



EEAC Headline Summary:

Civil Society and Climate Change: On the road to Paris

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Civil Society and Climate Change: On the road to Paris

At the end of November 2015, the COP21 brought to Paris close to 200 states to negotiate an international agreement to control greenhouse gas emissions and address the effects of climate change. It is crucial that these negotiations among states are paralleled by bottom-up civil society initiatives. Civil society plays a pivotal role as a driver of policy change, policy implementation and the development of innovative solutions. Civil society and NGOs are also critical actors as they scrutinize the policy approaches of governments, raise expectations, monitor policies, offer credible assessments, disseminate good practices and act as a vehicle for public participation.

The 23rd EEAC annual conference focused on the role of civil society in climate change mitigation and adaptation processes, both relevant speakers as well as representatives of interesting initiatives that mobilize front line actors were invited and joined the conference.

The conference was hosted by the French National Council for Ecological Change and the French Ministry for Ecology, Sustainable Development and Energy and took place on the 12th and 13th of November in Paris.

The Climate Change: Conclusions from AR5, by Professor Jean Jouzel,
Vice Chair, IPCC



Professor Jean Jouzel opened his presentation with a short summary of the important facts, related to the climate change debate. He stated that since the beginning of the Industrial era, human activities have led to an accumulation of heat in the climate system. This increase is (mainly) due to the use of fossil fuels and agricultural activities, Professor Jouzel claimed. Therefore it is no surprise, according to Jouzel, that the AR5 study of the IPCC concluded that it is likely that human influence has been the dominant cause of the observed warming since the mid-20^s.

Professor Jouzel continued by underpinning his statements with some numbers. Taking care of 35% of the GHG emissions, energy production remains the primary driver of GHG emissions. Followed by agriculture, forestry and land use with a shared contribution of 24%. The industry (21%), transportation (14%) and the building sector (6%) are responsible for roughly the remaining part of the total emission of GHG worldwide. As a consequence of emissions (of all kinds) it is assumed that the earth's surface is getting increasingly warmer. Each of the last three decades has been successively warmer at the earth's surface than any preceding decade since 1850, Professor Jouzel explained. As a consequence global average sea levels rise, arctic sea ice minimum declines as well as worldwide spring snow cover.

The main message of Professor Jouzel's contribution included a serious warning. If nothing is done, important effects for all kinds of categories (e.g., ocean acidification, sea level rise, climate extremes, biodiversity loss, and health) will face irreversible processes. For example, coastal systems and low-lying areas will increasingly experience adverse impacts such as submergence, coastal flooding and coastal erosion. A variety of species will be unable to move across landscapes with the speed at which temperature changes are projected to move across land, creating significant biodiversity losses. Crop yields are expected to change, leaving some areas with decreasing yields while others might 'benefit'. Professor Jouzel pointed in his presentation on a matter that was topical during the period of the conference: the refugee crisis. Professor Jouzel warned that due to climate change a much larger population will become displaced. Climate refugees looking for water resources, food security and basic security will become a major challenge, also for the developed countries, Jouzel warned.

In order to stay within the guardrails of the 2°C global temperature increase will require cumulative CO₂ emissions from all anthropogenic sources to stay below about 790 GtC. By 2011 about 515 GtC were already emitted, with an anticipated 540 by 2014. The 250 GtC left correspond to less than 25 years at the current rate of emissions, while current fossil fuel reserves are estimated around 1500 GtC. Professor Jouzel pointed out that it will be quite difficult to leave 80% of fossil fuels reserves where they are. What does this mean for our economy? Not only will leaving the reserves untouched 'cost' billions of Euros, also investments in alternative energy sources will need billions. Professor Jouzel concluded that although measures exist to achieve the substantial emissions reductions required to limit likely warming to 2°C, these measures will possess substantial technological, economical, social

and institutional challenges. though these challenges do exist Professor Jouzel argued that the price of delaying mitigation will only further increase the challenges associated with limiting warming to 2oC.

