Climate Change – Global Scenarios and Local Experiences

Klimawandel zwischen globalen Szenarien und lokalen Erfahrungswelten

24 - 25 October 2011

Convenors:
Dr. Heike Greschke (Bielefeld)
Julia Tischler (Bielefeld)

Abstracts
Climate Change – Global Scenarios and Local Experiences

Panel I. Different knowledge forms and interpretations of climate change -
Climate change as first-order scientific construct

Comment: Dr. Werner Krauss, Cultural Anthropology, Geesthacht

Dr. Christoph Küffer (Institute of Integrative Biology, ETH, Zurich): How do ecologists translate global climate change scenarios into local predictions of ecosystem change?

Ecologists are faced with the challenge to translate global climate change scenarios into local predictions of ecosystem change. Many important ecological processes happen at local spatial scales ranging from below meters to kilometres while climate change predictions describe possible future large-scale patterns at a relatively coarse spatial resolution (e.g. 15x15 km). Similarly, climate change models predict the future average behaviour of the climate system (i.e. the “climate”), while for ecological processes often the short-term variability and climatic extremes (e.g. a drought event, an unusual frost period) matter (i.e. the “weather”). An additional challenge for ecologists is that climate change is only one among many parallel physical, chemical and biological changes that currently and increasingly in the future affect ecosystems (e.g. increase in air CO2 levels or deposition of nitrogen or phosphorus; global redistribution of species; release of artificial chemicals (e.g. endocrine disruptors) and organisms (e.g. GMO or synthetic biology). We are rapidly entering an ecologically novel world that will differ in fundamental ways from the present or past, but uncertainties and ignorance about future ecologies are very high.

I will discuss a range of different research strategies that ecologists use to predict possible future ecosystem change with climate change, including (i) the analysis of current ecological change (that may be a response to current anthropogenic climate change), (ii) the paleoecological and historical reconstruction of ecological responses to past climate change, (iii) space-for-time substitutes (climate gradients in space, e.g. an elevational gradient, are used as a proxy to study ecological responses to climatic changes in time), (iv) natural experiments (replicated processes in nature are interpreted as an experiment, e.g. the outcome of recurrent introductions of the same non-native species to multiple sites with different climates), (v) statistical modelling (e.g. species distribution models that infer a species’ climate preferences – the climate niche of the species – based on the observed current distribution), (vi) field and laboratory experiments, (vii) simulation modelling (artificial ecosystems are encoded in a computer program that can then be used for virtual experiments such as manipulations of the climate conditions in different simulation runs), and (viii) the use of theoretical principles (e.g. the use of so-called functional species traits to predict the response of ecologically similar species to climate change).

In a second part of the paper I emphasise the need for a continuous reciprocal interaction between natural and social scientists for envisaging climate (or ecological) futures and adaptation strategies. A linear knowledge transfer from global climate change scenarios via local ecological predictions to socio-political interpretations of possible future changes and their management is not viable for different reasons. The core problem that we are faced with in climate change impact and adaptation research is that the future will be very different from the present or past. But because uncertainties and ignorance about ecological futures are very high ecologists cannot produce reliable ecological forecasts that local communities, decision makers or social scientists can take as a starting point for their deliberations.
Rather, knowledge users (including social scientists) need to have a good understanding of how this uncertain ecological knowledge is produced (interactional expertise) and need to be involved in the knowledge production process itself. In particular, climate change will affect ecosystems especially also indirectly via changes of human behaviours, e.g. changing land use practices, and predicting ecological changes thus must build on an understanding and prediction of societal change. There are tight feedbacks between ecological and social systems, and predictions of ecological change themselves will play an important role in this feedback by influencing human decision-making.


The eruption of the volcano Kuwae, today only a submarine caldera in Vanuatu but in historical perspective one of the five largest volcanic events in the last 10,000 years, is dated 1452/53 by common agreement in the natural sciences. A detailed look on the climatologists’ and volcanologists’ methods, especially the evaluation of ice core records, revealed a clear dependency on written historical records for precise dating. But it was not a historian who provided the so far undoubted historical facts for dating the Kuwae eruption to 1453, but an astrophysicist reading mainly sources on the fall of Constantinople in May 1453. His interpretation of the sources clearly misled him to believe there were reports about atmospheric phenomena which might be related to a huge and, therefore, globally effective volcanic eruption. The reports on unusual signs can be explained much more smoothly by referring to the city’s legends and the extraordinary importance attributed by contemporaries to the Fall of Constantinople.

