

# THE PERSPECTIVE

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(UN)SUSTAINABILITY



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## EDITORS' NOTE

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In cooperation with different associations of foreign affairs around Sweden, UPF Lund invites its members to a week focusing on environmental issues. With news outlets full of conflicts, famines, poverty, and political disorder it can be difficult to distinguish the more abstract problems constantly looming over our heads. Although the human-induced climate changes are becoming increasingly more visible, it is still not prioritized as an immediate threat in the global political discourse.

“**ENLIGHTENED BUSINESS AS USUAL**” could be a more accurate description of what came out of the Sustainable Development Goals in regards to the environment. While it seems like the young generation is more active and aware than ever, it is easy to feel hopeless in the face of such grave challenges. The responsibility placed on our shoulders is heavy. But with grave challenges and heavy responsibility, follows opportunities to build a better world.

**THE PERSPECTIVE'S EDITORIAL** team has continued in its search for the lesser known story, incorporating other narratives that may not exist in the public debate around climate change. In this issue, you can read about climate fiction, the plastic ban in Rwanda, who climate change affects the

most, and the global difference in the fight against it. Hold your breath and plunge into an ocean of problems associated with contemporary human unsustainability. Let's begin the discussion on our time's greatest issue, and more importantly, how we can solve it.

**ENJOY YOUR READ!**



**ZIGNE EDSTRÖM & VIDE WASSBERG**

EDITORS-IN-CHIEF

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## TEAM

### EDITORS-IN-CHIEF

ZIGNE EDSTRÖM  
VIDE WASSBERG

### LEGALLY RESPONSIBLE PUBLISHERS

ZIGNE EDSTRÖM  
VIDE WASSBERG

### LAYOUT

ANNA JASTRZEMBSKA  
EBBA BERGSTRÖM  
GABRIEL ZETTERSTRÖM  
JULIA BORGGREN  
ILARIA DI MEO  
ISABELLE KARLSSON  
LIZAVETA ZHUK  
NICOLE SKOGLUND  
SOFIA GJERTSSON  
SOFIE VON SCHCNK

### REPORTERS

SWAANTJE MARTEN  
THOMAS KUIJPERS  
TOBIAS ADOLFSSON  
VIDE WASSBERG  
ZIGNE EDSTRÖM  
  
ALBERTO PALACIO  
ALEXANDRA COOPER  
ANNA JASTRZEMBSKA  
EMMA EHRENBORG  
ERLEND MALMER  
GABRIEL ZETTERSTRÖM  
ISABELLE KARLSSON  
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LIZAVETA ZHUK  
PHILIP GYUROV

SIMON FLODÉN  
SOFIA GJERTSSON  
SUHAIB M. IBRAHIM  
SWAANTJE MARTEN  
THOMAS KUIJPERS  
TOBIAS ADOLFSSON  
VIDE WASSBERG  
ZIGNE EDSTRÖM

### ILLUSTRATIONS

SOFIE VON SCHNCK

### PRINT

TRYDELLS TRYCKERI AB

### EDITION

1000

### CONTACT

UTRIKESPOLITISKA FÖRENINGEN  
SANDGATAN 2  
223 50 LUND

MAGAZINE@UPFLUND.SE

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LET US KNOW WHAT YOU THINK!

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## CONTENTS

4. PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

6. WORLD BRIEF

8. GUEST ARTICLE: BLOOD BATTERIES

10. TRAVEL: UPF GOES TO TAIPEI

14. THE GEORGE SOROS PLAN

**16-72 THEME:  
(UN)SUSTAINABILITY**

18. SAND SHORTAGES: NOTICING THE INVISIBLE

21. CLIMATE FICTION

24. BAG BAN

28. ON THE LOOMING COFFEE SCARCITY

30. DRESSED IN TOXINS

34. MENSTRUATION IS POLITICAL ACTION

37. CLIMATE ACTION AND THE WELFARE STATE

40. THE PRICE OF PARADISE: PALM OIL COMMERCE

43. CHINA'S SUSTAINABLE URBAN DEVELOPMENT

46. DEVELOPING COUNTRIES AND CLIMATE CHANGE: LEGITIMATE CONCERNS, FAIR CLAIMS

50. WE NEED TO TALK ABOUT THE BIRDS AND THE BEES

52. CLIMATE CHANGE: WHO IS AFFECTED MOST?

56. WHEN GOOD INTENTIONS BACKFIRES

58. FICTION: THE WALL

62. GOD OR NATURE

66. ISLANDS ON A DEATH ROW

69. WHY WE SHOULD NOT KILL OUR DARLINGS

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## PRESIDENTS' ADDRESS

**WHAT A GREAT** start to 2018 it has been.

**AFTER TWO SUCCESSFUL** Get Active meetings, time has flown by, with a Valentine's Day visit from Foreign Minister Margot Wallström herself. Although not a stranger to the UPF crowd, she came back to give us an interesting talk on foreign policy.

**SPEAKING OF NEW** things, UPF is going to two new places this year. The Travel committee is organising a trip to Brussels, and our first ever cultural exchange to Belarus is taking place in April. If you're lucky enough to be going, keep the rest of us updated - we look forward to reading and hearing more in our media channels!

**IN LIGHT OF** the #MeToo movement and our responsibility to ensure a safe environment for all of our members, we are very pleased to announce that we have passed a sexual harassment policy to go alongside our environmental, crisis and stress prevention policies. If you would like to know more about any of our policies, you can find them on our website, [www.upflund.se](http://www.upflund.se).

**ANOTHER WAY TO** impact the association is to attend our Annual Election Meeting on May 12th. There we will be electing the new board for the working year of 18/19 and we hope to see you there. Application processes will open shortly, so keep your eyes peeled. However, if board work isn't your thing and you still want to get involved, there's no better time than now! For more details about our committees, don't hesitate to look us up online.

**LAST, BUT CERTAINLY** not least, our annual ball will take place on May 5th. You are all welcome to attend - in fact, it won't be the same without you! See you there, and thank you for being a member of UPF!



ON BEHALF OF THE BOARD,

**EBBA COGHLAN AND JAMES DAVIES**  
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EBBA COGHLAN  
[PRESIDENT@UPFLUND.SE](mailto:PRESIDENT@UPFLUND.SE)

### **VICE PRESIDENT:**

JAMES DAVIES  
[VICE.PRESIDENT@UPFLUND.SE](mailto:VICE.PRESIDENT@UPFLUND.SE)

### **TREASURER:**

TOBIAS ADOLFSSON  
[TREASURER@UPFLUND.SE](mailto:TREASURER@UPFLUND.SE)

### **SECRETARY:**

LEON KLINGBORG  
[SECRETARY@UPFLUND.SE](mailto:SECRETARY@UPFLUND.SE)

### **LECTURE COMMITTEE:**

JONATAN PUPP  
ELLEN BOJE AF GENNÄS ERRE  
ELEONORA HALLBERG  
[LECTURE@UPFLUND.SE](mailto:LECTURE@UPFLUND.SE)

### **PR COMMITTEE:**

TILDA KAJBJER  
ERIK HELLDÉN  
[PR@UPFLUND.SE](mailto:PR@UPFLUND.SE)

### **ACTIVITY COMMITTEE:**

SOHA KADHIM  
LOVISA LUNDIN ZIEGLER  
[ACTIVITY@UPFLUND.SE](mailto:ACTIVITY@UPFLUND.SE)

### **MAGAZINE COMMITTEE:**

ZIGNE EDSTRÖM  
VIDE WASSBERG  
[MAGAZINE@UPFLUND.SE](mailto:MAGAZINE@UPFLUND.SE)

### **WEBZINE COMMITTEE:**

JOSEPH AIVALIKLI  
MÄRTEN RANDAU  
[WEBZINE@UPFLUND.SE](mailto:WEBZINE@UPFLUND.SE)

### **RADIO UPF:**

HANNA KANON  
ANNA BERNHARDSSON  
[RADIO@UPFLUND.SE](mailto:RADIO@UPFLUND.SE)

### **CAREER COMMITTEE:**

MAXIMIN ORSERO  
MAGGIE HUYNH  
[CAREER@UPFLUND.SE](mailto:CAREER@UPFLUND.SE)

### **TRAVEL COMMITTEE:**

GLENN LIO  
TOVE JØRGENSEN  
[TRAVEL@UPFLUND.SE](mailto:TRAVEL@UPFLUND.SE)

### **UFS REPRESENTATIVE:**

JULIA BERGSTRÖM  
[LUND@UFSVERIGE.ORG](mailto:LUND@UFSVERIGE.ORG)

### **HEAD OF IT:**

CHRISTOPHER ANDERSSON  
[IT@UPFLUND.SE](mailto:IT@UPFLUND.SE)



# RAOUL WALLENBERG INSTITUTE

OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND HUMANITARIAN LAW



## About us

We are an experienced research and academic institution that has offices, programmes, and convening power covering 40 countries.

We combine evidence-based human rights research with direct engagement with key partners around the world to bring about human rights change for all.

We are named after Raoul Wallenberg, the Swedish diplomat who saved tens of thousands of Jews and other people at risk in Hungary at the end of World War II.

Want to know more about our work? Sign up for our newsletter at: [www.rwi.lu.se](http://www.rwi.lu.se)



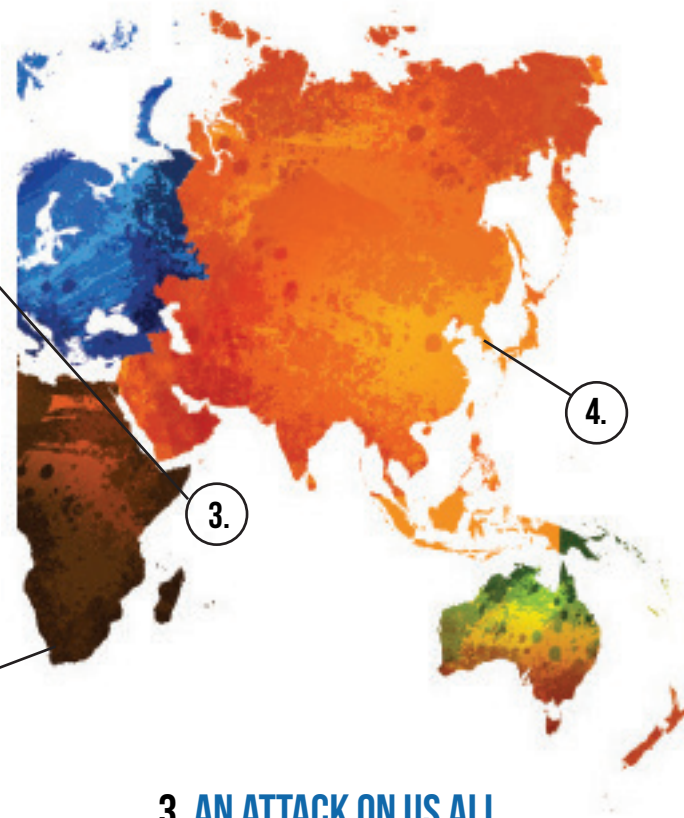
## 1. THE BIRTH OF ABORTION RIGHTS?

A woman in El Salvador who was jailed after stillbirth was recently freed after 11 years in prison. Carmen Vasquez was convicted in 2008 and received a 30-year prison sentence for allegedly aborting her child. Now El Salvador's Supreme Court has released her after a reduced sentence. The country is one of five countries in the world where abortion is criminalised in all cases. Women can be charged with murder, or similar charges, for abortion or suspected abortion, and if convicted they risk facing up to 50 years in prison. Medical professionals can also face prosecution if they choose not to report a suspected abortion. Amnesty International has called Vasquez's release a positive step in the right direction, but calls for an end to the ban that has resulted in the imprisonment of many other women as well. ●



## 2. GRABBING WHAT WAS STOLEN

Last week the left, populist party Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) presented a motion that would give the government in South Africa the right to take back land grabbed by the colonial power and the apartheid regime. About 70 percent of the farmland is owned by white farmers, that was previously grabbed by either white settlers or the apartheid state. The confiscated land will be taken by the state without compensation to its current owners. For the first time ANC, the party in government, supported the suggestion. It is still unclear how this will be executed in practice, but South Africa's president Ramaphosa has made it clear that a takeover of farms or land grabbing by the public will not be accepted. Ramaphosa himself has previously been against the suggestion, but might have brought up the motion on the agenda to bring his divided party together and prove that he dares to be radical. There are, however, sceptical voices arguing that it appears to be strategic words rather than a discussion on how it is to be implemented. The goal of EFF's party leader Malema is for all land to, eventually, be owned by the state alone. This is, however, not accepted by the ANC and many hope, despite of Malema's vision, that the land reform will mean that smaller farmers will be able to own their own land and boost the country's economy. ●



#### 4. MOVEMENT IN SOUTH KOREA

In the past weeks, women in conservative South Korea joined the MeToo movement and publicly accused high-profile figures in entertainment, art, literature, and religion of sexual harassment. The country's president, Moon Jae-in, has called for a wider movement to combat sexual harassment. He also demanded investigations of the accused who are among the most powerful men in performing arts and religion. Moon said that gender violence and sexual harassment can only change once culture and attitudes change as well. In fact, women in South Korea have used social media to raise the issue of sexual harassment in entertainment and art before, but this is the first time that the movement has been given public support by the country's leader. Maybe women's rights in South Korea face a new dawn in the light of the MeToo movement? ●

#### 3. AN ATTACK ON US ALL

Slovakia has witnessed a continuation of demonstration after the announcement of the release of seven suspects in the killing of journalist Jan Kuciak. Kuciak was investigating alleged links between Slovak politicians and Italian organised crime. His research reportedly found that Italian businessmen with ties to the Ndrangheta, a powerful organised crime group, were embezzling EU funds. The suspects that were detained were all named in Kuciak's report, but were released after no evidence was found. The release resulted in protests in 25 cities around Slovakia, and called for the prime minister Robert Fico to step down. "An attack on journalists is an attack on all of us", some slogans read. Fico himself has previously referred to reporters as "slimy snakes that are anti-Slovak". Journalist globally are increasingly becoming targets of violence and verbal abuse, making it one of the more dangerous professions to have. ●

# BLOOD BATTERIES

## - THE DARK SIDE OF RENEWABLE ENERGY

While electrification is an essential part of climate change mitigation, it comes at a cost not paid by billionaires, but by the men and women who mine Cobalt in the Democratic Republic of Congo for the production of modern batteries.

