

Spring Campus, April 1-5, 2019

Workshop: “Transitions to a Low-Carbon Economy in Comparative Perspective” – Summary and Conclusions

April 01-03, 2019

Organized by Dr. habil. Berthold Kuhn, Freie Universität Berlin, Prof. Kurt Hübner, University of British Columbia and Anna-Lena Guske, Freie Universität Berlin

Since the Paris Agreement from 2015 many countries have addressed climate change in new policies and projects on sustainability transitions to address the specific commitments made in the agreement. These initiatives address not only national levels but also regions and cities are highly active in testing and implementing innovative climate actions. These actions often involve a variety of different stakeholders, including international organizations, government agencies, the private sector, nonprofits and Universities.

However, the currently announced nationally determined contributions (NDCs) of the G20 and other countries are not sufficient to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement. Further commitments to advancing energy transition policies are facing various political challenges.

The workshop discussed new policy proposals that are designed to address these challenges, including technical solutions, and critical social aspects of transition policies and programs. At the workshop, speakers had the opportunity to present their research on different approaches towards climate action that analyzes their contributions to climate protection, and to discuss what we can learn from these innovations for other contexts. The contributions aimed at bringing together insights and theoretical concepts from different disciplines but also at bridging academic research and practical application of climate protection concepts.

In four sessions, the workshop gave an overview on action taken on different levels and from different perspectives, including also practitioners' views and approaches towards climate action:

1. Comparative perspectives on national level
2. Local case studies
3. The role of the social dimensions and perspectives on specific societal groups and individuals

The first session of the workshop focused on comparative studies of national approaches towards climate change. The session pointed out that the framing of climate change as a societal problem, but also the framing and acceptance of possible solutions for environmental challenges determine policy responses. Path dependence and thus past decisions and cultural backgrounds are key for explaining climate policies of various countries. However, windows of opportunity (shocks etc) can occur that allow for altering directions of the course of action. The debate on nuclear and resulting actions are an example how sustainable energy can be framed and conceived in very different ways by societies. The analyses showed that media play an important role in shaping the discourse on climate change. In the age of the internet and social media, this role might have changed.

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Therefore, it will be interesting to further look into the role of online discourses in shaping climate action.

The second session of the workshop confirmed, that approaches towards climate action are highly context specific. The participants presented case studies from local governments and city initiatives from around the globe, making it possible to compare different approaches and priorities in different regions and policy areas: energy transition, water management, mobility, and low carbon communities.

In the third session, which was conceptualized as a “rapid round” with short, thought provoking speeches, the speakers presented different methods and tools which may lead the way to future climate action, and have been developed or are under investigation in different regional contexts. One conclusion from the discussion was, that data and intelligent data processing in the age of digitalization will become even more important for addressing climate change in the future. These tools cannot only help developing efficient production and consumption mechanisms through artificial intelligence applications and the internet of things, but will also increasingly help to inform decision-making processes and also the population themselves (for example with regard to risk exposition). Next to technological innovations, approaches in governance are equally necessary to promote innovative climate action as the example of network governance in China showed. But also innovative approaches towards developing infrastructure is needed.

However, innovations in governance, infrastructure and technology alone is often not sufficient as climate action also needs to be backed by society. In order to raise awareness for climate change and to spark ideas for innovations, art can play a crucial role. It is often provoking, and can visualize effects of climate change, but also inspire by displaying futuristic ideas for climate action, which may then be translated into technologies or policies.

Raising awareness and acceptance is often a challenge as the fourth and last session of the workshop showed. It focused on the social dimension of climate action and the roles that societal groups and individuals play in implementing climate projects on the ground. The social dimension of climate action is increasingly foregrounded – not only with regard to distributional effects of climate policies. The social dimension is also relevant to handle conflicts and not-in-my-backyard attitudes. Hence, developing compensation strategies that are accepted by society as a whole but also the affected individuals plays an increasingly important role. Apart from socio-economic concerns, cultural aspects of climate change, such as religious practices, may also contradict climate goals and therefore can be important explanations for unsustainable behavior. However, research on their influence is just at the beginning, but will add another facet to explaining societal acceptance of climate action.

