



Infrastructural Interfaces & the Technological Surround



CLAIMS to Digital Everyday Lives & Energy Futures in Cape Town



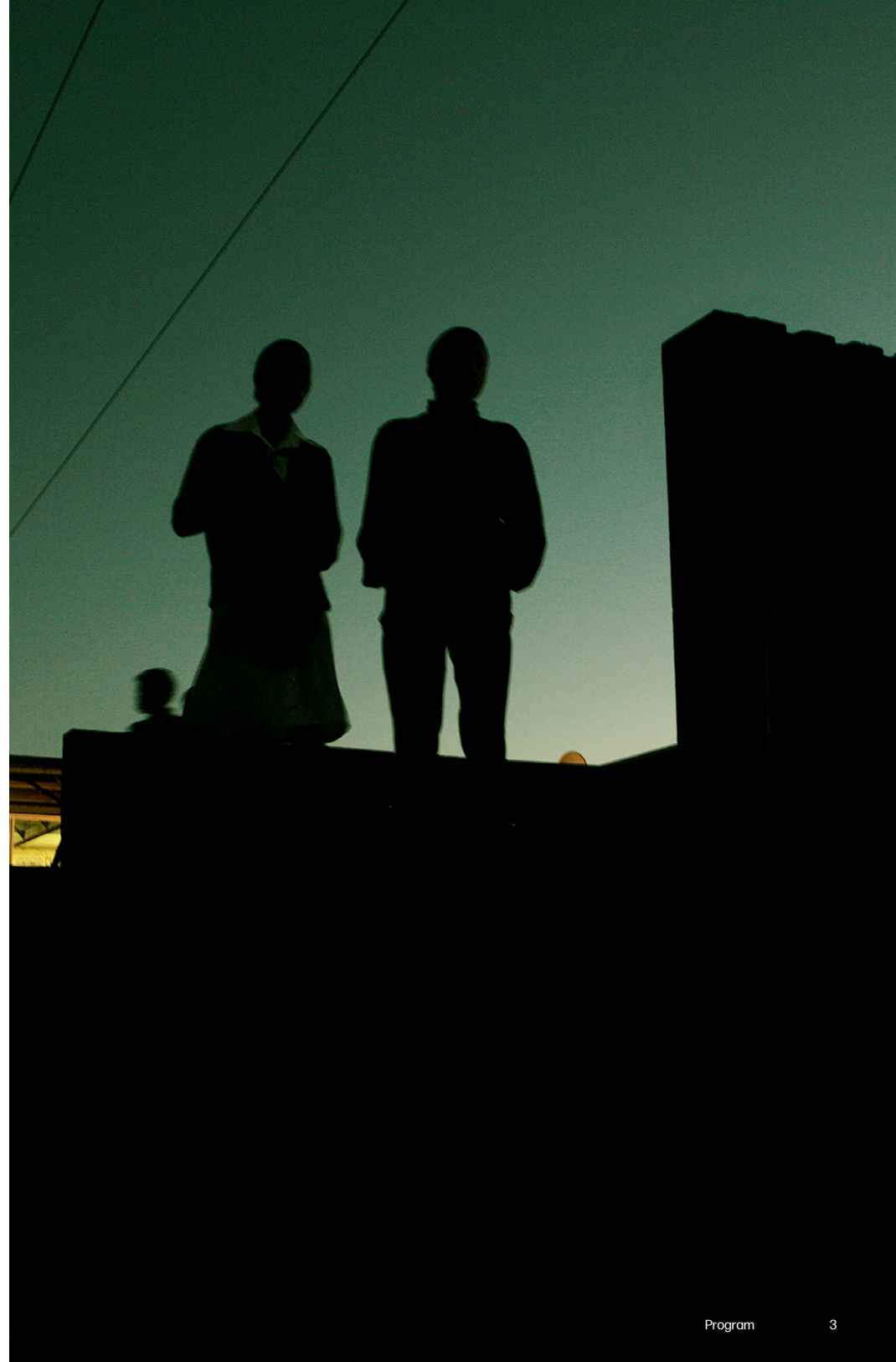
Introduction

In this 2-day International Conference, we think together about infrastructures, technologies, digital everyday lives, and energy futures in Cape Town, South Africa (and beyond). We look across scales and sites - at situated, digital everyday lives, global tech giants, and local tech entrepreneurs, and the energy needed to keep this dimension powered in a time of profound energy crisis in South Africa. The Conference is sponsored by the research projects 'Digital everyday lives far from Silicon Valley: Technological Imaginaries and Energy Futures in a South African Township (DigiSAT)' (IRFD 2021-2024, 1130-00019B) and 'CLAIMS to Energy Citizenship in South Africa' (DFC 2024-2028, 24-M05-KU). PI: Karen Waltorp, UCPH.

