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Global inequality due to climatic factors

Is social differentiation just? Are we still living in a class society?

| Kulturtheorie und Interkulturalität B

| Fall Term 2008

| Department CCM

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| Delivery Date: November 17th 2008

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1. The issue of climate-induced underdevelopment

“Nature’s inequality is not easily remedied.” (LANDES; 1999: 5)

In times of global competition based on the consistent progress of knowledge societies¹ (STEHR; 2007: 1) developing countries are at risk of being left behind irretrievably.

While one is able to observe an increasing disparity between industrialized and developing countries during the 20th century, which was marked by an extensive focus on material resources such as capital, soil and labor (WILLKE; 2005: 45), this phenomenon of progressive inequality has become even more acrimonious in the past decades (POVERTY NEWS BLOG; 2005).

As modern functional differentiated societies experience a relocation of the fundamental factor for their economic development towards a profound expertise in the handling of knowledge and science (WILLKE; 2005: 56), as “industrial society gives way to knowledge society” (STEHR; 1999:55), they coincidentally extend their economic advantage towards developing societies.

In order to achieve an increase of societal prosperity based on the above-mentioned insightful expertise developing countries are in need of financial means for investments in the educational and the technological sector.

But why have developing countries not been able to handle their material resources successfully? Why are we referring to them as underdeveloped?

When dealing with this subject of social inequality and injustice in regards to the Sub-Saharan one is confronted with numerous assertions as to how it is possible that some countries, predominantly in the northern hemisphere, are so affluent in contrast to the unfortunate developing countries of the Sub-African continent. Many authors seem to be fond of the one-best-way explanation for the underdevelopment of countries, often referred to as the Least developed countries (UN; 2008), as opposed to developed countries in order to clarify their condition as even further away from the status quo set by mostly Western protagonists.

The integration of climatic factors in the debate around global inequality seemed to have fallen into disrepute after the Second World War, as the latter tended to lead to one-sided, distorted associations regarding the repercussions of climate for societies (STEHR, STORCH; 2000: 2).

¹ According to Stehr knowledge is constitutive for reality in every respect of knowledge societies (STEHR; 2007:1)

In spite of the undeniable extreme economic, social and political consequences of slave trade and colonialism² one finds climatic realities and their effects marginalized and underrepresented when researching the occurrence of underdevelopment. Therefore this paper will deal with the repercussions for people due to this complex phenomenon and ultimately discuss the question of justice of social differentiation of this kind.

Dealing with justice or injustice tends to trail behind a sentiment of subjectivity. Therefore I do not claim this paper to be clear of the latter nor do I accord complete objectivity to any scientific work dealing with global injustice. Nevertheless I aim at using the term of injustice as suggested by Dr. Dr. h. c. Höffe from the University of Tübingen, who states that “in social morality injustice only characterizes the one elementary part of mutual acknowledgement that people are obliged to.”(BPB; 2008).

Furthermore the idea of inequality will be based on the one-sided occurrence of “ the enduring increase in the level of affluence and wealth” (STEHR; 1999: 54) regarding the industrialized/knowledge societies in contrast to developing societies and therefore attempt to address inequality as a global rather than a mono-societal phenomenon.

When approaching the issue of a class society this paper will focus on classes from a global perspective.

While class analysis may have fallen into disrepute (STEHR; 1999: 54) in industrial societies as a result of their constant augment of wealth and social stability I aim at proving that in global terms classes are a still prevailing phenomenon. The most obvious demonstration of this assertion can be detected in the abundant use of distinctions between the first and the third world, the industrial and developing societies, the developed and the less/least developed countries, etc.. However by illustrating the geographical realities of Sub-Saharan countries and their repercussions I intend to consequently display that, from a climatic point of view, it is accurate to speak of a global class society in the twenty-first century.

Moreover the term “class” shall be determined by Max Weber’s class analysis, in which he states that the concept of class is centered around the issue of *life chances* (WRIGHT;2002: 832). Taking this as a starting point I will outline climatic facts that gravely influence the development of Sub-Saharan African Countries and therefore alter the “life chances” of the inhabitants enormously.

By focusing on the extrinsic factor climate and its repercussions I intend to point out the inequitable prerequisites for the longstanding state of underdevelopment resulting in the fact that 22 of the 22 countries with “low human development” (UNDP; 2008a) are located in the Sub-Sahara and the still prevailing “massive poverty and obscene inequality” (BBC; 2005; Mandela’s poverty speech) menacing a substantial development of this region today.

