

Intergenerational Justice Review

Foundation for the Rights of Future Generations

**Issue Topic: Climate Change
and Intergenerational Justice**



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The reviewers for this issue were as follows (in alphabetical order):

Prof. Dr. Dieter Birnbacher: is a professor of philosophy at the Heinrich-Heine University of Düsseldorf.

Axel Gosseries: is a permanent research fellow, Fund for Scientific Research (FRS-FNRS) and lecturer at the University of Louvain.

Prof. Dr. Andrew Williams: is professor for philosophy at the University of Warwick

Prof. Dr. Bryan Norton: is distinguished professor in the School of Public Policy, Georgia Institute of Technology.

Prof. Dr. Stephen Gardiner: is associate professor in the Department of Philosophy and the Program on Values in Society at the University of Washington, Seattle.

Jürgen Kopfmüller: is a political economist and since 2005 has been the chairman of the Association for Ecological Economy.

Andreas Kraemer: is the director of the Ecologic Institute in Berlin and Chairman of the Ecologic Institute in Washington DC.

Prof. Dr. Max Tilzer: is professor emeritus of aquatic ecology at the University of Konstanz, Germany.

Prof. Dr. Burns Weston: is director of the Climate Legacy Initiative. He has directed the University of Iowa Center for Human Rights until his retirement in 1999.

Prof. Dr. Marcel Wissenburg: is professor of political theory at the Radboud University Nijmegen and Socrates professor of humanist philosophy at Wageningen University, the Netherlands.

Prof. Dr. Dr. Udo Simonis: is professor emeritus at Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung.

Dr. Ludvig Beckman: is associate professor in the Department of Political Science, Stockholm University, Sweden.

Prof. Huey Li: is professor of educational philosophy at the University of Akron, Akron, Ohio.

ture. In this context his approach of calculating the social worth of home will prove important in reaching the right decisions.

All things considered, the anthology *Political Theory and Global Climate Change* does live up to its aim to deliver new insights into the problems stemming from global climate change. A negative aspect is that it cannot always fully bridge the gap between political theory and the realities on the ground. Nevertheless, it does broach some of the most relevant problems mankind will face when trying to mitigate global climate change and its consequences. The issues addressed are not always new, but the antho-

logy's approach of green political theory usually offers new perspectives in dealing with known issues. Some articles like Luke's contribution on urban sprawl and Gonzalez' analysis of urban sprawl challenge our traditional perspectives of social realities by unmasking the self-destructive side effects of our way of life that we still tend to block out in fear of too much change and that sometimes blinds us by its short-term benefits. Considering the ambitious aims of the anthology, namely to offer new insights into problems of climate change through an interdisciplinary approach while marrying theoretical thinking with considerations of

on the ground problems, the articles are a respectable first step and offer a multitude of starting points for further research. Thus the anthology is, despite its negligible weaknesses, definitely an inspiring lecture in the truest sense of the word.

Steve Vanderheiden (ed.): *Political Theory and Global Climate Change*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. 280 pages. ISBN: 0262720523. Price: £15.15.

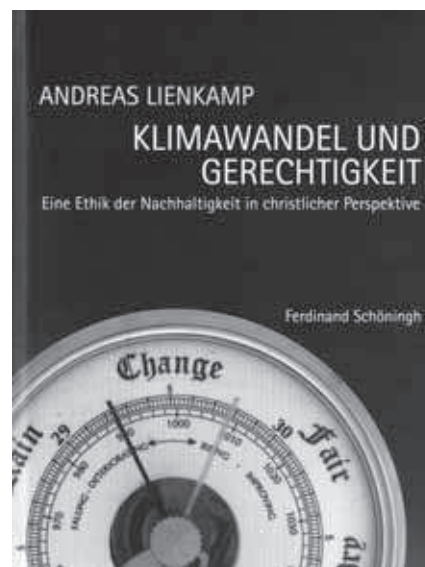
Andreas Lienkamp: Klimawandel und Gerechtigkeit. Eine Ethik der Nachhaltigkeit in christlicher Perspektive

Reviewed by Jörg Tremmel and Patrick Wegner

In his postdoctoral lecture *Climate Change and Justice. Sustainability Ethics from a Christian Perspective* (only available in German), the theologian and specialist in Christian social ethics Andreas Lienkamp tackles a crucial topic of our time. The already abundant catalogue of economic and political literature on climate change is hereby complemented by an important ethical work. Lienkamp's approach allows for religious positions to be at times interpreted in such an undogmatic way that the book can even be read by philosophers critical of theology to their real benefit.

