



SUGGESTED READING: GLOBAL POLITICS

Mearns, Robin/ Norton, Andrew (eds.) 2010:
Social Dimensions of Climate Change. Equity and Vulnerability in a Warming World
by Constanze Koitzsch

Steadily increasing temperatures, rising sea-levels as well as frequently occurring natural disasters are some of the most urgent challenges for humanity in the 21st century. The ongoing climate change does not only present a threat to the global ecosystem but does also aggravate the living conditions of the poorest, intensify social inequalities and can therefore - under certain circumstances - exacerbate already existing social conflicts.

In the volume edited by Robin Mearns and Andrew Norton, climate change is examined against the background of a just and social development - an approach that, according to the editors, has so far been neglected in the debate on climate change. Hence, they identify an important research area, but equally emphasize that - e.g. with regard to the realization of the Millennium Development Goals - this topic should also be made accessible for political debate.

The starting assumption is that not only climate change itself causes social inequalities, but that measures of adaptation and mitigation can also involve (unintended) negative consequences for the social development of a state. In the first section of the book those relations are analyzed in different policy areas. Even if a direct correlation between *climate change and migration* or between *climate change and the outbreak of armed conflicts* has not yet been empirically verified, it becomes evident that changing climate conditions can - influenced by other variables - accelerate such processes. Besides, it is emphasized that existing gender inequalities will be reinforced if *gender-specific consequences of climate change* are not adequately considered. This means: gender-blind strategies of adaptation will further deteriorate the situation of women and thus impede their empowerment.

In the second section of the book several authors depict that strategies of mitigation and adaptation are often developed and implemented without integrating local institutions, without including well-established local strategies and without considering special needs of particular groups. Therefore, an adaptation to climate change is hampered and developmental improvements as well as progress in poverty reduction strategies are undermined - a situation which is essentially criticized by the book. Consequently, it is demanded that measures of adaptation and mitigation are better incorporated in existing development and poverty reduction strategies. Likewise, the authors accentuate that development cooperation alone is not sufficient to successfully cope with climate change and its consequences. Unfortunately, it remains unanswered, *how* a coherence between climate and development policy, especially with regard to social justice, can be achieved. Although, the authors above all give some recommendations for action in the second part of the book, the reader would sometimes like to see concrete examples. Nevertheless, the book definitely provides a valuable overview of the social dimensions of climate change. It is desirable for this volume to stimulate further research on and discussions about the social consequences of climate change *and* the current climate policy in order that - also with regard to the current climate negotiations - failures of the past are not repeated.