

RIFS-Blogpost

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The starting point for Fellow Angela Lee's interactive workshop was on Köpenicker Straße in Mitte, appropriately located in front of the site of BEW, Berliner Energie und Wärme, the local power company.

During Science Week 2025, RIFS Fellow Angela Lee, along with Cherry Cheung and Charlotte Coosemans, hosted an interactive workshop titled Tracing the Invisible: Walking the Energeocene. Following in the wake of a recent conversation with Angela

! Zum Aktualisieren der Textelemente, Zitation markieren und dann F9 drücken !

Zitation: [Letz, Sabine] (2026): [Walking With a Hidden Giant] – RIFS-Blogpost, [28.11.2025].

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and an interview about her research, the workshop sparked my curiosity - it starts with the question: what kind of era could the 'Energieocene' be?

Of course, energy is everywhere, we depend on it, and yet it usually remains invisible. But what do I understand by the hidden metabolism of energy and resources beneath the surface of urban life? A metabolism is something active, alive – it almost sounds as if it were an animal?

The workshop kicked off on Köpenicker Straße outside a district heating complex belonging to Berliner Energie und Wärme (BEW), the city's municipal energy supplier. It was the first truly cold day of autumn, and "warm thoughts" felt particularly fitting.

A number of questions were raised in the event's description, such as "*What powers your comfort?*" or "*What really powers us — our bodies, our cities, our planet?*" The description conjured images of a vast, monstrous infrastructure of energy — a hidden giant that quietly shapes how we live, breathe, and connect. So there it is again, the association that it could be an animal. Guided by these questions, a group of around 30 people from across Europe gathered that Sunday to contemplate new ways of living in the Energieocene.

The first participants have arrived at the meeting point for the Science Week Walk.

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As the participatory walk began, Angela posed several questions that we would revisit throughout the afternoon in our open-air laboratory.

„If we broaden our understanding of energy, what do you notice during your walk?“

„What helps the city to recover, to adapt, or to maintain itself?“

„What can we do collectively to transform the way we share energy?“



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We strolled down to the Spree, passing the DAZ (*German Architecture Centre*) and continuing along a narrow street now lined with former factory buildings converted into apartments. One building, distinguished by a slender brick chimney, was once a soap factory. Today, a residential complex stretches right up to the riverbank.

To our right, we saw a kindergarten and a communal urban garden, both constructed using sustainable building methods. Further along the riverbank, a few slightly askew huts topped with solar panels – known as “Tippieland” – stood alongside a former industrial building that once housed an ice-works.





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Angela tasked us with slowing down and looking more closely, encouraging us to sense the hidden flows of energy and resources that permeate urban life. On the street, it was first and foremost cold and windy—we shivered. It quickly became clear that warming energy needs an enclosure—a structure that acts as a skin, retaining internal heat while protecting us from the elements. But what else does it take to feed and sustain this hidden giant?

What can we do together to change the way we share energy?

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The workshop then moved to the Holzmarkt Estate, where, inside one of the block-huts, we formed three groups. Each group collected their ideas—infrastructures, buildings, objects, materials, plants, animals, and planetary resources—onto large sheets of paper, using sketches, drawings, and collages to create a kind of energy ecology. The goal was to visualize metabolic cycles—to bring the energy-undercover-animal to life...



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Together, the participants visualized the invisible through drawings, creating a collective visual investigation of processes, metabolic cycles, and energy ecologies. The three groups worked diligently, each developing a highly distinct vision. Angela invited each Group to present and explain their final concepts. The presentations offered exciting insights and gave us plenty to think about on the walk home.

