

KlimaCampus Colloquium

Prof. Darrell Moellendorf

At the invitation of the CliSAP Speaker Prof. Anita Engels

Energy Poverty and Dangerous Climate Change KlimaCampus Hamburg

15.01.2015, 3:15 pm, Bundesstraße 53, room 22/23 (first floor)

Abstract

The chief objective of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change is to prevent “dangerous anthropogenic interference in the climate system” (Article 2). Attempts by natural and social scientists to identify dangerous climate change have failed to appreciate that danger in this context is a normative concept. Climate change is risky, but that which is *dangerous* is that which we have good reason to avoid. Because climate change and energy policy affect the well-being of billions of people, our reasons for the pursuit of a climate change policy involve moral values. Whether there is good reason in favor of a particular mitigation policy depends on its effects on the global poor. Human development depends upon inexpensive access to energy. Over one billion people live in energy poverty without access to modern energy. Most burn bio mass for fuel, which causes indoor pollution and is a public health problem rivaling that of HIV and tuberculosis. Fossil fuels, especially coal, are for most of the world the cheapest form of energy. But an international climate change mitigation regime is very likely to discourage use of fossil fuels and encourage innovation in renewable energy by raising the price of fossil fuels. Any additional loss access to energy for the global poor is also dangerous. A morally acceptable international climate change regime must insure that the poor are not burdened by loss of access to inexpensive energy. This fits nicely with the UNFCCC’s commitment (in Article 3) to respect the right to sustainable development. And it suggests a moral reason to place the responsibility in climate change regime on the most highly developed states to shoulder the bulk of the costs of a global energy transition.