But yet Medieval sources can provide valuable information about natural events. Several striking examples from chronicles and diaries from Northern Germany to Southern Italy and even Greece give independent and detailed evidence of dry fog and optical alterations of the sun, which can be clearly linked to the effects of a major volcanic eruption in 1464. This alternative dating still is within the possible margin of error for extracting data from ice core records. The medieval reports are surprisingly factual, detailed and lack any supranatural explanation, which makes them particularly credible.

It is far more complicated to look for the climatic impact of the Kuwae event on European societies of the 15th century. Though it is easy to sum up many of symptoms of societal and economic stress in the years till 1470, which might have been someway connected to the Kuwae-induced global cooling, this is not helpful at all. Bad weather, rising food prices and epidemics can be found for most of the years before 1464, too. Without a reliable climate reconstruction for Europe in the late Middle Ages, it’s difficult to distinguish the volcano’s specific impact. But the Kuwae event and its subsequent atmospheric phenomena in addition to a supposed climatic impact would offer a perfect possibility to examine a truly global historic event in the Middle Ages. This of course would mean international cooperation including not only European, but Arabic, Indian and Chinese sources of the time.
The case study hopes to underline the need and the possibilities of cooperation between scientific climatologists and researchers from the humanities. Especially the Middle Ages have far more and, if carefully examined, quite reliable documentary data to offer than thought before. On the other hand historians will need climatologists’ expertise to come to terms with any history of climatic impacts on pre-modern societies which have to avoid simple climate determinism.

Panel I. Different knowledge forms and interpretations of climate change - ‘(Western-)scientific’ concepts versus culturally specific, local interpretations of climate change – fields of tension?

Comment: Dr. Jeanette Schade (Sociology, Bielefeld) and Dr. Carsten Felgentreff (Geography, Osnabrück)

Jelena Adeli, M.A. (JRG Climate Worlds, BGHS, University of Bielefeld): Wechselwirkungen religiöser Weltbilder und wissenschaftlicher Konzepte: lokale Perspektiven zu Klimawandel in kapverdischen Alltagsdiskursen [The interplay between religious and scientific concepts in local perspectives on climate change in Cape Verde]

My paper reflects on the interplay of global scientific concepts and regional specific worldviews of climate change in everyday discourses in Cape Verde. Environmental changes are of high social relevance and need to be understood and integrated in everyone’s daily life.

In the Cape Verden context, the local perception of environmental changes rests - at least at some parts of the population - upon a religious understanding, which is gradually being challenged by scientific knowledge on climate change and the environment. This does not imply a simple clash of global and local bodies of knowledge but a combination of different perspectives with integrative capacities.

In my paper I argue that the encounter of scientific and religious discourses cannot be described in terms of a dichotomy. Rather it is gradual differences, which distinguish the different discourses and which dissolve the supposed discrepancy between religious and scientific knowledge.

By focusing on people whose livelihoods are directly and indirectly ocean- or agriculture-based, I will describe the hybrid character of these everyday discourses. Furthermore I will reflect upon how the media and media access play a role for the assertiveness of different bodies of knowledge.

My data is generated through ethnographic fieldwork on the Cape Verden islands Santiago and Boa Vista. The central focus of my whole research is the interplay of global concepts like climate change and conservation and local bodies of knowledge, using the example of different practices concerning the use of local resources. A big part of my research considers the local perception of climate change in everyday life, which, in extracts, I want to present in this paper. Hence my presentation contributes to the understanding of the plurality of local interpretations on climate change and picks up the question of how we can study the phenomenon of climate change from a sociological perspective.
Alleged climate induced migration is a prominent issue within the discussion on human dimensions of climate change. Despite the theoretical and methodological critique of often deterministic and linear explanations of migration under changing climatic conditions, many empirical case studies in this field are still deeply entrenched in static push-pull frameworks. Such studies tend to overlook the intertwining of environmental with the various other dimensions of human migration and therefore tend to reproduce simplistic causal relationships. In our view there are at least three important reasons for the perpetuation of analytical shortcomings.