² More detailed information about these topics in „Das nachkoloniale Afrika“ (Jakobeit, Tetzlaff; 2005)

In order to do so I will primarily focus on the idea of underdevelopment, so that a sensitized appreciation can be established.

Secondly the paper will explore climatic conditions and their direct repercussions for civil society. Particular interest shall be devoted to the agricultural repercussions and the consequences of the malaria epidemic, as I have been most confronted with these aspects of inequality during my stay in rural Zambia in 2008. In due course I ultimately intend to illuminate that social differentiation due to climatic factors is indeed unjust and that we are therefore in fact still living in a global class society.

2. The term of underdevelopment

„At the root of Africa's poverty lies its extraordinarily disadvantageous geography, which has helped to shape its societies and its interactions with the rest of the world.“
(Bloom & Sachs, 1998, S.211)

The assertion that underdevelopment in Sub-Sahara-Africa may partly be linked to climatic factors has to be handled cautiously for two reasons. On the one hand one has to critically face up to the term of underdevelopment. Therefore it seems essential to start by distinguishing between development- and underdevelopment- theories:

“Underdevelopment-theories are generally aiming at finding an answer for the question for the cause of economic underdevelopment, while development-theories declare how to overcome this condition” (“Translated by author”; WOLFF; 1998: 284)

In order to answer the question of justice of global social differentiation, according to Wolff, this paper therefore deals with underdevelopment-theories. As the term of underdevelopment has prevailed in the science of political development, I will not go into particulars about the moral aspects of the nomenclature, which technically speaking implies that the condition of western industrial/ knowledge societies is viewed as normality, as the status quo, whereas the condition of developing countries is portrayed as an exception in need of explanation (WOLFF; 1998: 284f).

Nevertheless it seems useful to maintain a critical perspective when it comes to terms such as the latter.

Jakobeit and Tetzlaff (2005: 62) contrast the term of underdevelopment to the evolutionary process of (industrial) societies, who have established a community of exchange and purpose according to the social contract of Hobbes and the division of labor proposed by Smith.

The criteria utilized to differentiate between these developed and the underdeveloped societies are namely the degree of the division of labor, the level of formal education and the degree of progress in technology.

The extent to which countries, who have altogether lost over 60 million inhabitants due to transatlantic slave trade starting in the 17th and ending in the 19th century (JACOBET, TETZLAFF; 2005: 41) and afterwards have fallen “into the hands of ruthless and cormorant” (“Translated by author”; SCHOLL-LATOURE; 2003: 24) colonial emperors can be compared to western industrial states with mostly no extrinsic take-overs whatsoever remains questionable. According to Höffe one can therefore already acknowledge severe forms of injustice in this aspect.

In the following however I aim at discussing the mostly neglected climatic factors and the repercussions of those for the African peoples, especially in Zambia, which can be attributed to Zimbabwe or Malawi as well as the latter are landlocked Sub-Saharan states, who encounter mostly similar climatic and geographical conditions. Furthermore I will observe the often times occurring misjudgment associated with the debate over climate and inequality.

3. Climatic Factors

“Africans always were and still remain borderland pioneers, who have claimed an especially disagreeable region of the world for humankind altogether. This is their most important contribution to the history of mankind. Therefore they deserve admiration, support and attentive scientific acknowledgement.” (“Translated by author”; ILIFFE; 2000: 9).

3.1. Climate Determinism

The second reason for the imperative cautious handling of the term of underdevelopment due to climatic factors is the danger of looking upon this problem and its consequences from a mono-causal and therefore rather distorted simple perspective. By arguing that peoples could be categorized due to their characteristics, ambitions and goals, which are supposedly directly related to climatic conditions one is easily drawn to dichotomist conclusions, i.e.:

