

## **Jörg Sommer and Michael Müller (eds.), *Unter 2 Grad? – Was der Weltklimavertrag wirklich bringt***

(Less than 2 degrees? – What the World Climate Treaty really brings)  
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At a time when the leader of the world's most powerful nation openly questions that climate change is a human-caused reality, thereby revitalising a scientific debate which, to many, had ended decades ago, *Unter 2 Grad? – Was der Weltklimavertrag wirklich bringt* makes an important contribution to a topic which is of concern not only to environmentalists. Assembling 39 well-known representatives from science, politics and civil society, this informative volume edited by Jörg Sommer, Chairman of the German Environment Foundation and former Secretary of State and Chairman of Naturfreunde e.V., Michael Müller, reviews and assesses the outcome of the 21st Conference of the Parties (COP-21) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) reached in December 2015.

Divided into four parts and drawing on insights from a multitude of different disciplinary angles and viewpoints, the book elaborates on and contextualises the Paris Agreement and argues that the latter constitutes not only an important breakthrough in global climate diplomacy, but indeed a “leverage for democracy, equality and a new understanding of innovation” (p. 12)<sup>1</sup>. In their introduction Sommer and Müller underline that they see the outcome of COP-21 as the starting point of a socio-ecological transformation which may lead to fewer distributional conflicts and more social justice, increased global cooperation and the opening up of new markets, and a new era of democratic participation.

While the majority of authors subscribe to this highly ambitious and, perhaps overly idealistic interpretation of the new global climate treaty, some also point to the remaining challenges. Professor Hans Diefenbacher from Heidelberg University, for instance, underlines the many unresolved issues in the financial realm and the parties failure to establish the “frequent monitoring and review process that is needed for the adaptation and adjustment of the necessary political instruments” (p. 68). Meanwhile, political scientist Professor Hartmut Ihne concludes that a large number of uncertainties persist after Paris and finds that the conflict about the right for equal development of emerging economies remains unresolved (p. 107).

While Thomas Friemel, editor-in-chief of a sustainable business magazine, convincingly argues that the ratification of the agreement and appropriate follow-up

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<sup>1</sup> All translations are the reviewers.

action might prove difficult in light of the lack of political commitment which some parties have demonstrated in the, past, this interpretation is contrasted with the idea that the Paris agreement constitutes the crucial break-through stakeholders have been advocating since the early 1990s and especially after the "fiasco of Copenhagen" (p. 53). In this context, Spiegel editor Christoph Seidler praises France for the successful hosting of the conference and compliments foreign minister Laurent Fabius and the ambassador for international climate negotiations, Laurence Tubiana on their skilful shuttle diplomacy.

Taking a pragmatic approach, a second set of authors focuses on concrete measures that are needed to bring about the successful implementation of the agreement. Climate and energy experts Ottmar Edenhofer, Christian Flachsland and Ulrike Kornek, advocate a policy of financial compensation and the coordination of minimum prices for national CO<sub>2</sub>-emissions and underline the role of the G20 as a promising forum for negotiations (p. 77). Peter Hennicke, former President of the Wuppertal Institute for Climate, Environment and Energy, also calls for more radical steps in light of governments' continued support of high-carbon assets and demands a "revolution in energy efficiency" (p. 79) and a "new narrative" (p. 82).

Meanwhile, Reinhold Leinfelder and Rüdiger Haum of the House of the Future in Berlin advocate a more radical approach when calling for "change agents" (p.136) and civil society to take action in addressing climate protection, while former MP Hermann E. Ott identifies the need for an "Alliance of Pioneers" (p.150). A similar idea is also put forward by Holger Rogall, Director of the Institute for Sustainability (INa) at the HWR Berlin and Head of the Institute for Sustainable Economy (INÖk), who argues that the world's industrialised nations must assume a leading role in a "Coalition of future-oriented states" (p. 164).