Lienkamp identifies the handling of climate change consequences as the key question from an ethical point of view. Justice plays a prominent role both in the search for climate change mitigation possibilities as well as in negotiations on intergenerational and international burden-sharing in adaptation. Lienkamp uses the term 'Ethik der Nachhaltigkeit' (sustainability ethics) to discuss these questions from a Christian perspective. On the one hand, the term is well chosen since it is wide enough to include all aspects of climate change and its consequences. On the other hand, the definitions surrounding the concept of sustainability are notoriously blurred – a problem that Lienkamp prefers to circumnavigate rather than to solve.

Lienkamp looks at the ethics of sustainability from a Christian perspective but fortunately



refrains from conceptualizing ethics of sustainability as a purely Christian concept. Solutions to climate change problems cannot be found from a solely Christian point of view since other religions and cultures have to be won over for a truly global solution. Lienkamp's definition of sustainable ethics from a Christian perspective could be interpreted as an invitation for dialogue and could even initiate an intercultural debate without appropriating the topic. In the same context of dialogue Lienkamp stands up for deeper cooperation of the scientific disciplines on climate change. He explicitly defines his approach as interdisciplinary and discursive

while still claiming the right to question results of other disciplines from an ethical point of view.

Lienkamp's genuinely Christian perspective draws mainly from the theology of creation which the Christian religion also shares with Judaism and Islam. Lienkamp underlines that human beings are part of the creation according to the theology of creation, and thus have a responsibility towards it (p. 25). The fact that mankind increasingly defines itself as ruler of creation, instead of as a part of it, is a main reason for the low popularity of the concept of ethics.

Lienkamp's analysis is based on the papal encyclical *Pacem in Terris* of John XXIII and the book *Laymen in the Apostolate* by the Belgian bishop, cardinal and founder of the *International Young Christian Workers*, Joseph Cardijn. In his encyclical, John XXIII emphasised the importance of the 'signs of the times' for gaining insight in theology. He defined the signs of the times as harbinger of great challenges or positive historical developments which the church and believers should detect in order to act accordingly. Lienkamp interprets climate change as such a sign of the times and consults the methodology in three steps 'Seeing – Judging – Acting' developed by Joseph Cardijn for an analysis of climate change. He structures the rest of his book according to these three steps: chapter 2 analyses the causes, the con-

sequences and the status quo of climate change (to see); chapter 3 describes the normative construction that Lienkamp consults in his judgement (to judge) and chapter 4 delivers advice on effective measures of mitigation and adaptation inspired by ethics of sustainability from a Christian perspective (to act).

The author has to be credited for his ability to introduce all relevant scientific facts in a short and concise way, through documenting the most applicable statistics and figures. As a theologian he manages to describe the most relevant factors of climate change and their interdependence in a more accessible way than many climate scientists. Considering the consequences of climate change (like rising temperatures and sea levels) he endorses the findings of the reports of the *Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* (IPCC), which are seen as conservative estimations by some (p. 50). He justifies this with the remark that even conservative estimations are sufficient to document the need to act according to ethical considerations. In a similarly unagitated way Lienkamp also solves the problem of the public dispute between sceptics and supporters of the thesis of anthropogenic climate change. With a hint towards the scientific weight of the IPCC calculation, resulting in a 95-100 percent probability of climate change being anthropogenic as opposed to natural (p. 81), Lienkamp clarifies the real weight of the sceptic arguments without immersing into the polemic debate with climate change sceptics.

