abstract
Governance through better relativism - Seven challenges to a future climate change debate
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UNFCCC COP15 did (not) fail. Various interpretations on the outcome of the Copenhagen conference exist. It is however too simple to state that negotiations failed because of a lack of political will. This paper identifies and motivates seven challenges to the global community in the interest of a democratic, fair and effective future climate change debate:

1   Bridging the gap between the poor and the rich by way of a meaningful moral approach to the issue of shared but differentiated responsibilities;

2   Bridging the gap between the science of the problems and the politics of the solutions by way of fostering a reflexive and transparent knowledge generation at the science-policy interface;

3   Organising formal negotiation processes that principally enable every actor (policy maker, journalist, NGO representative) to function according to her/his mandate, and in which practical logistic considerations may not be used to privilege one actor over the other;

4   Overcoming strategic 'narrow' framing of argumentation on issues such as nuclear energy by bringing them into the centre of the debate;

5   Organising a value-based debate on climate change policy in which cultural differences and state sovereignty are taken up as aspects of complexity, instead of leaving them to determine the boundary conditions of the debate itself;

6   Striving for binding agreements on the basis of a theme-oriented integrated sustainability assessment approach that results in concrete sectoral policies and measures instead of on the basis of a 'national' approach;

7   Bringing the now isolated climate change debate into the context wherein it belongs: a holistic, inclusive and proactive approach that puts sustainable development in a humanitary perspective instead of in an economical one.

The paper elaborates on the relevance, interrelation and practical translation of these challenges by referencing them to the actual UN climate change negotiations process and by grounding them in the theoretical work performed in the project 'The possibility of Global Governance' undertaken by the research initiative theAcademia.org. Starting from a critical analysis of inherent-structural and cultural-political factors that complicate governance, this research initiative inquires the performative and communicative character of the science-policy interface in terms of both its effectiveness and normative grounds, arguing that any inquiry on criteria for 'good' governance (and subsequent institutional design) will come down to a politico-philosophical and science-philosophical analysis of attitudes in and methods of socio-political interaction, taking into account the possibilities and impossibilities of using knowledge and mandates at the governance science-policy interface.

theAcademia.org is an independent research initiative that interacts with a wide spectrum of institutions and that is established and driven by the author. Since 1997, he participates as a researcher in the policy processes of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (UNCSD). He is also an active member of the Constituency of Research and Independent NGOs to the UNFCCC since 2006.

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