

Jobst Paul. *Das "Tier"-Konstrukt - und die Geburt des Rassismus. Zur kulturellen Gegenwart eines vernichtenden Arguments.* Münster: Unrast Verlag, 2004. 397 S. ISBN 978-3-89771-731-2.



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Various occasions throughout the 1970s are sometimes cited as the beginnings of modern environmentalism--the 1972 United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm, the Club of Rome's "Limits to Growth" report of the same year, more books published lamenting the state of the environment or anticipating apocalypse, and the establishment of social movements and political parties dedicated to environmental issues. But few would now accept that it was only from the 1970s on that West Germany or other western industrial nations took an interest in environmental issues. In his detailed and closely researched book, Kai Hünemörder uses a case study of environmental protection in the Ruhrgebiet in the 1950s and 1960s to show that during and often because of West Germany's "economic miracle," the environment became an issue of political concern. However, the book's main task, and its main success, lies in demonstrating the ways in which this environmental concern was expanded and made more central in social and public discourse in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Prior to this, environmental protection, especially in the areas of air and water pollution, was fo-

cused in the Federal Republic on "top-down" political and bureaucratic measures that sought to solve problems technologically. Hünemörder proceeds to show convincingly that the early 1970s did not witness the emergence of environmental concern but rather its transformation into a central social and political matter. This change was accompanied by a move away from the managerial, technical approach to environmental protection towards ecological approaches grounded in critiques of modern society and the perceived need for far-reaching reform.

In charting these changes, the book devotes considerable space to influences from outside West Germany, especially the United States, and to international bodies, such as OECD and even NATO. Hünemörder sees the United States as a forerunner to West Germany in its consciousness and action on the environment. The German press began to echo its American counterpart in covering more environmental stories, given impetus by events like the crash of the Torrey Canyon oil tanker in 1967, ongoing concerns about DDT and early discussions about the greenhouse effect.

Early international efforts to confront pollution problems derived in part from increasing awareness that clouds of smoke or slicks of oil did not respect very well national borders, and required more coordinated approaches. Together with concern about the finiteness of the earth's resources and doubts over the primacy of growth, these currents led into intensive international summitry in the early 1970s. Bernhard Grzimek, appointed nature protection commissioner of the federal government in Willy Brandt's new government, typified the shift that was going on: "Protection of nature is protection of people. We must finally realize that nature protection has nothing to do with picking Edelweiss, but is rather a question of survival for all of us and our children" (p. 160). As much as government initiatives reflected the environmental-political turn posited by Hünemörder, structural and mental changes within society also permitted a new emphasis on the environment. Protests set in train by the '68ers questioned much of modern, consumer society. Much of their discontent was cultural or political, but the author is surely correct to claim that the environment became a central part of this demand for comprehensive change in western society. The rise of ecology and citizens' initiatives later in the 1970s--sketched only relatively briefly here--continued earlier trends and reflected a degree of dissatisfaction with the conservatism of mainstream politics and flagged the desire to embrace grass-roots activism. By this time, as Hünemörder writes, "environmental protection was no longer a matter ruled only by industry and ministers? bureaucracies behind closed doors. The public now also participated with interest in the discussion over these questions" (p. 175). Part of the success of Hünemörder's book lies in its contextualization of these developments and in showing how new social movements and political ecology in the 1970s replaced earlier and narrower political concern for the environment.

Hünemörder's arguments rest upon an extensive use of archival material and other original

sources such as government reports and contemporary texts as well as skillful integration of secondary opinion. However, despite its considerable detail and depth of sources, I felt that the book could have been enriched through the inclusion of consideration of non-western/less industrial societies. After all, global environmental crisis and pollution does tend to affect the poorest, most poverty-stricken people the most severely. Closely linked to this point is that of agriculture. In an era when agriculture and the soil, plants and animals in it became industrialized and polluting, why exclude it from sustained examination? Looking at the environmental consequences of the Green Revolution could for example have provided an interesting point of comparison to the practice of environmental protection and politics in West Germany.

Hünemörder's discussion of international developments and their impact upon policy and opinion in the Federal Republic represents a welcome addition to the historiography of the environment and its protection in modern Germany. The book clearly confirms the view that environmental protection had a history before the 1970s, but also expertly shows how, with influences from abroad, increasing scientific awareness, changing social structures, and with new and more radical goals anxiety about the fate of our natural surroundings became a mainstay of current-day political and social concern.

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