

***Beyond Green Germany: Conflict and Change in German and Austrian Environmental Culture***  
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“Green Germany” has been popularly understood as a cohesive movement toward sustainability based on innovative policies and technologies. The reality is much messier, constituted by conflict-ridden local efforts, tensions and transformations of environmental values over time, and changes in various German-speaking countries at diverse scales ranging from rural farming communities to small cities to major metropolises. My project explores four case studies to trace discourses of environmentalism produced by a wide range of stakeholders, from environmental activists to farmers to politicians. The contradictory messaging in these discourses points toward the challenging cultural work that lies in the background of sustainability successes.

The first case study will focus on Munich’s surprising, and brief, self-promotion as the bicycle capital of Germany. The city adopted the nickname of *Radlhauptstadt* (bike capital) in 2010, but it ended the program in 2018 with numerous unfinished projects and with citizens complaining about the continuing, unquestioned privileging of cars over nonmotorized transport options. Still, calling this campaign a failure would miss a crucial lesson: although it was a major image-making and infrastructure-building project for the city, the promotion of cycling in Munich was never a top-down affair. Citizen groups pushed for bicycle infrastructure before it was adopted as a slogan by the city, and continued agitating after the campaign was officially ended. Moving beyond a narrow focus on the success or failure of Munich as “bike capital,” this case shows the value of sustained dialogue about what sustainable city transport looks like.

A second Munich case study will turn from the flow of bicycle traffic to the flow of water through the city, examining the portrayal of the Isar River and hydroelectric power over time. Both the *Isartalverein* (Isar Valley Association) and the *Stadtwerke München* (the city’s energy company) now proclaim very different values for the river than they did 100 years ago. These changes offer insights into the unstable images and meanings of environmentalism, based on shifting pressures and goals at local, regional, and global scales.

The third example will explore the *Salzburger Almsommer* initiative in the Austrian Alps, investigating the role of international funding structures and regional tourism initiatives to preserve hyper-local agricultural landscapes in the region around Flachau, Austria, a small town within Salzburg province. Flachau’s landscapes largely formed around dairy farming and still contain a patchwork of small pastures maintained by individual families; but they are now also influenced by EU support for Alpine agriculture and the growth of international agrotourism. Environmental histories of the Alps have often focused on either end of a spectrum between large-scale industrialization, showing how skiing and tourism brought a new international culture of speed and modernity to the mountains, and local landscape preservation, showing how remote villages in the Swiss Alps preserved traditional landscapes and common-pool resources over time. While these extreme cases offer important lessons from environmental history, the example of Flachau complicates the scales: processes of modernization and preservation arise through an interplay of international and local forces, both of which push in multiple directions.

In my final rural case study, I will examine the evolution and cultural resonance of *Energieagentur Tirol*, which works as a hub for communities across the Austrian province of Tirol to help individual communities meet the province’s sustainability goals. As in the example of Flachau, the organization’s imagery shows a mix of technological solutions alongside traditional Alpine landscapes, suggesting an approach to environmental initiatives that operates at diverse scales and embraces sometimes contradictory narratives or iconographies simultaneously.

In each of these examples, my research will combine study of city planning and policy, analysis of visual and textual analysis of marketing materials and other public-facing documents, and ethnographic study in order to gain insight into the complexities within individuals’ and communities’ responses to environmental changes.