The first one is the neglect of local perceptions of the environment and the political ecology at particular places where climate change is experienced (or not) and from where some people migrate. Studies that look at potential correlations between environmental and demographic features of a certain region are based on the hypothesis that environmental degradation for example should be reflected in a negative migration balance in this region. Using multivariate statistics to disentangle the environmental factor from others and to reveal correlations, these approaches usually fail to understand the decision-making in migration processes since local power structures and politics, economic constraints, social and cultural norms, the migration history of a particular society and people’s interpretations of climate and weather at a particular place are not considered.

Secondly a major difficulty that arises in empirical field research is that a causal linkage between climate/environmental changes and migration is often taken for granted in the research design. The questions asked usually lead to a certain bias of results by hinting at or treating causal relations between climate/environment and migration and tend to trigger answers that often refer to master narratives of environmental migration instead of giving the respondents the opportunity elaborate on the subtle and complex social and political undercurrents that relate to migration.

Thirdly we see a tendency to frame migration in the developing world in general and in Africa in particular both as a problem per se and as an answer to a problem (such as climate change) rather than a normal part of people’s lives. A strong sedentary bias in the research on migration in Africa implies a focus on so-called ‘root causes’ for hardship and misery as drivers of migration which is considered as diverging from the norm while mobility in the ’developed world’ is something desirable if not indispensable.

Drawing on first results of a new interdisciplinary research project in Mali and Senegal this paper suggests a place-sensitive research on the climate, environment and migration nexus. By acknowledging mobility as an integral part of human life and not as a sole response to a problem and by recognizing the importance of local perceptions and assessments of climate trends we seek to place specific mobility patterns in a context of not only environmental but multiple changes. These mobility patterns should be understood as rooted in the political ecology of particular places and as path-dependent but also, however, as open for constant
mutations. Methodologically we argue for a multi-level, multi-method and multi-sited research that seeks to separate the two research topics of migration and climate/environment. Ethnographic fieldwork that results in thick descriptions about migration, climate and environment through observation and in-depth interviews tries to avoid suggestive causality between climate, environment and migration waiving to ask respondents explicit questions about the linkages. Balancing these results with ‘hard’ data on rainfall, temperature and vegetation cover allows to become more susceptible for the social construction of alleged ‘facts’ such as droughts and land degradation as drivers for migration and to put meaning in the focus by considering perceptions and experiences of people.

Dr. des. Kristina Dietz (Latin American Institute, FU Berlin): Demokratie und Naturverhältnisse im Klimawandel: Sozialökologische und politische Dimensionen von Vulnerabilität in Nicaragua und Tansania [Contextualising vulnerability! Conceptual aspects and empirical evidences on the socio-ecological and political dimensions of vulnerability, cases from Nicaragua and Tanzania]

The current state of research concerning vulnerability to climate change exhibits serious gaps. In climate change related literature, vulnerability is most often conceptualised in biophysical terms, thereby neglecting underlying social conditions. In contrast, social scientific explanations underline the social construction of vulnerability, focussing on social and structural aspects while commonly disregarding the material site of the phenomena. Questions related to the political dimensions of vulnerability, such as political power relations and democratic conditions, are not addressed sufficiently in either of these research areas. The objective of my presentation is twofold: first I will refine a theoretical-analytical framework for the identification of context-specific conditions of vulnerability that incorporates not only socioecological. Second I will employ such a concept empirically. Based on case studies from Nicaragua and Tanzania it will be shown, that at the local scale, climate change is mediated by the interaction with socio-ecological and political distributional conflicts. I argue that social scopes of action related to adverse effects of climate change are shaped through the interlinkage of of different dimensions of societal relations with nature and the reproduction and perpetuation of social inequalities (specifically gender and class relations). Furthermore, it is shown that recent democratisation endeavours did not alter the scope of action of the rural poor in relation to the adverse effects of climate change. In addition, formal processes of political decentralisation did not lead to increased social integration of the rural poor, and newly established spaces for participation at the national, regional and local governance scales failed to improve opportunities for subaltern groups to politically participate, voice and promote their interests and claims.
Three main theoretical-conceptual conclusions are then drawn from the empirical evidence: first, vulnerability is historically embedded. Second, effects of climate change are mediated by social-spatial and socio-cultural contextual conditions. Third, vulnerability is political: The scope for individual and collective action to cope with or adapt to the adverse effects of climate change is determined by the institutions, opportunities and power-relations that shape peoples’ possibilities to voice and promote their interests in relation to the regulation of society-nature-relations and the distribution of (im-)material goods.

