

Ende Gelände Case Study:

Actors, Change Strategies and Possible Scenarios

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Introduction to the Case

Ende Gelände (German for "here and no further") is an alliance of people from the anti-nuclear and anti-coal movements, as well as many other campaigns, groups and networks, who share the common belief that it needs "civil disobedience as a powerful signal for real action to put our climate before profit", as the organisation puts it on their website (2018). Since 2015, they organised several protests to raise public attention and limit global warming through a coal phase-out, by blocking open-pit coal mines in Germany, leading to the reduction in power output or even the shutdown of nearby coal-power plants for a few days. In their most recent action in November 2017, three thousand activists blocked the opencast coal mine near Hambach forest, accompanied by hundreds of police men securing the place. The mine is run by the energy company RWE, who is also operating other coal mines in this coal region of North Rhine-Westphalia. "In addition to these protests, which usually last less than a day, a cluster of several dozen climate activists have been living for several years in the nearby Hambach forest in an effort to slow the tree clearance that marks each expansion of the mine" (Guardian, 2017). But not only do forests have to yield to the coal mines, but also entire towns, which are in the way of the diggings. So, happens to the town of Morschenich which is currently being relocated to a new position outside of the future digging area.

What we can see here, is an interesting interplay of many different actors, which are either struggling for change or wanting to maintain the status quo. As Ende Gelände is also currently the largest civil disobedience movement in Europe to phase-out fossil fuels (Special Report from the Occupied Forest, 2017), it makes the whole case of particular interest to our course.

In the following sections, relevant actors and describe their standpoints and underlying motivations to this particular case will be discussed. Their positions towards each other will be analyzed from a systems perspective, also taking into account aspects of power. The paper will conclude with a discussion dissecting how each actor, their relation to change theories, and their potential to bring about either positive or negative change and a discussion of what the most likely outcome of the case may be.

Actors and Their Role: Standpoints, Underlying Motivations and Aspects of Power

Dr. Rolf Martin Schmitz, CEO of RWE

Dr. Rolf Martin Schmitz has held the position of Chairman of the executive board and CEO of the German energy company RWE AG since October 15, 2016. After the Fukushima accident in 2011, the German government made a decision to decommission all nuclear power plants by 2022. This creates a significant financial burden to energy companies (Flauger, 2016). In order to avoid paying almost 5% interest, RWE decided to pay a lump sum of 6.8 billion euros of decommissioning costs to the German government in 2017 (RWE, 2018). Shouldering this challenge is one of RWE's biggest challenges (Flauger, 2016). To deal with this challenge, RWE listed an IPO for a subsidiary – Innogy – that was the biggest German IPO since 2000. After the IPO, RWE continued to own 76% of the renewable energy company (John, 2018).

In early 2018, RWE and E.ON executed a complicated transaction, where the two traded assets. This resulted in RWE becoming the third largest renewable energy provider in Europe (seeking alpha). RWE's share in wind power is second only to Iberdrola in Europe (John, 2018). 60% of RWE's portfolio of electrical production capacity is carbon free or low emission (including "highly efficient gas fleet"). This "clearly de-risk[s] our generation portfolio in regards to carbon". Since 2012, RWE has significantly reduced carbon emissions. 2016 alone saw a 10% reduction of emissions while the rest of Germany stagnated (RWE, 2018).

Although RWE is heavily investing in renewable energies and enjoys large profits from their renewable fuels based subsidiaries, they still rely on a stable income from fossil fuels to diversify their risk portfolio. As RWE's fossil fuel activities have been increasingly met by civil disobedience, the company has taken multiple measures to protect its profits. These include securing support of political leaders through lobbying, sponsoring social events and infrastructure projects, creation of astroturf groups, and ecological restoration / carbon offsetting programs. These civil measures are combined with more extreme techniques that overtly suppress resistance by combining private security forces with public officers of law that together attempt to legitimise RWE's fossil fuel production through stigmatisation, intimidation, and criminalization of the activists (Brock, 2018).