In accordance to the scientific literature, Lienkamp names three man-made phenomena as the main causes for on-going climate change: the ever growing output of greenhouse gases, the advancing deforestation destroying one of the most important natural CO₂ reservoirs, as well as the rising population figures and the need for food, energy and resources that grows with them. He lists heat, extreme weather phenomena, a loss of biodiversity, malnutrition, water shortage as well as conflicts resulting from this shortage as consequences of climate change. The so-called 'tipping-elements' in the climate system are of special relevance for the potential consequences of climate change, and Lienkamp mentions them at the end of the second chapter (p. 153). The deglaciation of frozen land masses or certain changes in the Asian monsoon system can reach a point at which they 'tip over'. This means that these developments can further accelerate climate

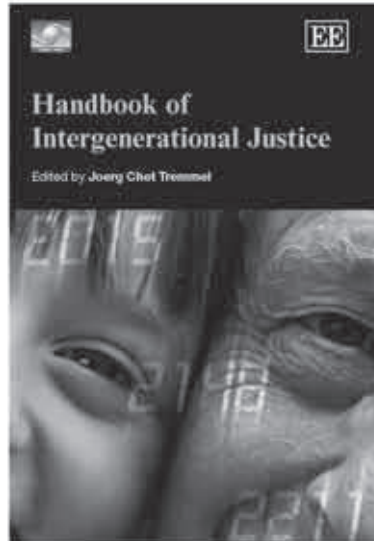
change or lead to catastrophic and irreversible consequences for mankind. In the media, the potential ebbing of the Gulf Stream due to the inflow of sweet water from melting glaciers around the North Pole is often cited as a potential tipping element that could lead to a new ice age in Europe. Lienkamp is using the irreversible character of the tipping element phenomena as an appeal for a principle of precaution in climate change matters (p. 135; 330-337).

In the third chapter Lienkamp derives the responsibility of mankind for God's creation as a whole from the bible and genesis. He argues for a modern interpretation of the bible according to the 'relecture' stipulated by Pope John Paul II in this context. His core arguments are that man has a responsibility for creation as an image and deputy of God on earth which results in his task to further the immanent the 'good' of creation (p. 216). Lienkamp states in this context that all humans, including future individuals have to be seen as equal in this effort. Lienkamp opposes the old interpretation of the bible, which was supported by the church for centuries that God told men to conquer earth and multiply by quoting several other passages of the bible. He reasons that the reign of men on earth is connected with a God-given responsibility and the mission to populate the planet can only be interpreted in the scope of an ecologically sustainable growth. Interestingly, Lienkamp interprets the Sabbath as a rest period which mankind should respect in regular intervals in order to facilitate the regeneration of natural resources and a readjustment of the economic system. Against the background of the current financial and economic crisis this seems to be a very topical and thought-provoking impulse!

One result of the 'relecture' of the bible is the perspective that man is not creation's crowning glory but a part of it. From this thought Lienkamp derives the rights of the nature. He proves the increasing acceptance of these rights with references to the German constitution (Art 20a) and the Lisbon-Treaty of the EU (Art 13).

To sum it up, Lienkamp denies an anthropocentric point of view in favour of a holistic, anthroporelational argument (p. 227). Herein he refers to the grace of charity, which he interprets as encompassing nature in the sense of a 'reverence for life', a term coined by Albert Schweitzer (p. 248). He also refers to the virtue of justice, which urges us to a responsible handling of the

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Handbook of Intergenerational Justice

Edited by **Joerg Chet Tremmel**,
Foundation for the Rights of
Future Generations, Germany

'This important book provides a rich menu of history, current theory, and future directions in constitutional law, philosophy of rights and justice, and the relations of economics and politics to time, institutions, and the common good. It is enlivened by back-and-forth discussions among the authors (including some disagreements), as well as by applications to important contemporary issues such as climate change, nuclear waste, and public debt. Theoretic considerations are nicely balanced with examples of the means adopted in a number of countries to establish a legal foundation for protection of the quality of life for future generations.'

Neva Goodwin, Tufts University, US

The Handbook is an important contribution to the literature and will be of great interest to academics and graduate students as well as readers interested in wider human rights issues.

Sept 2006 c 368 pp
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creation. He sees the principles of precaution and polluter-pays as practical guides for a just approach to mitigation and adaptation. Lienkamp decidedly refutes the interpretation of climate change as a misfortune and labels it an injustice. He also addresses the question of intergenerational justice in this context. Given the focus of the journal this section was of special interest to the reviewers. Lienkamp tries to draw on the bible to anchor his account of intergenerational justice. In the bible, however, the obligations of children towards their parents used to be emphasised, and not the other way around. The Fourth Commandment, "honour thy father and mother", is repeated more often in the Old Testament than any other commandment. Lienkamp interprets this commandment as an obligation that extends the scope of the family and encompasses respecting the creation in its entirety (p. 276) but this is surely not a literal reading of the bible.