Panel I. Different knowledge forms and interpretations of climate change - Climate cultures: climate change as a ‘glocal’ human-environment experience

Comment: Prof. Dr. Joanna Pfaff-Czarnecka (Social Anthropology, Bielefeld) and Prof. Dr. Peter Schweitzer (Social Anthropology, Fairbanks)

Claudia Grill, M.A. (JRG ClimateWorlds, BGHS, University of Bielefeld): Endangered animals, endangered community? Human-animal relations and climate change in Canada’s Sub-Arctic

Interactions with animals of various kinds are an essential part of everyday life in Churchill, Manitoba, the so-called “polar bear capital of the world”. This paper points out locally specific forms of human-animal-encounters and argues that people build their sense of belonging on them. External forces that have substantial impacts on those relations and thus on “belongings”, like climate change, add new parameters, but also tensions. Reviewing ethnographic data from ongoing fieldwork in Churchill, the paper elucidates the multifaceted interplay of humans and animals in a remote and seemingly isolated place which has gained global importance.

In 2011 the arctic sea ice, which is one major factor used to affirm climatic changes and warmer temperatures, will presumably come to its minimum extent since records have been taken. Although changing winds could still prevent that, the last five minimums occurred in the last five years and continuing warm temperatures over the Arctic lead scientists to assume that the sea ice is further thinning (NSIDC 2011). Arctic and subarctic regions are thought to be one of those parts of the globe where global warming is happening faster and has more dramatic effects than in midrange latitudes for example. Especially alteration of ice conditions has comprehensive effects on both people and wildlife in circumpolar areas, but one creature has become an icon of global warming and is seen as the ultimate victim of shrinking ice due to warmer temperatures: the polar bear. In the paper at hand I am going to present some initial findings from ongoing fieldwork in a small subarctic community where people share their living space, amongst other animals, with polar bears and that has gained global importance due to tourism that builds on them. I will give an insight in how interacting with animals in a locally specific way is an important factor of building a particular sense of belonging and show how those forms of human-animal-relations are shaped and influenced by external factors such as climate change or discourses on animal rights and conservation.

Data has been gathered through ethnographic fieldwork which has been conducted for my ongoing PhD-project. The framework for this study is provided by the Junior Research Group.
“Climate Worlds” that investigates how people in different coastal communities perceive their environment and current changes in it. Locally specific ways of dealing with those changes and particular practices that have been developed are another focus of the group. In order to find out how the population's daily lives are affected by environmental changes such as global warming, the five members of the research group engage in long-term ethnographic fieldwork with a strong focus on video records.

To give an overview of the complex constellation of relations between people and animals as well as the influence of touristic practices on them, I will first describe the place of my study and how I proceeded. Secondly, an outline of different forms of interactions between humans and animals will be given, followed by a section about locally noticeable changes due to global warming and other developments. Finally, I will go a bit further into the ethnographic material and show how the depicted aspects impact people's everyday lives especially in regard to belonging.

Shaozeng Zhang, M.A. (University of California (Anthropology), Irvine): Valuing the Amazon Forest through carbon markets

This paper derives from my doctoral study in Brazil on the emergent environmental-financial mechanism of REDD (Reduced Emissions through Deforestation and forest Degradation). Under the rubric of REDD, a new emission reduction scheme for the post-2012 Kyoto Protocol, forest inhabitants are provided with economic incentives to reduce deforestation, and such incentives are financed mainly through the global carbon markets which grant carbon credits to and thus financially sustain deforestation reduction activities. Many Brazilian scientists were among the earliest worldwide to promote REDD as a mechanism to add tangible value to environmental services and thus prevent forests from being destroyed for conventionally more lucrative activities, such as pasturing.

