropolitan and informal imperial contexts?
- Reciprocally, why and how is energy history an interesting prism to analyze colonial situations?

We are therefore particularly interested in **comparative studies** of different types of formal colonisation, such as colonies, protectorates and mandates, as well as comparisons between colonies and the metropolis and between formal and informal colonisation.

Expressions of interest, in the form of a **short statement (200-300 words)** explaining your research in energy and colonial history and your motivation for participating in the roundtable(s), along with your **CV**, your availabilities (dates and time zone) in September and any **questions**, should be sent to Lucie Rondeau du Noyer (lucie.rondeau-du-noyer@cncrs.fr) and Armel Campagne (armel.campagne@ucd.ie) **by 15 July 2026 11:55 PM CET**. Accepted participants will be notified by the 30th of July. The roundtable(s), divided in thematic half-day sessions, are set to take place **online in early September 2026**.

Selected references

- Andrews, Thomas G. 2010. *Killing for Coal: America's Deadliest Labor War*. Harvard University Press.
- Balandier, Georges. 1951. 'La situation coloniale : approche théorique'. *Cahiers Internationaux de Sociologie* 11: 44–79.
- Barak, On. 2020. *Powering Empire: how Coal made the Middle East and sparked Global Carbonization*. University of California Press.
- Bruisch, Katja. 2025. *Burning Swamps: Peat and the Forgotten Margins of Russia's Fossil Economy*. Cambridge University Press.
- Chatterjee, Elizabeth. 2020. 'The Asian Anthropocene: Electricity and Fossil Developmentalism'. *The Journal of Asian Studies* 79 (1): 3–24.
- Chatterjee, Elizabeth. 2023. 'The poor woman's energy: Low-modernist solar technologies and international development, 1878–1966'. *Journal of Global History* 18 (3): 439–60.
- Clair, Simone. 2025. 'Global Energy Partnerships: Green Colonialism and an Ecological New International Economic Order'. In *Global Partnerships and Neocolonialism*, edited by Aram Ziai, Praveen Jha, and Jule Lümmer. Springer Nature Switzerland.
- Conor, Liz. 2024. *Colonial extraction and industrial steam power, 1790-1880: decarbonising imperial history*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Cornu, Pierre, Stéphane Frioux, Anaël Marrec, Charles-François Mathis, and Antonin Plarier. 2025. *Une histoire environnementale de la France. vol. 2, Les natures de la République, 1870-1940*. La Découverte.
- Cropper, John. 2025. 'The Imperial Energy Economy: Energy, Industrialization, and the Environment in Nineteenth-Century Senegal'. *Nineteenth-Century French Studies* 53 (3): 242–59.
- Dejonghe, Marie, and Thijs Van de Graaf. 2025. 'Green Colonialism or Green Transformation? The Equity Implications of Clean Hydrogen Trade'. *Political Geography* 120 (June): 103338.

- Fressoz, Jean-Baptiste. 2024. *More and More and More: An All-Consuming History of Energy*. Random House.
- Gross, Stephen G., and Andrew Needham. 2023. *New energies: a history of energy transitions in Europe and North America*. University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Hamouchene, Hamza. 2023. 'The Energy Transition in North Africa: Neocolonialism Again!' In *Dismantling Green Colonialism*, edited by Hamza Hamouchene and Katie Sandwell. Pluto Press.
- Hasenöhr, Ute. 2018. 'Rural Electrification in the British Empire'. *History of Retailing and Consumption* 4 (1): 10–27.
- Malm, Andreas. 2016. *Fossil Capital: the rise of steam power and the roots of global warming*. Verso.
- Malm, Andreas. 2024. *The destruction of Palestine is the destruction of the earth*. Verso.
- Meiton, Fredrik. 2019. *Electrical Palestine: capital and technology from empire to nation*. University of California Press.
- Mitchell, Timothy. 2013. *Carbon democracy: political power in the age of oil*. Verso.
- Müller, Franziska. 2024. 'Energy Colonialism'. *Journal of Political Ecology* 31 (1).
- Musso, Marta, and Guillemette Crouzet. 2019. 'Energy Imperialism? Introduction to the Special Issue'. *Revue d'Histoire de l'Énergie* 3 (2): 1–5.
- Nguyen, Thuy Linh. 2025. *Vietnam's Coal Frontier: Mining, Environment, and Empire*. Cambridge University Press.
- Russ, Daniela, and Thomas Turnbull. 2025. *Energy's History: Toward a Global Canon*. Stanford University Press.
- Sánchez Contreras, Josefa, Alberto Matarán Ruiz, Alvaro Campos-Celador, and Eva Maria Fjellheim. 2023. 'Energy Colonialism: A Category to Analyse the Corporate Energy Transition in the Global South and North'. *Land* 12 (6): 6.
- Seow, Victor. 2023. *Carbon Technocracy: Energy Regimes in Modern East Asia*. University of Chicago Press.

Shutzer, Matthew. 2020. 'Energy in South Asian History'. *History Compass* 18 (12): e12635.

Straeten, Jonas van der, and Ute Hasenöhr. 2016. 'Connecting the Empire: New Research Perspectives on Infrastructures and the Environment in the (Post)Colonial World'. *NTM Zeitschrift Für Geschichte Der Wissenschaften, Technik Und Medizin* 24 (4): 355–91.

Vergara, Germán. 2021. *Fueling Mexico: Energy and Environment, 1850–1950*. Cambridge University Press.

Wu, Shellen Xiao. 2015. *Empires of coal: fueling China's entry into the modern world order, 1860-1920*. Stanford University Press.