Svenja Schulze, Environmental Minister of Germany

Svenja Schulze is probably the most important actor in our case. Since March this year she is the new Environmental Minister of Germany in the cabinet of Merkel IV. She is member of the German social democrats SPD and comes from the coal region of North Rhine-Westphalia, where the Hambach coal mine lies. She is also a member of the coal labour union IG BCE, which regularly advises against a too fast coal phase out (Stukenberg, 2018). But exactly this issue will be her most important task as Environmental minister and member of the commission, which will come up with a deadline for coal-fired power production in early 2019 (Climate News, 2018).

Being new to the federal political stage, she will be measured by her success as Environmental minister to drive forth new policies ensuring Germany will meet its climate goals for the Paris Climate Deal by 2030 (Wehrmann, 2018). But on the other hand, she has to be prudent not to provoke her voters in her home state with regulations that phase out coal too quickly, as thousands of people's livelihoods in this area depend on jobs the coal industry provides. This may be why she made the questionable statement that it might be convenient to build new, more efficient coal plants to reduce CO₂, as Stukenberg (2018) paraphrased it in his article. We can see here, that she is really concerned about people losing their jobs in that industry, as is understandable seeing how she still is a member of the coal-labour union. For her a fast coal-phase out would therefore only be possible if it is accepted by the coal workers in her home state. The only way this would be possible is to ensure that their livelihoods be taken care of through a new means.

But even if she would support a fast phase-out and would be able to convince the people in the coal-labour union about it, it won't be a done deal. For the most difficult task for her will be to convince more powerful Conservative ministers in the cabinet and commission of her agenda on climate and energy as Wehrmann (2018) points it out. That is where Ende Gelände comes into the field of tension. The activists may turn the scale. They could put pressure on the politicians, with creating enough publicity to change the public opinion towards a faster coal exit.

A good example for such a change in public opinion is Germany's decision in 2011 to phase-out nuclear power, after the Fukushima catastrophe. Back then the Conservatives under Merkel suddenly decided to shut down nuclear power plants, because the public opinion shifted towards anti-nuclear, even though they just proposed to extend the operations of those plants a year ago (Breidhardt, 2011). That's also one of the main reason Germany uses that much coal power right now.

So even though we may consider Schulze as the key actor to our case, she is only as powerful in promising a fast coal-phase out, as demanded by Ende Gelände, as the Conservatives and also the public opinion will let her.

Activist living in Hambach Forest

Contrary to the quick, large scale style of Ende Gelände, there is a group of activists that have taken up “residence” in Hambach Forest. They share the same goals as the Ende Gelände activists, but approach the problem from a different angle. A member tells his opinion about Ende Gelände, stating that “It’s a great action because it brings a lot of people together, also a lot of people who has not been so active before. I think it’s important that there are a lot of different strategies to work on these issues. And I think we need all of them. It’s what make us strong also” (Disobedience Live, 2017). Rather than temporarily stopping operation of the coal mine, they work longterm to stop RWE’s plan for expanding its coal mining facilities into Hambach Forest.

The activists achieve this by tying themselves to the trees, barricaded themselves in cabins and burying themselves in caves not far under the surface. They climbed through the branches, attached themselves to trees or blocks of concrete, hung suspended from tripods and even hid deep in a tunnel 6m underground. Their climate camps and direct actions take place against the company RWE and the government sectors that aid it.

There is now a whole police department assigned to this forest and to the activists living there. The protesters wear masks to hide their identity so as to avoid prison sentences for the illegal actions they take to make their voices heard. In the current situation, the coal mine destroys environmental systems and the living spaces of humans, animals and plants, and accounts for one

third of the carbon dioxide emissions of the whole of Germany. They are against the mine because they think the law that allows them to destroy an area in order to dig for something is retrogression. They think in a country where this kind of exploitation is simply legal, people have to take action regardless of the laws.

