

Energy democracy now! Against the fossil-nuclear madness.

Theses on energy policy by gegenstromberlin



1. We have to make use of the chance for a completely different, a renewable and democratised electricity supply. Reversing extended lifetimes and switching off eight nuclear power plants in Germany has weakened the energy corporations. Nuclear phase-out has to be accelerated; the energy transition must be used to turn away from fossil energies. Withdrawing from nuclear must not mean getting into coal. For already today thousands of people are dying every year due to the consequences of climate change and thus due to the exploitation of fossil fuels, of coal, oil and gas. **The demand must be: get out of the fossil-nuclear madness, 100% renewables as fast as possible!**

2. This “energy transition” must also be a transition away from corporate power and centralisation in the energy sector, turning to a largely decentralised and localised energy supply. **Therefore we say Yes to decentralisation and No to large-scale projects such as *Desertec* and gigantic off-**

shore wind parks, which are mainly huge public subsidy programmes for the “big four” German energy conglomerates in order to gain control over the renewable sector.

3. The ‘big four’ – RWE, E.On, Vattenfall and EnBW – insist upon the status quo in the energy sector. This makes them the largest barrier on the way to a real “energy revolution”. To break their power, the energy corporations must be directly attacked. **Smash electricity corporations, socialise the energy supply! Public utility companies and energy cooperatives will form the basis for a democratically organised energy sector.** They are capable of organising the entire energy sector, and, in contrast to the corporations, to do this in a directly democratic manner.

4. The energy transformation, and thus the fundamental reorganisation of the complete energy system, will not be for free. It is also true though: energy costs have been rising for years – despite supposedly cheap nuclear and fossil electricity. The challenge is thus threefold: **Energy supply has to be ecologically sensible, organised democratically and be socially just. In this context socially just means in particular that rising energy costs must not lead to ‘energy poverty’ for those who are the ones using the least anyway.** This is the only way societal acceptance for the renewables transition can be ensured. Thus, a

central condition for solving the ecological question is seeing energy as a need-based human right, not as a neoliberal product of workfare. There must also be an end to the endless subsidies for energy intensive industries arranged by politicians and energy corporations. Social justice in energy also means that working for the energy transformation is good, well-paid work. The rights of workers cannot be ignored.

5. **The societal basis of this radical transformation must be a broad energy movement** consisting of the anti-nuclear movement, anti-coal and anti-CCS initiatives, climate, environment and globalisation activists, NGOs, progressive union wings, public utility companies and many more. The question of how the movement should relate to ecologically and socially ambitious and yet profit-oriented companies in the renewable energy sector is still open. A cooperation for example at the local level could have greater impact than distancing oneself on principle.

6. **The uniting umbrella of such a movement is the fight for energy democracy.** Democracy means being able to make those decisions that influence the lives of us all, together and without the need to make a profit. We believe that we can already make this happen in the energy sector today. The call for energy democracy touches upon the loss of

democratic decision-making competences that is perceived by many after 30 years of neo-liberalism. It is this call that makes the fight for an energy transformation acceptable for a majority.

7. If we perceive our fight as one for energy democracy, the often snidely-cited initiatives against new energy grids, wind farms or pumped storage power facilities appear in a new light: as humans who feel that they are losing control over their lives. On the basis of this common feeling we can start communicating with them, and experience has shown that participation increases acceptance. If we neglect to do this, they will surely be played against us. This will weaken us significantly because it could lead to a split in the movement and a loss in legitimacy.

8. Beyond our connection to local actors in Germany, the fight for energy democracy must be an international one. That means: we support international struggles such as those against fracking, the tar sands, or particularly against repressive coal and oil extraction, such as in Colombia and Nigeria. Moreover, the Global North legitimises its continuing CO₂-intensive growth by exporting energy-intensive industries to the Global South. And around the world, fast-paced economic growth has long been hailed the cure-all for poverty. Yet this ideology has consistently legitimized

devastating social policy, large-scale projects unsuccessfully trying to rule and technify nature, displacements and enclosures against the poor. At the same time climate change impacts can be felt the most in the Global South and the so-called 'development' strategies accelerate this further. Our fight for an energy transformation with climate justice is a commitment to solidarity with the people who participate in our emissions but not in our prosperity.

9. Our energy transformation cannot be one that is content with simply feeding the crazy economic growth needs of the global economy with other types of energy. Long experiences and prognoses clearly show: economic growth simply cannot be decoupled from CO₂ and resource use. If we want an ecological transformation of the energy sector worldwide, societal consumption of energy and commodities must be lowered drastically. In our opinion this is only possible by turning towards a degrowth economy. Therefore: **No social and ecological energy transformation without criticising growth and capitalism!**

In summary: **The fight for energy democracy must be based on a broad energy movement whose aims are the socialisation, greening, decentralisation and democratisation of the energy sector.** We are aware that there may be conflicts between these aims in concrete

cases but we are certain that we cannot surrender any of these goals. Not morally and definitely not strategically.



About *gegenstrom Berlin*:

We see ourselves as an open group of climate activists. We are people with different organising backgrounds and perspectives and here and there there are very different positions. We intervene in the ruling climate discourse through articles, discussions, workshops and actions, We stand for a resistant practice based on principles of civil disobedience. Another world will not be given to us!

www.gegenstromberlin.net

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