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Public Hearing

Stakeholder Perspectives on Climate Justice

Online event • 25 May 2023, Berlin

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In its second hearing on climate justice issues, the German Ethics Council would like to learn more about the perspectives of certain stakeholders who are particularly affected by the consequences of climate change. Furthermore, the Council wants to take a closer look at peculiarities of the public debate on the topic.

It is often regarded as particularly unjust that those people who will foreseeably suffer the most from the consequences of global climate change often contribute only a comparatively small share to its emergence. This applies, for example, to many **people in the Global South**. Their perspective will be presented by **Md Shamsuddoha**, who himself lives in Bangladesh, one of the countries which are already severely affected by climate change. Thanks to his many years of involvement in international academic and climate policy projects, the director of the Center for Participatory Research and Development in Dhaka is also able to voice general interests and fears of the Global South.

Younger people, too, will be disproportionately affected by the consequences of climate change, even though their contribution to it is likely to be comparatively small. In this context, the Federal Constitutional Court in 2021 referred to a duty of the German state not to overly restrict the future freedom of young people through insufficient legislative action in the present. This was a partial success for the constitutional complaint against the Federal Climate Change Act of 12 December 2019, in which the then 22-year-old **Sophie Backsen** was involved. The Ethics Council invites her to contribute the perspective of young people to the hearing. Living on the North Frisian island of Pellworm, which already now lies one metre below sea level, Backsen is personally affected by climate change in a particular way.

Another perspective addresses the **health consequences of climate change**. These include direct health hazards due to more frequent extreme weather events such as heat waves or storms, but also indirect risks such as the spread of pathogens that are adapted to a warmer climate. At the World Health Organization, a dedicated department is working on the correlations between climate change and health. The German Ethics Council welcomes **Diarmid Campbell-Lendrum**, Head of the Climate Change and Health Unit at the World Health Organization.

All invited stakeholders have in common that they and many others are struggling to be heard in the **public debate on climate change**. The German Ethics Council is therefore also interested in the specific dynamics of this debate, as it influences both the decisions taken on the topic as well as their implementation and acceptance. Is this debate sufficiently open? How does public portrayal of more extreme forms of climate protest affect attitudes towards climate change? Does the use of dramatic terms such as “climate emergency” or “climate catastrophe” in the media have an influence on public opinion on climate change? And what is good communication when it comes to the powerlessness experienced by many in the face of these crisis metaphors? To get answers to these questions, the Ethics Council invites the communication scientist **Michael Brüggemann**. He heads a research group at the University of Hamburg dedicated to analysing climate communication in different media and countries.

Programme

- 1:00 pm **Welcome**
Julian Nida-Rümelin · Vice-Chair of the German Ethics Council
- 1:05 pm **Statement**
Md Shamsuddoha · Center for Participatory Research and Development, Bangladesh
- 1:20 pm **Statement**
Sophie Backsen · Appellant before the Federal Constitutional Court
- 1:35 pm **Statement**
Diarmid Campbell-Lendrum · WHO, Climate Change and Health Unit, Switzerland
- 1:50 pm **Discussion**
Chair: Kerstin Schlögl-Flierl · German Ethics Council
- 2:45 pm Coffee break
- 3:05 pm **Statement**
Michael Brüggemann · University of Hamburg
- 3:20 pm **Discussion**
Chair: Kerstin Schlögl-Flierl · German Ethics Council
- 4:10 pm **Closing words**
Alena Buyx · Chair of the German Ethics Council
- 4:15 pm End of the hearing

Md Shamsuddoha

Center for Participatory Research and Development, Bangladesh



Professional Curriculum

Since 2009	Chief Executive, Center for Participatory Research and Development, Dhaka, Bangladesh
2003–2008	General Secretary, Equity and Justice Working Group, Dhaka, Bangladesh
1999–2003	Senior Coordinator, Research and Advocacy, COAST Foundation, Dhaka, Bangladesh
1999–1998	Regional Sector Specialist, BRAC (Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee), Dhaka, Bangladesh
1997–1999	Program Officer, Plan International

Selected Memberships

Since 20213	Adviser to the Director, Climate Action Network South Asia (CANSAs)
Since 2018	Member and Treasurer of the Executive Committee, Bangladesh Network on Climate Change
Since 2009	LDC Watch
2020–2022	Director, International Board, Climate Action Network (CAN)

Selected Publications

Shamsuddoha, M. et al. (2022): Climate Diplomacy towards COP 27: Articulating CSOs position together. Ed. by Center for Participatory Research and Development, Dhaka, <https://cprdbd.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/CSOs-Position-on-Climate-Diplomacy-Towards-COP-27-1.pdf>.