**E**lon Musk famously said, “We will not stop until every car on the road is electric”. Since then, most major car manufacturers have developed electric models; trucks, buses, bikes, you name it – everything can be powered by the magic battery. While electrification is an essential part of climate change mitigation, it comes at a cost not paid by billionaires (who shoot Tesla Roadsters into space for promotion) but by the men and women who mine Cobalt in the Democratic Republic of Congo

**COBALT IS A** critical component in rechargeable lithium-ion batteries, and more than 50% of the world’s cobalt supply originates in the DRC. In a 2016 report, Amnesty International exposed how artisanal miners, locally known as creuseurs, mine using basic tools in hand-dug tunnels deep underground. These miners can be as young as seven, unable to attend school due to financial constraints, and often suffer from chronic illnesses and potentially fatal respiratory diseases caused by prolonged exposure to cobalt dust.

**OF COURSE, NOT** all cobalt in the DRC is mined under these conditions – there are also large industrial operations who come with their own environmental and ethical concerns. The issue is that it is almost impossible to trace the origin of the cobalt in its complicated supply chain. The rock is sold to traders at informal markets, no questions asked, and that is the way it enters the global trade. Once it has reached the London commodity markets, the cobalt that killed a 12-year-old boy is no different from that which was dug by a machine.

**HOWEVER, IN RESPONSE** to Amnesty’s report, the OECD put out a call to action, the DRC government committed to protecting human rights and several companies pledged to undertake human rights due diligence in their supply chains. Progress is slow but happening.

**I THINK MANY** of us who care about climate change felt uneasy by this story. It is easier to push the narrative of the evil fossil fuel industry and the heroic renewable sector, but the truth is that we live in a more complex reality than that. If we instead acknowledge the problems associated with our current industrial reality, we might be able to leverage broader social change through the new green revolution. Because progress which is built on the suffering of others should not be considered progress at all.

**IF YOU WANT** to discuss these issues further, Sustainability Forum and the Raoul Wallenberg Institute is hosting an afternoon on Sustainable Consumption: Human Rights and Justice on April 24 during the Sustainability Week. At 15.00 Radu Mares from RWI will lead a discussion with representatives from Vinge, Volvo and IIIEE on the issue of conflict minerals in global value chains and the clean energy revolution. Go to our website [hallbarhet.lu.se/batteries](http://hallbarhet.lu.se/batteries) to sign up for the event, hope to see you there. ●



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**WE WANT YOUR  
THOUGHTS, COMMENTS  
AND IDEAS!**



**E-MAIL YOUR SUGGESTIONS TO  
MAGAZINE@UPFLUND.SE**

# UPF GOES TO TAIPEI

Each semester, UPF Lund plans a trip to destinations around the world that are of international political significance and interest. In May last year, Taiwan became the first country in Asia to legalize equal marriage. Taiwan's open and progressive society is often praised as the "Lighthouse of Democracy in Asia". However, Taiwan's complex relations with China resulted in Taiwan's sovereignty only being recognised by 20 UN member countries. The unique political situation has made the island a haven for activists working on various social and environmental issues in both Taiwan and China. Therefore, the country's capital Taipei became the destination for UPF's trip the past autumn!

**G**anbei is Chinese for cheers, and it is a word that is said more than most would prefer before getting down to business. It was also an important part of the Taiwan experience, as you can never be serious without being silly too. It struck me as an important part of Taiwanese culture that was overt and immediately discovered by the UPF travel committee. Ganbei was often accompanied by a more covert part of Confucian society: the idea of Guanxi.

**THE PILLARS OF** Guanxi are mutual obligations, reciprocity and trust. It is the idea that has been poorly translated into connections and relations, but it runs much deeper than that. Guanxi is closely connected to Confucianism and refers to a concept of using established connections to secure favours in personal relationships. Guanxi does not need to be equally reciprocal, and often works in favour of the weaker partner of the relationship. Not following the principles of Guanxi means losing face.

**THE PERHAPS BEST** illustration of Guanxi that we encountered in Taiwan was our meeting with the World League for Freedom and Democracy. They met us with a banner as wide as the room itself, with gifts for each guest. After a very interesting meeting, we were taken out to a lavish twelve-course lunch and experienced the meaning of ganbei. This was first interpreted as a display of success, and it might have been, but the principals of Guanxi are meant to benefit the weaker part of the exchange. In that context, we were definitely the weaker part.

**IT SEEMED THAT** Guanxi was present everywhere we went: from gifts and lunches to curious questions about who we were, we were pampered and well received wherever we went. And it was not until we came home that the idea struck me: perhaps the island is keeping up the spirit of Guanxi in the hopes that the world will return the favour. Taiwan is in a peculiar position. It rests on a history of representing China in the UN but is not ousted and left only partially recognised as a state. It cannot compete with Mainland China and, as the weaker part, is constantly overlooked. A bit of global Guanxi could be just what the doctor ordered. ●





**T**he sun peaked through thin blinds, while sleepy Swedes stirred from their jet-lagged sleep. With blue skies and sunshine. Our first meeting of the day started at Covestro, a German-owned polymer company with a focus on recycling and innovation. “Covestro: people, planet, profit.” My marketing teacher would have been proud.

**NEXT MEETING OF** the day: “the rockstar turned politician”. I learned more in one hour about Taiwanese culture than three weeks of briefings. Freddy Lim is a true character. His calm demeanor and ease with information make him an ideal and adept electorate. He has a soft-spoken nature that contrasts a previous life filled with stage-dives and rock music. A life on stage has prepared Freddy for an ease with the masses, as well as an ability to channel passion along his political journey.

**HE DELVED DEEP** into political policies that created a clearer picture of the Taiwanese society. During a time when everyone is tearing down China and the political agenda is sorely focused on UN in-

volvement, Freddy offers a refreshingly positive outlook: “First, [Taiwan] should be thankful for its current situation. We have a fully functional democratic government. Mongolia has been fighting for independence for years with less successful results. China is an issue, but it’s not the only issue.”

**FREDDY SPECIFICALLY RECOGNIZED** opinions affecting the younger generation. He continued with a focus heavy on evening the Taiwanese wealth gap. “We should focus on strengthening the younger generation. There is no need to waste resources on China. We should focus on allies, not enemies.” The entire UPF group was shocked to hear such genuine words uttered from a politician’s mouth. Then again, Freddy Lim is much more than your every-day politician.

**OUR THIRD AND** final meeting of the day was with the organization TAPCPR (Taiwan alliance to promote civil partnership rights). To convey the right context, it is important to know the news headline on the 24th of May 2017: “Taiwanese constitutional court, rules that prohibiting same-sex marriage is unconstitutional.”







**THIS WAS** a huge step towards a freedom that is central to society and has been overlooked by countless nations. Taiwan is battling for civil liberty, a struggle that needs a change in the hearts and minds of millions. Victoria Hsu and the rest of TAPCPR are hoping to bring about change in their home country. Their main priority is to, “give the LGBT [community] the equal right to get married.”

**VICTORIA POSSESSED AN** enthusiasm that many strive towards in the work environment. We began with quick introductions and an engaging group discussion. Victoria was curious about our LGBT world-views and listened intently. Discrimination and its reflection on society is never an easy discussion. A complex topic produced a mixed discussion. This was youth international affairs at its core.

**THAT WAS IT** for the day’s work. Next on the agenda was play. It was only natural to act the tourists part. It was time to visit the island nation’s prime attractions: Elephant Mountain. We arrived as the sun began to set. The transition from metropolis to wilderness is immediate and unassuming. It is hard to believe only a fifteen-minute bus ride separates Taiwanese concrete and natural jungles.

**NOT WANTING TO** miss the incredible views in the fading light, a brisk tempo up the mountain began. For those unaware, the Taiwanese climate is incredibly warm and humid. Therefore, formal dress is not recommended for climbing a mountain in the rainforest. We did not have a change of clothes and must have looked quite amusing climbing the endless steps. We made it to the overlook just in time. Deep purple lit up the skyline. The views stretched from metropolis and mountains to forest and sea.

**DARKNESS ARRIVED IN** a haste. The mega city’s night owls began to wake. Next stop Taipei 101. Eyes bulged, stomachs rumbled and we feasted. 45 minutes and 5 kg later, we headed for the observation deck. The city rush came to a crawl. We gazed out over the horizon, revelling in the joy of a day completed. Our morning had been filled with corporate, political, and passionate meetings. The afternoon was spent in jungle and concrete mountains. This short summary explains the trip best: Work and play for the most complete days! ●





# THE GEORGE SOROS PLAN FOR THE RUINATION OF EUROPE

The people of Hungary have spoken, and they unanimously reject the Soros Plan. Wait, what?

**T**he goal of the Soros Plan is to push the languages and cultures of Europe into the background so that integration of illegal immigrants happens much more quickly. Together with officials in Brussels, George Soros is planning to dismantle border fences in EU Member States, including in Hungary, to open the borders for immigrants. Another goal of George Soros is to make sure that migrants receive milder criminal sentences for the crimes they commit. It is also part of the Soros Plan to initiate political attacks against those countries which oppose immigra-

tion, and to severely punish them. Now, based on these statements, do you or do you not support the Soros Plan?

**THIS QUESTION WAS** presented to the Hungarian populace in a 'national consultation', a survey, sent to eight million people this past fall. The statements above are actual quotes of what the Hungarians were asked to bear in mind when answering whether or not they support the Soros Plan. And the verdict of the people is all too clear. Out of 2 356 811 respondents, "the number of responses rejecting the Soros Plan was above 2.3



*Left: Fidesz propaganda poster promoting participation in the consultation by stating “the Soros Plan: do not ignore it”.*

million.” In the words of the Fidesz government spokesperson Zoltán Kovács, Hungarians “unanimously reject the Soros Plan” and “all arguments, plans and attempts aimed at persuading Hungary to become an immigrant country.” Therefore, “the government will continue to consistently reject all attempts to blackmail and threaten it into ‘giving in’ and submitting to Brussels’ intentions.”

**IF BY NOW** you are thinking ‘but wait, what is the Soros Plan?’ you are not alone: nobody really knows. That is to say that the national consultation formulated as much as asked about the plan, and the latter exists in no coherent way independently of the former. Some of the questions in the consultation draw in a twisted way on statements Soros has made over the last few years, primarily relating to the moral responsibility of Europe during the refugee crisis. But at the same time, Fidesz’ idea of the Soros Plan is much larger than anything he has said or even what is implied in the consultation. Indeed, they have used it to denote virtually anything they deem is posing an existential threat to Prime Minister Orbán’s political power or the fate of the Hungarian nation.

**SOROS, AN 87-YEAR-OLD** investor, philanthropist and Holocaust survivor has figured in far-right conspiracy theories for many years. One reason often presented to explain this is Anti-Semitism. Another relates to his philanthropic ventures. Through his Open Society Foundations, he has over the years donated more than \$18 billion to various causes, primarily relating to development, human rights and democracy, being an avid promoter of progressive and liberal values. In this regard one can find a speck of truth in the conspiracy theories: he does support a host of liberal causes. Of course, that is not all the conspiracy theorists nor the Fidesz government claim. In the national consultation as well as in other media Fidesz representatives allege that Soros is a puppeteer not only of NGOs and opposition parties, but of the leaders of the European Union. “Mister Soros’ proposals and plans are coming through the European institutional system,” said the very same Kovács in a BBC interview, and added “wait and see, you are going to see that this is true.” Prime Minister Orbán, too, bluntly expounded on national radio that “George Soros has people and whole institutions on his payroll. Brussels is under his influence, and

carries out his plan considering immigration.” The scope of his influence, it is claimed, knows no bounds.

**IT HAS BEEN** noted in several analyses that Soros is ascribed the role in Hungary that Emmanuel Goldstein has in George Orwell’s Nineteen Eighty-Four. Goldstein is the character invented by the Party to unite the people and to distract the citizen from “the discontents produced by his bare, unsatisfying life” and any grievances related to the regime. He is “the commander of a vast shadowy army, an underground network of conspirators dedicated to the overthrow of the State.” He is the personification of evil; the *raison d’être* of the state.

**REASONABLE PEOPLE CAN** disagree about the fairness of this comparison. Either way, the practice of personifying real or imagined political opposition and portraying it as malevolent and deceitful has a dark history. As much is shown by posters put up all over Budapest last year by the Fidesz youth wing, showing Soros as a puppeteer controlling Hungarian politicians next to a 1930’s print of a Jew in a similar vein as a puppeteer controlling the German people.

**THE POINT ABOUT** distracting the citizenry has been acknowledged by many analysts as the most probable explanation for the invention of the Soros Plan. In 2015, support for Fidesz was deteriorating, and the refugee crisis came, according to the newspaper Budapest Beacon, “like a godsend.” According to Goran Buldioski, director of the Open Society Initiative for Europe, one of Soros’ foundations, the Soros Plan is a way of “covering up everything else that is important for this country.”

**INDEED, WITH ELECTIONS** coming up on the 8th of April, there is little debate in Hungary on issues like corruption, education or health care. Any attempt to talk about these gets politicians labelled ‘agents of Soros’. The largest opposition party is far-far-right Jobbik, and by now it is unlikely that Fidesz will lose any votes in that direction. Alas, there is little doubt that Fidesz will be uncontested, and the will of the people triumphant. ●

# (UN)SUSTAINABILITY







Take a closer look at the front page of this issue. The planet-looking image consists of illustration from each of the articles in this issue, perfectly symbolizing the interconnectedness of everything in the earth's climate. The climate is underpinned by a sensitive system. The local environment lives in symbiosis with the global, simultaneously affecting and being affected by the changes induced in the intertwined cycle of life. Take away one link and the whole chain breaks.

On more 72 pages we try to shed light on some of the issues connected to the way we humans have organized our way of life. We stand in a crossway. The time for change is now!



# NOTICING THE INVISIBLE

Forget about relaxing days at the beach, the world is running out of sand. This reality puts a lot of pressure on the environment and local communities. There is a large discrepancy between the magnitude of the problem and the public awareness of it.



