

**ENERGY POLICY (Elsevier): editorial practices with respect to manuscript
'Restoration or Reversal in Europe's electricity industry', submitted as Viewpoint.**

Short briefing by corresponding author Aviel Verbruggen.

Introduction: In a Viewpoint twelve authors addressed recent EU policy changes that may retard the electricity sector transition and prolong fossil fuel and nuclear lock-in. The editor, L. Greening, rejected the Viewpoint. When submitting on September 9th 2014, the authors stated: "*The present text is a Viewpoint, and it is easy to find two experts that do not agree with the position of this Viewpoint. So in a standard blind peer-review this Viewpoint can easily be shot down by selecting two reviewers that adhere opposite positions.*"

Although Greening responded she would give the viewpoint a fair chance, and asked for three suggested reviewers, she selected the people to support her prejudiced decision of rejecting critical positions for the incumbent energy industry. But she did more, as revealed here.

December 22, 2014, the corresponding author protested the rejection:

To dr. Lorna Greening, editor of Energy Policy,

You decided to reject the Viewpoint '*Restoration or Reversal in Europe's electricity industry transition*' (JEPO-D-14-01800) by Aviel Verbruggen, Rosaria Di Nucci, Manfred Fishedick, Reinhard Haas, Frede Hvelplund, Volkmar Lauber, Arturo Lorenzoni, Lutz Mez, Lars J. Nilsson, Pablo del Rio Gonzalez, Joachim Schleich, and David Toke.

On submission, by mail of September 9th we stated: "*The present text is a Viewpoint, and it is easy to find two experts that do not agree with the position of this Viewpoint. So in a standard blind peer-review this Viewpoint can easily be shot down by selecting two reviewers that adhere opposite positions.*"

After the judgment of reviewer #1 was positive in providing two comments for improving our text, a standard practice in scientific reviewing, you indeed solicited two opinions[1] opposite to our viewpoint.

We here briefly reply to the two opposite opinions without losing too much time on the received statements.

Reviewer #2: Main point is about language and words. Some comments are easily remedied, for example, "nuclear phase-out" may substitute for "nuclear burial" in Germany. Others target the very essence of our Viewpoint, for example, we confirm that "the ethical, overarching perspective fostered by civil societies" is the right substitute for 'technical-economic cost/benefit studies' because the latter cannot resolve 'crucial decision issues, stretching far in time, ridden with uncertainty, ignorance and irreversibility'. Maybe this reviewer is not familiar with societal decision-making issues. Reviewer #2 further reveals being not in favor of the EnergieWende, but holds the belief that the potentials of renewable energy are not sufficient to supply the necessary energy, etc. This is an opposite viewpoint as the one we have developed, and of course such a reviewer does not like our viewpoint. Our section 6 is far from polemical, it only clarifies that opposite positions should be clearly stated.

Reviewer #3: Our viewpoint is called "a most peculiar paper", with the character of "a manifesto" with "ringing declamations" by a person with as major argument to reject that the paper is "quite condescending" (sic).

Her/his §3 sets a straw man of what we say about the cost/benefit of asking from small consumers to become electricity sector experts, and speaks in our name that we would dismiss energy efficiency and propose RE as only ethically as well as technically acceptable. We do not accept such 'straw man' tactics.

Her/his §4 are comments but not on our arguments (for example our bullet 8 is a concise description of what happened in the German EEG reforms after 2010, but the reviewer seems not to know the facts).

This type of opinionating comments continues for the rest of the report, under the authority of non-experts in energy matters: James Hansen and Marc Lynas. Amen.

A viewpoint is like a position paper: what is positioned, does not require general agreement. When general agreement is imposed, one cannot publish any interesting, worthwhile to publish viewpoint.

Rejecting a viewpoint because selected reviewers strongly disagree with the positions being argued is poor refereeing practice. A reviewer can comment whether the piece is well-written, argued and thought-provoking.

From previous experience I learned that the present Energy Policy editors do not respect appeal rights of authors, and consider the first 'no' as final. But bringing clarity in the position of the editors with respect to scientific plurality and debate could be helpful.

For a concerned group of scholars,

Aviel Verbruggen

Cc/ Mr. Henri van Dorssen, Elsevier

[1] Indeed: what authors more and more receive since Nicky France was removed from the editorial board at Energy Policy, are opinions, not academic reviews of policy papers.

The same day L. Greening answered as follows (I underlined text for further analysis):

Aviel,

Thank you for your note, but the decision on the paper remains unchanged. I should note to you that Reviewer #1 was one of three that you suggested; the other two declined immediately. After several rounds of invitations to my selections, the other two reviewers agreed. I thought Reviewers #2 and #3 provided good comments and reflected my thoughts on this submission precisely. In fact one of them made these comments to me privately:

"I do not believe this paper is suitable for publication. I have recommended reject although I would be open to read a major revision that would make an argument bolstered by evidence and theory, which right now is deficient in the former and lacking in the latter. A revision would also need to take on a different tone. At present this comes across as: everyone other than Germans is stupid; consumers are too lazy and dumb to use the smart grid (so conservation is out); EU countries are swamped by interests and ignorance and so continue to use fossil fuels and risky nuclear power (never touching on German increases in far riskier coal consumption); and all of us outside of Germany need a re-education program to make us think ethically and learn what wind and solar are really about!"

If I were a co-author on a piece that was so described by others, I would be most thankful that it had been rejected.

Therefore, no more will be said concerning this submission. I wish you luck on finding a venue for publication.

Lorna Greening, PhD
Editor, Energy Policy

Epilogue: Should we be knocked-out from the heavy blows by L. Greening? Not at all.

I checked whether Energy Policy contacted all three suggested reviewers, and learned:

- 1) One could not remember of any invitation from Energy Policy, and wrote he most likely was not invited.
- 2) One stated firmly not having been invited, because he re-checked his mailbox.
- 3) One answered being asked, and reviewed as follows:

“Excellent viewpoint! Here are two small comments:1) page 4 line 19 to 23: The numbers given here are from the 2013 version of the IEA Key World Energy

Statistics and give the electricity mix from 2011.2) page 12 line 38: .. causes negative power pricesIt would be good to put this comment in relation with the frequency of occurrence, the traded MWh and the monetary effects.In addition, it can well happen, that negative prices occur in one control zone and positive prices occur in another.

http://www.epexspot.com/en/company-info/basics_of_the_power_market/negative_prices

However, the corresponding author received the following review report from L. Greening:

“Here are two small comments:1) page 4 line 19 to 23: The numbers given here are from the 2013 version of the IEA Key World Energy Statistics and give the electricity mix from 2011.2) page 12 line 38: .. causes negative power pricesIt would be good to put this comment in relation with the frequency of occurrence, the traded MWh and the monetary effects.In addition, it can well happen, that negative prices occur in one control zone and positive prices occur in another.

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Greening edited the review; she deleted the main message “Excellent Viewpoint” that was accompanied by some comments intended to improve the viewpoint.

Then she found opponents of the German Energiewende to write some “condescending” text to support what she wanted, because it reflected her “thoughts on this submission precisely”.

As usual, she closes the case for further discussion.