Multilevel Governance and the Role of Civil Society, By Professor Claus Leggewie,
director of the institute for advanced Study in Humanities and Member of the German Council for Global Change



Prof Leggewie started his contribution with the statement that the COP21 gathering should support a paradigm shift on four levels: Development towards a modular form of multilateralism, reorganization of the assumption of responsibility in society, normative and cognitive paradigm shift and embedding markets into society. Professor Leggewie underlined that he expects that the agreements reached by the COP21 meeting will most likely be insufficient for adequate mitigation. It seems that societal/social movements, initiatives of cooperating cities resume more responsibility than national/federal governments, Professor Leggewie argued. Therefore Leggewie expect that these actors will push the required paradigm shift.

The different actors may push for a paradigm shift by creating new narratives, supporting the ambitions of states, experimenting with new forms of climate protection, intervening in public and political spaces, generating visibility, and by functioning as inspiring model to the general public. Professor Leggewie warned that these movements only will be successful if they are engaged in unlikely alliances, facilitate new forms of political dispute and act as stewards rather than classical stakeholders. There should be a clear level of ambition to start with, in this case the 20C degree temperature rise guardrail.

In his contribution, Professor Leggie touched upon an example of social moments and their role in the climate change debate: The Divestment Movement. The Divestment Movement is all about avoiding investments in the fossil energy sector. The movement is already broad in the UK and the USA (with rising interest on the European mainland) and the initiative reached also the big cities e.g. San Fransico and Londen,. They challenge public institutions to break away from classic investments, Professor Leggewie explained. He continued by stating that civil society should let go of nationalized methodology and include future generations. At the same time professor Leggewie identified a challenge: how to include and represent people who are no longer organized in societal pillars. For example, the number of people who are a member of a workers union or a church has declined. This process makes it more difficult to organize a representation of civil society that not only includes 'the usual suspects'.

Professor Leggewie concluded his talk referring to the study that was carried out by the German Council for Global Change on the role of civil society in the climate change debate. Professor Leggewie argued that small, autocatalytic foci of mitigation can kindle a large-scale transformation dynamic. Furthermore, he stated that predictable, cumulative effects are decisive for success. Although both professor Leggewie as well as the report by the German Council for Global change advocate an increasing role of civil society in the climate debate neither of them sees the role of civil society as a substitute to the diplomatic effort but more like

a mutual reinforcing cooperation. In a last remark professor Leggewie shared his concern asking where the big public debate is unfolding? He expressed his concern that the debate will be held only amongst the 'expert community' while the broader debate remains very modest.

WorldWide View on Climate and Energy, by Christian Leyrit,
President of the Commission Nationale du Débat Public, France



Mr. Lyrit expressed that climate change and the connected climate debate is about citizens, not only public institutions. It is of importance to get citizens mobilised, not only in the debate and negotiations process but also during the implementation process. In his presentation Mr. Lyrit touched upon the programme the Commission Nationale du Débat Public from France started. This is a programme that included 97 debates, which were organised all over the world, bringing together 100 average citizens each time.

Mr. Lyrit presented a couple of interesting findings on the outcomes of the worldwide citizens debate on climate change. One of the main conclusions was that civilians are often more willing to undertake action than their respected governments claim they are. According to the outcomes of the debate a negative view on the climate process exists. Not only the European citizens seem to be ambitious. It is interesting to see, Mr. Lyrit argued, that nine out of ten people engaged in the debate are in favour of a carbon tax. Furthermore, citizens stress that climate change should be one of the number one priorities of their governments. Most participants claimed that governments do not act sufficiently to battle climate change.

Mr. Lyrit finished his presentation by stating that the world is 'in the same boat' and should not wait for 'leading countries'. The outcomes of the worldwide debates gave an interesting clue what the world think. The outcomes of the debates could be considered a legitimation for world leaders to act, as society will support, Mr. Lyrit concluded.

Civil Society and Climate Change: On the road to Paris Part II

Parallel session #1. Civil society movements as game changers

Miranda Schreurs introduced the session, which included short presentations of 3 cases where civil society is a critical actor pushing governments forwards in terms of climate policies. The presentations were followed by a fruitful debate.

Mark Fodor, Director of *CEE Bankwatch Network* (bankwatch.org), briefly presented Bankwatch as a network of environmental NGOs from Central and Eastern Europe whose task is to challenge international financial institutions not to finance environmentally and socially harmful investments. They have succeeded, for example, in ensuring that European Investment Bank (IEB) is not financing coal projects (although it does with fossil fuels). His key

message was that “if we want real sustainable change, people should feel ownership of the solution”.

