

# Heat(ed) Debate – The German ‘Buildings Energy Act’ and its Heat Pump Saga

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## Background

- German Federal Government put the new **Buildings Energy Act** into force in **November 2020**
- The act sets out requirements for the energy performance of buildings and suggests the **Heat Pump** as a preferred solution to reach its ‘Climate Action Plan 2030/2050’ goal, so they push a **Heat Pump Offensive**

## Conclusion 1: Government texts

**German government publications** focus on how to reach the self-set goal of

- building in **500,000 heat pumps per year**, as it is already set as a best practice solution to transforming the buildings energy sector in accordance with the Climate Action Plan 2030/2050 [*Standardlösung, Transformation der Wärmeversorgung, Wärmewende*]
- **MAIN ACTORS** mentioned are ‘stakeholders’: researchers, craftsmen, specialists, trade unionists, energy consultants, manufacturers, (end customers, only indirectly, or to be addressed in the next step)
- **concrete measures** and **tools** to implement the necessary steps for the offensive

## Conclusion 3: Social Media



## Aims

Identify similarities and differences of the **linguistic framing** using four different slots in the following arenas:

1. German government policies / directives
2. German newspaper articles
3. International newspaper articles
4. Social media postings

## Conclusion 2: Newspapers

- **German newspaper articles** usually deal with the policy of the heat pump offensive
- **International newspapers** cover government and scientists telling people what to do instead of asking what those people want
- Many kinds of **MAIN ACTORS** are involved in the overall coverage



## Results

Slots analyzed:

- **Characteristics** of the object ‘Heat Pump’ (**HP**)
- **Actors involved**/addressed in the ‘Heat Pump Offensive’
- **Context** / Topics connected
- **Characteristics** of the ‘Heat Pump Offensive’ (**HPO**)

- The two slots **ACTORS INVOLVED** and **CHARACTERISTICS OF HPO** have high value
- The two slots **CHARACTERISTICS OF HP** and **CONTEXT / TOPICS CONNECTED** have low value

Semantic slots used in the corpora vary quite a lot:

- **Characteristics HP**: Government and international newspapers (NP) frame the HP positively and as a good solution to tackle energy conservation legislation for buildings; German NP and social media postings do not usually deal with any specific characteristics of the HP
- **Actors** are mentioned in all arenas, German government and international NP address general non-specific ‘stakeholders’, German NP and social media postings refer mainly to specific actors representing the HP(O)
- **Context(s)**: Both government texts and international NP articles link the HPO to a general energy transition away from fossil fuels; government texts also refer to Agenda 2030 as the EU’s approach to sustainable development; German NP articles also shed light on climate and refer to legal texts such as the Buildings Energy Act and the Energy Industry Act
- **Characteristics HPO**: Government texts characterize the HPO as a transformation of heat supply, as a heat turnaround that pursues the goal of installing 500,000 heat pumps per year; international NP articles describe the German HPO as an ambitious project; German newspaper articles, on the other hand, characterize the HPO as a modernization and refurbishment offensive with high financial and skilled workers requirements; SM also focuses on financial aspects of implementation and questions its benefits for climate change

## Methods

- Data used: government publications, newspaper texts, newspaper texts, social media postings
- Time frame: 2020-2023 (132 texts in total)
- Linguistic discourse analysis with a focus on Frame Semantics (Busse 2017): **Frames** represent knowledge structures that attach to a category certain **slots** (e.g., actors), which in turn can be filled out with certain concrete **fillers** (e.g., politicians)

## Limitations

- Include scientific texts as another arena to compare?
- Interpretation needed?