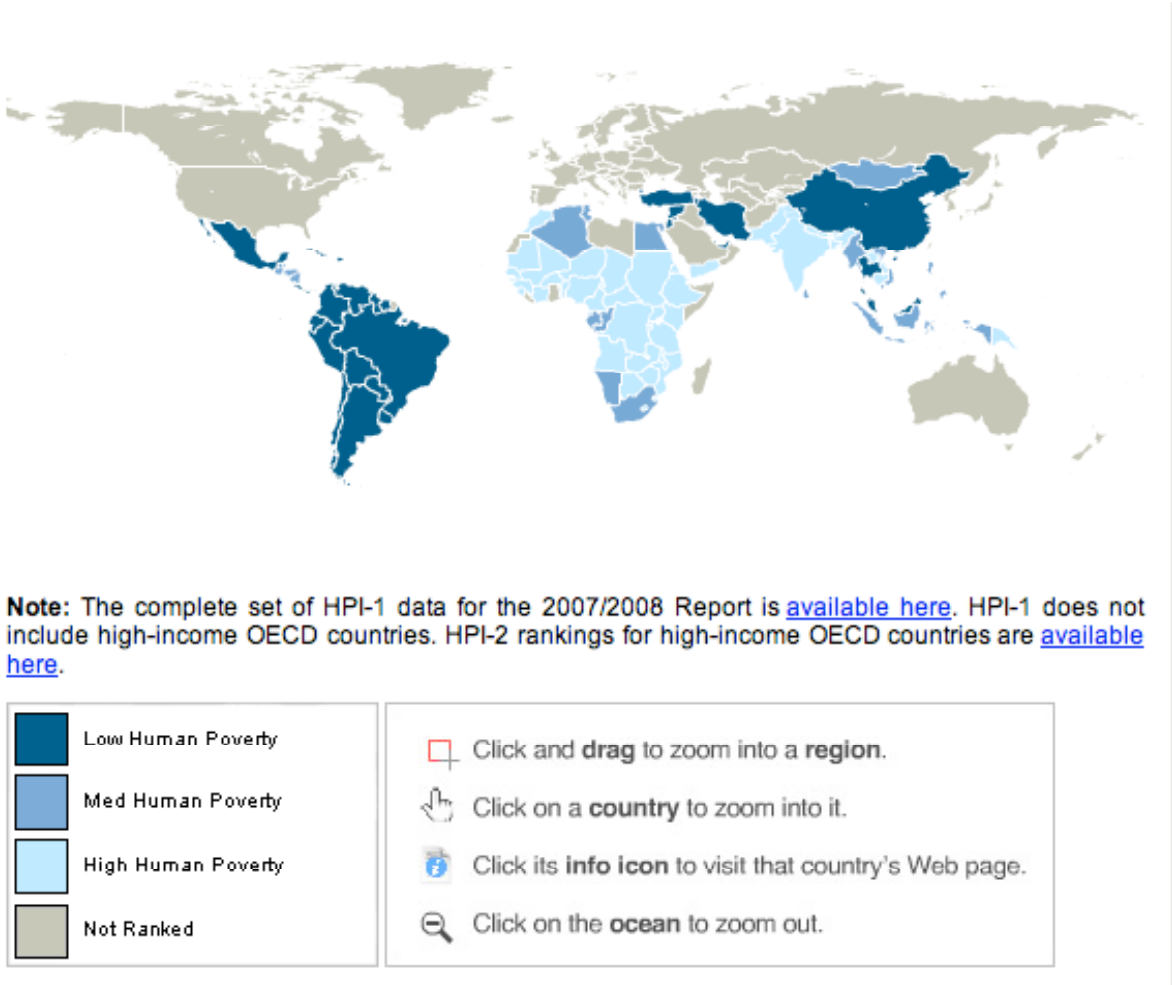
“Curiously enough man's body and his mind appear to differ in their climatic adaptations” (HUNTINGTON; 1919: 1). Taking statements like the latter as a starting point for the debate around climate and inequality may consequently lead to the idea of a “sober, thoughtful population” in areas with lower temperatures on the one hand and “ebullient pleasure seeking people” in higher-temperature environments on the other (LANDES; 1999: 4).

It is obvious that approaches of this kind fail to recognize the actual complexity of the climatic repercussions. This tendency for climate determinism (STEHR, STORCH; 2000: 3) is often times detectable in climatic underdevelopment-theories of the beginning 20th century. Proponents of the latter state that “Climatic conditions, behavior patterns und societal organizational forms are destined and that climate is constant.” (STEHR, STORCH; 2000:2).

The injustice of the false argumentation of climate determinists is, as depicted above, easily detected. However in the following I will portray the injustice resulting from more accurate conclusions of climatic differences for the question of social differentiation and class society.