Lene Olsen, senior specialist in workers activities at the Bureau for Workers Activities ([ACTRAV](#)), International Labour Organisation, presented the role of trade unions on climate change and COP21. Their demands are: a) Jobs and decent work, linking climate change measures to green jobs (huge potential identified in ILO reports); b) just transition; c) participation of workers at all levels (enterprises, governments, international level). They demand concrete measures to governments on emissions reduction and commitment to a just transition.

Dennis van Berkel, legal counsel at Urgenda, exposed the court case won by his organisation against the Dutch state ([urgenda.nl/en/climate-case/](#)). Urgenda is a foundation based in The Netherlands and focused on implementation. As climate science was absent from the Dutch energy debate and policies, they presented a court case against the Government arguing that “preventing dangerous climate change is not only morally and politically the right thing to do, but also that it is a legal obligation that cannot be ignored” (legal duty of care). The court decision from 2015 obliges the Government to take more measures against climate change. The Government has appealed but it has started to develop 25% emissions reduction policy.

The discussion highlighted the difficulty of civil society movements and stakeholders to be heard (or even to be able to speak up) in several places, as well as the need for “reframing” the issues to enable more sustainable policies (i.e. changing the underlying principles). Another topic was the idea that “when democratic institutions fail, civil society searches for other mechanisms (being courts or financial institutions)”. In climate change in particular, it was acknowledged that there are difficult decisions to be made by society/policy-makers, since action and no action has consequences on creating/losing jobs, but also impacts for the future and on other countries. As a “motto” for a successful COP21, workers organisations reminded that (there would be) “no jobs on a dead planet”.

Parallel session #2. Governmental and partnerships initiatives

Prof. Dr. Andrew Stirling chaired the session, which included short presentations of 3 cases where civil society cooperates with governmental institutions in order to strengthen climate policies and initiatives. The presentations were combined by debate between the speakers and the audience.

Dr. Larry O’Connell, Senior Economist, National Economic and Social Council, Ireland ([www.nesc.ie](#)) presented the evolution of the relationship between Irish agriculture (represented by the Irish farmers association) and the national Irish government on the climate topic. The process of cooperation between farmers and the government on climate related issues entered a new phase, Dr. O’Connell argued, since the development of the Carbon Navigator was a shared project by the Irish farmer association and the national government.

Dr. O’Connell touched upon three phases of the development of the carbon navigator; the expert phase, the networking phase and the problem-solving phase. Though the problem-solving phase is still on-going, Dr. O’Connell drew the conclusion that the key part of the new

narrative of agriculture and climate change in Ireland is the creation and subsequent development of measurement and reporting systems, such as the Carbon Navigator.

In the second part of his presentation Dr. O'Connell shared his view on the role of the Carbon Navigator. According to Dr. O'Connell, the navigator is an interesting instrument since it assesses current farm performance, and compares that performance with average and best performing farmers. By doing so the navigator gives a 'distant to target' indicator. Furthermore the navigator is a decision support system that has been developed as a tool to be used as part of the knowledge transfer process amongst farmers and between farmers and the government.

Mr. Lutz Ribbe, member of the [European Economic and Social Committee's Sustainable Development Observatory](#) shared his views on civil society as a main player in renewable energy generation. Mr. Ribbe stated that Renewable Energy Sources are more than a technical question: "It's on the structure of the energy production and it's on market and money, effecting all us directly." Mr. Ribbe touched in his presentation upon three questions: 1. What is the real role of civic society, what kind of involvement is foreseen/happening: simply information, consultation or active producers of energy?, 2. Is civil society ready to play a role?, and 3. Does the legal framework enable/allow civil society to play that role?

The EESC study showed that a favourable policy framework for civic energy is needed. Such a framework should include, amongst others, simple administrative procedures, effective support mechanisms and grid development and management. In his presentation Mr. Ribbe stressed that serious challenges remain in order to meet this kind of requirements. Although the challenges remain, Mr Ribbe claimed that civic energy (energy produced by citizens, NGOs, small cooperation's, etc) is possible. Civil society is interested and ready to be a driver of the energy transition, Mr Ribbe stated. People seem to be well aware of the opportunities for local socio-economic development offered by renewable energy production. Moreover, including local societies in the production of renewable energy removes opposition against renewable energy infrastructure.