**L**ook outside the nearest window. What do you see? It could be the dreadful outside of your student accommodation, or it could be the street outside with people going about their daily business. Whatever may exist outside, wherever you are, is not the most important thing here. Rather what you may not see: the actual glass. That transparent barrier, separating you from the outside scenery, causes more social and environmental hardship than you and most other people might know. What I am referring to is the component making up the glass, sand. The world is running out of it.

**RUNNING OUT? -** YOU might ask. But sand is everywhere? Yes that is true, however, after air and water, sand is the resource most widely used in the world today. Sand actually makes up most of the things that we see as naturally occurring in modern societies: glass, roads, solar panels, cosmetics, toothpaste, detergents, and especially, concrete. Sand even exists in your pocket in the form of the silicon chips that you can find in modern phones and electronics. Since ancient Egypt, our societies have literally been built on sand.

**BUT STILL, SAND** is everywhere! You might point out, yet again. Well, sand used to be a local product available for everyone to use. But restrictions, regional shortages, and skyrocketing demand have turned it into a global commodity. The sand that is used in modern production and construction is quartz sand, and most of it comes from the natural erosion and weathering down of mountains. Over thousands of years, the rock breaks down into small grains which is transported by rain and water streams down the mountainside and out into the world. Most ending up at beaches and in the ocean.

**THE GLOBAL DEMAND** for sand for the construction of cities and production of goods is so big that we are stripping beaches bare, cutting down forests, and tearing up farmland. As these sources dry up companies are now using ships to vacuum the ocean floor. Since 2005 at least two dozen Indonesian islands have disappeared entirely because of sand mining. The sand from those islands mostly ended up in Singapore, which needs titanic amounts to continue its program of artificially adding territory to reclaim land from the sea, making it by far the world's largest sand importer. Countries like

## “ AT LEAST TWO DOZEN INDONESIAN ISLANDS HAVE DISAPPEARED ENTIRELY

China, Indonesia, India, and Vietnam are developing in such a rapid phase that the global price for sand has increased sixfold in the recent twenty-five years as the world's sand consumption rises to forty billion tons per year.

**EVIDENTLY, THIS HAS** severe environmental consequences, both locally and globally. Local marine and land ecosystems are being wiped out. Further, the natural barriers that protect local communities and ecosystems from rising sea levels and extreme weathers, are being mined away. In the US, sand mines are blamed for land erosion, water and air pollution. There is a lack of scientific research and policies addressing these issues. The body of research that exists today mainly scrutinize the impacts infrastructure developments have in the surrounding they are being built, little attention has been paid to the impact of sand mining itself. Shedding light on the lack of sustainability within the mining, shipping, and trading of sand have mainly been driven by the global media. It has gotten to the point where governments have finally started to regulate sand mining. However, sand is a common-pool resource, easy to get and thus hard to regulate.

**REGULATIONS COMBINED WITH** the increasing prices and demands have spawned a worldwide boom in illegal sand mining. In contrast to legal sand mining operations, who need to pay for land restoration, gangs are robbing communities of their sand. Even companies with permits are spreading bribes around to dig deeper and wider pits, and corrupting societies in the process. In some cases whole beaches have disappeared as a conse-



*Photo: Wikipedia*

quence. Sand mining gangs are forming in Jamaica to Nigeria, Israel to Italy, all the way to Malaysia. But nowhere is the scramble for sand by the “sand mafias” felt more than in India. Sand mafias have reportedly killed hundreds of people the past years in India. Everyone from police officers, governments officials, to ordinary people and farmers protecting their land have been killed as the world craves sand to feed its neck-breaking constructions.

**FOR SOME, THIS** might seem like a problem of relocating sand across the globe, rather than an overall shortage. However, restrictions are, as discussed, hard to implement and hard to come by in less developed parts of the world. More developed nations have the privilege of greater governance over their natural resources and a greater chance of importing sand. Glass and other products could be recycled which would ease the sand demand. However, a big part of the fundamental issue is not glass, but rather concrete. Concrete is a mixture of cement and sand. The concrete in buildings are there to stay permanently. The sand that is used in construction is thereby taken out of the circulation indefinitely, breaking the recycling chain. The alternative is to crush rocks in order to create sand. This process is both very expensive and produces sand with lower quality than the naturally created quartz sand.

**BY NOW SOME** might be thinking: what about the great deserts of the world, surely that sand could be used? The answer is no. Desert sand general-

ly does not work for construction. It is formed by wind rather than water, thus the grains are too round to be able to bind together well. For example, Australian sand was transported to a faraway desert when Dubai’s Burj Khalifa tower was built. However, some initiatives are starting to emerge as small beacons of light. One way to deal with the ominous mountains of plastic is to grind it down to be used as an alternative to sand when mixing concrete. Sadly, this idea is not implemented on a larger scale, yet. Further, the melting glaciers in Greenland expose huge quantities of sand. On the one hand, exporting sand from Greenland would give the domestic economy a well-needed boost. On the other hand, this would merely export the problems associated with sand mining to Greenland. Ultimately, as sand stocks diminish, sustainable alternatives are vital in order not to dwarf global development.

**TODAY THERE ARE** no international conventions which regulate sand extraction. Sustainable use and extraction of sand need to be treated as serious as preserving clean air and water. The management of biodiversity and the fight against organized crime needs to incorporate global sand mining. In reality, it is the people of the less developed regions, with smaller voices, that feel the bitter pain of global inequality and unsustainable development. For the illegal sand miners themselves, the black market merely enables them with an income in impoverished areas. Yet again, I invite you to look outside the nearest window, what do you see? ●



Photo: TheDigitalArtist / Pixabay

# CLIMATE FICTION

## - A CALL TO ACTION OR HERALD OF FALSE DOOM?

Climate Fiction, or cli-fi for short, is the new name of a genre describing an ever more popular kind of fiction. But opinions divide on whether its impact on the climate change debate is positive or not.



**T**he term 'climate fiction' has emerged over the past decade. This type of fiction has been met with much excitement, with many hailing it as the ideal way to educate and convert the masses to the dangers of climate change facing us. But what actually is cli-fi and does it have the ability to do what its supporters claim it does?

**AS A FAIRLY** new term, cli-fi's exact definition is not universally agreed upon. Some have argued that it should be seen as a sub-genre of sci-fi, given that many texts and films defined as cli-fi depict events and technology of a fantastical nature. While others take place in the future, during or after a cataclysm, where climate change has brought on a dramatically different world and society.

**WHILE IT IS** true that many works of cli-fi could also be called sci-fi, there are many examples that don't fit this mold. Books like Barbara Kingsolver's *Flight Behavior* or Ian McEwan's *Solar*, for example, take place in a more or less mundane contemporary setting. There's a great variety in what may be called climate fiction, which makes the term hard to pin down. In its widest sense, cli-fi could be defined as any piece of fiction that in some significant way includes issues related to climate change as part of its plot, setting, or themes.

**WITH THIS IN** mind, it is perhaps not surprising that the inclusion of everything from biblical tales like Noah's Ark, to Victorian-era novels, up to and including films and tv-series like *Godzilla*, *Snowpiercer*, and *Game of Thrones* has been suggested. Even a novel like Michael Crichton's *State of Fear*, whose plot specifically denies and argues against the validity of climate change, may be considered cli-fi under this definition.

**PROPOSONENTS OF THE** benefits of cli-fi, both laymen and scientists, argue that it has great potential to educate and raise interest in climate change issues. Some, like Dr. Sarah Perkins-Kirkpatrick of the Climate Change Research Centre at UNSW Australia, point out that discussions about the actual science of climate change can seem distant and overwhelming to the average person. In contrast, cli-fi can portray these issues in a way that feels both more accessible and personal, possibly inspiring action.

“ CLI-FI CAN PORTRAY THESE ISSUES IN A WAY THAT FEELS BOTH MORE ACCESSIBLE AND PERSONAL

**MANY PROPOSONENTS ALSO** suggest that cli-fi has a better chance to reach and engage an audience that is not yet convinced of the reality of climate change. While such an audience might be less interested in a documentary on climate change, a work of cli-fi could appeal to them as its climate change theme will likely be embedded within a larger and exciting narrative.

**WHEN THE MOVIE** *The Day After Tomorrow* came out it was much maligned by climate change experts for its exaggerated and inaccurate portrayal of a sudden ice age striking the northern hemisphere. However, a number of studies showed that it did have a noticeable impact on its audience, causing greater awareness and interest in action toward climate change issues. In one such study, conducted by Dr. Anthony Leiserowitz of the Yale Program on Climate Change Communication, it even showed the movie affecting voting preferences, at least in the short term.

**THE MOVIE'S INACCURACIES** didn't seem to impede its ability to engage its audience, in fact, it may even have aided it. Advocates for cli-fi argue that since the real effects of climate change usually only become noticeable over a span of many years, they don't often lend themselves to good drama. Therefore, cli-fi should not be expected to follow the same demands of facts and realism as actual climate science. The ability to put climate change into a compelling narrative and contextualize it in a way that is easy for its audience to relate to is more important than adherence to real science.



**BUT THIS DIVERGENCE** from reality for the sake of drama has risks of its own. Some have voiced their concern that cli-fi's fictional portrayals of climate change and its consequences could cause unrealistic expectations about the real thing. Cli-fi's common focus on some kind of cataclysm, and a subsequent post-apocalyptic dystopian future could mislead audiences to assume that such a future is inevitable, inducing apathy and a reluctance to deal with climate change issues.

**DR. AILISE BULFIN** of the UCD School of English, Drama & Film has researched the impact of “catastrophe narratives” and has argued that they may cause a large number of ‘myths’ regarding climate change, such as this fear of an inevitable cataclysm. She also takes note of the reoccurring figure of a lone genius that steps up and resolves the crisis, which often appears in many of these narratives. While this figure could serve to inspire people, it may also cause a false assumption of scientists being able to solve the problems of climate change without the need for the adoption of mitigating behavior within society at large.

**OTHERS HAVE QUESTIONED** whether current cli-fi really can succeed to attract an audience whose opinions on climate change is not already in alignment with it. George Marshall, author of the book *Don't Even Think About It: Why Our Brains Are Wired To Ignore Climate Change*, argues that stories about climate change are often tied to a liberal viewpoint that alienates conservatives, predisposing them to reject the message within. Because of this, the dramatized nature of cli-fi might actually devalue it in the eyes of such readers (or viewers in the case of film), who might consider cli-fi's fictionalized drama as proof of how climate issues in real life are being exaggerated or just overblown fiction.

**CLI-FI'S GREATEST STRENGTH** is, therefore, simultaneously its greatest limitation. While its dramatized narratives could possibly inspire to greater climate action, it could also lead to misconceptions and even delegitimize real climate science in the eyes of some. Whether cli-fi can navigate these concerns and become the boon to climate change debate that its proponents hope for is yet to be determined. Ultimately, it is the audience, you and me, who determine the influence of cli-fi. ●



“ CLI-FI'S GREATEST  
STRENGTH  
IS SIMULTANEOUSLY  
ITS GREATEST LIMITATION.



# BAG BAN





Rwanda, a nation that went through hell, changed itself dramatically and faced the issues of tomorrow.

**I**t is two days before New Year's Eve, and we have just landed in Rwanda. As we are driving through Kigali, I experience the things I recognise from my previous visit to Africa: the tropical heat; the women with children under their arms and baskets on top of their heads; the sticky smell of sulfur and food. But something is different. While the roads in Ghana were completely cluttered with trash, here we see nothing except the ditches themselves. As we are about to experience, Rwanda is quite special.

**WE HUMANS ARE** about to destroy the earth with plastic. The latest reports are alarming and state that there are 500 times more microplastics in the oceans than stars in our galaxy. Recent research predicts that in 2050, we will have more plastic than fish on the planet. These reports should not seem like news for anyone. Still, we continue this plastic addiction which is overloading the planet with trash.

**In 2016, I** stayed for a longer period in Ghana; an amazing country in so many ways, but also drowning in plastic. In the beginning of the 2010s, media reported that rich western countries sold their garbage to Ghana instead of handling it by themselves. And in Ghana, people did little to improve the situation, most of them just threw the plastic away after consuming the contents. Ghana is not at all unique in an African context: Greenpeace once stated that Africa has become "the dump of the world".

**HOWEVER, THERE ARE** countries who have decided to face these challenges. Earlier this winter, I visited Rwanda - a country that, for a long time, was dealing with the same issues as Ghana but, since 2008, has forbidden plastic bags. The signboards that met us at the airport told us that every plastic bag would be confiscated. In the customs, plastic from imported goods are often removed, and even for manufacturing, for example, crisps in plastic

bags, you need an approval from the government and a detailed plan about how to collect and recycle the bags.

**THE BAN SEEMS** to have had positive effect in Rwanda; the streets, sidewalks, and roads are almost clinically clean. It is a part of the political development program that the government of the country launched at the turn of the millennium: "Vision 2020" - a plan for catalysing Rwanda's level of development until the year of 2020. A lot has happened since the launch of this innovative initiative. In addition to the new large, sweeping environmental policies, the country has gone through rapid economic growth, with skyscrapers popping up like mushrooms in Kigali, the nation's capital, which *New York Times* recently highlighted as one of this year's best travel destinations. The president, Paul Kagame, is reportedly dreaming of creating an "African Singapore".

Photo: Gabriel Zetterström





Poster of President Kagame at Inema Arts Centre, Kigali.  
Photo: Gabriel Zetterström



**ALMOST 24 YEARS** ago, Rwanda was hell on earth. During a genocide that lasted for a hundred days, almost a million people were slaughtered. Vision 2020 and the ban against plastic are parts of a plan to take Rwanda into the 21st Century, but could also be seen as a way of moving on from the events taking place in 1994. Today, Rwanda wants to be noted for completely different things than its past.

**JUST LIKE IN** most other countries in Africa, the plastic situation in Rwanda got out of control. "The main reason for the prohibition was that we did not have a good recycling system", explained Theophile Niyonzima, a doctor in environmental governance at the University of Rwanda, to the Finnish-Swedish magazine, Ny Tid.