3.2 Geographical Conditions

“If one marks off a belt a couple of thousand miles in width encircling the earth at the equator one finds within it **no** developed countries (...).”- John Kenneth Galbraith (quoted acc. to LANDES; 1999: 5)



Source: United Nations Development Program (2008b)

Illustration 1: Human Poverty Index

According to the HPI- 1 for Developing Countries introduced in 1997 by the United Nations Development Program countries with notable human poverty differentiate among the following kinds of deprivation:

1. The aspect of a short lifespan, which measures the probability not to survive to an age of 40 years
2. The aspect of illiteracy

3. The aspect of (low) standard of living, which is shaped by access to water and health services, and other economic conditions (UNDP; 2008b)

By taking a close look at the globe and the location of all of the developing countries noted in the HPI-1 one detects that most of the countries with highest human poverty are indeed as stated by Galbraith to be found in the area around the equator.

By comparing the geographical features of developed countries like Germany to the three landlocked African states Zambia, Zimbabwe and Malawi one identifies grave climatic differences:

Whereas Germany as a Central-European state with an average yearly temperature of 8,95°C (IPICTURE; 2002a) faces a rather variable climate with frequent changes of weather from day to day (BBC WEATHER; 2008) Sub-Saharan Africa displays tropical climate on the one hand, but also various peculiarities of the latter.

More precisely this means that countries like Zambia with an average yearly temperature of 21°C face extreme seasonal tropical climate changes (IPICTURE; 2002b). Therefore rain seasons (November-April), characterized by mostly hot, oppressive weather occur as well as dry seasons (May-October) with lower temperatures (GOSSNER MISSION, 2008a).³

The repercussions of these conditions are manifold. Among others they result in enormous agricultural deficits as well as immediate consequences for the population. In the following I will concentrate on these aspects.

3.3 Agricultural Repercussions

„Moreover, in several dimensions its (Africa's) environment is without parallel in raising obstacles to growth.“ (BLOOM,SACHS; 1998: 211).

In the first instance it seems necessary to note that a convincing measurement of the Sub-Saharan agricultural productivity can effectively only be started after the end of colonial rule and the thereby arising coercion for monocultural farming, which was mainly used for the supply of the transoceanic colonial emperors (BPB; 2008). However the climatic occurrences leading to slim harvests observed during this time period can unquestionably be referred to the situation delineated in the following.

Due to the above-mentioned climatic factors, such as a six-month rain- and dry –season it

³ Other Sub-Saharan countries such as Kenya face completely differentiated, nevertheless extreme, climate characteristics, i.e.: an average temperature of 17,8°C (Ipicture, 2002c) and a severely low amount of condensation, restricted to the months of April and October, in spite of yearly variations (BBC Weather 2008).

doesn't seem surprising that agricultural productivity in Sub-Saharan-Africa remains chronically low (BLOOM, SACHS; 1998: 211). In Zambia this productivity encounters for only 4% (WORLD BANK; 2008) of the Gross Domestic Product of the country, which seems disproportional when noting that 65,1% of its population is still rural (GOSSNER MISSION; 2008a). During my stay in Katete (East-Zambia) all of the 42-interviewed farmers stated similar to Essau Banda: "Every time we try to cultivate during the summer, the rain just washes everything away (...) and during the winter there is not enough water for us to grow the food, because the fountain is often dried out, too."

A different issue of agricultural productivity lies in the poorly developed infrastructure. In Zambia for example all roads leading to and away from Lusaka are in reasonably good shape. However as soon as one leaves the area around the capital, one is confronted with unpaved "streets" with numerous potholes, which hinders all vehicles from a brisk progression and therefore jeopardizes the nation's alimentation⁴.

The interplay of climatic factors with various intrinsic occurrences such as the above mentioned infrastructural problem lead to enormous difficulties for Sub-Saharan agricultural productivity and ultimately also to a severe reduction of the populations "life-chances" as depicted in Max Weber's class analysis.

However climatic aspects are capable of affecting humans in an even more direct way than hindering them from generating the maximal productivity of their soil. In the following I will discuss the consequences of the latter with special interest on the malaria epidemic.

