TRADE UNIONS AND THE ENVIRONMENT: DILEMMAS OF SUSTAINABILITY

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OVERVIEW

• jobs versus the environment?
• competing models of environmental politics
• scale and scope: collective actor problems
• green jobs, good jobs?
• (how) can there be a ‘just transition’?
There Are NO Jobs On A Dead Planet
JOBS VERSUS THE ENVIRONMENT?

• traditional trade union resistance to ‘green agenda’
  ➢ environment is not a ‘trade union issue’
  ➢ suspicion of NGOs
  ➢ defence of workers as producers (and consumers)
• but growing concern with environmental issues and the challenge of climate change
• structural change must be managed
• demand for a ‘just transition’
A Green and Fair Future

For a just transition to a low carbon economy.
COMPETING MODELS OF ENVIRONMENTAL POLITICS

• elite regulation : presupposes consensus
  - focus on global tripartite agreements (ILO, COP)
  - COP21: a glass half empty ?
• technical fixes : ‘ecological modernisation’
  - ‘science can save us’ – at zero cost and without social change
• ‘prosperity without growth’
  - reconfigure consumption, production and work
• system change
  - problems are structural and rooted in destructive socio-politico-economic system
• trade unions : evolution across models but with often sharp internal conflicts
SCALE AND SCOPE : COLLECTIVE ACTOR PROBLEMS

• between local and global: what articulations?
• single-issue and encompassing agendas
• how can the local and specific be integrated with the global and encompassing?
  ➢ ‘green workplace representatives’?
• the familiar dilemma of spontaneity versus strategic coordination
GREEN JOBS, GOOD JOBS?

• has the ‘green agenda’ been hijacked (‘greenwashing’) ?

• renewables, recycling, decentralisation : often based on low pay, bad working conditions, lack of employee voice

• gender implications (WiRES)

• how can we have a green economy + decent work ?

• a social and political challenge which trade unions are increasingly confronting
Wind- und Offshoreindustrie
Zukunft für die Küste
(HOW) CAN THERE BE A ‘JUST TRANSITION’ ?

• inequality is increasing, and the poor (within and between countries) suffer most from pollution and climate change
• default option: they will also bear the main costs of change
• a just transition requires radical redistribution
• but polluters wield immense political power...
• ... which few governments wish to challenge
  ➢ privatisation ⇒ deregulation (ILVA ?)
  ➢ austerity ⇒ reluctance to bear costs of just transition
• socially sustainable restructuring requires contestation and struggle!
ENDE GELÄNDE!

NEXT STOP: LAUSITZ 2016

13.-16.5.2016 [Pfingsten]
im Braunkohlerevier Lausitz [bei Berlin]
in the lusatia lignite mining region [near the german polish border]

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