On a trial basis, Lienkamp then applies Rawls 'veil of ignorance' to the intergenerational context but finds it very difficult, referring to the difficulties that Rawls himself encountered ("it submits any ethical theory to severe if not impossible tests"). Without a real application of the 'veil', Lienkamp endorses a preventive principle (p. 277) which is partly in line with the results of more elaborate applications of the 'veil'. Then, Lienkamp continues by operationalizing intergenerational justice by the three parameters 'diversity', 'quality' and 'access' (quoting Edith Brown-Weiss). Afterwards, Lienkamp mentions how 'intergenerational justice' is defined in the German National Strategy for Sustainability. While some of Lienkamp's results are shared by the reviewers, the arguments he offers to sustain his results fall short of his own deliberations, and his ethical theory is composed a bit too haphazardly. But even if Lienkamp does not deliver a precise ethical definition of intergenerational justice he offers some new aspects from an theological point of view.

People that are religiously 'nonmusical', as Lienkamp calls them following Habermas, will perhaps have problems to accept the core interpretation of Lienkamp's book since it relies strongly on the bible and thus on God's will and mandate. The Christian perspective of the book probably appeals to Muslims and Jews as well as it comes close to a monotheistic approach. But it might be less accessible to atheists or agnostics. According to Lienkamp, there can be many justifications (religious, ethical, economic) for mankind's obligation to save the climate. While the lines of reasoning may vary, the results of these deliberations converge and press us to start acting. But this is doubtful as the conservation of nature as the economic basis for mankind would not encompass all species. The consequences of the intrinsic and the instrumental approach to nature protection are not identical.

In the fourth chapter (*acting*) Lienkamp delivers a complete and well-arranged overview of measures that are discussed with regard to climate change. True to his moral argument he stresses the primacy of measures for mitigation. From energy transition to reforestation, financial incentives and CO₂-certificate trading systems he explains a lot of widely-discussed measures. But beyond that he also mentions far-reaching measures that are discussed much too rarely or too shallowly in politics, like ensuring an adequate ecological education starting at school age. Among these measures Lienkamp's preoccupation with a potential 'third parliamentary chamber' in the political system sticks out. This chamber is meant to represent the interests of the future generations during the legislative procedure in trust as some sort of Future Council. The introduction of such a chamber with real veto-powers against laws endangering the rights of future generations would be an important instrument to combat the short-sightedness of democratic systems that concentrate too much on the cycle of election periods.

All in all, this is a well-researched and accu-

rately written book. One point of criticism is that Lienkamp was not able to deliver on his promise to consistently treat the issue from an interdisciplinary point of view. Even though chapters 3 and 4 regularly mention legal sources and arguments one notices the lack of inspiration from political or social sciences. This is especially true for chapter 4, in which political science theories could have contributed significantly in judging the feasibility of these measures.

The book ends with a general call to take action. Here, Lienkamp resorts to the anecdote, used in science and media so widely that it has already become clichéd, that the Chinese word for 'crisis' is composed of the words 'opportunity' and 'danger'. This is meant to serve as a reminder to decision makers that bold measures are to be taken in the face of great problems.

As a conclusion one can say that the book delivers a well formulated and justified account of the ethics of sustainability which could rise to the challenges of climate change. The Christian perspective of the book is always there, but never so intrusive as to block an ethical approach to the topic. The modern reinterpretations of biblical passages are also conclusive for non-religious persons and offers highly interesting perspectives and approaches. Almost in passing Lienkamp also delivers a remarkably complete, clear and well written overview of the state of knowledge on climate change and possible counter-measures. The book is an inspiring lecture that can be recommended to anyone interested in climate change.

Andreas Lienkamp (2009): *Klimawandel und Gerechtigkeit. Eine Ethik der Nachhaltigkeit in christlicher Perspektive*. Munich: Schöningh. 534 pages. ISBN: 9783506766755. Price: 58 €.