3.4 Direct repercussions on civil society

„Heat (...) has an even more deleterious consequence: (...) faster transmission of disease and development of immunities to countermeasures.“ (LANDES; 1999: 7)

As stated by Landes heat, especially moist heat, as it is typical for the summers in the Sub-Saharan-African states presents ideal possibilities for the dispersal of tropical diseases.

Due to its wide spread Malaria is an even more fatal disease⁵ for Zambian, Zimbabwean or Malawian population than Cholera, Typhus, Yellow Fever or the Sleeping sickness.

“Malaria is endemic in 107 countries and territories in tropical and subtropical regions, with sub-Saharan Africa hardest hit. Between 350 million and 500 million cases of clinical malaria occur each year.”

“Malaria kills more than one million people every year.“ (UNICEF; 2008)

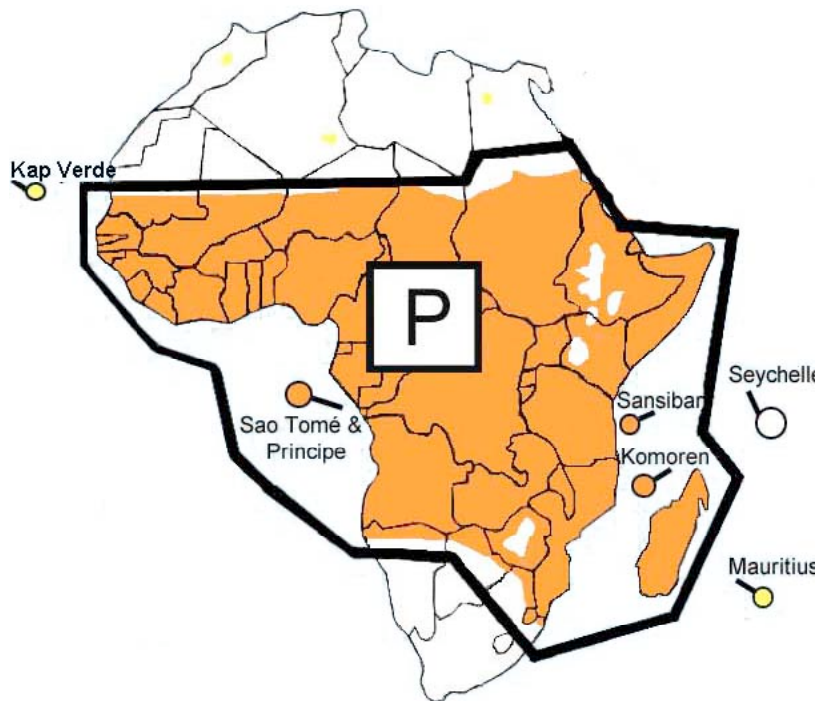
Transmitted by the Anopheles-mosquito Malaria is then released by spore-animalcules,

⁴ According to Willis costs for transportation in Zambia lie at 60-70 % of all crops produced (WILLIS; 2004: 2)

⁵ „This rate of reproduction is the critical measure of the danger of epidemic: a rate of 1 means that the disease is stable- one new case for one old. For infectious diseases like mumps or diphtheria the maximum rate is about 8. For malaria it is 90.“ – LANDES; 1999: 7,8)

who ultimately cause red blood cells to burst (UNI LÜBECK; 2006). In addition this process is accompanied by inconstant fever attacks. I for instance have also experienced shiver attacks and regurgitation after having been infected with the virus.⁶

The following illustration depicts the regions most endangered by Malaria, mostly during the whole year. One can easily observe that the latter are all located in immediate vicinity of the equator. “P” elucidates that these areas should not be traveled to without previous vaccination.



Source: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Gesundheit (2008)

III.: 2 Malaria-regions

Taking the climatic factors as a starting point one is drawn to a conclusion concerning the question why people in the areas pictured above seem to be especially contingent to the virus. During the six-month rain season in Zambia, Zimbabwe and Malawi mosquitos have a most advantageous prospect to reproduce:

“The Anopheles mosquito, which transmits the malaria parasite from one human being to another, thrives in warm, humid climates where pools of water provides perfect breeding grounds.” (UNICEF & WHO; 2000: 1)

Furthermore the insect is capable of laying hundreds to thousands of eggs, which after a few days lead to numerous new mosquitos (UNICEF; 2008).