As mentioned above, Activist living in Hambach Forest support Ende Gelände as both groups are of the same persuasion. Both are breaking laws to change society. However, compared to RWE, they have little power though they continue to use their right of freedom of speech. Since RWE has gained immense political power, the long term activists can not influence government to stop the expansion of the coal mine politically, but can and do put their physical bodies and lives in the way of corporate interests. Workers of the Hambach surface mine may empathize with the activists; however, as they are employed by the mine, their livelihoods depend the mine's continued operation. Thus they are hardly against the expansion project. Even though the activists activities are non-violent, police respond to the civic disobedience with violence.

The final target of the activists living in the forest will be a law conserving forest and declaring it to be a heritage site, which won't allow people and companies like RWE to cut it down. Obviously their demand faces either the state or the federal the Environmental Minister.

Police Officers

During the Ende Gelände protests, german police officers have gained a bad reputation for their occasional aggressive attitudes against non-violent protesters (Flening, 2017). One of the explanations we could find for this sort of behaviour has to do with power aspects as well as what is called the "dispositional hypothesis" (Bottoms, 2014). This hypothesis was used in the Stanford Prison experiment to try to bring some sort of explanation to the behaviour of the students who took the role as police officers. The way they ended up completely dehumanizing their counterparts and brought to a whole new level the roles they were asked to perform. This hypothesis is based on "the idea of attributions can be narrowed and focused into two contrasting hypotheses that can be used in experimentation to make assertions about human behaviour" (Bottoms, 2014). In this particular case we could try to investigate if the brutality of some of these actions come from a dispositional attribution (IBID), if it has to do with some of the

guards' personalities, personal backgrounds, violent tendencies, etc. Or, if it has to do with the environment of this event and the pressure they feel around it. We could argue here as well that it could be the power aspect. The fact that they feel with the responsibility to act in this way and keep things in order and at the same time entitled to do so and hurt citizens because they are the ones in power. This would be called a situational attribution (IBID). One of Zimbardo's hypothesis was that prisoners in this case are considered to be "bad people" so that also helps the guards to feel entitled to mistreat them and dehumanize them (Bottoms, 2014). This could be the case as well for the Ende Gelände police officers. They might feel entitled over the protesters as they are misbehaving, and they are being "bad citizens" which gives them even more power over them to act in brutal ways to keep them inline. And maybe they might even think they don't deserve better treatment as they are being the "bad ones".

Some of the underlying motivations for the police officers to keep protesters inline and behaving are; first and foremost, their jobs. In order to keep their jobs, they must follow orders. And in this case the order is to keep the activists off of RWE's private property and prevent them to do any damage to it. Some others as we discussed before might be either personal attributions and well as the situational attributions. The stress of the moment, the pressure they feel at the moment to keep things in order while having each year an increasing number of protesters from all sorts of different nationalities around them, risking their jobs. Part of this as well could be peer pressure. If other guards start engaging in this brutal behaviour others might feel the need to engage in the same behaviour out of fear as being seen as not efficient enough or not good at teamwork, etc.

Local Residence Morschenich (and Other Affected Towns)

The coal mines in the Lusatia region bring about very strong emotions in the local population. It is a hotbed of cause for conflict. The expansion of the mines would mean the loss of their home for certain citizens and the end of the activities would mean the loss of their job for certain other citizens. Even for those not affected by either there is still much to be lost or gained since the mining operations transform the region, enabling one lifestyle and disabling another. Max from BUNDJugend/Young Friends of the Earth Germany had this to say about the local population after the 2016 Ende Gelände:

As expected some local people showed their opposition to the climate camp. They or their relatives work in the coal industry or see it as an important economic driver in the region. However many citizens applauded and encouraged us. They felt left alone in the struggle against the polluting coal industry, and many had had already lost their homes or will soon if the pit continues to expand. These people were hopeful that coal mining will now receive wider attention outside Lusatia, and I later met some of them at the demonstration (Friends of the Earth Europe, 2016).