This paper focuses on a pilot REDD project and its associated REDD accounting model. Located in a forest reserve in southeastern Amazonas state, heartland of the Amazon, this REDD project has been pre-selling credits in voluntary carbon markets since its initiation in 2008. Each of the 392 families, all subsistence farming settlers living in 35 communities in this forest, receives a monthly payment on the condition of no more deforestation for swidden farming—the principal local economy. As well, each is encouraged to adopt the new practice of permaculture and to intensify the existent practice of sustainable harvest of forest products, such as brazil nut. The project has been carried out with financial and political supports from domestic governments as well as foreign agencies. Based on this project, the REDD experts developed a methodology of REDD carbon calculation which constitutes a practice of estimation and commensuration of emission reductions and credits with multiple political and cultural stakes. This methodology has been recently approved as a REDD+ accounting model for global use.

My research is a qualitative (ethnographic) study. I conduct participant observation, interviews and document collection in three sampled communities and three organizations hosting almost all the experts involved in the project. The three communities include two
riverine ones, one close to and the other far from the municipal town, and the third one by the state road of AM-174; the three organizations include a semi-governmental foundation, a non-governmental research institute and a public national research institute, all headquartered in Manaus.

This paper juxtaposes the perspectives of the forest residents, the Brazilian REDD experts and the international REDD experts on the value of forests. It looks into (1) how the forest residents perceive in their local settings the (economic and socio-cultural) value of forests, (2) how the Brazilian experts (re-)define, calculate, commensurate and commodify the (economic) value of forests, (3) how the international REDD experts (validators of REDD project and methodology) define and apply the rules and principles of valuing forests, and 4) how these three groups of people (mis-)communicate about, negotiate and transform REDD knowledge and practice. Then it analyzes the flows, exchanges and transformations of expert knowledge and local knowledge with their embedded political visions and cultural logics.

This situated case study examines the macro issue of making climate science and carbon markets on the ground—ground as both the experts’ office floors and forest communities. It speaks to the multi-disciplinary studies on climate change adaptations of both marginal populations and expert communities. It also contributes to Social Studies of Science and Technology that situate (global) scientific knowledge making as another form of (local) cultural production. It bridges environmental and economic approaches to the climate change issues by elaborating the economic concepts of value and market. More technically, this paper establishes dialogues with the ongoing policy debates regarding REDD in the context of international geopolitics of climate change, for example, on whether to prioritize the provision of a global good (carbon sequestration) or the improvement of local wellbeing in developing countries.

Panel II. Forming society in the light of climate change – governing global climate change: towards glocalized climate policies?

Comment: Prof. Dr. Claus Leggewie (Political Science, Essen) and Prof. Dr. Miranda Schreurs (Political Science, Berlin)

Prof. Dr. Susan Crate (Department of Environmental Science and Policy, George Mason University, Fairfax): Towards Seeing the Big Picture and the Finer Details: Exchanging Local and Scientific Knowledge to Bolster Adaptive Response and Inform Policy in Northeastern Siberia

Today there is a great need to understand not only how the world’s ecosystems are affected by and responding to global climate change, but also to understand how the diversity of human populations are affected by, perceiving, and responding to it. This paper describes a collaborative interdisciplinary research project aimed towards first gauging local perceptions and responses then integrating that local knowledge with regional scientific knowledge. The project is ongoing with native Viliui Sakha, horse and cattle-breeding agropastoralists of northeastern Siberia, Russia. I argue that in order to maximize adaptive capacity for Viliui Sakha communities and also to inform policy decisions to facilitate local adaptation,
understandings and perceptions of change need to be informed by regional scientific data and vice versa via a process of ‘knowledge exchange.’ Hence the project’s main objective: to produce more robust understandings across stakeholder groups in order to facilitate local adaptive capacity and generate better-informed policy responses. Our premise for facilitating this effort is based upon the fact that although 21st century climate change is global in coverage, its affects on local ecosystems and their human inhabitants are diverse and disparate, and therefore calls for ways to integrate global data with local knowledge.