As 75,8% of the population in Zambia live on less than 1\$ and 94,1% on less than 2\$ per day (GOSSNER MISSION; 2008b), mosquito nets with an average price of 10\$ in Lusaka,

⁶ For more detailed information around this subject I would recommend Planet Wissen (2008).

Livingstone and Katete are far out of reach for the majority, which is why families living in poor circumstances, mostly the rural population, are trapped in a vicious circle of poverty. The sheer economic consequences of Malaria are an average loss of 1.3% of annual economic growth in countries with intense transmission (WHO; 2008b).

4. The injustice of social differentiation due to climatic factors and the still prevailing global class society

„No one can be praised or blamed for the temperature of the air, or the volume and timing of rainfall, or the lay of the land“ (LANDES; 1999: 4)

Taking a state of underdevelopment that is to be overcome as a starting point, one realizes, after a profound analysis of climatic aspects, that the latter affect the physical well being of the population enormously and therefore ultimately the economic development of a country. After a close observation of the repercussions of climate on the agriculture and the civil society one apprehends that climatic factors are not the only reason for social differentiation in Africa. However their jeopardous interplay with Sub-Saharan economical realities gravely shaped by centuries of slave trade and colonial rule lead to a radically unjust vicious circle of poverty. As Landes claims in the quote above: no one can be blamed for the temperature of the air, the volume and timing of rainfall or the lay of the land (1999: 4). Furthermore Africans cannot be blamed for centuries of foreign exploitation. Taking these assertions as a basis one is consequently drawn to the conclusion that social differentiation due to climatic aspects is gravely unjust and that the repercussions of the latter very well result in a class society, as one part of the world, mostly western industrialized, knowledge based societies have been favored by nature and are therefore able to fully exhaust their “life chances” and others, developing, less developed, least developed, underdeveloped countries simply have not been privileged in this manner.

Sub-Saharan Africa has been severely impaired in its countries’ development chances, so that a profound global inequality has been established, where industrial/knowledge societies are able to pursue an “enduring increase in the level of affluence and wealth” (STEHR; 1999: 54) and developing countries are being left behind.

Claiming that social differentiation of this kind was just, would be the same as for instance the marginalization of all red-haired people simply because of the consequences of their chromosomes. It would be the most basic form of discrimination and ignorance, related to undoubtedly more extreme and yet similar forms of the latter demonstrated in Germany during the 1930ies and 40ies of the past century.

Although these climatic occurrences are subject to the control of none of us (STEHR; 15.10.2008) I suggest that the consequences of the above can nevertheless be managed successfully. Therefore the peoples living in areas that are by any means hostile to man, i.e. Zambia, Zimbabwe or Malawi are not the game ball of the climate system (STEHR, STORCH; 2000: 4), but in fact able to adapt and develop their countries. However the prerequisite for successful development, which in the globalized world will always have the status quo of the (western) industrialized countries as the ultimate aim, is a fundamental expertise in the handlings of knowledge and nescience (WILLKE; 2005: 56). Therefore investments in science and technology become indispensable and yet, as portrayed above, only poorly feasible.

Taking into account that numerous families in rural Sub-Sahara-Africa are facing both above depicted repercussions of climate, firstly the infinitesimal small gains from their barely existing fields and secondly the lifelong affects of malaria through increased poverty (WHO; 2008) one is easily drawn to a conclusion concerning the justice of social differentiation and the existence of a still prevailing class system.

Although in general “inequality is not compulsorily equal to injustice” and “justice is not a synonym for equality” (“Translated by author”; BPB; 2008) it seems clear that in terms of global disparity due to climatic factors they are at least very closely linked.

Therefore climate differentiation, hence social differentiation due to climatic inequality and the thereof arising global class society are incompatible with any idea of justice.

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Ehrenwörtliche Erklärung

Ich erkläre hiermit ehrenwörtlich, dass ich die vorliegende Hausarbeit mit dem Thema:

„Global inequality due to climatic factors“ selbstständig und ohne fremde Hilfe angefertigt habe.

Die Übernahme wörtlicher Zitate sowie die Verwendung der Gedanken anderer Autoren habe ich an den entsprechenden Stellen der Arbeit kenntlich gemacht.

Ich bin mir bewusst, dass eine falsche Erklärung rechtliche Folgen haben wird.

Friedrichshafen, 17.11.2008
Ort, Datum

Nikolina-Romana Milunovic
Unterschrift