

# “No Impact Man:” Film Screening and Panel Discussion



**13 October 2010, Amerika Haus, Munich, Germany**

**Sponsors:** The Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society (RCC), The Ökologisches Bildungszentrum Munich (ÖBZ/MVHS)

**Conveners:** Alexa Weik von Mossner (RCC / University of Fribourg, Switzerland), Ulrike Wagner (ÖBZ)

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As part of the Munich “Klimaherbst” initiative, the Rachel Carson Center and the Ökologisches Bildungszentrum Munich (ÖBZ/MVHS) joined forces to offer screenings of the American documentary, *No Impact Man*, at the Amerika Haus in Munich.

The film *No Impact Man* tells the story of author Colin Beavan who, together with his shopaholic and espresso-addicted wife Michelle and their two year old daughter Isabella, attempts to abandon his high consumption New York City lifestyle in order to make as little environmental impact as possible over the course of one year. Filmmakers Laura Gabbert and Justin Schein followed the family on their “no impact” journey, and the result is a documentary that draws the viewer very closely into the tough challenges of this project, which involves living on the ninth floor of a Manhattan apartment building without ever using the elevator, without a refrigerator, without toilet paper and in the end without any electricity at all.

Tying in to the film screening, a number of environmental organizations, including BUND Bayern, Certified Coolness, LifeGuide Munich, and Green City, provided information to the interested public on how to reduce their own environmental “impact.” These exhibitions were coordinated by Ulrike Wagner of the ÖBZ, which also provided regionally sourced refreshments.

More than 100 people viewed the film during the afternoon screening and over 150 people attended the evening screening, which was followed by a panel discussion with convener **Alexa**

**Weik von Mossner** (RCC / University of Fribourg, Switzerland), **Ramón Arndt** of Green City and **Andrea Reiche** of LifeGuide. Alexa Weik von Mossner pointed out that the film had received both positive and negative criticism after its release in the U.S., whereas it appeared that the film was generally well received among the participants of the Klimaherbst event. The discussion centered less on the film itself and more on questions of how individuals can lower their environmental impact. During the discussion, Andrea Reiche and some audience members provided useful information about initiatives and possibilities to become active in and around Munich. Ramón Arndt pointed out opportunities to influence local decision making processes in Munich and highlighted some of the campaigns of Green City, such as the “Wanderbaumallee,” the Streetlife festival, and the Munich Blade Night. But despite Ramón Arndt’s optimism that these campaigns can make a difference, others pointed out that reflections on our environmental impact are mostly limited to a more educated social class and that we still lack innovative ideas on how to sensitize a broader public towards these important issues.

The Klimaherbst contribution of the Rachel Carson Center was a great success – many people attended the screening and the event facilitated cooperation with leading environmental organizations in Munich. The film and discussion will hopefully have left a lasting impression on many of the participants, encouraging them to think more about their own lifestyles and perhaps even influence others to be more aware of how our lives impact on our environment. Following the positive resonances of this evening, the Rachel Carson Center is already planning to establish a series of events featuring thought-provoking documentaries and expert panel discussions on current environmental issues.

-- Andreas Grieger