

Kai F. Hünemörder. *Die Frühgeschichte der globalen Umweltkrise und die Formierung der deutschen Umweltpolitik (1950 - 1973) (Gebundene Ausgabe).* 2004. ISBN 978-3-515-08188-7.



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For a long time, German environmental historians concentrated on the nineteenth century. Only recently have environmental historians increasingly also focused on the twentieth century, with the period around 1970 often at the center of research. This is no surprise, as some highly stimulating questions remain to be answered: why and how within only a few years did both politicians and the public start to be interested?"-supposedly out of the blue--in environmental problems? Usually the environmental movement is said to have played the most influential part in this change of consciousness as well as in the beginnings of environmental politics. This notion is partly due to the fact that a significant proportion of the literature about the environmental movement was written by those who participated in it at the time. Historical research of the past few years has started to reveal this to be more of a myth.

Kai Huenemoerder's thesis can be viewed as a contribution to these new studies. The author concentrates on a factor that has barely been researched until now: the impact of international environmental organizations and movements on

the establishment of German environmental politics. I will first mention the conclusion of his study: without this impetus, which explicitly includes the environmental protection politics of the United States, the German Government never would have included environmental protection as a main goal within its reform politics in 1970 (p. 13). The goal of his study, Huenemoerder says, is to chronologically describe for Germany the process of the perception, discussion and politicization of the environmental crisis, starting with the 1950s, and ending in 1973 (p.12). Despite touching upon the 1950s and 1960s, this study primarily focuses on the years between 1969 and 1973. During this period, global environmental problems came to the forefront of politics. According to the author, the first recognition of worldwide interdependence, today better known as globalization, came about in the sudden recognition of dangers to the environment, rather than in the global marketplace (p. 11). Throughout this book, the author focuses on demonstrating that various organizations and individuals recognized and expressed the global aspect of environmental problems. The study's main focus is on air and

water pollution, with North Rhine-Westphalia as an example.

The study is organized into eleven chapters, including an introduction and conclusion. Chapters 4 and 8 in particular offer most of the new insights. Chapter 4 examines the "First Steps to an Integrated Perception of the Global Environmental Crisis." The author presents some aspects of how American environmental political developments were perceived in Germany. There were reports in newspapers about the world congress of local government politics in 1961 in Washington, at which important German representatives discussed common environmental problems in the industrialized world, and provided delegates with descriptions of technical solutions from all over the world. These statements from the German representatives were based primarily on reports from committees of various UN organizations (p. 122). Furthermore, experts in the local government of North Rhine-Westphalia kept in close contact with colleagues from the United States, mainly from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The author points out that, in contrast to Germany, the U.S. government established departments to deal with public relations, aimed at increasing public demand to introduce environmental protection measures on industrial plants. The American strategy represents a major difference between the countries. From the perspective of the United States, Stewart L. Udall, then Secretary of State, became interested in the development planning of municipalities in North Rhine-Westphalia when he visited Germany in 1966 (p. 124).

Next, the author describes how a sense of urgency concerning environmental problems and ecological arguments became more important within international organizations during the 1960s. He summarizes policies and activities of the International Union for the Protection of Nature (IUPN), the Council of Europe, the European Economic Commission and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

by describing, often in detail, the statements of German representatives (pp. 128-137). Of interest is the author's remark that in these cases administrators gained power at home in Germany by taking part in international committees (p. 147), although in general, German administrators thought societal problems, such as dealing with communists and the extreme left wing, had a higher priority than ecological problems (p. 134). Additionally, international conferences were important for the formulation of scientifically based ecological policies. The author mentions the first international Congress on clean air in 1966 and, above all, the UNESCO Biosphere Conference in Paris in 1968.

In this chapter, Huenemoerder also addresses a little-known role of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. As early as 1969, Richard Nixon had convinced NATO to establish a committee for the improvement of environmental conditions. Thus, NATO was one of the first international organizations to have an influence on how high-ranking politicians perceived global environmental problems (p. 143). German Chancellor Kiesinger supported Nixon's ideas, although he was convinced that this policy was intended only to distract public attention from the Vietnam War. The most important aspect of the discussion about NATO's role in regards to environmental protection policy, according to Huenemoerder, is simply that it occurred at all (p. 145).

In concluding this chapter, Huenemoerder states that, at the end of the 1960s, there was widespread knowledge about various environmental problems among international organizations, who had a preference for technologically based solutions. But there an influential and widely supported environmental movement did not yet exist in the industrialized countries. To be influential, international environmental policy should have developed a global ecological perspective, he concludes (p. 146). This conclusion is somewhat confusing, insofar as the goal of this

chapter was explicitly to reveal that ecological arguments were gaining increased importance among international organizations. The author clearly shows that ecological arguments were expressed, but he does not give proof of how important the ecological paradigm was.

The UN General Assembly did not discuss the ecological crisis during the 1960s, but agreed on the Swedish proposal to have a UN conference on the Human Environment, which was held in Stockholm in 1972. This UN conference is investigated in chapter 8. Huenemoerder describes, in detail, Germany's preparation for the conference. The main importance of this conference to Germany was that, according to Huenemoerder, for the first time a substantial part of federal as well as local government departments were forced to work out German policies regarding global environmental problems. As a result, a new department was established to deal with international environmental policies and to keep in contact with international organizations. In general, proposals of UN organizations were welcomed, mostly because they were noncommittal. Still, German bureaucrats found the best solution in technological progress (p.249). In light of the current greenhouse effect, Huenemoerder points out the forward-looking paper of the Ministry of Traffic (p. 251). Additionally, the conference was important in that the European Union (EU) could no longer neglect the issue of environmental protection. However it was not until the 1980s that the EU took an influential part in environmental policies (p. 275). In general, the importance of the conference should be seen in the fact that an immense amount of information regarding environmental problems was collected from all members of the UN, assembled and summarized (p. 245). Furthermore, the UN conference contributed a great deal to the spread of ecological thinking among the public, and to the establishment of an environmental movement, described in chapter 9.

The author's concluding chapter is weak. Huenemoerder states explicitly that he cannot present a final historical evaluation of the early years in which the global environmental crisis was recognized (p. 330). With this, the author himself reveals one weakness of his book. No one asks for a final evaluation, but it would have been interesting and helpful for the reader to have at least some preliminary considerations about how to evaluate the developments in the years under research in his book. That the author does not choose to comment on the developments he describes is mostly due to the fact that he does not pose any precise questions. The author undoubtedly worked hard. The literature and sources he studied are immense and range in scope from administrative files, to newspaper articles, to fiction, to manuscripts of radio shows. However, the author neither reviews nor analyzes his sources by following precisely formulated questions, nor does he present any evaluation of the sources themselves. Thus, in the end, the book is more of a quarry for raw materials (a collection of interesting references, opinions and incidents), without any attempt to shape them within a broader context or to explain them. Nevertheless, the author fulfils his goal of providing the reader with a chronological description of the developments. For novices, the book provides a helpful overview of the German and North Rhine-Westphalian environmental history from 1950 to 1973, and presents helpful initial information for readers who are interested in the activities of international organizations.

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