“ THE GOVERNMENT  
DOESN'T TAKE INTO  
ACCOUNT HOW THESE  
POLICIES WILL AFFECT  
POOR PEOPLE

**AT FIRST SIGHT**, the ban against plastic bags seems like a brilliant idea to face littering and environmental issues. But, as always, there is another side. The harsh legislation, which in worst cases can lead to prison sentences, has created a black market where plastic bags become lucrative contraband. The explanation: the people need them to survive. "No buyer wants to take home *sombé* [pulverized cassava leaves] or tomatoes in a paper bag. The vegetables sweat, and the bag dissolves," said Beatrice Rukundo, a saleswoman at Gisenyi Market, to Al-Jazeera. "The plastic bag ban is typical of many well-intentioned policies introduced by the Rwandan government," added Carina Tertsakian, senior researcher at the Africa division of Human Rights Watch. "They look good on paper, but they have been imposed in a really draconian way, almost overnight. Often the government doesn't take into account how these policies will affect particularly poor people."

**PAUL KAGAME WAS** one of the leading figures in the Tutsi rebellion who finally defeated the Rwanda Armed Forces, as well as the Hutu militia, Interahamwe, in July 1994. That marked the end of the genocide. Since 2000, he has been the president of Rwanda. Many political observers claim that this is exactly the stability Rwanda needed to heal the wounds from the past. But as years go by, Kagame maintains his control. The hero has become the dictator whose policies have turned more and more towards "the end justifies the means" type of reasoning. When discussing climate challenges, this is the question that always comes back. What are we willing to pay for saving the planet? ●





Financial District in Kigali. Photo: Gabriel Zetterström



# ON THE LOOMING COFFEE SCARCITY:

## HOW WILL CLIMATE CHANGE AFFECT OUR FAVOURITE NON-ALCOHOLIC DRINK?

What would be left of our love lives if we would no longer be able to go on fika dates? As a result of climate change, coffee might become a very scarce good in the near future. Fortunately, coffee bean producers are adapting to the changing weather circumstances. But the question is whether adaptation alone will be enough to save our caffeinated delicacy.





**T**he worldwide coffee production is under pressure! The coffee plant is very vulnerable to even small changes in annual temperature and rainfall, while climate change causes rising temperatures and increasingly extreme weather conditions and natural disasters in the world's coffee growing regions. According to a recent report by The Climate Institute in Australia, about 50 percent of the land currently in use for coffee production will no longer be usable for that purpose by 2050. On that note, the production sites that survive will be more susceptible to diseases, fungi, and parasites, increasing the likelihood of destroyed harvests. Though it is not very widely known, this problem didn't emerge recently: several coffee producing countries, such as Ethiopia, Guatemala, and Tanzania, have reported falling yields since the second half of the 20th century.

**SO FAR, SMALLHOLDER** coffee farmers - which constitute 80 to 90 percent of the total number of coffee farmers - have been trying to adapt to the increasing temperatures, mainly through two mechanisms. One, they move up productions to higher altitudes where climate conditions are still favourable for coffee plants. Unfortunately, this often comes with the (illegal) logging of forests, which in its own right contributes to the rising temperatures. And of course, the hill or mountain is only so high; at a certain point, a farmer is simply not able to move their plantation any higher. This is usually the point where the second adapting mechanism comes in: switching to producing a different, often less valuable, crop, that is less vulnerable to changing weather conditions. A main cause in the decline of coffee bean harvests.

**AN ESTIMATED 600** to 800 million people worldwide are in one way or another dependent on coffee production, in their livelihoods. This does not only include the 25 million coffee farmers and their families, but also people employed in the processing, transporting, shipping and selling of coffee, or even in more remote but related industries, such as packaging. Obviously, coffee scarcity would have its consequences beyond the coffee producing regions. Considering the amount of fika that is consumed during editorial meetings, for example, this very magazine would probably cease to exist. Even when writing this article, yours truly finds most of his inspiration in the comforts of one of Lund's many cafés.

**HOWEVER, BEYOND THIS** (somewhat justified) ego-centric thinking, the real impact of declining production will of course be felt somewhere else: in the coffee producing regions. Most smallholder farmers have a very little capacity to build greater resilience other than the two previously mentioned mechanisms. Part of this is due to the low wages for workers on coffee farms. Besides that, most of these farmers belong to marginalized groups in their countries, such as indigenous populations, giving them little opportunity to reach out and further educate themselves on how to adapt to changing weather conditions in different ways.

**A RELATIVELY SIMPLE** solution, for example, would be to plant avocado trees on the coffee plantations. Not only do they provide shadow, and therefore at least somewhat cooler conditions for the plants to grow under, but they also provide food and additional commodities for the farmers and their families. Unfortunately, many of the smallholders are unaware of this mechanism, or they do not have the available resources for this costly and labour intensive investment.

**FORTUNATELY, MANY MAJOR** coffee companies have begun to make substantial efforts to ease the problematic situation in the affected areas. For example, they support research on how the coffee plant can be made more resistant to changing weather conditions, they reach out to the smallholder coffee farmers and educate on how to adapt in sustainable ways, and they limit their own greenhouse gas emissions. Partly, these developments happen because we, the consumers/coffee junkies, are becoming increasingly aware of the issues, and have started to demand this of them. Therefore, we should definitely continue to put pressure on these major coffee companies, so they cannot get away with continuing unsustainable coffee bean production.

**HOWEVER, MANY OF** the discussed solutions are only fighting the symptoms of the root cause: climate change. It is uncertain in how far a 'least impact scenario' will affect the coffee production, but to save coffee it is necessary to mitigate climate change as much as possible. As of now, 2.25 billion cups of coffee are consumed worldwide, every day. Imagine the consequences of their disappearance! ●

# DRESSED IN TOXINS

## HIDDEN DANGERS IN YOUR CLOTHING

Today the clothes we wear are statements. Many people use clothes to portray what they feel, who they are, or maybe just how comfortable they feel that day. However, the way fashion and clothes are used today could mean something completely different to the environment.

**C**lothes can be a dream, going to your favourite store and picking out that new jacket you have been eyeing for a long time, or going shopping for bargains on the sale just after Christmas, or simply taking your mind of the daily struggles. The way we consume clothes has changed rapidly over the past decades, and the global production of clothing doubled between 2000 and 2014. Today an item of clothing is expected to last half the time an item was expected to last 15 years ago. We have thereby increased our demand and production of clothes. But when you look at the prices, they remain low, meaning that the production today must be double as efficient as it was 15 years ago.

**ONE OF THE** most common materials in clothing is cotton. However, the environmental effects of the cotton industry are far more extensive than most people could imagine. Cotton requires enormous amounts of water, pesticides, and fertilisers to grow to the extent we need today. The cotton plantations only take up around 2,5 percent of the worlds farmed land, but 20 percent of the worlds agrochemicals are used for cotton production. Cotton also requires chemical treatments throughout its production process.

**HOWEVER, MOST PEOPLE** are aware of cotton industries using pesticides. Despite this, it is often believed that the environmental effects of the pesticides remain in the production area, and to some extent this is correct. Many of the countries producing cotton have limited water supplies, as the water demand in cotton production is high. For example, it is estimated that the production of one t-shirt requires 2 700 litres of water. Therefore, most cotton plantations use irrigation systems in order to keep up with the production. Nevertheless, in some ways it is true that most environmental effects remain on a local level. For example, the Aral Sea, which used to be the biggest lake in the world is close to being completely dried out. Though recently many efforts to bring water back







to the lake have been made. Nevertheless, it is the people living in these areas that will suffer from lack of water, pesticides in the soil leading to higher levels of cancer, and kidney diseases, to name a few. The pesticides used gets absorbed into the local soil and water streams, spreading through the food chain and eventually to humans. Increasing the already high demand for freshwater.

**HOWEVER, WHAT DOES** this have to do with the people actually demanding these high quantities of cotton textiles? How could this affect you and me? From the beginning to the end of the cotton production, it has been treated with chemicals. The clothes are often treated extra before being shipped to other countries in order for them not to

be damaged. As a result, the material is still packed with chemicals and pesticides when it arrives at its final destination, the store. We, as consumers, often believe that everything bad that happens, happens far away. Even though the biggest environmental effect is local, we still bring the chemicals to where the production started, where the big companies are. When buying a new item of clothing, 30 percent of the weight of the clothing is pure chemicals. These chemicals are then absorbed either by our skin when wearing the clothes or into our own local systems when washing them. As a result, the chemicals find their way into our ecosystems. However, it is still unclear how big the effect in the consumer's environments will be.

**ASIDE FROM THIS**, cotton also affect the greenhouse gases, as one kilogram of cotton generates 23 kilogram of greenhouse gas. This is not something that only affects a few regions in the world. As most of us know, the greenhouse effect, affects everyone on earth. Furthermore, the consumption of fresh water is also alarming across the globe, as water shortages are something many nations already struggle with. It could well be so that the West will begin suffering from this as we continue using water carelessly in many cases, such as the cotton industry.

**LUCKILY, THERE ARE** companies moving towards a more sustainable cotton production. H&M has made several steps towards this goal by eliminating the most toxic chemicals in their production process by investing in “better cotton”. Also, Tom Cirdland, a British designer, puts a lot of emphasis in his clothes that they should last a long time. According to him, the clothes he produces are meant to last for up to three decades. Another movement is the trend of buying second-hand clothes. A way for consumers to still fill their demands, without having to produce more cotton and thereby not having to use up water resources and contaminating the environment with pesticides.

**THESE MOVEMENTS ARE** moving us in the right direction. However, not many companies put any emphasis on the fact that their customers should recycle, reuse, or mend their clothes. Most do not even know how much overall impact their companies have on the environment. A reason for why the environmental issues in the textile industry are not prioritised can be that the people in charge do not see the affects themselves or that it is believed to collide with their profits. If more people were aware of the extent of the cotton industry's affects on the environment and the climate, locally and globally, including themselves as consumers, it might change people's priorities. And through them the priorities of the companies producing for the global garment industry as well. People need to be made aware of just how close they are to these toxins. They are, in fact, practically wearing them! Further, researchers need to focus on how this affect us as human beings. If more research was made on the effects near us, then maybe there would be a push for change in the way we see the usage of pesticides and toxins. Because if we do not do anything and let this ignorant usage go on, soon the effects of (un)sustainability that is sewn into the clothes we wear, might get exported to us. Maybe then will we understand the reality of people living in the areas of cotton production. ●





Photo: Cristina Gottardi/Unsplash





# MENSTRUATION IS POLITICAL ACTION

“There is little value to equal rights if none of us can breathe the air due to pollution,” said Kate Metcalf at the Women's Energy Network. From this perspective, there really does not seem to be a point in picking battles. Intersectional feminism has already set the goal to combine different ideologies, but it is time to act from an environmentalist angle.

**L**et's start with an exercise! Without taking it as heavy-weight evidence, let's see how the English language mirrors this misunderstanding and blurring of women and nature following Karen Warren. “Women are referred to as cats, pussycats, bitches, bunnies, cows, sows, chicks, beavers, foxes, vixen, queen bees, cheetahs, serpents, old bats, old crows, bird-brains, and whales. Women cackle, go to hen parties, henpeck their husbands, become old biddies. Mother Nature (not Father Nature) is raped, mastered, conquered, mined; her (not his) secrets are penetrated, and her womb is put into the service of the man of science (not woman of science, or simply scientist). Virgin timber is felled. Fertile (not potent) soil is tilled, and land that lies fallow is useless or barren.”

**THE PROBLEM DOES** not seem to be new: that the Western information society and science have been built by white men for centuries – and its “export” to other areas – be that women or other continents – happens on terms of fundamental incapability to comprehend differing ways to live and to look at life. Women, for example, are now allowed to build careers – on the condition of accepting the pre-existing construction of the institutions we thereby enter. And institutions are places where there is very often no space for care, emotions, taking days off because of period cramps or for having a baby.

**PROCESSES BIOLOGICALLY CONNECTED** to the female body, such as menstruation, are spaces for unavoidable choices. The individualistic aspects of feminism and environmentalism meet here: pads and tampons create hills of waste, for example. A woman is estimated to use 11,000 tampons in her lifetime and these are not only based on cotton

and chemicals, meaning their production is unsustainable, but the waste they create takes centuries to degrade. The sustainable options are the silicone-based menstrual cup, reusable pads, or period underwear. However, one has to deliberately choose them, because they are not as easily available in most parts of the world, and then keep up the use. Washing a thing again and again not only uses tap water, another valuable resource, but requires much more commitment than simply throwing away bloody pads. Organic cotton disposables, on the other hand, cost up to two or three times more than regulars, making them unaffordable for a significant part of the female population. Worth remembering, that mainstream pads and tampons are not affordable to many, due to double marginalisation, resulting in schoolgirls staying home from fear of stigma.

**SOMEWHAT SIMILARLY,** a no-waste sex life is hardly a thing. More precisely, when it comes to birth control, fertility awareness is zero waste, but does not work for everyone, and takes a lot of discipline in monitoring oneself. The contraceptive pill is wrapped in masses of plastic and paper, and the excess estrogen that ends up in the water through urine, from the pill, patch, ring, shot or implant causes alterations in fish, such as becoming intersex. The IUD coil only has to be removed after 5-12 years, thus scores higher on the green grade than most contraception, among them the sponge that is thrown away every time, or diaphragms and cervical caps made of rubber, reusable up to a few years. Just like the menstrual cup, these have to be washed, dried and stored for reuse, requiring constant effort.

**BUT WHEN IT** comes to safe sex, protection from STDs, the (internal) condom cannot be circum-



## “ CONDOMS ARE ESTIMATED TO AMOUNT TO 1,365 TONS OF WASTE IN THE US YEARLY,

vented. Condoms are estimated to amount to 1,365 tons of waste in the US yearly, while more than 10 billion are used worldwide in the same time frame. Several manufacturers offer semi-solutions: lamb-skin condoms are biodegradable, although exploit animals, fair-trade products take into account the working conditions at the plantations, and sustainable condoms do not add chemicals to the natural latex making it easier to degrade. Once again, as far as sustainable and fair-trade options are considered, it becomes an availability issue as they cost more.

**KINGA MILÁNKOVICS** at the Glass ceiling blog investigated how a sustainable lifestyle aiming to decrease the family's ecological footprint comprises determined choices that put weights on women's shoulders. This is a lifestyle angle at families in Western, but not yet gender equal, countries. Home-grown vegetables – a female chore. Processing the vegetables and fruits – a female chore.

Home-made food without lots of packaging and preservative – a female chore. Using textile diapers that have to be washed again and again – traditionally a female chore again. Taking children to school by public transport, or even better, by bike – well, this one is arguable, but the picture is clear.

