

Energy democracy? A socio-ecological Transformation in the area of energy

Report on the international conference in Vienna, 3-5 July 2013

Jul 12th, 2013 / Ulrich Brand

More than 60 participants from 18 countries and a wide variety of areas of activity came together for the conference Socioecological Transformation – Focus Energy at the University of Vienna from July 3-5, to explore the possibilities and limits of just such a transformation. The conference was organized by Ulrich Brand of the University's Institute for Political Science, and by the Brussels Bureau of the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation.



In his welcoming statement, Klaus Sühl placed the conference in the context of a multiyear process which the Brussels Bureau would like to support with workshops, conferences, studies and publications. Knowledge and proposals are to be drafted, positive and negative developments assessed, and stable and trust-based networks established. That is all the more important since European energy policy is developing very dynamically and also very problematically: in the interest of the major corporations and powerful capital groups, clearly away from the goal of sustainability and the democratic structuring of society and its relationship with nature.

Clearly, this will involve a restructuring of energy systems in the core area of any sustainability policy, and the question immediately arises as to whether such a policy is indeed taking place at all, and who is determining that process – in other words, how democratic or how capital-driven is it? How can various actors – policymakers, trade unions and companies, social movements, NGOs and the scientific community – contribute their specific experiences and perspectives in the fruitful manner?

The conference was structured in such a way that open questions and problems could be raised. For example: how might companies and employees of the fossil fuel extraction industry be won over to the transformation process? How – if the path forward does not only involve technological innovation – can production and consumption be reduced without causing crises and impoverishment? What role can European policy play, with its orientation toward international competitiveness and the strategies of “energy security”? Which alternatives are currently being developed at the local, national, European and international levels?

One term that was repeatedly used, and which could introduce a restructuring process, was “energy democracy”. It could show how the transformation of energy systems might be conceived as a societal task oriented not only toward the profitability interests of business, but rather much more comprehensively.

See also:

>> [Conference socio-ecological transformation focus energy, July 2013](https://www.rosalux.eu/en/article/136.energy-democracy-a-socio-ecological-transformation-in-the-area-of-energy.html)

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