

Unruly Energies: Citizenship Beyond Ecocapital in Germany's Energy Transition

Jennifer Carlson

Unruly Energies describes how Germans live out and transform sustainable development projects geared to turn them into “energy citizens” who produce the power they consume. At a moment when Germany’s energy transition is a benchmark for environmental politics around the globe, many Germans relate to the transition with a surprising degree of ambivalence, and many who are able to take part in energy development projects refrain from doing so. *Unruly Energies* explores the structures of feeling underlying these expressions and (in)actions in order to understand how public life unfolds in the absence of democratic engagement with renewables. Based on extensive research in a region rapidly developed by wind, solar, and biofuel concerns, this manuscript illuminates how, in the midst of technoscientific projects designed to foster citizenship as well as climate remediation, civic engagement flourishes beyond—and in direct contradiction to—planners’ expectations.

The unruly energies at the heart of the text are sensibilities that animate everyday life within the transition, shaping how people relate to the development projects in their communities and, by extension, to each other. Registering more in terms of affect rather than as discourse, unruly energies are seldom framed as overt support of or opposition to the transition. As such, they are “unruly” compared to the concrete declarations of will and intent that characterize liberal notions of public participation. These forms of vitality are energies, no less so than the electricity and heat articulated through wind, solar, and biofuel technology. But rather than powering the grid, unruly energies animate social situations and connections that flourish in the midst of the transition. These nascent socialities emerge in the friction between development projects and specific social relations in communities where these projects are implemented. Spinning out of the everyday practices through which these communities are continually made and re-made, unruly energies move certain people to engage with civic power generation projects and others to refrain from doing so. In following such public feelings, this book asks what unruly energies can teach us about public life amid inequality and ambivalence, illuminating forms of citizenship in a postliberal world.