



The Age of Smoke: Environmental Policy in Germany and the United States, 1880-1970 (Pittsburgh Hist Urban Environ)

Frank Uekoetter

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In 1880, coal was the primary energy source for everything from home heating to industry. Regions where coal was readily available, such as the Ruhr Valley in Germany and western Pennsylvania in the United States, witnessed exponential growth-yet also suffered the greatest damage from coal pollution.

These conditions prompted civic activism in the form of “anti-smoke” campaigns to attack the unsightly physical manifestations of coal burning. This early period witnessed significant cooperation between industrialists, government, and citizens to combat the smoke problem. It was not until the 1960s, when attention shifted from dust and grime to hazardous invisible gases, that cooperation dissipated, and protests took an antagonistic turn.

The Age of Smoke presents an original, comparative history of environmental policy and protest in the United States and Germany. Dividing this history into distinct eras (1880 to World War I, interwar, post-World War II to 1970), Frank Uekoetter compares and contrasts the influence of political, class, and social structures, scientific communities, engineers, industrial lobbies, and environmental groups in each nation. He concludes with a discussion of the environmental revolution, arguing that there were indeed two environmental revolutions in both countries: one societal, where changing values gave urgency to air pollution control, the other institutional, where changes in policies tried to catch up with shifting sentiments.

Focusing on a critical period in environmental history, *The Age of Smoke* provides a valuable study of policy development in two modern industrial nations, and the rise of civic activism to combat air pollution. As Uekoetter's work reveals, the cooperative approaches developed in an earlier era offer valuable lessons and perhaps the best hope for future progress.

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