

Interdependencies between Ethnic Inequality and the Success of Climate Change Policy Making – the Case of Guyana

by Constanze Weiske

Abstract

Global climate change is the most pressing environmental issue the world society has to tackle in this day and age. Although the international Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) has been established in 1992 in order to mitigate climate change, substantial progress is not made yet. In order to identify the reasons for that unsatisfactory situation, researchers have mainly concentrated on analyzing the climate change negotiations on the international scale. By contrast, this paper is giving attention to the national scale by presenting empirical findings about the implementation process of the UNFCCC mechanism Redd+ in forest-rich and multiethnic Guyana. By applying a structuralistic perspective, it is argued, that *persistent ethnic inequalities* are significantly *impacting the outcomes* of Redd+ and - at the same time - are *reproduced by* the implementation process *within* Redd+. The mechanism is identified in the areas of decision-making, resource distribution and in relation to the incooperated land issues between Indo-Guyanese government and Amerindian communities. As many forest-rich states in the global South are facing ethnic situations, a redesign of the Redd+ implementation is suggested.

The paper aims to contribute to the conference by addressing the phenomena of ethnic inequality, which became more relevant under the condition of globalization. Second, it raises awareness for the persistence of phenomena especially in the global South, where ethnic inequality is rooted in the colonial division of labor and still inscribed in postcolonial institutions. Third, the presentation illustrates, that ethnic inequality plays a significant role in seemingly unrelated areas of research - like in the field of global environmental problems, resp. environmental policy making.

Personal Information

Constanze Weiske is a doctoral student in social science and Lichtenberg scholar (until March 2014) within the interdisciplinary PhD program "Biodiversity and Society" at Georg-August-University Goettingen/ Germany. Her PhD project aims to research the interdependencies between ethnic inequality and the implementation of the international Conventions of Climate Change and Biodiversity in Guyana. Fieldwork was conducted during nine-month's fieldwork in the the capital, regional capital and five Amerindian communities, where a mix of qualitative methods has been applied.