We center the Cape Flats on the urban periphery of Cape Town; we center the surrounds - those urban spaces beyond control and capture that exist as a locus of rebellion and invention (Harvey & Moten 2013, Simone 2022). This extends to considering in parallel the subversion of digital technologies of oppression toward a liberatory potential - the technological surround (Coleman 2021) in a post-Apartheid setting.

People make claims to energy and electricity from vastly different positions, as they engage with the digital services and technologies powered by energy and undergirded by an infrastructure of servers, centers, and cables. The promise of stability which infrastructures hold (Harvey 2018), makes them enchanted sites of contemporary state-craft (Harvey & Knox 2012), even as these infrastructures (may) disappoint and generate negative consequences. How can we understand the (dis)enchantment with the urban state-craft of energy-generation and -delivery? How do socio-technical imaginaries of the 'Silicon Cape' and the recurring power cuts figure in these entwined digital infrastructures?

The title of the Conference 'Infrastructural Interfaces & the Technological Surround' is an invitation to grapple with the digital-energy nexus across the two research projects and alongside our Keynotes Beth Coleman and Penny Harvey. We foreground the empirical attention to everyday (work) lives, and a propositional attitude to thinking about the space of energy and possible futures in an interdisciplinary perspective. A Book Talk on Energy Futures: Anthropocene Challenges, Emerging Technologies and Everyday Life (DeGruyter 2022) is part of the official conference program.



Monday June 10th Day 1:

The Technological Surround & Digital Everyday Lives

9.30 Arrival

9.45 Welcome & short introduction to the DigiSAT & CLAIMS projects & teams:
Karen Walторp, Liza R. Cirolia, Tammy Wilks, & Asnath Paula Kambunga



10.00 Opening Keynote
Technological Surround as the Digital Everyday: AI in the World
Beth Coleman, University of Toronto.

Chair: Stine Lomborg

11.15 Coffee Break

11.45 Blackout: Tech Imaginaries, Energy Crisis, & Everyday Life in South Africa's Silicon Cape (DigiSAT project)
Asnath P. Kambunga & Karen Walторp.

Discussants: Sam Breslin, Julia Velkova, Steffen Jensen, Nathalie Ortar, Signe Sophus Lai
Chair: Nanna Thylstrup

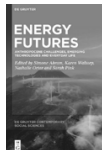
13.15 Lunch

From Mahalle Lebanese Restaurant

14.30: Interventions from a Nordic POV:

- Tom Bratrud on Digital Sociality & Access: AJEC Special Issue
- Laura Watts on Megabytes vs Megawatts

15.00 Book Symposium: Energy Futures: Anthropocene Challenges, Emerging Technologies, & Everyday Life:



- Everyday Futures, Spaces, Mobilities: Nathalie Ortar
- Powering 'Smart' Futures: Liza R. Cirolia, Julia Velkova
- Imagining Energy Futures Beyond Colonial Continuation: Pierre du Plessis, Karen Walторp

Discussants: Brit R. Winthereik, Astrid Oberborbeck Andersen, Kasper Tang Vangkilde

16.45 Break - possibility for swimming

18.30 Conference Dinner

Il Buco - Responsible Restaurant, Njalsgade 19b, 2300 Copenhagen

Tuesday June 11th Day 2:

CLAIMS to Energy Futures & Infrastructural Interfaces

9.30 Arrival

9.45 CLAIMS to Energy Citizenship & Energy Sovereignty
Tammy Wilks, Liza R. Cirolia & Karen Walторp

- CLAIMS from the Cape Flats & Everyday Energy Use
- Sub-national Energy Sovereignty & Decentralized Technologies
- Integrating Perspectives: Design Workshops & Steps Toward Energy Citizenship

Discussants: Lisa Ann Richey, Jacob Rasmussen, Tom Bratrud, Nanna Schneidermann
Chair: Jannie Møller Hartley

11.45 Methods Roundtable Discussion: Sound + Vision + Evocation

Beth Coleman, Christian Vium, Pierre du Plessis, Laura Watts, Meghna Singh

Chair: Karen Walторp

12.45 Lunch

From Mahalle Lebanese Restaurant



14.00 Closing Keynote
Politics at the Interface - Reflections on Infrastructures of Energy Citizenship
Penny Harvey, Manchester University

Chair: Liza R. Cirolia

15.30 Closing comments & thank you to all

Project Summaries

DigiSAT: Digital Everyday Lives far from Silicon Valley *University of Copenhagen*

The project "Digital everyday lives far from Silicon Valley: Technological Imaginaries and Energy Futures in a South African Township (DigiSAT 2021-2024)" interrogates everyday implications of digital developments in times of profound energy crises in South Africa, mapping interrelated controversies. Drawing on more than two decades of ethnographic research on the Cape Flats on the outskirts of Cape Town, the project analyses what digital infrastructures and technologies do for- and to- people in this (former) township area on the Cape Flats, and how this relates to the current energy crisis in myriad ways.