For both the proponents and the opposers of the expanded mines, amongst the local populace, one can imagine a sense of powerlessness. Powerful forces battle over the future of the region with seemingly no regard for those that stand to lose their jobs or homes. Some of the opposers may feel betrayed by the German government – Martin Boslau, elderly resident of another nearby village called Proschim recalls that: politicians promised after reunification in 1990 that no further villages would be demolished to make way for coal (Paterson, 2014). Proschim is now scheduled for demolition and the residents are furious (Paterson, 2014). The village's 350 inhabitants as well as the local farming community are devoted to the green cause and has put in place, wind solar and biogas plants that provide electricity for 15 000 homes (Paterson, 2014). Another elderly, Johannes Kapelle, recalls how the town used to reek of phosphor thanks to the mines and state they will do every in their power to avoid having to go back to the old days (Paterson, 2014).

At the same time Vattenfall, owners of the mines at the time, claimed that they provided jobs for 8200 directly and 25000 indirectly in 2014 (Paterson, 2014). It can certainly be argued that the local residents are divided on the mines and that they would, therefore, be most inclined to argue, as a group, to preserve the status quo. The mines and power plants are a very important source of jobs in the region but the expansion is only calculated to create 700 new jobs (Paterson, 2014) while 3400 are expected to be forced to move due to the expansion and as such the local populace might be inclined to keep things as is (Corporate Europe Society, 2016). However,

many locals are fed up with being bullied for the sake of the mines, 136 villages with more than 30 000 residents have been forced to move already (Corporate Europe Society, 2016). Opposers of the mines also argues that the mining damages local ecosystems and drinking water and have caused the loss of local forests, arable land and anything else of value in the areas claimed by the mines so far (Corporate Europe Society, 2016). At some point, enough might be enough for the part of the population not employed by the coal industry.

Change Theories and Their Relation to Ende Gelände

The Amoeba Theory

According to the amoeba of cultural change-model we ought to imagine social change as an amoeba. At first only a small part of the amoeba reacts to food, but once it stretches out, the rest will follow. In the same way, if a change agent promotes an idea for social change, the whole community may follow – at first some people will resist for various reasons, but if the most influential individuals of the community can be convinced to initiate change, the majority will follow and eventually even the resisting ones will follow so as to not be left out of society.

In our case the activists of Ende Gelände are the change agents that are trying to promote a new idea. Among our actors, Svenja Schulze is the most influential individual. She can, to a large extent, convince the community as a whole to follow the activists of Ende Gelände and transform society. Other influential individuals of the German society and the region of Lusatia also have potential to become great transformers, if the Ende Gelände movement can convince them.

The actors most likely to resist social change in this case are those that stand to lose the most from phasing out the coal mining. Obviously Dr. Rolf Martin Schmitz, the CEO of RWE will be among the most resisting ones. Certain residents that are working in the mining industry will also resist the change. Police officers and less influential residents of the area will be the most neutral according to amoeba-model.

In the case of Ende Gelände the activists are the change agents, they have the initiative and have set the agenda. At the same time, as Massey notes, social movements are typically a challenge to two of the most powerful actors in society - governments and huge corporations (Massey, 2016), this is such a case, and therefore not an easy task. Therefore, having one of them on your side

might be a huge advantage. According to the model, the ones they need to convince of their agenda are the most influential ones, the ones that can sell their idea to the general public. Among our actors Svenja Schulze has the most influence and the only really influential and therefore the one with the most power. It is important to note that she faces strong opposition from more conservative forces in the German government and convincing her is not enough. What she can do however, if the activists convince her of their agenda, is to give a voice to public opinion, as opposition to the many voices of corporate interests, both in the media and from their friends in the government.

As a counterexample, one could argue that RWE is a change agent for another social movement, the expansion of coal mines and continuation of a way of life. As Massey notes, some social movements are movements of resistance to specific changes rather than proponents of change (Massey, 2016). RWE argues that they provide jobs and urges the population to rally to save their jobs, thus it could be considered a counter-movement resisting the phasing out of coal. In that case, they have to convince the most influential actor, which would, once again be Svenja Schulze and once again, that puts her in the most powerful seat among our actors, according to the amoeba of cultural change.

