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Proposals for an effective participation of the people affected by dams- and waterwaybuilding

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In the middle of the 80s the democratization of political institutions came up in South America and East Europe. This process went on together with the extended agreement on the necessity to include people affected by developmental decisions in all steps of decision-making and -implementation.

Although many international conferences, governmental resolutions and statements so as the recommendations of the international financial agencies expressed the will to guarantee people's participation in the preparation and implementation of developmental measures, many projects are yet carried out without a suitable information and effective participation of affected people. These deficiencies are especially obvious in the case of building interventions in water- and river-systems.

On the basis of the experiences around the Parana-Paraguay Waterway one can see that the recommendations of the international financial agencies and their conditions for the inclusion of affected people in the decision-making and implementation either don't work in the practice or are eluded by the governments and the committed firms. The majority of the recommendation catalogues and international resolutions aren't binding on the actors or don't foresee transparent controls for the affected people.

I think that this congress should concentrate its discussions on the search for instruments and ways that can guarantee an effective participation of people affected by building interventions in water- and river-systems.

National governments and international financial agencies need institutional mechanisms and binding rules with flexible, goal-oriented and rational possibilities of application. Governments and international agencies should recognize that participation implies not only the application of a repertoire of formalized instruments, but also that the whole society must look for common values and convictions to ensure a sustainable development. Affected people finally need common developmental goals in order to strengthen their exigences of effective participation.

As an effective people's participation I understand a process of transfer to these groups of faculties (empowerment) and ressources in order to guarantee the realization of the fundamental human rights as they were defined by the United Nations. As in the present the distribution of power and wealth is very inequal, this process should especially foresee the transfer of faculties and ressources to ethnic minorities and empoverished people.

The participation of the people affected by building measures is influenced by the social and environmental conditions in the areas in question so as by their grade of integration in the hegemonic culture, their educational level and the political will of all actors. The participation-question is then put in three ways:

- a) How can we equilibrate participation-limiting conditions in order to put affected people in the situation to exige their rights?

- b) With which contents, values and symbols do we have to carry out the political education of the affected people in order to let them organize themselves and take political initiatives as a democratic community?
- c) How can we persuade international organizations, governments and companies of the necessity to make possible the effective participation of affected people for a sustainable development?

Dealing with these questions starts a long-term action perspective, in which we have to give answers about developmental measures, the ways of the democratic mobilisation of the affected people and these of achieving international binding decisions for typical building projects, that can be applied in similar cases. For us it is no more about demanding the recognition of fundamental rights, but about carrying out working control mechanisms, *which can be put in force also against the will of individual actors.*

In this case states could transfer some sovereignty rights to supra- and international institutions. UN's regional organisations should be stronger committed with the ensurement of Human Rights also in social and environmental areas. International justice should be empowered in dealing with these questions.

In the future conceiving and deciding about developmental projects should take always account of the diversity of values and norms, ie of cultures, between as well within each country. Ethnic and cultural minorities should be given strength to put their view of sustainable development into the discussion. Especially in the regions affected (or potentially affected) by building interventions research and education about these questions should be even stronger promoted.

We have to give stength to political education and democratic mobilization of the affected (or potentially affected) people. Through strategical promotional measures we should improve the ability of affected people to build up their own political opinion and to articulate it in the political competition.

„Rivers are our lives“ said a Spanish poet. It is no more about the defence of this life, but about its enrichment and improvement so as about the conditions of its continuity in the future. Analysis of the situation must go over to searching for instruments to modify the actual situation.