

# **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**

A woman wearing a white hard hat and a green long-sleeved shirt is standing in front of several wind turbines. She is looking towards the camera with a slight smile. The background is a clear blue sky. The text "Wind- und Offshoreindustrie Zukunft für die Küste" is overlaid on the image in white.

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



HIER WIRD DAS KLIMA VERHANDELT!

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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