

# Conference



## How New Are the Renewables? Historicizing Energy Transitions

**Time** 21-23 February 2018

**Venue** Deutsches Museum, Kerschensteiner Kolleg, Munich, Germany

**Conveners** Sarah Kellberg (Deutsches Museum), Patrick Kupper (University of Innsbruck), and Helmuth Trischler (Deutsches Museum / RCC).  
Cosponsored by the Rachel Carson Center and the Deutsches Museum.

**Abstract** In discussions about *energy transitions*, renewable energy is often presented as a “new” resource. However, the exploitation of biomass and hydropower have a long history as does the exploitation of the “new” renewable resources of wind, solar power, and geothermal energy, all of which have been used for decades, or even centuries. Thus, we observe that alternative energies have always competed with fossil fuels, yet their usage has been marginalized or their development obstructed or prevented by the prevalence of coal and oil. This conference looks at the social contexts that drive people to advocate the use of renewable energies.

Rachel  
Carson  
Center

## Wednesday, 21 February 2018

1.00–1.30 pm      **Arrival and Check-in**

1.30–2.00 pm      **Welcome and Introductory Words**

2.00–3.30 pm      **Session 1: In Search for Substitutes**  
**Chair: Helmuth Trischler (Deutsches Museum / RCC)**

Arne Kaijser (KTH)

“Driving on Wood. The Swedish Transition to Power Gas during WWII”

Critic: Jan-Henrik Meyer (University of Copenhagen)

Timothy Moss (Humboldt University of Berlin)

“Truncated Transitions: Waste-to-energy Technologies and the Reconfiguration of Urban Infrastructures in Nazi Berlin”

Critic: Felix Frey (Colby College)

3.30–4.00 pm      **Break**

4.00–5.30 pm      **Session 2: Biofueling the United States**  
**Chair: Astrid Kirchhof (Deutsches Museum)**

Frank Uekötter (University of Birmingham)

“Inventing Biofuels: The Chemurgy Movement in New Deal America”

Critic: Odinn Melsted (University of Innsbruck)

Jeffrey Manuel (Southern Illinois University Edwardsville)

“One Hundred and Fifty Years of Missed Opportunities? Assessing the Long History of Alcohol Fuel Advocacy and Use in the United States”

Critic: Eva Oberloskamp (Insitut für Zeitgeschichte München-Berlin)

5.30–6.00 pm      **Interlude over Drinks**

Astrid Kirchhof (Deutsches Museum), Jan-Henrik Meyer (University of Copenhagen), and Helmuth Trischler (Deutsches Museum)

“History of Nuclear Energy and Society (HoNESt): A European Research Program in the Making”

6.00–7.00 pm      **Keynote Address**

Erik van der Vleuten (TU Eindhoven)

“Challenging Prometheus: A History of Energy Transitions for an Age of Global Challenges”

7.00 pm            **Dinner at the Kerschensteiner Kolleg**

**Thursday, 22 February 2018**

**8.30–10:00 am**

**Session 3: Small-Scale Wind Power**

**Chair: Sarah Kellberg (Deutsches Museum)**

Nicola Hesse (University of Stuttgart)

“Under Pressure: Low-Tech Wind Energy Landscapes in Times of Energy Transitions, 1880-1940”

Critic: Thomas Turnbull (Max Planck Institute for the History of Science)

Aristotle Tympas and Kostas Latoufis (National and Kapodistrian University of Athens)

““We Got the News from the Wind”: A Historiographical Context for Puzzling Episodes of Wind Electricity”

Critic: Daniel Eggstein (University of Konstanz)

**10.00–10.30 am**

**Break**

**10.30 am–12:00 pm**

**Session 4: Heating the Home**

**Chair: Patrick Kupper (University of Innsbruck)**

Daniel Barber (University of Pennsylvania School of Design and School of Arts and Sciences)

“Solar Architecture and Renewable Energy in the Cold War”

Critic: Siddarth Sareen (University of Bergen) and Sunila Kale (University of Washington-Seattle)

Irene Pallua (University of Innsbruck)

“Renewable Energy in the Swiss Heating Sector: The Rise and Fall of Heat Pump Systems between 1930 and 1960”

Critic: Stephen Milder (Rijksuniversiteit Groningen)

**12.00–1.15 pm**

**Lunch**

**1.15–3.00 pm**

**Guided Tour through the Exhibition “Energy-Transitions” by Sarah Kellberg**

**3.00–3.15 pm**

**Break**

**3.15–4.45 pm**

**Session 5: Rising to the Nuclear Challenge**

**Chair: Ute Hasenöhrl (University of Innsbruck)**

Felix Frey (Colby College)

“Blue Coal. Tidal Energy in the USSR and the USA, 1930-1970”

Critic: Timothy Moss (Humboldt University of Berlin)

Jan-Henrik Meyer (University of Copenhagen)

““Hvad skal ind – sol og vind!” The Societal Debates on (Nuclear) Energy and the Origins of Danish Energy Transition in the 1970s”

Critic: Arne Kaijser (KTH)

**4.45–5.15 pm**

**Break**

5.15–6.45 pm

**Session 6: The Oil Price Crisis as Catalyst of Change**

**Chair: Astrid Kirchhof (Deutsches Museum)**

Eva Oberloskamp (Insitut für Zeitgeschichte München-Berlin)  
““Renewable Energies” in the UK and West Germany during the 1970s and 80s: Political Discourses and Approaches”  
Critic: Jeffrey Manuel (Southern Illinois University Edwardsville)

Odinn Melsted (University of Innsbruck)  
“Eliminating Fossil Fuels: Iceland’s Transition from Oil to Geothermal Heating in the 1970s”  
Critic: Frank Uekötter (University of Birmingham)

6.45 pm

**Dinner at “Auer Hof” (Mariahilfplatz 4, 81541 München)**

**Friday, 23 February 2018**

9.00–10:30 am

**Session 7: Energy Knowledge**

**Chair: Patrick Kupper (University of Innsbruck)**

Daniel Eggstein (University of Konstanz)  
“From the Anti-nuclear Movement to the “Energie-Wende”. The Role of Independent Ecological Research Institutions in Germany”  
Critics: Aristotle Tympas and Kostas Latoufis (National and Kapodistrian University of Athens)

Thomas Turnbull (Max Planck Institute for the History of Science)  
“The Historicity of Energy Conservation”  
Critic: Nicola Hesse (University of Stuttgart)

10.30–11.00 am

**Break**

11.00 am–12:30 pm

**Session 8: Energy Justice**

**Chair: Ute Hasenöhl (University of Innsbruck)**

Stephen Milder (Rijksuniversiteit Groningen)  
“From Solar Clubs to Citizens' Energy: Renewables as Climate Solutions in the Reunified Federal Republic of Germany”  
Critic: Irene Pallua (University of Innsbruck)

Siddarth Sareen (University of Bergen) and Sunila Kale (University of Washington-Seattle)  
“Solar ‘Power’: Socio-political Dynamics of Infrastructural Development in Two Western Indian States”  
Critic: Daniel Barber (University of Pennsylvania School of Design and School of Arts and Sciences)

12.30–1.00 pm

**Concluding Discussion**

**Moderator: Patrick Kupper (University of Innsbruck)**