**SUSTAINABILITY GENERALLY MEANS** putting effort into the smallest details in life, moving out of the comfort zone – and range up until the decision to give up on cars entirely, or do not have children. In cultures where women are already overwhelmed by managing a household and working at the same time, sustainability only requires additional time, work and energy. And the gratifications are not clear. There is, of course, a kind of delight in eating healthier, home-grown vegetables. And there is also an indescribable satisfaction, that one did something good. But it's for nature, and it's for the future, and probably the only reward is that one delays doomsday.

**NOW THE QUESTION** is not whether lifestyle choices count as activism or if they are sufficiently effective, because they are unavoidable, as this is the century of individualism when these angles of ideological movements will most probably stay with us. The question is if we can expect women to once more work additionally, and save nature for all of us. ●



# CLIMATE ACTION AND THE WELFARE STATE

- THE CHALLENGES TO COME

What will happen to the welfare services developed societies around the world enjoy when we move from a socio-economic system based on industrialisation and fossil fuels, to one that aims to use sustainable resources and be in harmony with nature?

**W**hat are the first things that jump to mind when we think and talk about climate action? Recycling and reusing materials to conserve power? Yes. Reduced usage of plastics? Sure. Curbing our reliance on fossil fuels and moving on to sustainable development via renewable energy resources, like wind and solar power? Certainly. Ensuring that further development does not exact the terrible toll it has on the environment since the age of industrialisation, which will continue to reverberate ramifications to future generations, much like it does to us today? Absolutely. The answer is simple: all of the above, and more.

**MOST PEOPLE TODAY** would agree that climate action is of vital importance if we are to trammel the detrimental effects of climate change. We are already experiencing abnormal weather conditions that affect most of all the poorest countries with the least amount of resources to deal with the issue, like Haiti, Zimbabwe, and Bangladesh. However, the situation is changing apace and these changes will be felt everywhere around the world, sooner rather than later. Not to mention that these changes affect not only humans, but the animal and plant kingdoms alike. Climate change is perhaps the most important issue humanity will have to tackle in the twenty-first century. However, as we address this problem, others arise, as if we are playing a game of “Whac-A-Mole”, where before we manage to deal with one concern, another appears and we rush to confront it as well, lest we tailspin into a worse scenario than before.

**ONE SUCH CONCERN** is the sustainability of the welfare state and what will become of it as we move

to a socio-economic system based on sustainable development. A country’s welfare is provided by its government and it is the system that ensures a minimal living standard to all its citizens via the provision of healthcare, education, and insurances against unemployment, ill-health, old age, and others. Most countries have a welfare state in place, which, however, differs in size and scope from country to country. Nonetheless, the services provided are mainly financed by tax revenues that are highly dependent on the current job market, which creates a problem. The shift from a non-sustainable system to a sustainable one will most likely leave a lot of people jobless, as they will need requalification and time to adapt to the new market. In addition, the UN projects that by 2050 the Earth’s population will reach 9.7 billion people, which is quite the leap from today’s 7.5 billion. These two factors alone mean there will be more people in the world and fewer jobs, subsequently bringing in less revenue to a country’s coffers, meaning less spending on overall human welfare. Is this permissible?

**SWEDEN, TO TAKE** an example, has one of the world’s best-developed welfare states. Swedish citizens are accustomed to their universal education, healthcare, and parental leave policies, to name a few welfare services. However, the very same were largely developed and expanded on during the golden age of the Swedish welfare state, following the years after the Second World War (1950-1970), where the country experienced fast rates of GDP growth, full employment, economic stability, and high birth rates. All of this was possible via an industry aimed at rebuilding war-ravaged Europe. Following the financial crises in the 1970s and 1990s, however, Sweden had





Photo: GoodFreePhotos

to dismantle some parts of its public sector as it was becoming too expensive. A move not taken lightly by its populace. The provision of welfare services would hardly find opposition towards the government, but try and dismantle them and resistance is guaranteed. With this in mind, we need to ask ourselves two fundamental questions. First, how will these changes affect a government's ability to provide welfare to its citizens? Second, how will the citizens react to these changes?

**IT IS HARD** to give an answer to the first question simply because we do not know how a future based on sustainable development would look like. We have a notion that we might live in harmony with nature, but such a vision would probably require a clean slate, rather than building on top of the current system. The second question is easier to answer. Citizens will not be sanguine if there is an abrupt change to their welfare services. Indeed, living in the bliss and bane of a democracy, they might challenge the move towards sustainable development, regardless of the need for climate action. So what should we do to attenuate such issues?

**FIRST OF ALL**, as argued by scholars at the universities of Lund and Leeds, people will need to alter their attitudes alongside the economic changes

that are occurring. This would mean rapid cultural changes that will shift expectations of the way welfare is provided in order to minimise conceptions that a system based on sustainable development would necessarily mean a deterioration of personal welfare. This leads us to a second point: policy-makers need to start easing people into this new system by advancing novel ways of providing welfare services, showcasing how a move towards sustainable development will not harm personal welfare in any way. By doing this, governments will succeed in gaining support by their citizens, allowing them to be more efficient in their efforts to tackle climate change. An example can be taken from the Swedish city of Malmö, where for the last two decades public policies have been transforming the city from a declining industrial hub to a sustainable urban centre.

**IN THE END**, the welfare state seems unimportant when we think about climate change, especially when, as these words are jotted down, people struggle halfway across the world. However, if increased climate action questions the welfare of a country and has no substitute in mind, discontent will be assured. The welfare services are just one example of such issues arising, and if we do not properly deal with them, we might, like in the game of "Whac-A-Mole", be overwhelmed and lose a lot more in the end. ●



# THE PRICE OF PARADISE

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## PALM OIL COMMERCE IN THE FACE OF ENVIRONMENTAL PRESSURES

*Palm, palm, the magical fruit...the more we consume, the more we pollute.  
The more we pollute, the more ecosystems we steal.  
So let's be conscious before every meal.*



**D**eep in the rural pockets of East Sumatra, canopied by one of the world's most lavish tropical rainforests, the clashing and clattering of newly chopped African Oil Palm trees crescendos in the distance. The fallen foliage here represents only an infinitesimally small fraction of forest that has been hacked and harvested as part of the century-long crusade for these trees' auspicious asset: palm oil.

**COVERTLY LABELED AS** "stearic acid", "glycerol" or "vegetable oil", palm oil can be found in a wide variety of household items – from the entire tub of Haagen-Dazs you generously spoon-fed yourself last Sunday night to the laundry detergent you used to scrub those tear-soaked chocolate stains the day after. The glutinous golden sap is ubiquitous, yet virtually undetectable to con-

sumers. And while palm oil has been prominently traded on global markets since the mid-nineteenth century, recently it has become rampant.

**THE PROLIFERATION OF** palm oil can be attributed to rapid developments in its processing and manufacturing over the past few decades, which have granted the multipurpose potion a competitive edge against other vegetable extracts. It has a simple extraction process, yields comparatively more than its competitors, and it can be secretly inserted into a seemingly endless list of products. Consequently, global consumption of the oil has more than quintupled since the 1990s.

**THIS SKYROCKETING MARKET** for the illustrious fruit, however, has created strenuous demands on the rich tropical environments in which they are cultivated. These pressures incentivize negligent cultivation practices, which intensify the degradation of forest ecosystems. One widespread and particularly vile practice is the act of "slashing and burning" whereby huge swaths of forestland are set ablaze to create arable land for the plantations. This makes palm oil production not only one of the greatest drivers of deforestation but also one of the largest emitters of greenhouse gases: taking away viable trees and releasing billions of tons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere.

**NOWHERE IN THE** world is 'slashing and burning' more commonplace than in Indonesia. The vast archipelago-state sits in first place in the Asia Pacific region's palm trade – where nearly 90 percent of the world's crude palm oil is cultivated. Like many other palm-producing countries, Indonesia is home to some of the most bountiful rainforests, envired by large expanses of carbon-absorbing peat soil and abound with diverse wildlife. These types of tropical sanctuaries not only support terrestrial biodiversity but also provide livelihoods for billions of people worldwide, including many indigenous populations. Hence, the industrial ravaging of these forests exposes countless species to endangerment and degrades lush ecosystems and forest resources, often at the expense of native forest-dependent communities.

**THESE UNSUSTAINABLE PRACTICES** of palm oil production have not gone entirely unnoticed from the international community. Joining the fray are organizations such as Conservation Interna-







tional, Oxfam, WWF, and Sumatran Orangutan Society, which have campaigned tirelessly to expose climate culprits and further the legislation of sustainable forest practices. Their influence is far-reaching, goading global governance actors like the UNFCCC to take up the matter – such as establishing global initiatives like REDD+, which sets out to reduce deforestation and forest degradation while promoting sustainable livelihoods.

**ALTHOUGH THESE INTERNATIONAL** sanctions pressure forest-actors to act sustainably, the profitability of palm oil's current methods of production undermine commitments made by producers to accept the more sustainable, but less financially appealing practices. Successful climate action is therefore two-fold: in addition to establishing stringent regulations, redirecting consumer-demand is also imperative. Accordingly, many countries have attempted to label all products containing palm oil, while the EU has committed to instating a moratorium on all palm imports from a few major exporting countries within the upcoming years.

**HOWEVER, THESE NEWER** trade conditions have been met with collective resistance from affected exporting countries. The opposition is diverse, ranging from government officials to large corporations to smaller-shareholders, and immigrant plantation workers alike. The network of affected parties reflects the complexity of palm-dependent livelihoods across and within these nations. While monstrous corporations might have the greatest share of the “palm-oil cake”, there are

still many independent or semi-independent local business, and plantation workers also in the mix.

**REWORKING CONSUMER DEMANDS** must, therefore, entail being mindful of these livelihoods, promoting the growth of sustainable palm oil employment while also spurring income diversification into more environmentally friendly markets. In 2004 the “Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil” (RSPO), an international ‘green’ certification program for credible palm oil products, was established by a group of relevant palm oil stakeholders with hopes of doing just that. While the methods it uses to categorize ‘sustainable’ farms are worthy of critique and the extent to which these labels have led to tenable ecological improvements are still contentious, the scheme nevertheless represents appreciable actions on behalf of global actors to encourage more eco-friendly industries.

**THE ROOT OF** change for future palm production is ultimately nourished by our very own conscious consumerism. When we envisage climate action, colorful images of activists chaining themselves to isolated oilrigs or scientists and political leaders at long mahogany tables often spring to mind. Very seldom do we consider the mundane task of grocery shopping a pivotal form of climate action. However, in many ways, eco-friendly consuming – which entails both refraining from goods containing the infamous oil or opting for ‘green’ certified products – can make all the difference. When it comes to climate action against palm oil, we must take matters into the palms of our own hands. ●



CHINA'S SUSTAINABLE URBAN DEVELOPMENT.

# A MODEL FOR A BETTER FUTURE?

When looking at China in terms of climate action one might be a little puzzled. From being highly criticised for high carbon emission and polluting, to being a leader in climate change discourse in the G20 meetings. China have the recent years shown incredible ability and wishes to rapidly change course. Now they might become a leader in urban sustainable development.

**E**co-cities, vertical forest cities and low-carbon cities have been on the rise as a sustainable solution for future urban development. China has the last decade taken a huge leap, establishing themselves firmly on the international stage as the leader in terms of sustainable urban development. The asian country is now building eco-cities at a tremendous pace. The projects have been regarded in widely different ways, giving way to a lot of criticism and scepticism as well as a bright hope for the future. China is currently building 280 new “eco-cities” and estimates that 50 percent of all their cities will be “eco-cities” in near future.

**THE IDEA IS** not new and was established already in 1975 by Richard Register. As of today there does not exist a formal definition and includes a wide array of different underlying ideas. Broadly speaking, eco-cities are supposed to be self-contained, environmentally friendly, emit lower amounts of carbon and use fewer resources. In some cases, the cities are said to be socially harmonious. In 2008, the international eco-city conference defined “eco-cities” as an ecological healthy city, the harmonious coexistence between man and nature in order to achieve sustainable urban development. To build these cities one needs a deep understanding of the relationship between economy, politics, urban environment and culture based on ecological principles.

**CHINA IS CURRENTLY** in a unique situation. Until recently, China has had a large rural population, but are now experiencing a massive urbanization boom. It has been estimated that Chinese cities will experience a 17,7 million increase each year - that equals the city of New York each year. The rapid and large urbanization of the country is one of the reasons the mass scale building of eco-cities. The Chinese people are no longer in the dark concerning the climate change and especially regarding their own hazardous urban environment, due to the country’s extreme industrialization in recent decades. This means that the Communist Party needs to change course and living conditions to avoid destabilizing elements in the future. Apart from the 1,6 million premature deaths due to dangerous air pollution, China is also experiencing 50 percent of its waters undrinkable. One might wonder if the eco-cities are more about having decent

living conditions rather than “saving the world” as some western spectators believe. Some think that these cities only live in the powerpoints presentations, while other regard them as the future of urban development.

**THERE EXISTS A** huge variation between these eco and low-carbon cities. Some have failed to populate and have become “ghost towns”, some are inhabited but fail to meet the eco-friendly requirements and some are on track. Many observers give the central government the blame for these “flopped eco-cities”, saying they are concerned

“ WELL, GIVEN THAT THERE IS NO DEFINITION OF WHAT THEY [ECO-CITIES] ARE, SUCCESS IN ACHIEVING ECO-CITYNESS CAN BE SELF-DEFINED TOO - WILLIAMS

with economic development more than the environmental progress. As a matter of fact, in terms of sustainability and eco-friendly urbanization, London is actually more “green” than the some of the Chinese eco-cities. So could one call London an eco-city? According to Fu and Zhang who did a rather comprehensive comparative analysis of the 300 eco-cities, the development of these cities are still in an early stage and therefore it is hard to say if they live up to the expectations. Since there is no one way to build an eco-city, the experienced achievement is highly individual. Critics often highlight that the Chinese green cities are still very much about economic growth, social progress and improved conditions for the new urban dwellers. Not that the cities are necessarily bad, but perhaps not as environmentally friendly as suggested and promoted? Many of the researches done regarding





the performance of these green cities are viewed through a Western environmental lense, and with that comes some harsh criteria.

