

0189 Realigning the electric city: Legacies of energy autarky in Berlin and Hong Kong

Timothy Moss¹, Maria Francesch-Huidobro²

¹IRS, Erkner, Germany, ²City University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong, Hong Kong

Whilst cities are widely regarded as playing a pivotal role in low carbon transitions, recent research is highlighting the enormous variety in urban responses to climate change. The search for model development trajectories for the low carbon city is being clouded by stories of deviation, contestation, appropriation and adaptation peculiar to specific urban contexts. This differentiated picture of urban low carbon transitions as they are really happening is helpfully opening up the debate to the multifarious factors shaping urban responses to climate change and the emergent challenges for both policy and research. What is in danger of getting lost in these powerfully 'presentist' narratives is a sense of where these urban responses are coming from and how historical legacies of energy production and use are influencing (low carbon) options for the future. The proposed paper uses a comparative analysis of two iconic 'electric cities' - Berlin and Hong Kong - to explore the legacies of past socio-technical configurations for today's attempts to realign urban energy systems and the role played by intermediary organizations in the process. It investigates firstly how the two cities of West Berlin and Hong Kong - prior to their respective reunification - strove to make themselves self-sufficient with localized electricity generation networks, building up capacity for energy autarky. The paper, secondly, demonstrates how political and economic reintegration in the 1990s led to a realignment of each city's energy policy, as power grids became regionalized and local generation capacity questioned. In the third section, the authors draw implications from these historical legacies of energy autarky and regionalization for these cities' responses to the low carbon challenge today. As a cross-cutting theme, the paper explores the ambivalent and fluctuating relationship between interests in energy security and energy efficiency, and how this informs energy infrastructure policy in cities.

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