



Negotiations under the direction of the Portuguese Prime Minister Jose Socrates (second from the right), with the Sudanese president Omar al Bashir (second from the left), at the meeting between EU and Africa held in December 2008 in Lisbon (AP Photo/Portuguese Presidency, Pool)

# Participation not paternalism

## Other aspects of a solar partnership with Africa

By Claus Leggewie

Due to its causes and its' environmental impact, climate change is normally considered a subject for the natural sciences. But with a view to its consequences, it must also become a central subject for social and cultural studies. Africa has contributed very little to climate change, but it may suffer many of the consequences. A genuine solar partnership between Africa and Europe must offer the African partners a fair and autonomous development opportunity. Opportunities that are not usually provided in current development cooperation initiatives.

In July 2007 Nicolas Sarkozy gave a talk at the University Dakarim in Senegal, entitled “Speech To the Youth of Africa.” In it, he echoed the German philosopher Hegel who had, during the course of his lectures on the philosophy of history found that Africa represented “the lack of entering into history and the undiscovered, that which is still caught in its natural spirit.” The newly appointed French president continued his lecture: “In this universe, where nature determines everything, the African remains in a static order, in which everything seems determined, immovable.” (FAZ) With Sarkozy as the patron of the EU-Mediterranean Union and a proponent of a close partnership with Africa this promises little good news. Among Africa specialists it caused a storm of protest.

This embarrassing episode highlights that a solar partnership with Africa, the sense of which cannot be disputed, without equal African participation would take place on an uneven playing field. From an EU perspective, it's ecological industry policy, to which many national and supranational groups subscribe, would become globalised. However, this approach suffers from its reliance on and trust in “political technology”, i.e. the flourishing cooperation of legislation, technical innovation and incentives for investors and consumers. As important as this convergence is, it sets its targets too low, with a view to climate protection and prevention strategy. The top-down approach of the energy partnership launched in September 2008 must also be underpinned from the bottom.

However, the Climate-Cooperation with Africa is clearly counting on the support of the military-supported classes in Africa. The vast majority of Africans are not included. Even the ‘Universal Electricity Plan for Africa’ treaty that was recently negotiated in

Addis Abeba and Brussels does not consider the majority of Africans in the implementation. In this way, this project is in the tradition of megaprojects of the colonial and post-colonial period, and is not different than the majority of developmental policies in its poor attempts to reduce the north-south divide, and diminish Africa's dependence on the small class of political and economic elites. A transnational culture of partnership is blocked by authoritarian and corrupt regimes that are dependent on western states, companies, aid agencies and are suspicious of an open society. In this way, the success of a development-cooperation requires not just more participation, but requires no less than the democratization of the African states or at least a conditioning of cooperation through good governance.

#### Climate Culture: a cultural approach to studying climate change

The blind spot of the climate protection concepts resides in the academic division of labour. Climate, energy and

environmental research are largely in the domain of the natural science and technology academics, who with their valuable know-how significantly influence political climate policy decisions. Social and cultural scientists cannot really complain because, with a few notable exceptions, they have only marginally addressed the subject, and without any expectation that their expertise should have an effect on the political and administrative system. When input from the ‘soft’ sciences is requested it is largely in the arena of loss adjustment (economics), acceptance (empirical sociology), and socio-ethical ornamentation (philosophy). Even further reaching considerations of supra- and transnational climate-governance regularly ignore the indispensable aspect of the participation of the affected, both as citizens and consumers.

With respect to its causes and its environmental impact, climate change is a subject for the natural sciences. But with a view to its consequences, it must also become a central subject for social and cultural studies. Of course, meteorologists explain why hotter summers



One of the consequences of climate change: desertification in Libya.



Gradually advancing industrialization in Africa ...

can be expected in North Africa, while the winter temperatures will be cooler; and why an increased temperature in the Sahel zone from 2.6 to 5.4 (Average 3.6) degrees Celsius can be expected (WBGU 2008). It will also largely be technically driven research that will protect African coasts from the El-Niño phenomenon with the help of early warning systems.

