



EINLADUNG ZUM KOLLOQUIUM

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**« The coal question » :
A cultural history of coal in Victorian Britain**

As early as 1789, at the onset of the energy transition towards coal in Great Britain, the question of a possible shortage of this fossil fuel was raised. What was to become “the coal question” (a phrase coined by Stanley Jevons in his 1865 eponymous book) obsessed English people for more than a century. On the basis of this surprising worry (considering the huge amount of coal in the country), we would like to question the premise on which historians have so far analysed coal: indeed, it was not only an *opportunity* for the economic development of the country, but also a *dependence* that was challenged. From a cultural point of view, it is therefore possible to wonder how English people accepted and understood such a subjection to a polluting and exhaustible energy source, if they voiced hostility to it, and whether they moved away from or tried to reduce their reliance on it.

Charles-François Mathis is Senior Lecturer at Bordeaux-Montaigne University and president of the French network of environmental historians (RUCHE – leruche.hypotheses.org). He specialises in British and environmental history, with a cultural approach. He has published a book on the birth of an environmental consciousness in Victorian Britain (*In Nature We Trust. Les paysages anglais à l'ère industrielle*, 2010) and his forthcoming book (2017), will deal with the place of vegetal nature in French cities from the 17th century to present times.

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