

Overcoming Carbon Lock-In: Fossil Fuel Divestment and the Delegitimization of Fossil Fuels

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The 2015 Paris Agreement has been hailed as a victory for multilateral diplomacy and a key step towards moving the global economy to a low-carbon pathway. Yet for all its good provisions, the agreement omitted a critical issue: the need to rapidly draw down fossil fuel extraction and production. There is growing recognition that if we are to limit dangerous climate change, most fossil fuel reserves will have to be left in the ground. There is therefore an urgent need to identify strategies and policy interventions that address fossil fuel extraction and consumption to foster zero or low-carbon energy pathways. Thus, to increase chances of limiting dangerous levels of climate change and of meeting Paris Agreement goals, we need better understanding into how the institutions, investments, and infrastructure that collectively constitute the dominant fossil fuel energy system limits the transition to low-carbon alternatives.

The fossil fuel divestment movement shifts attention “upstream” to the resistance by the incumbent fossil fuel regime and its key actors as the most significant obstacle to fundamental changes in energy systems. Building on my existing work on divestment, this interdisciplinary project aims to: (1) explore the potential of fossil fuel divestment and other restrictive supply-side strategies by societal actors to overcome carbon lock-in as part of the transition to a low carbon energy system; (2) explore the intersection between the delegitimization of fossil fuels and nascent field of energy justice; and (3) examine lessons learned from *Energiewende* and how they might inform state level energy transitions within the US and a “global energy turn.” I’m also keen to explore how concepts from justice and ethics can provide important tools to inform energy discourses, preferences, practices, and actions while also examining some of the principles, policies, and potentials of “post growth” economic alternatives. This project will involve collaborating with a number of RCC LMU affiliates as well as other Munich-based groups involved in fossil fuel resistance and campaigns for a post-carbon economy.