The workshop showed that the action taking towards achieving current climate goals are manifold, taking place on all levels, addressing all sectors but still face a number of challenges. Technological innovations still offer a lot of room for improving efficiency, and a number of innovations have been presented that offer sustainable solutions in different areas such as mobility or water management. However, the workshop also showed that

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social innovations, like the design of new governance mechanisms are equally important to be able to raise awareness and acceptance of climate action, and to ensure that technologies have the intended effects in the different local contexts they are used in.

The contents and presentation topics of each session can be found in the overview below. For more details on the workshop findings, please also have a look at the presentations, which can be downloaded from the conference website.

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Tuesday 02 April 2019 • Fabeckstraße 23-25, Freie Universität Berlin

<i>Time</i>	<i>Topic</i>
9:00 am	Plenary Session, open for all participants Smart Cities – The University Campus as Part of an Urban Sustainable Transport Vision Prof. Andreas Knie, WZB
10:00 am	Coffee Break
	<i>Workshop IV: “Transitions to a Low-Carbon Economy in Comparative Perspective”</i>
10:30 am	Intro: K. Hübner, B. Kuhn, A.L. Guske 15 minutes presentations by Jeffrey Broadbent Setting a New Research Agenda for Climate Change Mitigation and Energy Transition Research—the Compton project—Comparing Climate Change Policy Networks Department of Sociology, University of Minnesota, United States Lutz Mez/Helmut Weidner: The Ecological Modernization Capacity of Advanced Industrial Countries: Japan and Germany in comparison Freie Universität Berlin chaired by K. Huebner Stiftung Wissenschaft & Politik
12:30 pm	Lunch
02:00 pm	Session chaired by Berthold Kuhn, Freie Universität Berlin Simona Rens Transitions to a Low-Carbon Economy from a Comparative Perspectiv Advisor Energy and Environment, Royal Danish Embassy Berlin Huanhong LI The role of local government in promoting disruptive innovation in sustainable mobility transition Peking University Qian ZHOU A Multi-level Perspective on Transition to a Green Oriented, Low Carbon Based City Life: Experience from China Xiamen University The climate governance model of "low carbon community" experiment: A

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	comparison between Germany and China Lijie GAO Chinese Academy of Sciences
04:00 pm	Coffee Break
04:30 pm	<p>Rapid Round: 7 min presentations by</p> <p>Nikolai Bobylev St. Petersburg University, Environmental Management Low-Carbon Physical infrastructure</p> <p>Jessica Yu University of British Columbia Climate-change related risk factors in North America in the past 10 years</p> <p>chaired by K. Huebner</p> <p>Haiyan LU Freie Universität Berlin Place-based leadership in promoting low-carbon initiatives in infrastructure</p> <p>Lisa Price, Energy and Sustainable Development Consultant From Inefficiency to Sustainable Abundance</p> <p>chaired by B. Kuhn</p> <p>Sina Ribak Mischkultur - art&science “The scope of political ecology and of artistic research - The public smog project”</p> <p>Jana Holz Friedrich Schiller Universität Jena “Mentalities in Flux: Social Imaginaries in modern circular bio-based Societies”</p> <p>chaired by A.L. Guske</p>
6:30	We have pre-booked tables in the restaurant “Luise” near U-Bahn station Dahlem Dorf for a self-organized dinner.

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<i>Time</i>	<i>Topic</i>
9:00 am	Plenary Session, open for all participants Germanys Coal Phase-Out: Robust entry into the clear exit Dr. Felix Christian Matthes (tbc) Research Coordinator for Energy & Climate policy, Institute for Applied Ecology
10:00 am	Coffee Break
	<i>Workshop IV: “Transitions to a Low-Carbon Economy in Comparative Perspective”</i>
10:30 am	15 min presentations by Josef van Wijk Hebrew University of Jerusalem “Intervention in the social acceptance of energy infrastruc-ture: the role of compensation” Lior Herman Hebrew University of Jerusalem “Kosher Electricity and Renewable Energy Transformation: Building Block or Stumbling Stone?” Rosaria de Nucci Freie Universität Berlin “Barriers and drivers for the socially inclusive and environmentally sound uptake of wind energy: Insights from the WinWind project” chaired by A.L. Guske Concluding discussion
12:30 pm	Lunch
02:00 pm	Excursion: After a sightseeing tour of Berlin's city center participants can choose between two tour offers (please indicate your choice in the registration form): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tba
06:00 pm	Farewell Dinner, Restaurant ‘Stone Brewing Berlin’, Im Marienpark 23, 12107 Berlin, (tbc)