Shamsuddoha, M. et al. (2022): Locally-led Adaptation Planning-Communicating Ground Realities to Bangladesh's NAP Process. Ed. by Center for Participatory Research and Development, Dhaka, <https://cprdbd.org/locally-led-adaptation-planning-bangladesh>.

Shamsuddoha, M. et al. (2021): MRV in Climate Change Discourse: Making Climate Action Transparent and Accountable. Ed. by Center for Participatory Research and Development, Dhaka, <https://cprdbd.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/MRV-in-the-Climate-Change-Discourse.pdf>.

Islam, M. M.; Shamsuddoha, M. (2018): Coastal and marine conservation strategy for Bangladesh in the context of achieving blue growth and sustainable development goals (SDGs). In: *Environmental Science and Policy*, 87, 45–54.

Islam, M. R.; Shamsuddoha, M. (2017): Socioeconomic consequences of climate induced human displacement and migration in Bangladesh. In: *International Sociology*, <https://doi.org/10.1177/02685809176931>.

Md Shamsuddoha

Center for Participatory Research and Development, Bangladesh

Bangladesh, ranked 7th in disaster losses from 2000 to 2020, faces worsening climate change impacts. It experiences increased cyclones, floods, erosion, salinity intrusion, desertification, and associated water, food production, health and displacement crises, causing substantial losses to the economy, infrastructure, and most tragically, human life.

Without adaptation efforts, millions will face river floods and coastal inundation over the next decades. The agricultural sector, employing 38 percent of the labour force, will suffer from reduced yields due to temperature rise, saline intrusion, droughts, flooding, and waterlogging. Climate change threatens to undo the significant development progress that Bangladesh has achieved in recent decades, with GDP losses estimated at 2 percent annually by 2050 and over 9 percent by 2100.

Climate-related disasters often place disproportionate burdens on already marginalised vulnerable people while widening inequality and instigating social exclusion such as gender discrimination, ethnicity, and socio-economic deprivation. Women in particular are more vulnerable than men to all kinds of climate related impacts and disasters, especially if they are poor. Alarming, the human dimension of climate change impacts is grossly ignored in global policy discourses as well as in national planning processes.

Socially just climate action should follow comprehensive, site-specific, bottom-up vulnerability analyses and prioritise procedural and distributive justice. This means empowering communities and providing preferential access to resources and services to marginalised people. Climate justice needs to address not only the historical injustice caused by developed countries but also the failure of countries in the global south to protect vulnerable and socio-politically excluded communities. While challenging in a neoliberal world, we should mobilise public opinion to strive for a fairer world with climate justice to the extent we can.

Sophie Backsen

Appellant before the Federal Constitutional Court



Curriculum Vitae

Since 2019	Student at Kiel University
2020–2021	Constitutional complaint against the German Federal Climate Change Act
2018–2019	Complaint at the Administrative Court of Berlin demanding further action of the government in regard to the climate crisis
2018	High-school diploma

Publication

Backsen, Sophie; Backsen, Silke: Butter bei die Fische. Wie wir von Pellworm aus die Klimapolitik verändert haben. Hamburg, 2022.

Sophie Backsen

Appellant before the Federal Constitutional Court

In a sensational ruling of April 2021, the German Federal Constitutional Court held that the Federal Climate Change Act of 2019 violated the fundamental and freedom rights of future generations. Although the German government amended climate protection law immediately, two years later and after a change in government not much has changed in practical terms.

This means, even after a ruling of the highest German court young people in Germany and everywhere else still must fight for their future freedom rights concerning climate change.

One generation has consumed a huge amount of the CO₂ budget thereby leaving the need to reduce emissions radically to following generations whose lives and freedom will be severely restricted as a consequence. This must change and politicians in charge now have to take drastic steps to reduce emissions in order to secure the fundamental rights of young people and people who are not even born now, but will be affected considerably by climate change.

Diarmid Campbell-Lendrum

WHO, Climate Change and Health Unit,
Switzerland



Professional Curriculum

- Since 2003 Scientist/Senior Scientist, World Health Organization, Switzerland
- Since 2010 Team Leader/Unit Head, Climate Change and Health, World Health Organization, Switzerland
- 1995–2003 Research Fellow/Lecturer, Disease Control and Vector Biology, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, United Kingdom

Selected Memberships

- Since 2022 Member of the US National Academy of Medicine
- Since 2011 Lead author, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) 5th and 6th Assessment Reports
- 2009–2013 Lead author, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Special Report on Extreme Events (2013)

Selected Publications

Romanello, M. et al. (2022): The 2022 report of the Lancet Countdown on health and climate change: health at the mercy of fossil fuels. In: *The Lancet*, 400 (10363), 1619–1654.

Campbell-Lendrum, D. et al. (2015): Climate change and vector-borne diseases: what are the implications for public health research and policy? In: *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences*, 370 (1665).

