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“Energy Democracy in the Era of Climate Crisis”

From protest over the Keystone XL Pipeline to activist calls for a just energy transition to controversies over deployment of evolving solar and wind energy technologies, energy transition is becoming one of the most important sociotechnical challenges, made even more acute by pressing ecological exigencies such as climate change. The ongoing energy transition offers a significant opportunity to examine the relationship between energy and democracy. Energy democracy is both a just and participatory ideal to which many communities strive, and a set of practices that seek to shift energy decision making away from energy corporations to local communities, away from fossil fuels toward alternatives, and away from the people who benefit the most to the people who are most affected by energy extraction. This presentation is a rhetorical analysis of North American indigenous struggles around energy production such as Dakota Access Pipeline protests and Honor The Earth’s no coal project on Dine and Crow lands. It describes how these movements both enact and challenge the principles and practices of energy democracy. The presentation concludes by considering the possibilities of energy democracy as a framework for a just response to the climate crisis.