

Socio-Ecological Mentalities and the Issue of Transformation in Germany:

Intensifying conflicts or new defensive consensus?

Among policymakers and social scientists there was long a prevailing view that climate consciousness and the willingness to act would, in the manner of a gradual, ever-evolving civilizing process, eventually prevail and pave the way toward a rationally enlightened, climate neutral society. Alas, in Germany, as in many other European countries, it is evident today that this has not come to pass. In fact, after climate and transformation issues had become increasingly contested in recent years, what we are currently seeing is more of a pacification of the situation in the opposite direction—toward a defensive consensus of ‘de-civilization’, in which majorities seem to be turning away from the prospect of a rational solution to planetary crisis, in favor of a myopic defense of the given unsustainable mode of living at any cost.

Dennis Eversberg is professor of sociology with a focus on environmental sociology at Goethe University in Frankfurt am Main, Germany. He was previously head of the junior research group “Mentalities in flux” at Friedrich Schiller University in Jena. His research interests include socio-ecological mentalities and conflicts, the critical analysis of modern capitalist societies and their expansionary imperatives, degrowth movements, and the role of work and trade unions within socio-ecological transformation processes.

Using a Bourdieuan relational framework and drawing on two waves of a representative survey in Germany conducted by the *flumen* group in 2021 and 2023, this presentation reconstructs this re-figuration of the ‘transformation conflict’ in German social space, illuminating how mentalities, as acquired and incorporated, socially specific modes of perception and affect, are linked to socio-economic factors. The analysis reveals a triangular relationship between eco-social mentalities in higher socio-cultural positions, conservative growth-oriented mentalities in economically dominant groups, and defensive-reactive mentalities in lower social positions. We highlight the multiple lines of a new socio-ecological class conflict within this constellation and present new diachronic analyses showing a rise in decivilizing processes and changes in the triangular relationship.

Philip Koch is a doctoral candidate at Friedrich Schiller University in Jena, and until recently research associate in the *flumen* group. Within the group, he has conducted a case study about transformation processes in rural Spain. His PhD thesis investigates social relationships with nature and the historic background of imminent transformations in the olive sector of Jaén in Southern Spain.

TIME, DATE, PLACE

Thursday, 9 October 2025, 16:00 CEST
The seminar will be held on Zoom.
Please register for attendance [here](#).