Smith, K. R. et al. (2014): Human health: impacts, adaptation, and co-benefits. In: *Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability. Part A: Global and Sectoral Aspects. Contribution of Working Group II to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*. Ed. by Field, C. B. et al., Cambridge, New York, 709–754.

Smith, A. J. et al. (2009): Public health benefits of strategies to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions: overview and implications for policy makers. In: *The Lancet*, 374 (9707), 2104–2114.

Patz, J. A. et al. (2005): Effects of regional climate change on human health. In: *Nature*, 438, 310–317.

Kuhn, K. G. et al. (2003): Malaria in Britain: past, present, and future. In: *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences USA*, 100 (17), 9997–10001.

Diarmid Campbell-Lendrum

WHO, Climate Change and Health Unit, Switzerland

Climate change is the greatest health challenge of the 21st century. It is driving health emergencies, placing additional strain on healthcare, and undermining the environmental determinants of health, from clean air, to water, to food and shelter. The impacts are felt hardest in poor and vulnerable communities that have contributed least to the carbon emissions which drive climate change, but rich nations are not immune. Solutions to mitigate and adapt to climate change already exist, and the health gains that would result from a clean energy transition, for example from reduced air pollution, would exceed the associated financial costs. This is therefore a political rather than technological or economic challenge, to harness the strong public support that already exists for climate action, counter those that have a vested interest in continuing business as usual, and managing a “just transition” for those groups most affected by climate and health policy.

Michael Brüggemann

University of Hamburg



Professional Curriculum

- Since 2023 Program Chair, The New Institute, Hamburg
- Since 2019 Project Director, Cluster of Excellence “Climate, Climatic Change, and Society” (CLICCS), University of Hamburg
- Since 2015 Chair of Communication Research, Climate and Science Communication, University of Hamburg
Principal Investigator, Cluster of Excellence “Integrated Climate System Analysis and Prediction”(CliSAP)
- 2014 Habilitation, University of Zurich
- 2010–2015 Senior Teaching and Research Associate, University of Zurich
- 2007–2009 Post-doctoral Fellow, Project Coordinator SFB 597, Jacobs University Bremen
- 2007 Dissertation, Dr. Phil. (summa cum laude), University of Hamburg
- 2003–2006 Research Associate, SFB 597, University of Bremen
- 2002–2003 Research Associate and Lecturer, University of Munich
- 2002 Graduation, Deutsche Journalistenschule (German School of Journalism), Munich
- 2001 University degree, Diploma in Journalism (with distinction), University of Munich

Selected Memberships

- 2018 Editorial Board Member, International Journal of Communication
- 2018 Founding Editor of the series “Global Communications”, Open Book Publishers, Cambridge
- 2017 Member, Department Council Social Sciences, University of Hamburg
- 2015 Member, Board of Directors, Research Center Media and Communication, University of Hamburg
- 2015–2019 Editorial Board Member, journal “Environmental Communication”

Selected Publications

Elgesem, D.; Brüggemann, M. (2022): Polarisation or just differences in opinion: How and why Facebook users disagree about Greta Thunberg. In: European Journal of Communication, DOI: 10.1177/02673231221116179.

Brüggemann, M.; Jörges, S. (2022): Zwischen Unterlassung und ökologischer Verantwortung: Klimajournalismus in Zeiten kognitiver Dissonanz. In: Ralph Brix, R.; Schumann, N. (ed.): Medien in der Klima-Krise. Munich, 27–44.

Brüggemann, M.; Rödder, S. (ed.) (2020): Global Warming in Local Discourses. How Communities around the World Make Sense of Climate Change. (Global Communications, vol. 1), <https://www.openbookpublishers.com/product/1177>.

Michael Brüggemann
University of Hamburg

The Four Apocalyptic Riders Haunting the Media Debate on Climate Change: Disregard, Denial, Doom, Delay

Leaving aside the wide differences of how different media in different contexts cover climate change, there are four problematic patterns shaping the climate debate.

(1) Disregard: the potential climate angle in news stories is being routinely overlooked by non-specialist journalists. Intense coverage is limited to UN summits, IPCC reports, protests, extreme weather events. Routine coverage remains on a low level, but has increased since 2019, as a result of a combination of climate protests and extreme weather events.

(2) Denial: denying the severe risks associated with climate change persists on social media and fringe outlets, but is no longer an important pattern in leading mainstream news. Professional journalism has moved beyond false balance.

(3) Doom: climate change as apocalypse was salient already in the 1980s. Today, climate coverage still is problem- rather than solution-centred. The focus on bad news may lead to news avoidance.

(4) Delay: a whole set of strategic attempts to delay climate actions draws attention to the costs of climate action, to easy future technical fixes or to green-washed pseudo-solutions.

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