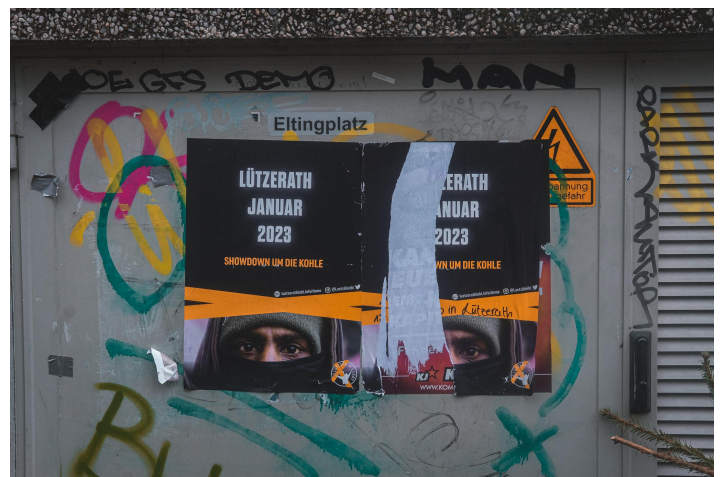


While in Germany, I conducted onsite research for my capstone on stakeholder responses to the ongoing energy crisis. My largest takeaway from the interviews was that Germany has rapidly responded to the sudden cutoff of Russian natural gas quite well, innovating at a rapid and admirable scale. One particularly notable experience was that I overlapped in the Western states of Nordrhein-Westfalen during the peak [protests](#) against Lützerath. Before arriving in Germany, I was unaware of the Lützerath crisis; the German government struck a deal with utility RWE, allowing them to expand a pre-existing open-face mine, in exchange for a commitment to retire coal earlier than planned. Still, the expansion of the mine would result in the destruction of an already partially abandoned village (Lützerath) that was occupied by climate activists for a few years. RWE agreed to only tear down Lützerath, rather than a number of other villages on the list, to make way for more mining. While I was in Nordrhein-Westfalen, Greta Thunberg actually came to Lützerath and was arrested for her efforts in the process, while I stayed only a block or two away from the RWE headquarters in Essen, known as the energy capital of Germany.

I was able to interview someone in the corporate strategy division at RWE, but now with the lens of Lützerath and political compromise on the back of my mind. I learned about RWE's efforts to respond to the crisis, with its largest initial priority, to no surprise, being the replacement of Russian gas imports. RWE played a critical role in finding a Floating Storage and Regasification Unit for short-term response, while working on the new, and now operational after just 200 days of construction, LNG terminal. The individual I interviewed also noted RWE's commitment to renewables and decarbonization, highlighting an accelerated coal phaseout from 2038 to now 2030, though not explicitly mentioning that this was due to the government deal in exchange to expand Lützerath.



The expansion of Lützerath was also at the forefront of my mind as I visited a UNESCO heritage site in Germany's energy capital, the Zollverein Coal Mine Industrial Complex. It was a fascinating contrast to see a coal mine that was declared the "most beautiful coal mine in the world" when less than 100 miles away, Lützerath protests raged on.

As I consider the next steps in my energy career, equity has been at the forefront of my mind, and seeing these demonstrations live time in Germany deepened my understanding of energy equity. Germany's political environment has typically been quite demonstrative, especially when it comes to issues of climate injustice, and contrasting that against efforts in the United States,

where I have more experience with environmental justice issues, was enlightening. Even in a favorable political environment with a liberal coalition in power, Germany still faces struggles and difficult decisions are routinely made in the face of the *Energiewende*, or the energy transition. It is hard to say whether or not Lützerath would have been expanded if Russia had not cut off natural gas, but I learned firsthand the rippling effects of such an outstanding crisis for both public and private sector stakeholders.