



Umweltpolitik in a Shifting International Order

The Making of the German “Energiewende”

Workshop & Film Screening, series “Green Germany?” Part IV

Tuesday 19 november 2024

Kloveniersburgwal 48

Room E1.02 E

Program

14:00 Welcome and coffee

14:15 **Norm Entrepreneurs, Green Entrepreneurs, and the Making of the *Energiewende***

Stephen Milder (Rachel Carson Center, LMU Munich)

15:00 **Technological Disruption by the 5th and 6th Innovation Cycles and the Economical and Geo-Political Impacts on Germany and Europe**

Noam Shoval (European Forum at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

15:45 Coffee break

16:00 **Energy Revolution: How Citizens and Communities Have Powered Germany’s *Energiewende***

Trevelyan Wing (University of Cambridge)

16:45 Wrap-up

17:00 Dinner

19:00 **Introduction: The Performative Politics of German Environmentalism**

Katrin Sieg (BMW Center for German and European Studies, Georgetown University)

Film screening: Documentary “Vergiss Meyn nicht”

Summary: In 2018, Steffen Meyn died from a fall during the protests in Hambach Forest.

This film combines the footage he shot on a 360-degree helmet camera with interviews with environmentalists and asks how far activism must go.

“Green Germany?” is a DAAD Lecture series organised by Duitsland Instituut Amsterdam and research group Environment & Society (UvA).

Contact & register: Krijn Thijs (k.thijs@uva.nl) & Mario Daniels (mdaniels@uva.nl)



Abstracts

Stephen Milder

Norm Entrepreneurs, Green Entrepreneurs, and the Making of the *Energiewende*

This paper considers the origins of Germany's *Energiewende* (energy transition). Perhaps the single most important policy behind the energy transition has been the Feed-in-Tariff. Rather than mandating transformation, that policy allows individuals to produce renewably generated electricity and feed it into the electric grid. Since it was first implemented in Germany in 1991, the feed-in-tariff has made producing renewably generated electricity into a lucrative business opportunity and boosted Germany's "green" reputation. Drawing on the experiences of grassroots environmentalists, tinkering renewables pioneers, and maverick parliamentarians, this paper shows how an unlikely collection of actors shaped the *Energiewende*. Their collaborations made individual initiative and market-based problem-solving essential ingredients in Germany's interlinked efforts to promote green energy and to promote itself as a climate champion.

Noam Shoval

Technological Disruption by the 5th and 6th Innovation Cycles and the Economical and Geo-Political Impacts on Germany and Europe

The theory of innovation cycles was developed by economist Joseph Schumpeter who coined the term "creative destruction" in 1942. Schumpeter examined the role of innovation in relation to long-wave business cycles.

During the last 250 years we witness 6 long waves of innovation. Europe and especially Germany was the core of the third waves (water power, steam power, rail, steel, electricity, chemicals and the internal combustion engine). After the WWII the 4th wave that included petrochemicals, electronics and aviation was spearheaded in north America, but Europe had a key role in this phase and benefitted immensely as well.

The 5th wave that started in the 1990's included digital networks, software and new media. Nowadays we are in the midst of the 6th wave that is defined by artificial intelligence (AI), internet of things (IOT), robots and drones, electric vehicles, clean tech, etc. Europe is certainly not a technological leader in those two last waves. The leadership is clearly in North America and in the far East (mainly China, but also South Korea and Japan to some extent).

This paper will use the case of electric vehicles to and the lessons learnt from them so far to present the possible major implications of these current waves of innovation and technical disruption on Europe and Germany. The "Gigafactory Tesla Berlin-Brandenburg" and the German car industry will serve as case studies.



Abstracts

Trevelyan Wing

Energy Revolution: How Citizens and Communities Have Powered Germany's *Energiewende*

This paper explores the role of citizen/community initiatives in advancing Germany's *Energiewende*. Situating the transition in its historical context – rooted in the social movements of the 1970s – it examines how grassroots pressures prompted federal policy change, triggering complementary bottom-up/top-down dynamics that have facilitated a dramatic expansion of renewables nationwide, with over 50% of total installed renewable power generation capacity citizen-owned by the early 2010s. Changes to the *Energiewende*'s legal/regulatory frameworks are analyzed, as subsequent governments sought to control the growth of renewables and adjust the transition's building blocks to prioritize market-oriented instruments, despite stiff opposition from below.

Drawing on over 100 semi-structured interviews conducted with stakeholders involved in the *Energiewende*, among diverse other sources, this paper sheds further light on the impact of 'energy democracy' initiatives in the evolution of this multidecadal transformation and how citizen/community actors have continued to affect the pace and trajectory of change in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, 2021 federal elections, Ukraine war, and ensuing energy crisis. Here, it contributes a fresh perspective regarding the interrelated nexus of sustained grassroots action, evolving policy, and shifting sociopolitical realities that form the context in which Germany's *Energiewende* has been (re)launched, reformed, and reimagined over the decades.

Katrin Sieg

The Performative Politics of German Environmentalism

Climate fiction and cinema have long been important tools for mobilizing public sentiment and steering it in support of urgent political changes to mitigate or reverse climate change. From Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962) and Roland Emmerich's blockbuster *The Day after Tomorrow* (2004) to the literary oeuvres of Barbara Kingsolver, T.C. Boyle, and Kim Stanley Robinson, fiction and cinema have balanced the objectives of shaking up audiences with dystopian tales and inspiring them with hope for a more sustainable future. So far, few German authors, playwrights, or filmmakers have engaged with the topic in sustained ways or captured broad public, much less international attention. However, the last few years have seen theater and film festivals on the topic of climate change (e.g., Klimafestival 'endlich' in Augsburg; Klima und Umwelt Filmtage Baden) sprout up all over Germany and give dramatic form to the issue of global warming and the quest for decarbonization. At the same time, climate activism has become more performative, generating public attention through traffic blockades and museum interventions.

My presentation will discuss the documentary *Vergiss Meyn Nicht* (2023), which observes young protesters in the Hambacher Forst, to ask what film, television, and performance can enhance viewers' understanding the long timescales of climate change, the resonance of local events in geographically distant locations, and the effects of large-scale but often invisible processes on the human body.