However, the question of what effects these events will have on existing governing classes and social structures lies fully in the territory of social and cultural sciences; also the question how actual climate wars could develop around scarce resources. Natural scientists are better acquainted with complexity, but less so with the symbolic interpretations and the construction of realities, as created by people in both normal as well as in exceptional times. These of course, have an immediate and long-term effect on politics, society and economy. Because climate change will also mean a cultural revolution, climate research advances to a key subject for cultural sciences. The Social sciences with its fixation on normalcy and modernization has shown as little feeling for this as has the postmodern cultural studies with its fixation on deviation.

Therefore, hazard analysis, risk management, and catastrophe preparedness must be supplemented with the creation of cultural scenarios, based on personality, mentality, and functional systems. The cultural techniques of survival in front of a backdrop of local traditions, cultural memories of catastrophes and new forms of self-discipline should be the subject of research. Apparent contradictions like obligatory-partnership and interdependence-min-

imizing globalization must be considered, map exercises and simulations must allow also for improbable scenarios like a renaissance of agriculture in the Ruhr area or a solar partnership with Africa.

Needed are not just renewable energy sources and sustainable environmental policies but first and foremost the insights into individuals and collective adaptation and coping strategies as well as insights into the effects of climate change on societies and their relationships. The effects of climate change that have been projected by the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and leading research institutes like the rising oceans, the appearance of extreme weather conditions, desertification, and the melting of glaciers are more than apparent. These have profound effects on global living conditions and cultures; survival areas disappear, migration and climate refugees increase, and cultivation zones shift. With a view to Africa, diverse studies have shown the drastic consequences



... creates a constantly increasing demand in energy.

(see below). In these there are winners and losers, where existing differences are exacerbated not just between North and South but also between generations. There are large deficits in the scenarios and model building of the social sciences, which are largely the result of the complexity of the 'social climate' and are at least as complicated as the physical one. Which is exactly why an interdisciplinary approach to methods, instruments and model development is necessary. Under these auspices a cultural scientific climate research must develop scenarios and prognoses, which cultures and which social consequences climate change will bring with it. More specifically, what the mental and symbolic forms of perception and explanation are, and what the prerequisites are for a successful adaptation to the consequences of climate change.

This approach is neither alarmist nor determinist. Climate change does not only pose a significant risk to living standards and trade but also offers the chance to develop new institutional and individual forms of cooperation and cultural techniques to cope with wide reaching threats. The establishment of transnational organizations – like an international environmental court – and a new culture of partnership could be promoted through climate change as well as sustaining technologies and infrastructures. Required are more subtle concepts of direction, realistic models of participation, alternative market incentives, considerations of generational justice and suggestions for the prevention of violence. A research program like this would at first only result in a series of work in progress methods and preparative forms (Leggewie/Welzer/Heidbrink 2008) to which I will subsequently make a few references using Africa as an example.

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A genuine solar-energy partnership requires partnership

#### A New Deal with Africa?

A genuine solar partnership between Africa and Europe cannot be a one-way highway, but rather offers the African partners a fair and autonomous development opportunity. These opportunities are usually not given in current developmental cooperation. Even if one must guard against radical conclusions like getting rid of developmental aid entirely, it is especially with a view to the least developed countries of Africa south of the Sahara that one can speak of their utter failure. Both the areas of acute humanitarian aid as well as mid-term developmental cooperation have yielded some unintended and perverse effects, as well as some that were consciously and willingly built into corruption schemes. Solar partnership must try to prevent these effects from the outset. It cannot only be oriented to

solving the supply problems of the European Union, or to simply hope for spill-off or trickle down effects.

A solar partnership therefore must directly and indirectly contribute to the containment of the worst and most long-term effects of climate change in Africa. The International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) already stated in 2001 that Africa has done little to contribute to climate change, but could be particularly hard hit by it (Unmüssig/Cramer 2008). Above all, according to the latest results of the Report Up in Smoke 2 (September 2008), 6 stress factors make Africa particularly vulnerable for the effects of climate change.

1. *Water resources, especially in international shared basins where there is a potential for conflict and a need for regional co-ordination in water management.*

2. *Food security at risk from declines in agricultural production.*



African ruling classes often stand in the way of their citizen's development (from the left) Arthur Mutemba, Zimbabwe, Robert Mugabe, President of Zimbabwe, Morgan Tsvangirai, the new Prime Minister of Zimbabwe, and Thabo Mbeki of South Africa. September 2008/ Harare

3. Natural resources productivity and biodiversity at risk.

4. Vector- and water-borne diseases, especially in areas with inadequate health infrastructure.

5. Coastal zones vulnerable to sea-level rise, particularly roads, bridges, buildings, and other infrastructure that is exposed to flooding.