**BUT IF THESE** so called eco-cities are built only to provide decent living conditions for the people, China is building their first “forest city” which is supposed to be very environmentally friendly. Italian architect Stefano Boeri has some very interesting ideas. He wants to build a “vertical city” in Nanjing, China, a city where he plans to completely cover with trees that produce 132 pounds oxygen per day. Simultaneously in Liuzhou, the city will be covered in more than 1 million plants and 40.000 trees that will absorb 10.000 tons of carbon dioxide and 57 tons of pollutants each year. Chinese government officials have promised that 90 percent of transportation in urban areas will be on foot, by bike or public transportation by 2020.

**THERE ARE MANY** critics and sceptics. There are those who believe that the cities only lives in powerpoint presentations and have no real impact, those who believe that it is a good development, and last but not least those who outline the fact that it might not “save the world” but create decent living conditions for new Chinese urban dwellers, which are currently living in harsh urban condition. Given the clear wish and desire from the Chinese government to build sustainable cities and their rapid urbanization, these new green cities, including Boeri’s vision, might truly be an important element in the years to come. Many of the eco-cities do not live out their true

potential, mostly because of exterior pressures such as economic development and the central government. However, given the fact that they actually build these cities might serve as a promise for the future, not to mention the possibility of mass scale building of vertical forest cities. China functions as a top-down system, and the success of the eco-cities might be largely dependant on a down-top stream of knowledge, so the country can gain popular support for the successful development of eco-cities. Either in terms of creating a decent urban living environment for the Chinese or saving the world with groundbreaking sustainable urban development, is China now taking the lead? Or is it too ambitious? Or is it simply to create a decent urban life for their people, not the bright future the western commentators hope it will be. ●

“**URBAN FORESTRY IS NOT ONLY NECESSARY TO IMPROVE THE ENVIRONMENT OF THE WORLD'S CITIES BUT ALSO AN OPPORTUNITY TO IMPROVE THE LIVING CONDITIONS OF LESS FORTUNATE CITY DWELLERS**  
**- BOERI**





**DEVELOPING COUNTRIES AND CLIMATE CHANGE:**

**LEGITIMATE CONCERNS  
FAIR CLAIMS**

Climate change is a global threat that requires more unity than ever. As they say, the ocean is neither Republican nor Democrat, it does what it knows, it just rises. The planet itself is neither developed nor undeveloped, it just follows the laws of nature. Collective efforts should be gathered to address the many deep-rooted issues previously ignored, resulting in today's disasters. Individual measures are simply not enough.



**B**ack in Sudan, I was once talking to one of my old relatives. He was a farmer, and like many other farmers depending on rain for irrigation (over 85 percent is rainfed irrigation). He was complaining about shifting of seasons, drier climate, intensity, and temporal changes of the rain and how it affects and sometimes destroys all his crops either due to droughts or floods. What immediately came to my mind was climate change. But the question was how could I explain the concept of climate change to him? What could he do to prevent its impacts? And more importantly, how could I help him?

**CLIMATE CHANGE** is the rise in earth temperature due to the surplus of Greenhouse Gases (GHGs) which are essential for keeping the earth's warmth. They occur naturally but the anthropogenic emission rates lead to the abundance of GHGs, which accordingly increases earth's temperature. It is expected to be about a 4 degree rise in this century alone. Climate change is often mistakenly understood as just a rise in temperature. But actually, it affects weather patterns, wind currents, resulting in cooler weather in Europe, and shifting of the precipitation belt away from the equator which leads to more droughts and flooding in the already hot and dry regions.

**MANY CONFERENCES, CONVENTIONS,** and international institutions under auspices of United Nations have taken place. The most recent one was the Paris agreement, which aims to keep a global temperature rise this century well below 2 degrees and aspire for 1.5. Fundamentally, it is a frantic quest for clean energy. There are many alternative sources for clean energy but the fossil fuel industry is old and well-established. The energy sector is the world's biggest investment of which, according to international energy agency (IEA) , 81.1 percent is unclean, unsustainable resources. Thus, looking for alternatives is a matter of will in the very core because technically it is doable, but it requires a big initial capital investment and it will take a long time to fully shifting the system towards renewable environment-friendly resources.

**So, IT** is a test for global will, for decision makers around the world. Do they realize the seriousness



and urgency of the situation? What sacrifices can they make? Especially developed countries as they have the means and capacities to lead this action, and also it is claimed that the process of their development is what caused this tragedy in the first place. To what extent are they willing to fairly handle the consequences, including a fair deal to other countries who believe it is their time to utilize their resources?

“ TO WHAT EXTENT ARE THEY WILLING TO FAIRLY HANDLE THE CONSEQUENCES?”

**RIGHT NOW, IMPACTS** of the climate change are already being felt by people across the globe. Evidence show that the temperature change has affected the health, livelihoods, food productivity, water availability, and overall security of those regions. According to the Climate Change Vulnerability Index for 2015, seven of the ten countries most at risk from climate change are in Africa. All are developing countries which do not have the capacities to mitigate the impacts. Africa has seen a decrease in rainfall over large parts of the Sahel

and Southern Africa, and an increase in parts of Central Africa. Over the past 25 years, the number of weather-related disasters, such as floods and droughts, have doubled, resulting in Africa having a higher mortality rate from droughts than any other region.

**IN SUCH VULNERABLE** regions, already struggling with poor infrastructures, diseases, famines, illiteracy, corruption, conflicts, to prioritize climate change on the agenda would be more of a bad joke than a scientific discourse. Even though these places are the ones already receiving the first hit of climate change. History plays an important part as there is a big distrust between the continent and the rest of the world. Moreover, it is a distrust between developing countries and developed countries. Many people justifiably think that they are just being denied their rights of development. How can this fair concern be addressed?.

**ANY SOLUTION FOR** the issue - from developing countries perspective - should simultaneously follow three paths. The first and most urgent is on a global scale, and it is to significantly reduce GHGs emissions. 75 percent decline in carbon emissions in industrial countries by 2050 should be reached to hypothetically decrease the temperature of about 2 degrees.

**SECONDLY, ANOTHER URGENT** measure is helping vulnerable countries in facing the first climate change hit and mitigate consequences. The world should cooperate to mitigate natural disasters, to facilitate mobilization of funding, to help farmers in those vulnerable regions sustain their agriculture, to build infrastructures in order to control water, to alleviate the temporal distribution and intensity of rainfall problems, as well as raising awareness, and empowering by education. A long, but sustainable way to solve the root of the problem.

**THIRDLY, A FAIR** deal with countries that have just started exploiting their energy resources should be attained. By provision of alternative cheap technologies for renewable clean energy and building capacities to be able to sustain the energy sector in the future independently. If every country in the world starts to fully utilize its fossil fuel potentials, consequences would be unthinkable. Therefore, large emitters should have responsibilities towards vulnerable countries. Countries like

the US, China, Canada, and Russia, should have concrete obligations, mitigating the impacts and providing alternatives.

**AS FOR MY** uncle, and all other farmers, the international community can assist with the cooperation of local governments through training programs on shifting towards more stable irrigation systems, more efficient water consumption, more productive farming and help financing water harvesting projects to ensure water availability throughout the year. By domino effect if we attain water and food security, then conflicts, internal migration, and ultimately security issues will fall down accordingly. It is crucial to know that it is a burden that has been accumulated for centuries, so there will not be any cheap, instant solutions. It is time to pay the bill for centuries of recklessly exploiting the planet resources. It will for sure imply some big sacrifices and concessions. ●

“ ANY SOLUTION FOR THE ISSUE, FROM DEVELOPING COUNTRIES PERSPECTIVE, SHOULD SIMULTANEOUSLY FOLLOW THREE PATHS





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# WE NEED TO TALK ABOUT THE BIRDS AND THE BEES

Like all the species on the planet, insects are at an immense risk due to the climate change. However, a lot of people are unaware of how dependent we are on these tiny creatures and how the fate of even one species can affect the life worldwide.

**A**re humans the chosen species to hold dominion over the Earth? That was our delusion. Does the climate change happen far away, mostly in the developing countries? That is not entirely true, either. It affects the natural habitats of species worldwide by the changes in seasonal cycles, weather, and temperature. Like other animals, insects do not recognize the international borders and do not divide the world according to the economic development. Different species of bees and mosquitos are found around the world, making and breaking the lives of millions of people in the completely opposite ways. However, with the changing climate, we are more dependent on them than ever before.

**IT IS ESTIMATED** that 80 percent of the flowering plants are dependent on pollinators, or insects that move pollen from a male to female flower to fertilize them. Without pollinators, a whole range of food crops, trees, and other plants would be at risk. Among them, bees are one of the most important on the planet. There are about 20,000, or, by some approximations, even up to 30,000 species of bees, and they are all suffering from the climate change.

**OF SPECIAL SIGNIFICANCE** here is the global warming. With the rising temperatures, European and North American bee species are moving north. At the same time, the bees that inhabited more northern areas remain there, which results in a concentration of the insects in a smaller habitat. There is also the question of phenology, which is the periodic life cycle of animals and plants, influenced by seasons and climate. It is not yet clear what effect the shorter winters will have on bees – will they emerge from the beehives earlier to match the plant phenology, or will they mismatch and the plants will not be pollinated, and the bees will starve? There is not enough research in the area but so far it is suggested that the plants and the bees use different cues in their annual cycles, with plants dependent on precipitation and snow, and bees on temperature. The climate change is also only one of the difficulties encountered by the bees – they are also largely affected by human development, pollution, and use of pesticides. Overall, their future does not look bright.



**WHAT CAN BE** done to help the bees? First of all, planting flowers. Sowing native flowering plant species in your home garden or even just in a pot on the windowsill can greatly help the bees. Then there is avoiding using pesticides, supporting local farmers, avoiding foods coming from monocultures, and knowing where your honey comes from – the raw, local honey is much better to you and to bees than the “mixture of honeys from the EU and the People’s Republic of China” from a supermarket at any rate. If you are feeling really passionate and have the space, you might look into starting your own beehive or a bee hotel. As it has been growing popular, there are lots of helpful websites out there.

**THAT BRINGS US** to the other problem. It would be hard, if not impossible, to find someone who likes mosquitos. Their buzzing and biting is an inescapable part of any summer and often a source of sleepless nights. However, with the climate change, the problem is just going to grow. Unlike bees, mosquitos are extremely adaptable and the scientists have already noted how they are adjusting to the changing climate. It is an especially pressing problem as we are not only talking about the nuisance but a possible threat to health and lives to an increasing number of people worldwide.

**THE GREATEST CONCERN** is caused by *Anopheles*, the genes of mosquito that carries malaria. You might have done the simple math above – we equate mosquitos with summer, summer means warmer weather, the climate change raises the temperatures worldwide, affecting mosquitos’ phenology, broadening their habitats, and making them more of a problem. It is anticipated that by 2050 most of Europe (including parts of Sweden) will be a suitable habitat for malaria-spreading mosquitoes. Due to the generally high quality and accessibility of healthcare in Europe, it is not expected to become an epidemic here. However, it is worth mentioning that malaria is not the only mosquito-borne disease. Zika virus, West Nile virus, and dengue fever are some of the more infamous ones, but there is a total of thirteen of them and they are responsible for the deaths of about a million of people each year. With the rising temperatures, they are all becoming more widespread and not everyone has access to the healthcare of Scandinavian standards.

**THERE IS A** variety of other insects that could be considered here –crops pests, disease-carrying ticks, pollinating butterflies. Whatever direction we look in, the future looks bleak and the longer we take to make a change, the bigger risk that the changes will be irreversible. We need to accept that the times when we thought that humans were masters of this world are over and make peace with the fact that the death or life of a tiny insect can affect us immensely.







# **CLIMATE CHANGE: WHO IS AFFECTED MOST?**



People already feel the effects of climate change whether they know it or not. But there are some groups who would suffer more from the adverse effects than the others. So, who are these people and where do they live?

**C**limate change is happening now and fewer people are courageous enough to claim the opposite. The fear of an uncertain future already affects the way we produce goods and services, extract natural resources, and even how we live our daily lives. But do we all feel the influences of climate change evenly? The immediate answer is no, we do not. Women waiting for the return of their partners at home somewhere in Bangladesh. Farmers from Nicaragua dependent on their crops to provide a decent living for themselves and their families. Slum dwellers in Dhaka, capital of one of the most densely populated countries in the world. These are just a few examples of people who will carry a heavier burden of the changes induced by climate change in comparison with those living better off and in the less vulnerable countries.

**MANIFESTATIONS OF THE** changing climate are already visible in many parts of the world. According to the UN projections, “under a business as usual scenario, greenhouse gas emissions could rise by 25 – 90 percent by 2030 relative to 2000 and the Earth could warm by 3°C” contributing to the rise of sea levels from 18 to 59 cm by the end of this century. Practically, if we continue using the same amount of natural resources, producing the way we produce even in the same quantity, we will ourselves charter the course towards the dismal climate scenario. Unsustainable production and extensive use of natural resources will result in more commonly appearing extreme weather conditions such as storms, floods, hurricanes, and droughts. Lack of food, clean drinking water shortages, the spread of climate-sensitive diseases, and the extinction of plant and animal species across the globe.

**THE IMPACTS OF** the changing climate do not represent an environmental challenge solely, but will also bring negative economic and social consequences that could perpetuate and reinforce existing inequalities. Consequences of climate change vary disproportionately across regions, among and

within countries, among generations, social classes, income groups as well as between men and women. This because of many reasons, but mainly due differing capacity to manage the disasters and adapt to changing environmental conditions. Poor people, using World Bank’s terminology, living in low- and lower-middle-income countries already today suffer more from extreme environmental conditions. The heavier burden is carried by women living in societies where they are oppressed and discriminated against on a daily basis. Same goes for other disenfranchised groups and communities.

“CONSEQUENCES OF CLIMATE CHANGE VARY DISPROPORTIONATELY ACROSS REGIONS, AMONG AND WITHIN COUNTRIES, AMONG GENERATIONS, INCOME GROUPS AS WELL AS BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN

**ACCORDING TO THE** 2017 global climate risk index, the ten most affected countries by climate change in the world from 1996 to 2015 are Honduras, Myanmar, Haiti, Nicaragua, Philippines, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Vietnam, Guatemala, and Thailand. All these countries, apart from Thailand, are ranked 117 or lower according to UNDP’s multi-dimensional poverty index, measuring the population’s level of health, education, and standard

“

# THE TEN MOST AFFECTED COUNTRIES BY CLIMATE CHANGE ARE HONDURAS, MYANMAR, HAITI, NICARAGUA, PHILIPPINES, BANGLADESH, PAKISTAN, VIETNAM, GUATEMALA & THAILAND

of living. The security and wellbeing of people in these countries are additionally challenged by the low capability of states to cope with extreme weathers occurring due to changing climate conditions. Coupled with limited ability to ensure the decent standard of living and access to public welfare services, it also puts at higher risk the most disadvantaged.