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that long term interests are implemented? Do any of these systems practice sustainable politics?

Take for example the complicated decision making in the political system of Germany, a system that requires the consensus of many actors often recompensing blockades. The non-appearance of costly reforms, for example in climate protection, are examples which illustrate that measures often oriented to the future can and are being blocked by single parties. In this case future generations in particular are disadvantaged by the absence of functional collaboration of parties.

Deadline for the submission of abstracts is 1 November 2009.

Deadline for the submission of full articles is 1 December 2009.

FRFG at the COP15 United Nations Climate Change Conference Copenhagen 2009

The FRFG has received a provisional admission for the UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen in December. The Foundation will attend the talks with two observers in order to ensure that we can gather first hand information for our research on climate change issues. The Foundation will also advocate the

importance of generational justice in climate change mitigation and adaptation at the conference and at various side events.

Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment

Since April 2009, Joerg Chet Tremmel is a Visiting Research Fellow at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE). Although he works in the Centre for Philosophy of Natural and Social Science, he also follows closely climate research activities that take place at LSE. The "Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment" is the new home to climate-change and environment research at LSE.¹ The Institute is chaired by Lord Stern of Brentford, author of the 2006 Stern Review,² and brings together international expertise on economics, finance, geography, the environment, international development and political economy to establish a world-leading centre for policy-relevant research and training in climate change and the environment.

The Institute has been funded by philanthropists Jeremy and Hannelore Grantham, through their Grantham Foundation for the Protection of the Environment. It works closely with the Grantham Institute for Climate Change at Imperial College London, established last year also with funding from the Grantham Foundation. A common advisory board oversees the

work of both Institutes.

Upcoming event:

Public lecture: 'Climate Change: Are We Heading for a New Cold War?' Thursday 1 October 2009, 6.30-8pm, Old Theatre, Old Building, LSE. Speaker: Professor Graciela Chichilnisky. There is an historic standoff between China and the US on the issue of global warming. Neither wants to limit emissions unless the other does so first. In Copenhagen (December 2009) the nations of the world will decide whether to resolve the Global Warming problem extending Kyoto after 2012 – or to start a new Cold War of escalating emissions – the outcome of which may determine the fate of humankind. Professor Graciela Chichilnisky suggests two modest improvements to the Kyoto Protocol that could resolve the impasse and literally save the day. These unique proposals have received positive attention in China and in the US. But will they be adopted in Copenhagen?

Graciela is Director of Columbia Consortium for Risk Management and Professor of Economics and Statistics at Columbia University. This event celebrates her newest book *Saving Kyoto*.

1) http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/grantham_institute/Default.htm

2) http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/sternreview_index.htm

Publisher: Foundation for the Rights of Future Generations (Stiftung für die Rechte zukünftiger Generationen)

Editor-in-Chief: Jörg Chet Tremmel

Guest Editors: Konrad Ott, Edward Page

Editorial staff: Patrick Wegner, Hannah Taylor-Kensell, Karsten Gödderz, Dan Sylvain, Kristof Müller, Alessy Beaver

Layout: Angela Schmidt, OblaDesign

Print: LokayDruck, Königsberger Str. 3, 64354 Reinheim (www.lokay.de)

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The peer reviewed journal *Intergenerational Justice Review* aims to improve our understanding of intergenerational justice and sustainable development through pure and applied ethical research. Quarterly published in English and German, the IGJR (ISSN 1617-1799) seeks articles representing the state of the art in philosophy, politics and law of intergenerational relations. It is an open access journal that is published on a professional level with an extensive international readership. The editorial board comprises over 50 international experts from ten countries, and representing eight disciplines. The IGJR is not only read by the scientific community but also by members of parliaments, decision makers from the economy and persons with a general interest in intergenerational justice. The internet version is free of charge, the printed version has an annual subscription cost of 25 Euros which has to be paid in advance. The cancellation period is three months until the end of the year. For subscription, see last page.

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Youth for Europe sponsors our two EVS (European Voluntary Service) editorial staff members: Hannah Taylor-Kensell and Dan Sylvain. We would like to thank them for supporting this project.

