

# A Personal Learning Bridge: How New Jersey and the World, Including Europe and Germany, Might Learn From Each Other



Matthew Polsky  
45-Year Sustainability Change-Agent  
Rutgers College, Class of 1977  
Ph.D. Student Erasmus University (The Netherlands) Sustainability Program  
Adjunct Professor, NJIT and Ramapo College  
Former Sustainability Team Leader, NJDEP

It's not your fault!  
Conventional wisdom has misled you.

Source: robsprimallife

## A Few of Many Mindset Barriers to Sustainable Transformation

- Widespread quiet assumption (bi-partisan and shared by nearly all sectors, including journalists) “There’s nothing new under the sun”; so, among other things, there is little to be learned from Europe
- Strong preference in policy circles for values like: Practicality, legality, political feasibility, political advantage, what is seen as “the real world”; as opposed to vision, creativity, what is seen as “academic,” or asking “What is really possible (or needed) if....?” Therefore, little exploration of productive hybrids like practical idealism
- Sense that transformational change is not feasible, necessary, or even desirable; that incremental or even baby-step changes are all that is necessary or doable
- Little knowledge there even is a sustainable business field; it is developing, including in some cutting edge and bold ways; with lots of potential to address environmental and even social problems in new ways. Therefore, no one asks politicians about their ideas on this subject or pressures them. Language, framing, and communications issues, like common media statements that “business is against “X” policy, when relatively new sustainable business organizations are not; and all environmental claims by business automatically seen as green wash are not helpful
- Political cycles of anger at “over-regulation” and “hostile government enforcers” makes it hard to even hold a discussion of green economy possibilities
- Innovation as limited to just technology, and not relevant to social issues, organizations, policy; little awareness of cultural or organizational barriers to it

## The European Experience:



Source: <https://i.imgur.com/KYIETN9.jpeg>



Image Retrieved by Richard Pollex, German/English Translator, University of Muenster, Rutgers Class of 1975

## Bottom Line Conclusions and Recommendations of Four-plus Decades

Students need to be leveled with about the urgency of climate change and that current approaches will probably prove insufficient within their lifetimes. Therefore, students should never stop learning, which should include breaking down conventional boundaries, questioning conventional wisdom, and co-creating new possibilities. It should never end. A subset of them should “Aim Big” (And not just students)

The mindset in New Jersey that ignored the relevance of the global scale to states and localities was inconsistent with core original themes of Environmentalism (“There’s only one Earth,” “We’re all interconnected”) and Sustainability (E.g., UNCED 1992 commitments made by the North to help the South, the UN SDGs) were mistakes We cannot afford to make more unnecessary mistakes

We must make must faster progress on Sustainable Transformation. Small, incremental, more familiar, somewhat easier societal changes are important, but likely insufficient

New Jersey colleges, if they’re not already doing it, should bring the Sustainable Transformation and Sustainable Transitions fields into their curriculums; and become more engaged and active contributors to them, including lessons that could come out of New Jersey policies and practices that would be very valuable to know in Europe. (These fields are not currently strong in understanding government and how policy is made.)