At the same time frustrations grow within society due to bureaucratic hurdles and with the non-recognition of civic energy by policy makers, and fears about current policy reforms. Moreover, the EESC study showed there is a lack of consistency when policies are implemented and that in some cases the EU RES Directive is not implemented at all. Combined with the notion that in some countries, like Germany, politicians seem to close windows of opportunity for civic society, action is needed, Mr. Ribbe said.

Professor Filipe Duarte Santos member of the [Portugese National Council on Environment and Sustainable Development](#) and professor at the University of Lisbon, made a contribution on the topic of the case of ClimadaPT.Local project. in his presentation Prof Santos touched upon the risks Portugal faces due to climate change. Amongst others strong increase in the meteorological risk of forest fires, sea level rise, land erosion and displays of extreme weather phenomena. This combined developments form a strong reason to adapt to the current climate situation Professor Santos argued.

Professor Santos continued by arguing that it is easier for society to embark on a climate change adaption process if there is a perceived change in the current climate. These developments in Portugal are the basis of the ClimadaPT.Local project. The ClimadaPT.Local

project helps to construct climate adaptation strategies in 26 municipalities, which means that each of the portugese regions has a climadaPT.Local project. The project enables local institutions to raise the awareness of climate change and to promote adaptation and mitigation. Furthermore, the project makes the case for adaptation at the local level and for coordination and cooperation with stakeholders and with the central government, Professor Santos argued.

The project aims to embed the climate change adaptation dimension at the local and municipal level in Portugal. By embedding the climate change adaptation dimension the project should help to create a community of municipal actors, aware of climate change issues and trained for the use of decision support tools on adaptation.

Furthermore the project should promote local adaptation knowledge particularly in the definition of strategies, planning and implementation of measures, communication and sharing of good practices.

Professor Santos concluded the presentation by touching upon some general observations he made regarding the ClimadaLocal.PT. He argued that adaptation at the local level depends essentially on trust. It must be a collaborative and inclusive process. Furthermore, there is need to improve the interaction between central government, regional government, municipalities, business, other stakeholders and academia. Professor Santos also shared his worries about the difficulties in making estimates of adaptation costs and benefits and the lack of climate and other physical data. On the other hand professor Santos was very positive about the strong political commitment and will in the Municipalities and the willingness to consider social issues related to climate change and to improve the adaptation capacity.

Civil Society and Climate Change: On the road to Paris: Roundtable Session summary by Miranda Schreurs.

The final panel discussion was chaired by EEAC vice-chair, Miranda Schreurs and featured: David Baldock, Executive Director, Institute for European Environmental Policy; Dr. Mikael Karlsson, President, European Environment Bureau; Sébastien Treyer, Director of Programmes, Institute for Sustainable Development and International Relations; Max Schön, Former president, Foundation 2° --German CEOs for Climate Protection and Member of the German Council for Sustainable Development (RNE); and, Andrew Stirling, Professor of Science and Technology Policy, University of Sussex. The panellists discussed the many ways in which civil society, including both environmental NGOs and environmentally minded business actors, had become increasingly active over time in climate change activities and activism, the sustainability networks that the business community had formed, the climate campaigns of environmental groups as well as their active role in the climate negotiations, including in preparation of the Paris COP. Confronted by the question of why civil society's voice was not stronger, and why civil society had not succeeded in pushing the climate negotiations along faster, the panellists both countered that civil society had in fact achieved a lot and were having influence—raising awareness, putting issues on the agenda. The panellists also reflected on the challenges confronting civil society, including the difficult of forming strong networks, the slow start of some NGOs in terms of turning their attention to climate change, and membership challenges. A further discussion point related to whether or not civil society was suffering from shrinking democratic spaces in many parts of the world and that if one of the great challenges in the years ahead for civil society would be the loss of liberal democratic freedoms which have opened the door for greater civil society participation in policy making.



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