I first provide some background on the need for integrating knowledge systems, I then share background information on the research area and project to date, including a discussion of our methods and findings to ascertain inhabitants’ perceptions, understandings and responses to the local effects of global climate change, then share our findings via a case study of Summer 2010 ‘knowledge exchanges’ with place-based communities in northeastern Siberia, Russia. Our research team designed the knowledge exchanges to promote the interaction of local and scientific knowledge between scientists studying the local effects of global climate change and populations inhabiting the local areas under the scientists’ study. To these ends, we facilitated a presentation that both incorporated findings from long-term ethnographic field study and regional natural science measurements/data generation and that opened the floor for audience input. Results show that there were interactions of knowledge across several cross-sections, some unexpected. Overall, the exchanges were highly successful and one of several processes providing essential data needed for realizing the project’s ultimate goal to integrate these two forms of knowledge. Beyond the immediate utility to local and regional stakeholders, the interaction of observations, experiences, and understandings of local change with regional scientific data is valuable to the larger research community engaged in climatic change research.

Dr. Silja Klepp (artec | Forschungszentrum Nachhaltigkeit, University of Bremen): Climate change and mobility – legal discourses and possible solutions for environmental migration in the Pacific region

Focusing on the low-lying Pacific islands of Kiribati as an affected nation by climate change, the paper realises an analysis of the current developments on the island in relation to legal and political negotiation processes and discourses around “environmental refugees”. After presenting currently contested aspects in the debates around climate change and migration and discussing why it will be difficult to find legal and political solutions on the global level, regional developments are analyzed. Which claims and moral requirements do the government and the people of Kiribati formulate, what are their strategies to achieve them and who are their allies? What new challenges will we have to face in areas such as transnational mobility and conflicts around “climate justice” between countries of the global South and industrialised countries?

The inter-connections and developments between local, national and supra-national actors were studied in the Pacific region, focusing on an analysis of the conflicts and perspectives for “environmental refugees”. In spring 2011 I visited Kiribati to learn more about a long-
term strategy of the government that is called “migrate with dignity”. The government is encouraging their citizens already now to move out of the island, although the exact effects of climate change on the island are still uncertain. Labelled as “climate change migration” the government is negotiating different labour programs with New Zealand and other countries. In conclusion, the potential of these migration programs to function as development strategies for the country in the present as well as in the future is analysed.

Panel III. Climate change as second-order scientific construct – methodological reflections

Comment: PD Dr. Gabriela Christmann (Sociology, Erkner) and PhD Monika Büscher (Sociology, Lancaster)

Dr. Sophie Elixhauser, Katrin Vogel, M.A. & PD Dr. Stefan Böschen (Wissenschaftszentrum Umwelt, University of Augsburg): The making of climate places: A theoretical and methodological framework for research on local perceptions of climate change

In this paper we propose a theoretical and methodological framework for research on local perceptions of climate change which visualises the complex interplay of local and global processes that characterise the idea of climate change. This framework has been developed in the frame of a research project on perceptions of climate change in different Alpine communities, and the respective interests, discourses and types of knowledge. After some theoretical words about the framework, we will explain our methodological approach, which will be illustrated by some brief examples from initial fieldwork in Southern Tyrol and Upper Bavaria.

On a local level, the phenomenon of climate change is produced through the interplay of various actors and entities: particular persons, ideas, forms of knowledge, perceptions, embodied practices, and various material and non-material entities (e.g., environmental phenomena, technologies, infrastructure). This interplay shall be visualised with the help of the metaphor of the meshwork (cf. Ingold 2011). In contrast to a network which is most commonly regarded as a set of interconnected points, a meshwork is to be understood as an interweaving of lines or paths. The lines of a meshwork meet and entangle to form particular knots. A meshwork is not a bounded entity but an unbounded entanglement of interwoven lines. Though temporarily stabilised, the entanglements of the lines of a meshwork are subject to constant change; new lines and knots come into existence and others again cease to exist. These “climate knots” are created by both non-material, rather abstract paths, such as certain ideas, discourses, etc., as well as material paths which may be located in geographical space. The latter might also entail, for example, certain populations groups who are especially active or knowledgeable in relation to the climate change issue (and e.g. their whereabouts or meeting points), goods related to this issue that move between different towns or cities, or institutional and administrative regulations produced in one locality and implemented in another. Our research examines the paths that co-constitute climate places – be they spatially
rooted or not – especially with regard to the development or blocking of climate-relevant activities.