The Dialogue, Activism and Democratic Social Change

The main roles in this particular case study are Dr. Rolf Martin Schmitz, the CEO of the RWE; Svenja Schulze, the Environmental Minister of Germany; the activists living in Hambach Forest all year long to protest against the coal mine; the police officers that have to keep control on the demonstrations from Ende Gelände all year long, especially in the largest events; and of course the residents of Morschenich, one of the two towns which are still left to be swallowed by RWE in benefit of the coal mine expansion. The relation between these actors and the change theory is based on the lack of dialogue between the German government and the dissatisfied citizens all around Germany and Europe. The RWE coal mine in Hambach has contribute with the destruction of the 12,000-year-old Forest of Hambach as well as the eviction of hundreds of people in the surrounding towns. This has caused a great deal of pain as well as uncertainty about their futures. This lack of dialogue has been the base for one of the largest activist

demonstrations in Europe pressuring the German Government for a more democratic social change - to listen more to the citizens it represents, rather than favouring the large corporations that have been lobbying to prevent the phase out of fossil fuel usage. The response of the German government and the police officers in charge of the Ende Gelände demonstrations has been more on the oppressive side than an opening to dialogue, causing the citizens and activist to engage in ever increasing aggression in civil disobedience, which of course has to do with the power relations. This is most likely the biggest problem regarding the lack of dialogue in the Ende Gelände case study, issues of power (Ganesh, S. and Zoller, H.M. (2012). But one could argue that the activists' strategy at Ende Gelände has been delaying a solution as it has been more of an ACT-UP! strategy, rather than an opposition dialogue to find a solution (IBID). Usually consensus is taken as a better option for effective change rather than pressure, but as stated before in this case the power relations leave that option virtually off the table (IBID).

End Case Scenarios

After considering challenges and opportunities our actors face, we would like to draw possible outcomes of this case.

Best Case

In our view the best-case scenario would be a rapid coal phase-out within a few years. The actions of Ende Gelände would have big influences on public opinion and cause concrete social change that results in giving up using fossil fuels in society. The public opinion will exert environmental policies and the laws related to natural resource exploitation will be changed towards protecting the nature. Then the remaining citizens may be able to keep staying in their villages depending on how far the digging already went, and there will also be a financial structural change to reshape the economy of the coal region. Energy companies may start to expand their business to renewable energy area. As a result, green energy production will be accelerated, compensating for the phase-out of the coal power-plants.

Towards these outcomes, strategies of Svenja Schulze and RWE would be influential. At first, if the actions of Ende Gelände changes the public opinion, it would be a great help for Svenja

Schulze, as she has to convince the Conservative ministers in the cabinet. With the public support, she would be able to persuade them more strongly and then new laws to save the environment would be passed.

In addition to this, though Ende Gelände is against RWE, RWE has contributed to environmental concerns and development of renewable energy. If their coal power plants are banned by laws, they may try to develop and expand their renewable energy business even further to compensate the loss profit and stable department.

Worst Case

The worst-case scenario in our point-of-view, would be the decision by the coal-commission to postpone the coal phase-out for a decade or so, which basically means maintaining the status quo. RWE will continue to dig coal out of the ground and expand the mines even more, till they are depleted. Activist living in Hambach forest will be supplanted and the rest of the forest will be cut down, as well as the remaining villages lying in the future digging areas will be relocated and the citizens will lose their homes. This scenario supports RWE's current strategy to continue its coal business. Probably there will be then a big re-action from Ende Gelände to that decision, which most likely will face a harsh police oppression, as the police are only an extension of the government and enforces the laws.

Conclusion

To conclude, we think the most realistic outcome will be a compromise that balances the above described cases. The coal phase-out will probably happen within the next 10 years, so that Germany will be able to meet its climate goals, but there is also enough time for a transition towards renewable energies to compensate for the coal power production. It will all depend on how the public opinion will change within the next few years in terms the urgency of climate action, which will be the fundament for future political decisions regarding this issue. We are convinced that Ende Gelände will play a role in shaping the public opinion with their action and therefore be an important actor in the climate change movement striving towards social change.

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