

As society edges towards a deeper awareness of the decline of fossil fuels as an energy source and the urgent need to reduce the carbon emissions which contribute to global warming and climate change, the project “Reflecting Oil: Arts-Based Research On Oil Transitionings” offers innovative multi-perspective reflection about crude oil, one of the most important fossil fuels characterising modern life.

The project is grounded on the hypothesis that fresh perspectives to *rethink* this omnipresent yet often elusive liquid – in its material dimension as a *chemical mixture*, its real-world dimension as a *geopolitical cause of conflict and pollution* and its symbolic sociocultural dimension as a frontier myth-like *object of desire* – can be illuminated through the use of arts-based research methods and thus help to inform the transition to clean energy in an original way.

Drawing on the latest developments in arts-based research, contributions by international “petro-artists” and recent theoretical advances in the emergent academic field of Energy Humanities and interrelated disciplines, the principal investigator, accomplished Austrian artist Ernst Logar, will embark on a series of artistic experiments involving crude oil which are to be carried out in the laboratories of Montanuniversität Leoben’s Department of Petroleum Engineering with the support of its scientists and an interdisciplinary team of experts from the University of Applied Arts Vienna and the Universities of Alberta and Waterloo, the other cooperating academic institutions.

Creative, hands-on manipulation of the material by artists and non-artists, and the imaginative use of technical equipment, will make the formal, industrial space of the laboratories into sites for speculative exploration and fresh ways of thinking. The project will break new ground in arts-based research by providing a *unique* means of engaging with the diverse perception levels of crude oil (its visual appearance, colour, smell, tactile sense, viscosity, toxicity, etc.) with a view to contribute to the development of a creative representation and narrative of oil to facilitate the public’s transformation of perceptions and imagination of a democratic future beyond oil. A congruent, critical artistic discourse making profound meaning of the multidimensionality of *unique* artworks emanating from this engagement will be part of the research contribution.

The project will use a multi-method approach characterised by interrelated *artistic experimentation*, *interdisciplinary reflection* facilitated by the collaborative team, and *dissemination* through a diversified public outreach strategy (a public petrocultures colloquium, exhibitions, public talks and exhaustive documentation both online and in print media).

The state-of-the-art research infrastructure facilitated by the cooperating institutions will ensure that research outputs are all of the highest quality, and that each project phase enhances our understanding of 21st century societies’ oil transitionings. The project will strengthen the collaborative exchanges between scientific and artistic communities and further Austria’s research capacity.