

Attribution science – the key to a fair and effective Loss and Damage Fund

Lea Rahman

Application as *academic* for the conference *adjust*: Justice in Finance for Climate Change Adaptation and Loss and Damage

Abstract

One major outcome of 2022's COP27 was the idea of setting up a *Loss and Damage Fund* to financially assist communities struggling with climate impacts. Implementing this idea will be controversial, given the inherent challenges related to fairness and solidarity. The specific structure and conditions of the fund are yet to be defined and will be a key topic of the upcoming COPs. Central questions will include identifying the states that will contribute to the fund, deciding who will receive money, and defining the exact types of losses and damages that will be eligible for compensation. Answers should not be left to the political arbitrariness of the following climate conferences, but rather placed on a scientific basis. Attribution science can give a fact-based footing to intergovernmental negotiations in at least four ways:

- (1) *Attribution of particular losses and damages eligible for compensation by the fund:* Attribution science links extreme weather events and slow onset events to anthropogenic climate change and thus ascertains whether and to what extent certain events have become more frequent or more intense due to climate change.
- (2) *Identifying the donor states:* Attribution studies are already used in the growing field of climate litigation and have long been recognised by the IPCC as producing useful evidence. Attribution science can trace climate change causality through historical emissions and a country's carbon budget overreach, thereby guiding the identification of potential donor countries.
- (3) *Identifying legitimate claimants:* Attribution science can also identify which countries have been rendered vulnerable to climate and weather events and should consequently receive financial compensation.
- (4) *Criteria for expenditure:* Attribution science can not only help with damage calculation, but also identify risks and drivers in climate and weather changes. Therefore, it can also provide expenditure criteria for specific events.

But it would be naïve to think attribution science provides a silver bullet: This field has deficiencies of its own which could be politicised – most notably the way that data inequality maps onto broader global inequalities. The focus now should be on remedying this data inequality and working on a pragmatic application of attribution science to the modalities of the fund: By working with averages instead of individual case studies, disadvantages due to unequal data bases can be prevented and compensation could be realised faster according to the respective scientific standards.

Statement: Policy-relevance

At COP27, states agreed to establish a Loss and Damage Fund to provide financial assistance to communities and states highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. The fund could mean a breakthrough towards global climate justice. However, its success will depend on contributions from many countries and on transparent criteria for the equitable distribution of resources. If, by contrast, there is a perception that the fund is being used as a political tool – for example, if payouts are subject to political conditions – this may reduce the willingness of some countries to provide financial support. Scientific findings could help mandate states to contribute financially and could assist in identifying recipients of the fund's disbursement mechanisms. If these can serve as unbiased criteria, they will likely increase acceptance for the fund.

Background

I am doing my doctorate at the University of Augsburg in the field of International Relations on the topic of environmental justice and am working on international environmental and climate policy since 2019. This includes my book "Neokoloniale Strukturen in der internationalen Klimapolitik" (2021), in which I observed developments on Loss and Damage in the UNFCCC negotiations. During my Young Fellowship at DGAP (German Council on Foreign Relations), I worked on the design of the Loss and Damage Fund using attribution science. I published a paper "Attribution Science and the Loss and Damage Fund" (2023). My abstract is mainly based on my research at DGAP.

Previous Publications and Conference presentations on Loss and Damage

Rahman, Lea (2023): Attribution Science and the Loss and Damage Fund. Using Science Will Make the Fund More Fair and Effective. Berlin: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Auswärtige Politik e.V.

Rahman, Lea (2022): Für Klimaschäden müssen die Verursacher haften. JACOBIN.de <https://jacobin.de/artikel/fuer-klimaschaeden-muessen-die-verursacher-haften-cop27-un-klimakonferenz-lea-rahman/>

Rahman, Lea (2021): Die Herausforderung einer global gerechten Klimapolitik. Presentation at the 18th Meeting of the Junior Research Group Umweltsoziologie „Sozial-ökologische Transformation im Kapitalozän: Herausforderungen und Widersprüche“, 12.-13. November 2021, Europa-Universität Flensburg.

Rahman, Lea (2021): Neokoloniale Strukturen in der internationalen Klimapolitik. Eine postkoloniale Perspektive auf den Diskurs im Rahmen der UN-Klimakonferenzen. Baden-Baden: Tectum.