

# Volkswagen Foundation Funds Project on Model Theory

Model Research as a Joint Effort of the Humanities and Engineering Sciences – Social Dimensions of the Energy Transition



*Shaped conceptions and expectations are often part of scientific models. Using the Energy Lab 2.0 as an example, these mechanisms shall be analyzed. (Photo: KIT)*

**Models are the basis of political and social decisions. But many people do not know that these decisions are not only influenced by figures and facts, they are also determined unconsciously by ideologies and attitudes. The interdisciplinary project “Literaturforschung und Energiewende – Entwicklung und Applikation einer literarischen Modelltheorie“ (Poetic Modeling and Energy Transition – Development and Application of Literary Model Theory) of the University of Münster (WWU) and Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT) analyzes energy technology modeling using literary model theory. Volkswagen Foundation funds this project with EUR 940,000.**

Modeling is accomplished in every scientific discipline. It helps understand current developments, shape future scenarios, and assess the consequences of our acting. An overarching theory combining the strengths of models of different disciplines is still lacking, however. The joint project is therefore aimed at developing a literary model theory to review narratives in technical and scientific models and for use as a new instrument in technology assessment.



*KIT Energy Center: Having future in mind*

**Monika Landgraf**  
Chief Press Officer,  
Head of Corp. Communications

Kaiserstraße 12  
76131 Karlsruhe, Germany  
Phone: +49 721 608-47414  
Fax: +49 721 608-43658  
Email: [presse@kit.edu](mailto:presse@kit.edu)

**For further information,  
please contact:**

Kosta Schinarakis  
Science Scout  
Phone: +49 721 608 41956  
Fax: +49 721 608 43658  
Email: [schinarakis@kit.edu](mailto:schinarakis@kit.edu)

“We are interested in what drives human beings in model development apart from their scientific findings,” Professor Veit Hagenmeyer, Head of the Institute for Applied Computer Science (IAI) of KIT, says. The scientists working in the areas of German studies, English studies, philosophy, education, computer science, and technology assessment intend to pool their cultures and to analyze which narratives of society, i.e. personal opinions, conceptions, and expectations as well as ideologies, are incorporated in modeling and which aspects exceeding the scientific problem proper affect a model.

“Models often have a life of their own,” the computer scientist coordinating KIT’s project shares describes the phenomenon. In cooperation with KIT’s Energy Lab 2.0, energy research models are to be analyzed and improved with the help of the new model theory. In addition, the KIT experts want to push “hermeneutic change” in technology assessment with their project results. This is to promote in-depth understanding of human acting. Hermeneutics is the theory and methodology of understanding, in particular of texts. In a broader sense as envisaged by the project, it is the theory of understanding contents and sources in their context.

The project “Literaturforschung und Energiewende – Entwicklung und Applikation einer literarischen Modelltheorie” (Poetic Modeling and Energy Transition – Development and Application of a Literary Model Theory) will start in August 2017. It will be funded by Volkswagen Foundation under its “Extraordinary Projects” program with EUR 940,000 for a duration of four years. Project partners are the English Department and the Institute for German Studies of the University of Münster (WWU) as well as KIT’s Institute for Technology Assessment and Systems Analysis (ITAS), Institute for Applied Computer Science (IAI), and Institute for Vocational Education and General Education (IBAP).

More information:

<http://portal.volkswagenstiftung.de/search/projectDetails.do?ref=93293>  
[https://www.uni-muester.de/Philologie/aktuelles/pm/2017\\_volkswagenstiftung\\_foerdert\\_projekt\\_zu\\_literaturforschung\\_und\\_energiewende.html](https://www.uni-muester.de/Philologie/aktuelles/pm/2017_volkswagenstiftung_foerdert_projekt_zu_literaturforschung_und_energiewende.html)

(In German only)

More about the KIT Energy Center: <http://www.energy.kit.edu>

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*Since 2010, the KIT has been certified as a family-friendly university.*

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