**LOW-LYING, FLAT** and densely populated Bangladesh is considered to be the sixth most susceptible and vulnerable country to climate change

in the world according to the climate risk index. The populations most at risk include poor people living in slums and squatter residual areas, representatives of lower castes, and women. Making climate change a national priority, Bangladesh became more resilient to catastrophes in recent years. By strengthening communities and government's capacity to deal with emergencies, fortifying river embankments and coastal polders in the low-lying lands vulnerable to flooding, building emergency shelters and more resilient houses are some of Bangladesh's efforts to reduce disastrous consequences of extreme weathers. Nevertheless, the occasions when emergency warnings do not reach certain populations are still common. Sometimes, due to other cultural and social factors, people choose to avoid a self-saving course of action. For example, staying-at-home Bangladeshi women usually have fewer chances to receive emergency warnings in time, and even if they do, often they choose to stay, out of fear to leave their homes without the husband or partner's permission. Some are afraid of experiencing physical and psychological violence during evacuation and at shelters. Also, the majority of Bangladeshi women have never learned how to swim decreasing their chances of survival in frequently re-appearing floods.

**NICARAGUA, WHICH IS** ranked four according to the same index, suffers from a significant reduction in crop yields due to frequent droughts and floods. In the past, extreme weathers have already contributed to the increased levels of malnutrition among the population. The changing climate conditions also continue to hit the country's economy by





threatening the cultivation of one of its biggest export products – coffee. While droughts and floods directly influence the crop yields, increasing climate change impacts the suitability and quality of the coffee. It pushes the producers to adapt to fast-changing environmental conditions. Most recently, coffee producers started to gradually shift from production of arabica to robusta, which is known as a coffee variety that requires less care, grows faster and has a higher disease-resistance level. At the same time, robusta is considered to be of a lower quality, and “less prestigious,” thus less valuable and popular. The shift to robusta combined with bad harvests documented in recent years has a significant potential to generate less incomes. For the people at the bottom of the value chain, this scenario would put in danger their economic security and employment opportunities, decreasing their overall wellbeing.

**THROUGHOUT HISTORY,** WE have been organizing our lives and our societies around climate conditions of the areas we live in. With the already visible weather shifts and current climate projections, extreme weathers falling outside the normal range will increase. The effects of climate change will be disproportionately felt by different countries depending on their geographical position, susceptibility to climate change and the capability to manage the climate-related risks. Most importantly, some people will face greater challenges than others. People living in the areas exposed to frequent storms, floods, and droughts, but also poor, elderly, women and children, people with disabilities, migrants and many others

would have fewer opportunities to deal with the adverse impacts of extreme weathers putting at risk their security and livelihoods. Cultural, environmental and socio-economic decisions of countries can either amplify or reduce climate change impacts. Thus the environment does not exist in isolation to cultural, political and socioeconomic systems and climate change would have cascading effects among various sectors of countries' economies directly influencing people living in these countries. The question that we need to ask ourselves is: Would we be able to respond to the environmental challenges in a comprehensive manner to ensure that the resources we use and negative impacts we bring would not further increase the socio economic cleavages, that does not only exist between countries, but within them as well. If we want future generations to have the ability to satisfy their material and social needs, an answer needs to come quickly. ●

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# WHEN GOOD INTENTIONS BACKFIRES

What differentiates a marine activist from a pirate? And what an environmental activist from an intruder? Sometimes it is difficult to define how far activism should go and where to draw the line between provoking and committing crimes.

**A**ctivism has incredible potential. Well-planned events, campaigns, and lobbyism are effective ways of raising awareness among people about all kinds of issues that they did not see as such before. They can educate people on what to do differently in their everyday lives - surely, most people remember having seen pictures of dolphins tangled up in plastic and starting to bring their own bags to the grocery store - and, last but not least, activism has the potential of bringing concerns to a higher level, bundling many voices and giving them an outlet, making sure they get heard by politicians and decision makers.

**HAVING SAID THAT**, however, activism also has a dark side to it. When it is not well-informed and well-planned, it can shed a negative light on activism as a whole or even lead to disastrous consequences.

**A CLASSIC EXAMPLE** of such an occurrence is an action organized and carried out by the Animal Liberation Front (ALF) in 1998. A number of activists broke into a mink farm in New Forest in England one night with the aim of saving some 6500 minks from being killed and turned into fur coats. While their intentions were undoubtedly honorable, they possibly caused more damage than good. Releasing the 6500 minks into the wild meant releasing an army of predators into an ecosystem that was not adapted to that kind of threat. Thousands

of animals, including rare owl species from a local sanctuary, fell victim to the minks, and local fisheries were seriously endangered. While this action certainly gave ALF high media coverage, it was definitely not the kind the activism branch needed.

**ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF** activism backfiring is a literal crime Greenpeace committed in 2014 in Peru. For a publicity stunt





during the UN's climate conference in Lima, the organization placed a slogan right next to the Nazca lines in the South of the country. The lines are more than 1500-year-old carvings of animals and a vital part of Peru's indigenous culture. Usually, visitors need a special permission and certain footwork to go near them. The Greenpeace activists, however, were either not aware of this or did not care to respect those rules and left footprints on the vulnerable ground. According to the Peruvian government, they damaged the UNESCO world

heritage site, showing disrespect for the importance of the

sacred ground. Even though Greenpeace leader Kumi Naidoo flew to Peru personally to apologize for the faux-pas, Greenpeace's image, and with it environmental activism, took a deep scratch that day.

**A VERY EXTREME**, yet ambiguous example for uncontrolled activism is the marine conservation NGO "Sea Shepherd Conservation Society". The organization has declared it their mission to protect dolphins, whales, sharks and other marine animals. In the light of the ongoing whale hunt by Japan that kills hundreds of animals every year, this is a much-needed work. The question is, however, how this should be done and by whom. The self-declared ocean guards from Sea Shepherd claim to have sunk several whalers' ships over the years. Their fleet tracks down whale-hunters and poachers and pursues them – sometimes over several months – to hinder them in their work. Continuous brutal confrontations between the whalers and the Sea Shepherds are the consequence. In 2012, the US Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit ruled in favour of the Japanese whalers who had requested an injunction against Sea Shepherds requiring them to keep at least 500 yards distance to their boats. Judge Kozinski stated:



## YOU ARE, WITHOUT A DOUBT, A PIRATE

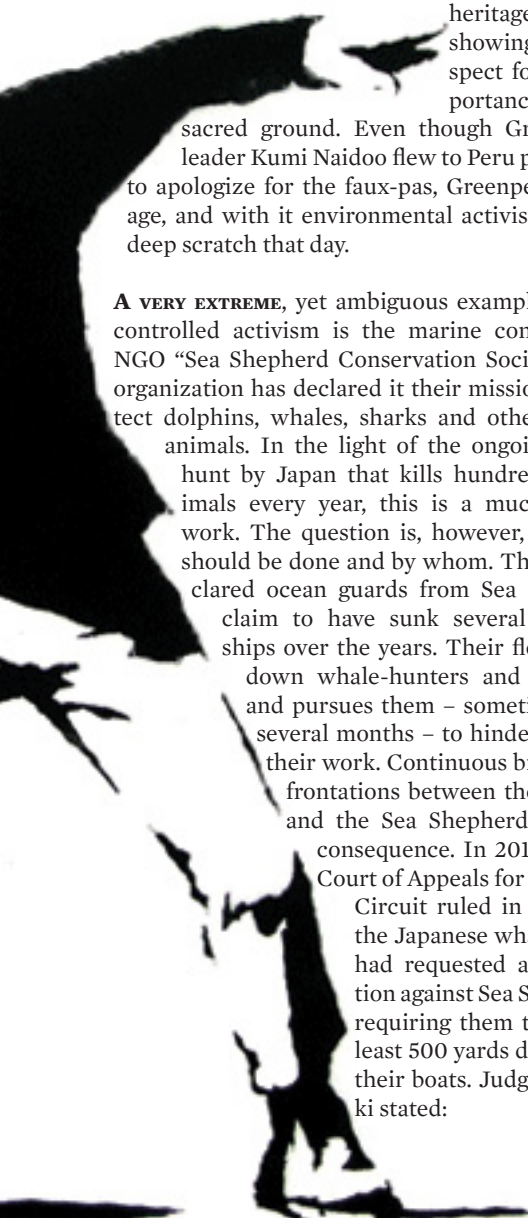
**"WHEN YOU RAM** ships, hurl glass containers of acid, drag metal-reinforced ropes in the water to damage propellers and rudders, launch smoke bombs and flares with hooks; and point high-powered lasers at other ships, you are, without a doubt, a pirate."

**HE RULED THAT** it was not up to the organization to police Australia's court order that made the whale-hunt in Australian waters illegal, but for the country itself. The Australian government declared it had no affiliation with Sea Shepherds and condemned them for breaking the UN's convention on the law of the seas. Julie Bishop, the Foreign Minister of Australia, told the press club of Japan:

**"WE DO NOT**, and will never, condone reckless, dangerous, unlawful behaviour. And where it occurs on the high seas, we will unreservedly condemn it."

**THE QUESTION REMAINS** how populist activism should be. It is in the nature of activism to swim against the mainstream. However, it seems that activism should still be maintained and organized in some way. While anarchy tends to be a very effective instrument to receive attention, it can also backfire and shed a bad light on activist movements in general. Activists thus have a fine line to walk between being provocative yet respectful, being bold but not endangering anyone, calling on institutions but not foreclosing potential future cooperation with decision makers.

**WHEN ACTIVISM MANAGES** to walk that line, it has incredible potential to transform our world. ●



# THE WALL





Somewhere in the back of my mind I know I'm dreaming, but it feels so real. I tell the voice in the back of my mind to shut up. I like it here. It's warm, it's hazy, and for some reason, I can't explain, it feels good. I'm happy.

**A DISTANT SOUND** commands my attention, but I ignore it. I'm not ready to leave. I just told the back of my mind to shut up, I don't want to tell this noise that as well. The noise gets louder, but I still cling on to the happy place. Just let me stay in my happy place. The noise is too loud now to be ignored. It's pulling me up. I break the surface and open my eyes. The sound of the alarm clock is shrieking. It's the worst noise in the world. Slowly, I drag my legs off the side of the bed and heave myself up to a sitting position. I take a deep breath. I may not be sleeping anymore, but this is the nightmare. Reality.

**OPENING THE LOOSE** floorboard under the bed, I grab my most prized possession. Grandma's diary. Well, it's not as much a diary as it is a book of fairy tales. Fairy tales about the past, stories from another time, from the days of her youth. When life was so different from how it is now. The pages are withered with age, the cover falling apart from being handed down through three generations. She started writing it when The Change took place. She gave it to my mum; my mum handed it over to me. She wanted us to remember, to understand. Everybody else seems to have forgotten.

I **WALK UP** to the dusty window, the diary pressed to my chest. Matron will be here soon, but I still have a couple of minutes to myself. I press my nose to the cold glass, staring out over the city. Stockholm looks the same as yesterday, and the day before that. On the other side of the grey water, I glimpse the round building of The Riksdag. Behind it, in the distance, is The Wall. Throwing its looming shadow over the city like a dark veil.

“THE WALL IS THE PRIORITY. KEEPING THE INCOMERS OUT IS THE PRIORITY.”

**STRAIGHTENING MYSELF,** I open grandma's diary to its first page. Women in The Riksdag, that's what it says. Women in The Riksdag, women in law enforcement, even women in The Army. I can barely comprehend it. Women could do anything. Travel, study, work, love freely. They could even be politicians and leaders. That round building on the other side of the water, where women haven't set foot in decades, used to be open to them.

**THERE WAS THIS** man back when grandma was young. He was the leader of The Americas, I think.



Photo: Holger Ellgaard/Wikimedia

Apparently, he wanted to build a wall, to keep people out. That idea spread. Many places have walls now, because of The Army's fear of The Incomers.

**I HAD TO** go to the other side of The Wall once. We all have to, so we know what awaits if we stop being useful. I'll never forget the smell. It's the smell of thousands and thousands of people crowding together for decades. Dirt, garbage, faeces, sick, blood, and death. That was the smell.

**THAT PLACE IS** hell on Earth. The Incomers didn't want to come here, but they couldn't stay where they were either. There were floods, droughts, rising sea levels, new diseases, food shortages, no water. Earth was dying, and we were the murderers. The North didn't fare as badly as the rest of Earth though. So The Incomers had to leave everything behind and come here. But they came in the millions. So the Army seized power, and instead of welcoming those in need, they built The Wall. Now The Incomers can't get in, and we can't get out.

**IN THE SWEDEN** of grandma's youth, equality was a priority. Sweden was known for it. Our equality doesn't sound like the same thing as what grandma meant by it. There are other priorities now, and

The Army decides the priorities. The Army controls, The Army governs. No women allowed in The Army, so we aren't a priority. The Wall is the priority. Keeping The Incomers out is the priority. Women stay inside. Swedish women only, though. We nurture, we raise, we care, we treat. That's our equality, that's where we're needed, that's equally important, or so they say. But we stay inside. We don't leave. We don't make decisions.

**I'M ONE OF** the lucky ones they tell me. I'm inside The Wall, I should be happy. But I'm not.

**WE COULD HAVE** stopped this a century ago. There were ways of stopping what we were doing to Earth. Then The Incomers wouldn't have been forced to come here, The Army wouldn't have seized power, The Wall wouldn't have been built, and maybe women could've done like the women in grandma's fairy tales. We could've travelled, studied, worked, loved freely, and even have become politicians and leaders.

