

The spatial dimension of climate politics

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Who governs climate change?

Discourses of global climate regulation and their regional implications

How global is climate change?

Climate change crosses borders. It has become a pivot of apocalyptic narrations – of natural disasters, tides of refugees and looming wars. At the same time – and more than other topics of our time - it has led protagonists from various nations and subject areas to the stage of global politics. Neither the ecological impacts of changing weather and climate as a result of anthropogenic emissions, nor intentional technological interferences are spatially homogeneous. The consequences of political and social actions, too, are unequally distributed in the attempt to avert a global catastrophe. In a variety of ways, global climate policies are based on spatial arrangements. International expert groups monitor the state of the planet and give recommendations to national decision makers. Emissions are balanced for nation states and local projects in poor countries – supported by the Clean Development Mechanism – produce new development potentials but new dependencies, too.

Geoengineering and Geopolitics

A human geography perspective on a Global Governance of Geoengineering focusses on the ambivalences characteristic for the relation of society and environment in the 21st century: new technological opportunities are pitted against incalculable risks that are unevenly distributed in spatial and social terms. A risk assessment in international discourses of climate regulation is decisive for the implementation and exploration of different geoengineering schemes. Thus, a “governance of climate change” by technologies and political instruments is always bound to global power relations to be exposed and questioned. Against this background Geoengineering, understood as an intentional large-scale manipulation of the climate system, has the potential to reorganize current geopolitical constellations. With regards to a political regulation the question remains how unequally distributed risks, development chances and responsibilities can be translated into collective and responsible action in a globalized world.

Technological climate control: a post-colonial project?

To direct the analytical gaze to questions of power relations implied by a regulation of climate change in general and of geoengineering in particular, the perspective of Governance can be extended and understood as a mode of Governmentality – a governance of thought and act. This is based on the assumption that particular forms of “governing climate change” are always bound to specific cultural interpretations of natural and social processes. A geographic inquiry highlights the relevance of spatial organizations: What relevance do spatial categories and scales have in dominating narratives of “climate change”? How are new “geographies of climate change” shaped in the discourse about geoengineering? “Space”, in the discussion of

technological opportunities and political frameworks, can be regarded as a central category of our thinking and acting. Chances, risks and interdependencies are reorganized and relocated globally in different ways and it has to be asked in which ways geoengineering presents itself as a post-colonial project of our time.