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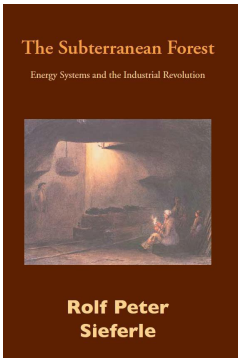
The Subterranean Forest: Energy Systems and the Industrial Revolution

Sieferle, Rolf Peter



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Sieferle, Rolf Peter. *The Subterranean Forest: Energy Systems and the Industrial Revolution.* Translated from the German original by Michael P. Osman. Cambridge: The White Horse Press, 2001.

The Subterrranean Forest studies the historical transition from the agrarian solar-energy regime to the use of fossil energy, which has fuelled the industrial transformation of the last 200 years. The author argues that the analysis of historical energy systems provides an explanation for the basic patterns of different social formations. It is the availability of free energy that defines the framework within which socio-metabolic processes can take place. This thesis explains why the industrial revolution started in Britain, where coal was readily available and firewood already depleted or difficult to transport, whereas Germany, with its huge forests next to rivers, came much later. This landmark text was originally published in German in 1982 and was thoroughly revised and updated for the White Horse Press in 2001.

Rolf Peter Sieferle 's other publications include *Fortschrittsfeinde?* (1984), *Die Krise der menschlichen Natur* (1989), *Bevoelkerungswachtum und Naturhaushalt* (1990), *Die konservative Revolution* (1995), and *Rueckblick auf die Natur* (1997).

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