

## Dr Frank Uekotter

Reader in Environmental Humanities

[Department of History \(/schools/historycultures/departments/history/index.aspx\)](/schools/historycultures/departments/history/index.aspx)

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### About

I am a Birmingham Fellow working on environmental issues, both past and present, in a global context.

### Qualifications

- PhD Bielefeld University, 2001
- Habilitation, Bielefeld University, 2009

### Biography

I studied history, political science and the social sciences at the universities of Freiburg and Bielefeld in Germany, the Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore and Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, USA. I earned, or at any rate was awarded, a PhD from Bielefeld University in 2001, where I continued to work for several years. Among other things, I organized a conference on the environmental history of Nazi Germany for the German ministry for the environment and spent some time at the German Historical Institute in Washington DC in 2005.

I moved to Munich in 2006, helped by a generous Dilthey grant from the Volkswagen Foundation. I taught at Munich's Ludwig Maximilian University and helped to build the Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society, an institute for advanced studies in the environmental humanities run in collaboration by Munich University and the Deutsches Museum. It is during these years that I realized that environmental history, in addition to being an exciting field of historical scholarship, holds a huge potential for ongoing environmental debates. I also moved beyond my primary focus on German and U.S. history towards a more global perspective on the past. I joined Birmingham University in September 2013.

### Teaching

- Towards a Dead Planet? A History of Humans, Natural Resources, and the Environment (Spring term).

### Postgraduate supervision

I would be interested in supervising research in environmental history, broadly conceived.

### Research

My research interests currently go into two directions. One is the past and present of environmentalism. I am about to publish a book on the Green Germany, which is a synthesis on German environmental history as well as a reflection on where environmentalism is standing in the twenty-first century. I plan to follow up with a book that is essentially an archaeology of environmentalism: an investigation into places and events that resonated globally. The project follows the intellectual tradition of "sites of memory" (*lieux de mémoire*) and aims for that holy grail of memory research, global sites of memory. In fact, the more I work on this book, the less I am certain that it is still an environmental history book, but maybe I should not worry too much about academic classification. The point is that there is a transnational level of collective awareness hidden in artefacts and environmental challenges that we can study at great merit as part of global memory.

My other concern is with resources. I am currently building a research group on the global world of monoculture that seeks to understand why production systems all over the world, from coniferous forests in central Europe to soybeans in Brazil are tilting towards a reliance on a single crop during the modern era. The working argument is that there may be something akin to a "mind of monoculture," which we can observe in very different societies all over the world. I also worked on non-organic resources and found the similarities between mining, forestry and agriculture striking. Enthused by the current academic talk about neo-materialism, I fantasize about writing a global resource history in my megalomaniac hours.

### Publications

#### Books

- *Am Ende der Gewissheiten. Die ökologische Frage im 21. Jahrhundert* (Campus: Frankfurt and New York 2011).
- *Die Wahrheit ist auf dem Feld. Eine Wissensgeschichte der deutschen Landwirtschaft* (Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht: Göttingen, 2010. 2nd edition 2011, 3rd edition 2012).
- *The Age of Smoke. Environmental Policy in Germany and the United States, 1880-1970* (University of Pittsburgh Press: Pittsburgh, 2009).
- *Umweltgeschichte im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (R. Oldenbourg Verlag: Munich, 2007).
- *The Green and the Brown. A History of Conservation in Nazi Germany* (Studies in Environment and History, Cambridge University Press: New York et al, 2006).
- *Naturschutz im Aufbruch. Eine Geschichte des Naturschutzes in Nordrhein-Westfalen 1945-1980* (Campus: Frankfurt and New York, 2004).

- *Von der Rauchplage zur ökologischen Revolution. Eine Geschichte der Luftverschmutzung in Deutschland und den USA 1880-1970* (Klartext: Essen, 2003).

## Articles

- "Farming and Not Knowing. Agnotology Meets Environmental History," Dolly Jørgensen, Finn Arne Jørgensen, Sara B. Pritchard (eds.), *New Natures: Joining Environmental History with Science and Technology Studies* (Pittsburgh, 2013), 37-50.
- "Fukushima, Europe, and the Authoritarian Nature of Nuclear Technology," *Environmental History* 17:2 (April 2012): 277-284.
- "Affluence and Sustainability. Environmental History and the History of Consumption," Hartmut Berghoff, Uwe Spiekermann (eds.), *Decoding Modern Consumer Societies* (Palgrave MacMillan: New York, 2012), 111-124.
- "The Enigma of Mobility. Reflections on the Arab Revolutions," *Transfers* 1:2 (Summer 2011): 150-157.
- "Consigning Environmentalism to History? Remarks on the Place of the Environmental Movement in Modern History," *RCC Perspectives* 7 (2011).
- "The Magic of One. Reflections on the Pathologies of Monoculture," *RCC Perspectives* 2 (2011).
- "Thinking Big. The Broad Outlines of a Burgeoning Field," Frank Uekoetter (ed.), *The Turning Points of Environmental History* (University of Pittsburgh Press: Pittsburgh, 2010), 1-12.

I am particularly proud of having published in several languages that I cannot read, and will be glad to talk to people speaking Chinese, Japanese, Russian, or Hebrew, who can tell me what I wrote.

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