6. Exacerbation of desertification by changes in rainfall and intensified land use.

The report clearly illustrates the close relationship between climate protection, fighting hunger, sustainable agriculture methods, and strengthening local communities.



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Claus Leggewie, born in 1950 has been professor for Political Studies at the Justus-Liebig University of Giessen since 1989. He studied social sciences and history in Cologne and Paris. PhD and Habilitation were received in Göttingen. Guest professorships followed in Paris, Nanterre, and at the Institute for Human Studies in Vienna. He was the first to receive the Max-Weber-Chair at New York University between 1995-1997. In March 1998 he was a Faculty Fellow at the Remarque Institute at New York University. In the Academic year 2000/2001 he was Fellow at the Wissenschaftskolleg in Berlin. From the foundation in 2001 until 2007 he was director of the Centre for Media Interactivity (ZMI) at the University in Giessen. Since 2007 he has been Director of the KWI in Essen.

*„Empower poor communities to be part of the climate change solution:*

*...it has to be about strengthening communities from the bottom up, building on their own coping strategies to live with climate change and empowering them to participate in the development of climate change policies. Identifying what communities are already doing to adapt is an important step towards discovering what people's priorities are and sharing their experiences, obstacles and positive initiatives with other communities and development policymakers. Giving a voice to people in this way can help to grow confidence, as can valuing their knowledge and placing it alongside science-based knowledge.*

**Strengthen disaster risk reduction**

*When dealing with the uncertainties of climate change, reducing vulnerability to today's climate through disaster risk reduction (DRR) is an excellent method of building adaptive capacity for the future. Communities can be protected from disasters relatively cheaply and simply – tools and methodologies are well developed and can be employed immediately in communities. Thousands of lives could be saved and economic losses prevented each year if more emphasis was placed on this. The climate change community therefore needs to recognise that DRR is a vital component of climate change adaptation. It should work with the disaster management community to advance both fields and avoid duplicating activities. Governments must also fulfill their previous commitments to DRR.*

**Reform emergency responses**

*(...) The emergency, or 'humanitarian', system must be overhauled, so that it is truly able to deliver*

*prompt, effective assistance on the basis of need. It must support people's livelihoods as well as meeting the immediate needs of the hungry. The stop-start approach must give way to longer-term support to address the underlying causes of food insecurity, including through social protection programmes through governments, backed by reliable funding. Moreover, the type of aid is still often inappropriate. It is not right that 70 per cent of food aid distributed by the UN is still the produce of the developed world: food aid should not be a means of supporting farmers in developed countries. When hunger is caused by lack of access to food as a result of poverty rather than food shortages, providing cash can be a more appropriate, faster, and less expensive option.*

#### **Tackle poverty – provide rural livelihoods for the most vulnerable and boost small-scale agriculture**

*More fundamentally, if food crises are to be averted, much more must be done to tackle the root causes of hunger. That means tackling poverty and the power imbalances that underpin it. (...) Even allowing for the extraordinary pace of urbanisation in Africa, the majority of the continent's poorest and most undernourished people live in rural areas – especially smallholders, nomadic pastoralists, and women.*

*The joint effort to eradicate poverty promised by African governments and donor governments must therefore deliver rural policies that involve and prioritise these vulnerable groups. Even small improvements in what they produce and earn, in access to health, education and clean water, will have major impacts in reducing hunger, as well as driving equitable growth.*“

There is one illusion, which could be taken from this but should be avoided by any future development cooperation with Africa. Namely, that it is clear that the North will emerge as the winner of climate change and that the South, in particular Africa, will be the big loser. One may believe that Europe will be less affected by the weather and with its new environmental technology will be able to help itself and the world. However, already now the effects of drought are affecting a poorly prepared Europe in the form of climate refugees. While the North is fixated on the humanitarian aid provided by the state, in many places in Africa where the state has failed and expectations of corrupt regimes no longer exist, people are self-reliant and self-organising. This is naturally not to suggest a denationalization but rather to show where Europe (and not just in the question of climate!) can learn from Africa. In this spirit of reciprocity an energy partnership must be conceived. •

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