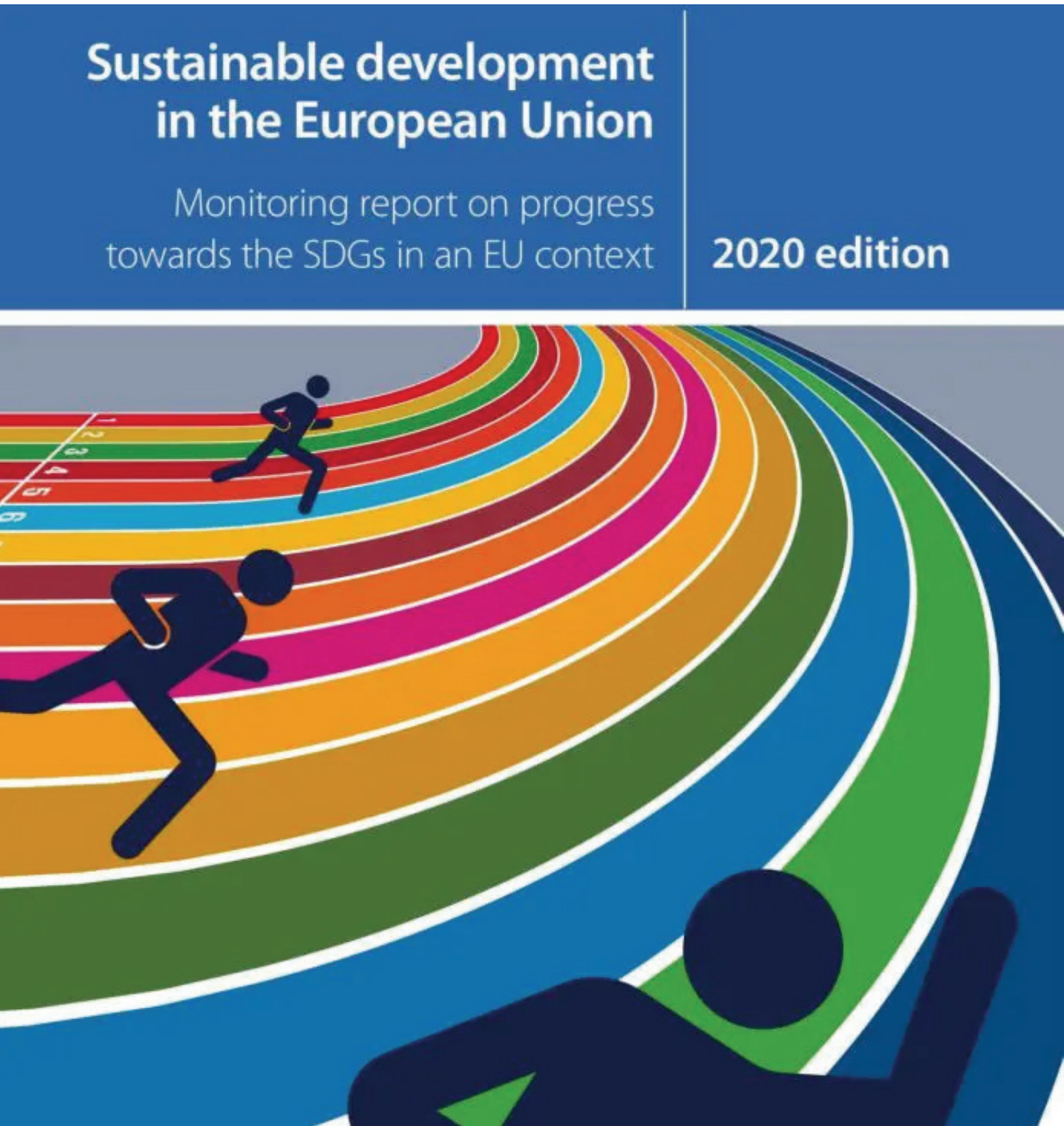
Therefore, Mindset Barriers, or how we think about things and the assumptions we make, whether conscious or not, should be better understood as unnecessary, unforced barriers; and ways developed to try to overcome most of them

There should be more active learning connections with Europe  
Innovation has to be taken more seriously, with those in charge of these initiatives more reflective of the possibilities and non-obvious barriers. All or nearly all innovation projects should connect to sustainability or climate change

Some German initiatives, although they may have been or are controversial, should be studied for lessons learned that could be brought to New Jersey as applicable. These include the Energiewende, or electric sector restructuring/transition to renewables; product take-backs; mass biking; possibly (if climate refugees become a major thing in the future) even their mixed experiences with large scale taking in of refugees; and maybe Coalition politics. Governor Murphy could build on his contacts from his former role as U.S. Ambassador to Germany.



Source: <https://d1keuthy5s86c8.cloudfront.net/static/ems/upload/img/5ac624fdcd0473e903c234dca9585c19.png>



Source: <https://unric.org/en/eu-progress-on-sdgs-a-starting-point-commissioner-gentiloni/>



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