

Climate Protection as Religious Mantra

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Probably no one knows when the German discussion about climate protection actually started. We merely sense that we knew a lot quite early on. What exactly is not entirely clear. Only this has always been certain: climate protection is good, and no climate protection may lead to the end of the world. In the meantime we have a more precise target, namely to limit the temperature increase caused by greenhouse gas to two degrees by 2050. The question remains as to how we are going to fund our emission-decreasing endeavor. And which countries are supposed to join in? Basically, every country, with Germany as the major pioneering force. Or that is at least what we would like to believe.

Other things we still don't know include the following:

- How can this gradual reduction be politically and economically implemented?
- How many politicians will be willing to push the relevant concepts?
- Which kinds of investments, infrastructure, and framework will be necessary to do so?
- How can we reach this goal without severe cuts that would detrimentally affect our economic growth?
- Which technologies should be sponsored?

Mostly we seem to be waiting, looking for the energy plan the federal government has announced for this fall, and hoping for climate protective structures which are supposed contradictory to aspects such as planning safety, investment safety, security of energy supply, competitiveness, and socio-political consensus. A nice illusion in times of permanent change.

For better or worse, though, we are globally embedded when it comes to energy and climate-political questions, i.e., we live in a system of markets where the energy demand will increase predominantly in the emerging markets, China and India above all. The same can be said about their emissions. Even if the industrial nations reduced their emissions to zero, it would not be sufficient to reach our two-degree target by 2050. Therefore, we like to talk about global *level playing fields*, where we want to formulate our targets with all emitting nations in harmony. Another nice illusion.

So, let us first look at the implementation of our various goals. These refer to the energy sector, the industrial sector, agriculture, transport, real estate, and the heating market. What needs to happen to harmonize them towards a holistic fulfillment of the two-degree goal? Usually we come up with:

- increase in energy efficiency
- renewables
- CCS technology (CCS = Carbon Dioxide Capture and Storage)
- and the highly disputed nuclear energy.

For its overall economy, the federal government has formulated an annual energy efficiency increase target of 3% by 2020. During the past few years we have managed 1.7%. This brings us to the question of whether the industry, which is the recipient of governmental regulation, will be able to follow these rules at all. And come to think of it, which role does the state play in this context? How much has been invested by the federal government into energy research? Actually, very little compared to other countries, namely about €5 per capita. In Japan, for example, this sum amounts to €25 per capital. It nearly looks as if both industry and the federal government are waiting for the other to either subsidize or invest more into climate protection.

If we were smart, we would develop a mindset with a focus on concrete measures aimed at opportunities rather than risks. Right now German industry still has pertinent growth potential. If we showed how integrated energy systems function in cities, on the countryside, and along coasts, and exported this kind of expertise, we would all profit - the technology and energy providers as much as the consumer. But above all we have to start creating, testing, propagating, and selling new lifestyle models.

For instance, we could develop regional pilot communities, where

- a large number of households has turned into energy producers using mini-power stations or combine solar and geothermal energy;
- Car pools and electric cars use the surplus of this decentralized energy production as a matter of fact;
- work hours are graded in a way that regular bussing can be arranged;
- multi-regional meetings will be conducted via Skype or video conferencing rather than being personally attended;
- users reload their mobiles, iPods, and computers with the help of solar panels attached to their bags while running and/or exercising;
- kids walk or bicycle - or e-bike - to school and also generate energy for their e-equipment with the help of solar panels attached to their backpacks;
- the new group of LOHAS serve as role models; that is, those people following a lifestyle of health and sustainability and at the same time the environment-affine successors to the fashion addicted yuppies.

The point is, should we eventually find out that we and all traditional ecological interest groups have become far too inflexible to rethink and recreate the models in which we live, there is no other choice but to make place for those who are the mental pioneers and show us how to implement the things we have been talking about since the first Birkenstock sandal.