

Living with Inflammation (Prag, 9–10 Apr 26)

Prag, Apr 9–10, 2026

Deadline: Jan 23, 2026

Léa Perraudin

Living with Inflammation: Inquiry into the Ontology and Politics of Flammability.

Organizers: Tereza Stöckelová and Hana Porkertová (Institute of Sociology of the Czech Academy of Sciences) and Léa Perraudin (Department of Cultural History and Theory, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin).

Keynotes: Harris Solomon (Duke University) and Andrea Ford (University of Edinburgh).

In contemporary biomedicine, inflammation has emerged as a central concept in understanding health and disease. It is increasingly studied as a physiological process underlying a wide array of conditions—from obesity and cardiovascular disease to neurodegenerative disorders such as Alzheimer’s, as well as depression and cancer (Furman et al., 2019; Medzhitov, 2008). While acute inflammation—a targeted response to specific stressors or injury—is a vital and protective function of the immune system, chronic low-grade inflammation is now recognized as a source of long-term harm.

Considering these developments, Hannah Landecker (2024) argues that inflammation research has profound implications for understanding how society “gets under the skin.” She observes that “the inflammatory body emerging from the studies of adiposity and diabetes is produced by metabolizing material and psychosocial conditions.” In this way, social inequalities manifest as inflammatory states—not as downstream consequences but as upstream conditions of health disparities.

Attention to inflammation may, in turn, illuminate the intricate entanglements of bodies, ecologies, and material infrastructures, drawing critical attention to the creeping conditions of exposure, contamination, and toxicity associated with anthropogenic interference (Alaimo, 2016; Chen, 2012; Liboiron, 2021; Murphy, 2017; Naddaf, 2025; Shotwell, 2016). Inflammability may also serve as a productive lens for analysing the reactive (mal)functions of material objects within technological systems—whether solar batteries, urban infrastructures, or post-industrial landscapes. While flaming combustion is a high-temperature chemical reaction prone to escalating momentum, the colder burn and slow spread of latent, smouldering processes invite reflection on their temporal and material thresholds (Perraudin 2025).

Drawing on STS studies of social topology (de Laet & Mol, 2000; Mol & Law, 1994; Law & Singleton, 2005), Porkertová and Stöckelová (2025) recently introduced the notion of the inflammable object to describe a specific capacity to “catch fire”: such objects embody both the potential to

erupt and the possibility of fragile control that prevents irreversible damage. Inflammability is thus neither fully eliminable; rather, it may serve as a harbinger of systemic disturbance and complexity. The issue, then, is not one of eradication but, to paraphrase Haraway (2016), of finding ways to live with the smouldering trouble.

We invite papers that examine inflammatory or inflammable objects across diverse settings, to explore the analytical productivity of inflammation (as a condition), flammability (as a quality), and smouldering (as a process). How do these concepts relate, overlap, or intra-sect within bodies, materials, and ecosystems? Our aim is to ignite—and keep smouldering—a sustained conversation that will culminate in a special journal issue.

Deadline for abstracts (max. 300 words): 23 January 2026

Submit proposals to: hana.porkertova (at) soc.cas.cz

Selected participants will be expected to submit a 3,000-word draft paper by 31 March 2026.

Papers will be shared with all participants prior to the workshop, and each paper will be assigned a discussant.

Reference:

CFP: Living with Inflammation (Prag, 9-10 Apr 26). In: ArtHist.net, Nov 29, 2025 (accessed Jun 24, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/51248>>.