We follow a call to show empirically how technologies emerge in and with societies and people's everyday practices, staking a claim for centring this in debates about possible digital and energy futures. The energy system is changing at rapid pace and scale, affecting every aspect of how energy is generated, distributed, and used. South Africa currently finds itself in a deep energy supply crisis, with daily scheduled blackouts - known as load-shedding - effectuated nation-wide with increasing frequency. We address fundamental issues of concern around inequality, ecology, and economy: and controversies emerging around the cost of data, the failing energy grid, and the arrival of global tech giants in South Africa. We analyse the 'Silicon Cape' in terms of what it means to hopes, fears, livelihoods, and the digital everyday lives of township dwellers and young tech entrepreneurs on the Cape Flats, a former township area on the outskirts of Cape Town, pushing beyond the myth of 'digital universalism'.

We draw in the notion of the parallax effect: seeing the same phenomenon from various points of view and across scales, focusing on tech giants, local tech entrepreneurs, and township people in turn, looking at the ways in which digital technologies and infrastructures simultaneously create new opportunities and generate ethical and environmental challenges.

www.digisatproject.com

CLAIMS to Energy Citizenship in South Africa
University of Copenhagen, African Center for Cities, University of Cape Town & City of Cape Town

Energy access and affordability are major challenges across Africa. The research project 'CLAIMS to

Energy Citizenship in South Africa' aims to confront this challenge, focusing on Cape Town. In a rapid transition away from coal and toward renewable energy, CLAIMS unpacks how energy - in particular electricity - is a key site of negotiating contemporary citizenship.

Climate change intersects with other development threats such as poverty and political exclusion. To avoid exacerbating existing inequalities in the transition to green energy, it is key to consider energy citizenship - and include restorative justice and belonging in it. There is a need for deeper socio-cultural understandings, likely to impact on the futures that forecasting modelling and scenario building seeks to predict, and for more qualitative research into the experiential dimensions of energy use in urban South Africa. The objective of CLAIMS is to understand, substantiate and contextualise 'energy citizenship'. Concretely, we shed light on the interface between government and city policies and provision practices, and the ongoing claims, concerns, and actions of marginalised citizens and electricity users on the Cape Flats, a township area on the outskirts of Cape Town.

Partnering with local stakeholders, we contribute evidence-based and people-centred perspectives on green energy transitions and provision, amidst an unprecedented energy crisis with spiralling electricity prices and extensive scheduled black-outs, and against a longer history of deep urban injustices. An interdisciplinary team of South African and Danish anthropologists, geographers, urban planners and historians, we provide solid, empirically based, knowledge on how energy and electricity is experienced and claimed by citizens on the margins and handled by the city. We trace the concrete technologies of 'the electricity socket' and 'the solar panel' and the infrastructures, politics, practices, and future possibilities they engender. Through ethnographic fieldwork, archival work, interviews, co-creative mapping, collaborative filmmaking, and design workshops, we provide insights into experiences of the planning of - and participation in - energy systems, sensitive to the innovative solutions of marginalised citizens and the municipality, and document the scenarios where provision works well, including the City's experiments with Independent Power Production (IPPs), and citizens' involvement in mini-grid projects.

www.drpfcentre.com/project/claims-energy-citizenship-in-south-africa



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Tammy Vanessa Wilks,
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University of Copenhagen



Karen Waltrorp
PI CLAIMS & DigiSAT
University of Copenhagen

Invited Speakers & Discussants:

Asnath Paula Kambunga
University of Copenhagen
post.doc. DigiSAT

Astrid Oberborbeck Andersen
Aalborg University, Techno-Anthropology

Beth Coleman
Keynote speaker
University of Toronto, Data & Cities / Artist

Brit R. Winthereik
Denmarks Technical University (DTU)

Christian Vium
Aarhus University,
Fellow Harvard Film Study Center 2023-24 / Artist

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Roskilde University (RUC)
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PI DataPublics

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PI Megabytes vs. Megawatts

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University of Copenhagen, PI CLAIMS/DigiSAT

Kasper Vangkilde
Department of Anthropology
University of Copenhagen, PI RE-ANIMATE

Laura Watts
University of Edinburgh
Megabyte vs Megawatts / Poet

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Copenhagen Business School, Centre for
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University of Cape Town, Co-I of CLAIMS

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ENTPE-University of Lyon

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Manchester University

Pierre du Plessis
Environmental Humanities, Oslo University

Samantha Breslin
SODAS: Copenhagen Center for
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Stine Lomborg
Department of Communication, University of
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University of Copenhagen, post.doc CLAIMS

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Oslo University

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Graphic design: Sebastian Ygge

PI CLAIMS & DigiSAT: Karen Walторp

