

THREATS TO POWER: METHANE EXTRACTION IN RWANDA

Kristin Doughty, Associate Professor of Anthropology, University of Rochester

At the border of Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo sits Lake Kivu, an infamous freshwater lake whose scenic beauty conceals vast stores of methane and carbon dioxide. On its shores, internationally financed companies, in partnership with the Rwandan state, have built the world's only dissolved-methane-to-electricity projects. In this talk, I will talk about my forthcoming book *Threats to Power* (MIT Press), which situates these projects within the long shadow of Rwanda's post-genocide reconstruction, asking how a lake came to be understood as an existential danger in a region shaped by devastating human violence. Drawing on ethnographic research conducted with engineers, government officials, and communities around Kivu, my project examines efforts to transform methane from threat to resource—and what these efforts reveal about the exercise of contemporary forms of power. Bringing energy into conversation with carceral geography and war ecologies, I trace how a dangerous gas becomes a tool of national repair, uncovering the fraught relationship between technological promise, sovereign power, and the lived realities of those who dwell at the lake's edge.



Facilitated by:

- Saida Hodžić, Associate Professor of Anthropology, Cornell University
- Nikita Agarwal and Nora Stocovaz, Syracuse University PhD students

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