Agency also features prominently in the contribution of former MEP Beate Weber-Schueholz who underlines the contribution on the role of cities and the "Compact of Mayors" prior to and during the conference (p.240) and in Volker Mosbrugger's work on the role of regions as the places where political decisions are taken and investments for mitigation and adaptation are agreed upon. The Director General of the Senckenberg Nature Research Society furthermore reminds climate researchers to act as "honest brokers" rather than "embedded scientists" and stresses the importance of academic independence. At the same time, however, he also suggests a closer cooperation between various political and scientific fora and bodies, using the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the Intergovernmental Platform for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) as an example. That IPBES, a UN-affiliated independent body, is located in Germany's former capital Bonn puts to the forefront that the Federal Republic has so far assumed a key role in global efforts to address climate change. In this context Maria Krautzberger, President of the Federal Environment Agency, stresses in particular the significance of the Energiewende (Germany's turnaround in energy policy) which triggered both international attention and heated domestic debate.

With regard to the policy's contentious nature, it is debatable, however, whether Toni Hofreiter, Chairman of the Green faction in the Bundestag, paints a fully accurate picture when arguing that "many parts of society are much more advanced than the difficult nature of negotiations in Paris makes us believe" (p.211). Given the rather widespread criticism of the Grand Coalition's decision to phase out the country's fleet of nuclear reactors by 2022 and to support renewable energy with generous subsidies,

Hofreiter's judgment thus appears to reflect more his idea(l)s and visions than current realities in Germany. Moving beyond the German context, other contributors express concerns about the implementation of the Paris Agreement and the growing trend towards more nationalistic policies. While it is hardly surprising that when "walking through the exhibitions halls, visiting the exhibition stalls and attending one of the countless side events" (p. 211) in Paris, Hofreiter and others may have gained a rather optimistic image of the status quo, it would thus be dangerous to base broad claims about future developments on such anecdotal evidence. The chapter, while overall informative, would thus profit from a more rigorous engagement with relevant data and the appropriate legal provisions and a generally less manifesto-like character. Despite a brief look at the distinction between end-of-pipe and clean techniques, this highly political contribution therefore contrasts quite significantly with the more thoroughly researched analyses contained in the book. A welcome addition to Hofreiter's chapter is therefore the contribution by Mathias Miersch who provides a more descriptive account of the domestic implications of the Paris Agreement. After outlining how closely climate change measures are linked with wider political decisions and policies in the realm of infrastructure, agriculture and construction, the environmental spokesperson for the SPD faction in the Bundestag concludes by arguing for a national climate protection act (p. 235), although the interested reader would have appreciated further insights as well as examples in this regard.

With its large number of individual contributions and different perspectives on the topic *Unter 2 Grad? - Was der Klimavertrag wirklich bringt* offers a broad introduction to global climate diplomacy and Germany's role therein. While readers who are already familiar with the prevailing debates and basic arguments are unlikely to encounter many new insights, they might nonetheless appreciate the volume due to its multi-angled approach and the bibliographic notes which accompany most chapters. While only a few chapters actually speak to the book's subtitle which promises insights into the future of climate change policy post Paris, Nick Reimer repeats most observers' apprehension that the Agreement will not suffice to bring about the 2 degree target. The Editor-in-Chief of the online magazine *klimaretter.info* furthermore underlines the necessity for follow-up action and negotiations analogous to those which occurred in the context of the Montréal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, and suggests that Europe is a key factor in combating climate change.

While European countries indeed carry significant weight in this respect, this argument largely ignores findings of collective action theory, and in particular the fact that the effective pursuit of a global public good requires more than a comparatively small roster of a highly committed group of role models and enthusiastic promoters of common initiatives. The volume would thus have profited from a critical engagement with possible incentivisation strategies both at the national and international level. Contributions by experienced diplomats and negotiators could have provided relevant additional insights in this regard.

It would also have been instructive to read accounts of experts from outside Germany, in particular of representatives of countries which in the past have found it rather difficult to meet their obligations, or who are leading the campaign against international cooperation in climate protection today. Such an approach would also have reflected the tenor of the introductory note by former Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier which underlines the role of foreign policy in solving the world's

most pressing problems. In the absence of such insights, the reader remains unsure about what to expect from Paris and is merely left with the invitation to understand the Agreement as a "compass" rather than as a "detailed road map" (p. 182). These shortcomings notwithstanding, the timely volume provides a useful introductory analysis to anyone interested in understanding how various aspects of global climate change are understood and debated in Germany – a country which, despite policy incoherences and scandals, continues to be perceived as the front-runner in addressing what leading scientists have identified as the key challenge of the 21st century.