



Trump, Think Tanks and Ideas Across the Atlantic: The Changing Role of Expertise in Policy-Making

Event

[Discussion](#)

Date

21 February 2017

Location

Berlin, Germany

Speaker

[Prof. James McGann](#)
[Sascha Müller-Kraenner](#)

At an Ecologic evening event on 21 February 2017, Prof. James McGann and Sascha Müller-Kraenner discussed the future of US and EU think tanks under a the Trump administration.

"Trump could cause 'the death of think tanks as we know them'", writes Josh Rogin in the Washington Post. Anti-science sentiment is rampant in parts of the population, not only in the US but also in the UK, where Michael Gove, one of the drivers for Brexit, famously claimed that "Britain has had enough of experts". The tectonic plates are shifting under institutions that are an essential ingredient of open, democratic societies, institutions that provide critical contestation of policy ideas, help to avoid or identify and correct mistakes, and provide the necessary platforms and mechanisms for policy learning.

In his remarks, Prof. McGann highlighted some of underlying trends that may explain Mr. Trump's success. Inter alia, he pointed to the transformational power of social media (and the resulting decrease in influence of journalism), a deep-seated perception of economic insecurity, combined with a loss of personal and national identity and a mistrust towards government. Prof. McGann warned that the forces which brought Mr. Trump to the White House are not a only an U.S. American phenomenon, since similar movements are at work in Europe. He called on think tanks to address the underlying societal grievances and improve the means of communication.

Sascha Müller-Kraenner reflected on key narratives used by European environmental organisations, asking the community to self-critically reflect on the social impacts of ecological modernisation, as well as on imbalances within the EU.

Organizer

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