This way of visualisation allows us to picture the processual and non-linear character of the development of meaningful (climate) places. In the frame of our research we regard the Alpine communities under study as (settings for) “climate places”. These places are made up by a meshwork and its respective knots centred on and around the theme of climate change. In considering communities as climate places we counter a wide-spread view of community as a spatially, politically and socially bounded entity, which so easily ‘slips into’ community research.

Our methodological framework further builds upon the approach of “multi-sited ethnography”, coined by George Marcus (1995). Multi-sited research is designed around conjunctions of ideas, persons, environmental phenomena, narrative, practices, and so forth, situated on very different levels and in different spatial settings. Using different “tracking strategies” (e.g., following a story, a person/particular people, a thing or material entity, a conflict), we follow the paths that lead to, and lead away from, climate knots. The paths which lead away from certain climate knots may again become part of other entanglements. The latter knots (such as, for example, science as site for the production of knowledge, media, or administrative centres) are explored only in relation and in their particular relevance for our specific climate place.

This research by the Environment Science Centre (WZU) Augsburg forms part of the research project “Regional Climates: Social transformation processes for climate protection and climate adaptation”, carried out by social scientists at LMU Munich, the Munich University of Applied Sciences, and the University of Augsburg.

Friederike Gesing, M.A. (artec | Forschungszentrum Nachhaltigkeit, University of Bremen):
Working with nature in Aotearoa New Zealand: An ethnography of emerging coastal protection practice in the context of climate change

The paper draws upon recent fieldwork on coastal protection practices in Aotearoa New Zealand to reflect upon the role of collaborative relationships for the anthropology of climate change. It starts out discussing the concept of the “para-ethnographic” developed by George E. Marcus and Douglas R. Holmes to frame how experts in technocratic fields of knowledge engage in reflexive practices resembling anthropological ways of knowing. Focusing on a specific collaborative encounter in the field, the notion of the “second-order informant” is proposed to grasp how research subjects express their own conceptual agenda by talking about and through others. The aim is to incorporate reflexive or second-order knowledge into the anthropological analysis of fields which are partly structured around technocratic experts and their knowledge, but also populated by other subjects whose reflexive practices should
not be left out of the collaborative endeavour. The Anthropology of Climate Chance is prone to be engaging in such fields, especially in its attempt to follow climate change as a second-order concept.

Dr. Heike Greschke (JRG ClimateWorlds, BGHS, University of Bielefeld): Was macht eine Forschung über lokale Interpretationen des Klimawandels zu einer globalen Ethnografie? Einblicke in die Forschungswerkstatt des KlimaWelten-Projekts [What makes a global ethnography on local climate change perceptions and interpretations? Telling the inside story of „Climate Worlds“]

Drawing upon current experiences of the junior research group “Climate Worlds” this paper contributes to the methodological reflection of ethnographic research on global phenomena, such as climate change. Since May 2010 the “Climate Worlds” research team has been studying coastal communities with respect to their modes of perceiving current environmental changes, how they interpret and cope with such changes and whether “global climate change” has taken root as a frame of interpretation in these communities. The team members’ studies are located at different sites around the globe, all of them assumingly threatened or already affected by rising sea levels and/or global warming. The entire research team jointly follows climate change-related local discourses in order to identify how and by which social actors and institutions knowledge about global climate change is constructed and disseminated. Spread over the continents, these studies shall together form a global ethnography, in shape of a ‘teleidoskop’ in which a central topos of climate change discourse is refracted in a number of local interpretations.

“Climate Worlds” aims at understanding culture-specific bodies of practical (not only cognitive) knowledge. The methodological concept hence provides for long-term ethnographic fieldwork (approx. 20 months) in combination with a strong focus in video recording. Communication between the group members is supported by an electronic network, including regular audio conferences and a shared videoblog.

In accordance with the “unique adequacy requirement” formulated by Ethnomethodology’s founder Harold Garfinkel, the projects’ methodological concept has been developing alongside the research process. In this paper I reflect on the “Climate Worlds’” research procedure developed so far. I first illustrate how we respond to the problem of studying local perceptions and interpretations of an imperceptible and global phenomenon. Against the background of our research experiences I then discuss notions of multi-siting and the global-local nexus in contemporary ethnography. In this regard, I shall highlight the process of becoming a member of the studied field as an analytical tool of multi-siting.