

Reflections on the PCF-Summerschool

Guillaume Mulard

The summer school “Post-Carbon Futures. Cities, Industries and Energies in Central Europe” was an interesting experience for me. On one hand, it was very inspiring to see, all the participants being connected to each other thanks to their common interests in urban-industrial entanglements and energy transition, and, at the same time, still having differences resulting from the remarkable heterogeneity of the different backgrounds. Many of them grew up in profoundly different cultures, regions and thus got in touch with different knowledge or different theoretical and practical approaches. The interesting insights I gained during this summer school were both the results of the active interest of the participants and, of the commitment of the organisers. They had organised interesting field trips and shared their own research interests and field experiences with us. I thank them for the summer school. If it had not been for them, the summer school would not have been possible.

During this week, I experienced fruitful discussions and exchanges with many participants and organisers. Just to mention two of them, I remember my discussions with Benedikt and the presentation given by Felix Ringel. At first glance, my research topic and Benedikt’s seem to be quite different. Whereas Benedikt’s research project is about the international supplies of hydrogen and its related issues, my research project focuses on territorial conflicts related to the land use and the exploitation of natural resources. Specifically, I’m analysing the negotiations between different actors (mining company, ministry of industry, local politicians, NGOs and inhabitants) regarding the approval or disapproval of a mining project in Fontrieu, a locality in the south of France. But during our discussions, we both slowly recognized the connections between our topics. First, Benedikt explained to me that tungsten is a promising material in order to improve the efficiency of technologies that are involved both in the generation of electricity and heat from hydrogen and in the production of hydrogen. Then, I understood that the development of a relocation policy regarding the mining industry in France was not an isolated event, but must be understood as an integral part of European policies which seek to secure the supply of strategic and

critical mineral resources, including tungsten. I finally realized the key role of this “critical and strategic metal” in the digital and energy transition and the potential political reasons for the mining project in Fontrieu.

A second example of these enlightening moments during the summer school can be found in the inspiring anthropological work of Felix Ringel regarding the concept of time. His conceptual approach to time was really interesting for me because the temporal dimension in territorial conflicts enables us to follow the emergence, evolution and transformation of power relations and the configuration of actors over time. From this point of view, it is then possible to describe the evolution and shift of worldviews of different factors such as the perceptions, significations and representation of land, resources and territory or the attitudes towards development and futures.

Finally, I would like to emphasize the point that besides being a place for intellectual interchange, the summer school was also a place for conviviality, and personal interchange. This week was a short, but intensive and wonderful experience. But unfortunately, “all good things must come to an end“. I’m really grateful to everyone I came across during this week.

About the Author

Guillaume Mulard is a MA student at the ‘Institute für Empirische Kulturwissenschaft’ at Hamburg University. He holds a BA degree in Anthropology and business economics. Guillaume is interested in environmental Anthropology and human-environment interactions.