

Sebastian Kistler

How Much Equality Is Fair? Social-ethical Studies on Sustainable and Fair Climate Protection.

More and more people from all over the world are realizing that our climate is changing. The 2007 International Panel on Climate Change report and other, newer studies predict devastating anthropogenous climate and environmental changes that will aggravate living conditions around the world. Following the unsuccessful UN climate conference in Copenhagen in December 2009, the 2°C goal, and therefore the prevention of a dangerous climate change seems, for many climate experts, nearly unreachable. We would need to drastically reduce our carbon emissions in order to enforce any form of climate protection. But how should CO₂ rights be distributed?

Is it really fair that everyone has the right to an equal amount of carbon emissions? A per capita distribution of emission rights would have enormous moral, political, and economic effects, and would establish a form of global and intergenerational egalitarianism unrivaled in the history of humanity. Therefore, it is important to ask whether the concept of human equality should be taken to mean that we all have the same right to carbon emissions.

On a theoretical level, there is a lively philosophical controversy between egalitarians, mainly in tradition of John Rawls, and so called non-egalitarians. In the opinion of John Rawls, who reinitiated the discourse on justice in modern times with his book *A Theory of Justice* (1971), social and economical inequalities are only acceptable if they are even beneficial to the worst situated person in a society and if they are linked to social positions which are accessible to all members of a society. Non-egalitarians, like Wolfgang Kersting, a philosophy professor at the University of Kiel and expert for John Rawls, criticize this concept of egalitarianism. In his book *Kritik der Gleichheit* (2002), Kersting argues that if such a model of justice is consistently used, it will lead to a deconstruction of human differences, which are important for human dignity.

In the field of climate justice, this problem is intensifying because questions of mitigation of future climate change and adaptation to the current climate problems which are globally spread very unevenly, have to be taken into account. Thus, borrowing Aristotle's systemization, a differentiated view of distributive justice is necessary. In *Nicomachian Ethics*, Aristotle defines the measure of distributive justice in relation to a *tertium comparationis*. Because of the close interconnection between climate change and development opportunities, these two complementary and sometimes rival elements of distributive justice — demand-based justice and burden-based justice — must be considered. Demand-based justice can be linked as *tertium comparationis* to the varying vulnerabilities of different population groups, and burden-based justice to mitigation demands.

My Ph.D. project explores a range of decisions for or against egalitarian patterns of distribution, analyzes the resulting ethical, political, and economical conflicts, and examines popular instruments and strategies used in climate treaties and the justice theories which influence them.