**WELL, TOO LATE.** I put the old diary back under the loose floorboard and prepare for the day, just like any other. ●

*Photo: CC0 Public Domain/Pxhere*





# Sustainability, Human Rights & Justice

## A STAKEHOLDER CONFERENCE ON SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION - APRIL 24 2018

Producing the clothes we wear, the food we eat and the cars we drive is a global process – it involves cut and sew factories in Bangladesh, Cobalt-mines in the Congo and retailers in Lund. How can consumers, companies and states make sure that human rights are respected throughout the value chain? This and more will be discussed between 13-17 on the 24th of April 2018. The event is a cooperation between Sustainability forum and Raoul Wallenberg Institute and a part of the Sustainability Week 2018. **The event is free but sign-up is required at: [hallbarhet.lu.se/consumption](http://hallbarhet.lu.se/consumption).**



## #FashionRevolution

TIME: 13 - 15

The 24th of April marks the anniversary of the Rana Plaza garment-factory collapse in Bangladesh, which killed 1138 people, and serves as a reminder of the precarious situation for many textile workers. The fashion industry is second only to oil as the top industrial polluter, producing more greenhouse gas emissions than all international flights and maritime shipping combined. Our addiction to fast fashion has consequences, so what are the solutions?

**PANELISTS:** Malin Oud (Raoul Wallenberg Institute), Parul Sharma (Human Rights Lawyer), Johan Wigerhall (Social Sustainability Expert H&M), Liang Xiaohui (CSR-Expert Peking University), Songul Can (Individuell Människohjälp) and Jens Hultman (Department of Business Administration).

## Consumers as agents of change?

TIME: 15 - 17

Saving the world is an audacious goal, and we are increasingly putting that responsibility on consumers. BUY organic, BUY fair trade, HOLD companies accountable – but should we even be allowed to purchase unsustainable products? What responsibility do we have as humans, as companies, as politicians?

**PANELISTS:** Magdalena Bexell (Department of Political Science), Malin Oud (Raoul Wallenberg Institute), Parul Sharma (Human Rights Lawyer), Liang Xiaohui (CSR-Expert Peking University), Songul Can (Individuell Människohjälp) and Johan Jansson (Department of Business Administration).

## Blood Batteries

TIME: 15 - 17

Elon Musk famously said, "We will not stop until every car on the road is electric". Since then, most major car manufacturers have developed electric models; trucks, busses, bikes, you name it – everything can be powered by the magic battery. However, producing a battery is resource intensive and demand for metals like cobalt, copper and nickel is soaring. To fill that demand, artisanal miners in the Congo are digging deep, working under terrible conditions and with death as a looming risk. Are we switching carbon lock-in for metal lock-in, with considerable human and environmental cost? What are stakeholders doing to prevent human rights violations in their supply chains?

**PANELISTS:** Radu Mares (Raoul Wallenberg Institute), Theo Jaekel (Human Rights & Supply Chain Specialist at Vinge), Philip Peck (IIIEE) and Eva Bennis (Sustainability & Compliance Volvo Group Trucks).

## Land Use Change

TIME: 15 - 17

As soil degrades in the west, we look for fertile ground elsewhere. Large areas in the global south are being occupied by multi-national agriculture ventures, often through violence and oppression, only to have the harvest exported to markets in Europe. Many of the technologies of tomorrow are bio-based; we want to make plastic out of sugarcane and diesel out of palm oil - but there is a finite amount of land, will it be enough?



LUND UNIVERSITY

**RAOUL  
WALLENBERG  
INSTITUTE**  
OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND INTERNATIONAL LAW

# GOD OR NATURE





*In this era of ecologic awakening it is important to be aware not only of the environmental consequences of our actions, but also how the ideas shape our relationship with Nature to properly understand their implications.*

Since the beginning of Western philosophy, humans have occupied the center of the universe. According to this conception, only human beings have an intrinsic value per se, the rest of the living things only have an instrumental value which means that the value of each thing is determined by its ability to satisfy human needs. This view is called Anthropocentrism and we can observe it already in Greek philosophers like Aristotle, who in his book *Politics* states that “nature has made all things specifically for the sake of man”. Some scholars argue that Judeo-Christian religions were the driving force for the spread of Anthropocentrism over time. For those religions, the idea that humans were sons of God and Earth was created exclusively for their use, was a core belief. For example, the Old Testament in the Book of Genesis (1:26) states “And God said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and

over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth”. Due to the popularization of Christianity all over Europe, Anthropocentrism became hegemonic in the Western thought during the end of the Roman Empire and the Middle Ages. This conception legitimated the exploitation of nature for the benefit of humans.

**COPERNICO WITH HIS** heliocentric model was the first who stroke a blow to this conception when he displaced humanity from the physical center of the universe in the 16th century, which triggered the beginning of the scientific revolution. All the new scientific discoveries, such as the Darwinian evolutionary theory, contributed to discredit theological metaphysical explanations and rationalism rose as the main epistemological view thanks to philosophers like Descartes. However, rationalism also lied the foundations for a new type of Anthropocentrism mainly through Cartesian dualism, that states that mind and body belong to two different realms of existence (note that de-

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spite arguing against classical theology Descartes maintains the same basic Christian structure of body and soul). This implies that only humans have minds and therefore, reason, drawing a crucial difference with the rest of living creatures.

**YET, IN THE** 17th century a new original and radical conception that challenged all previous ideas was conceived by Baruch Spinoza, a Jewish rationalist philosopher. He explained that everything that exists in Nature (i.e., everything in the Universe) is one Reality (substance) and there is only one set of rules governing the whole of the reality (this conception is usually called monism). Spinoza viewed God and Nature as equivalents, namely a single, fundamental substance that is the basis of the universe and of which all lesser “entities” are actually modes or modifications. Hence, Spinoza rejects the traditional duality of body and soul, instead he argues that both are mere attributes of the universal substance. This idea was perceived as heretic at that time and Spinoza was expelled from the Jewish community in Amsterdam and considered an atheist. Hence, it can be said that Spinoza laid the foundations for a new relation between human beings and nature.

**DRAWING FROM THOSE** roots, the 19th Century American transcendentalists writers like Henry David Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson and Walt Whitman also showed interest in the relationship between humans and Nature. According to this philosophy, Nature should be protected not only because it has current or future quantifiable value for society, but rather, because of what we do not know about it. At the core of these ideals is that natural, pristine places have a spiritual and magical grandeur and we should respect them out of childlike wonder. This philosophy laid the groundwork for early environmental concerns in the US at the end of the 19th century. However, also from the anthropocentric point of view, some authors began to worry about the preservation of environment. The English philosopher John Stuart Mill argued that there was no value in conquering nature and that it would be necessary to maintain a “stationary state” in order to achieve an equilibrium. This had a strong influence on the US environmental policy, resulting in the creation of National Parks under the presidency of Theodore Roosevelt, for instance.

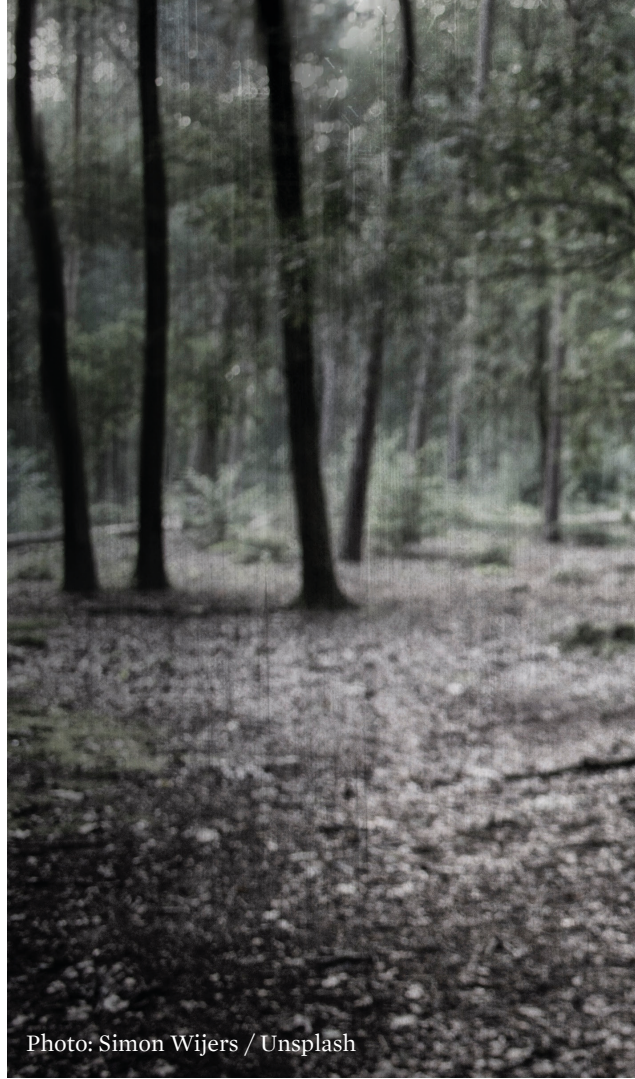


Photo: Simon Wijers / Unsplash

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WE CAN NO LONGER DISMISS NATURE AS SOMETHING SUBORDINATED TO HUMAN'S INTEREST, BUT RATHER AS AN EQUAL





**IN THE 20TH** century the outcome of the extreme interference with our environment led the scientific community to fear that the rich biodiversity of the planet is at risk, occurring climate and environmental changes may lead to serious consequences for human beings and to the other forms of life on the planet. Hence, according to scientists a new approach to nature was needed in order to promote a harmonious cohabitation with Nature. The effect of human actions on environment began to be seen as self-evident and concerns about preservation of Nature started to gain importance. In 1973, the Norwegian philosopher Arne Næss coined the term “deep ecology”, which constitutes an environmental philosophy that encourages “biocentric egalitarianism”, meaning that all living beings have an intrinsic value regardless their value to human needs. Deep ecology has numerous sources, both scientific with the development of ecology and biology and spiritual like

Buddhism (live in harmony with Nature). However, it is clear and Næss himself acknowledges it, that the main grounds are due to Spinoza’s metaphysics. Deep ecology takes a more holistic view on the world and seeks to understand the separate parts of the ecosystem function as a whole. This philosophy provides theoretical grounds for ecological and green movements and seeks for a new foundation of environmental ethics.


**THE POSITION EACH** element occupies within the hierarchical relationship between humans and Nature is shaped by the view used to analyze it. Hence, the deep ecology view challenges the predominant anthropocentric conception by attributing Nature the same importance as humans. This implies that we can no longer dismiss Nature as something subordinated to human’s interest, but rather we have to value Nature as an equal. ●



# ISLANDS ON A DEATH ROW

Increasing sea levels due to climate change is a serious threat especially for growing coastal populations. For some people living on low-lying islands, damage from sea level rise is already a daily reality. Kiribati, one of the most vulnerable islands, illustrates well the (unfulfilled) needs of a small nation fighting the consequences of climate change.





**T**he adverse impacts of climate change are contributing to current and future transformations of human movement. Despite extreme environmental events such as hurricanes and tsunamis receiving far more attention, it is the gradual changes in the environment that will have the greatest impact on future migration. One such gradual phenomenon is rising sea levels, especially affecting the population of numerous low-lying islands. Should the sea level keep rising at the current rate, these islands are in danger of entirely disappearing. Even though this might sound like a pessimistic prediction, rising sea levels already impede the everyday life of people living on island nations such as Fiji, Tuvalu, the Marshall Islands, Vanuatu, and Kiribati - amongst others.

**KIRIBATI, A NATION** of 105,000 people, is on the list of places in the world most vulnerable to rising sea levels and could be completely submerged in

only 50 years. Kiribati includes 32 small islands, of which most are less than 2 kilometres wide. Hence, many citizens of Kiribati live near exposed coastlines and constitute some of the most impoverished victims of climate change. The tangible fear existing on the island is reflected by the purchase of 5,460 acres of land on neighbouring Fiji. The purchased plot is not only intended to be cultivated in order to deal with increasing food insecurity, it could also serve as a potential relocation place for the island's entire population.

**THE LAND TRANSFER** was approved by Ratu Epeli Nailatikau, president of the Republic of Fiji, who assures that the people of Kiribati will have a home if their country would drown by the rising sea level as a result of climate change. He further states that his nation and others have a responsibility to not stand back and watch another country "sink slowly beneath the waves" and that Fiji would assist Kiribati in any way it could. Brave words, but



the situation on Fiji is not looking much better. On the island, coastal homes have been routinely flooded, while saltwater has been destroying sugarcane crops, a driving force of Fiji's economy.

**HENCE, SOLIDARITY CANNOT** only be provided by another vulnerable island, but also the less vulnerable world has to accept responsibility to counteract threats of rising sea level. This, in practice already faces obstacles on a legal basis, where people displaced due to the forces of climate change are de facto unprotected. The 1951 Refugee Convention uses refugee as a legal term for a person persecuted for "race, religion, nationality; membership of a particular social group or political opinion". However, this definition excludes people displaced by climate change. A legal mechanism that assures climate change refugees the assistance from other countries does simply not exist yet.

**THEREFORE, INTERNATIONAL AGENCIES**, such as the UN Refugee Agency and the International Organization for Migration, have pointed out the need to specifically protect environmental migrants. Yet, establishing such a law has been proven to bring along a number of serious challenges. Institutional capacity issues, the causal complexity, as well as the difficult problem of determining and proving that environmental changes alone forced somebody to migrate, have impeded the construction of international agreements that can be practically applied. A single new category for a climate migrant opens an important discussion, as clearly defining who qualifies as a refugee will be far more complex than the simple category suggests.

**IN NEW ZEALAND**, the world's first climate change refugee case has already taken place around Ioane Teitiota, a Kiribati citizen. In 2015, the Supreme Court chose not to review the decision that he and his family do not qualify as refugees according to the international refugee convention. Ioane Teitiota and his wife came to New Zealand in 2007 and remained in the country illegally after their permits had expired in October 2010. In order to avoid its deportation, the family has applied for the refugee status "on the basis of changes to his environment in Kiribati caused by sea-level rises associated with climate change". Despite that Teitiota has made several attempts to stay in New Zealand as a climate change refugee rather than returning back home, his request had for a third

and final time been rejected by high court. As it has been argued, a refugee must have a legitimate fear of persecution in his home country. Despite acknowledged that rising sea levels may make life more difficult, the judged decided that Teitiota failed to prove that nature is persecuting him.

**YET, THE BASIC** tenor in New Zealand has somehow changed as the government has recently been debating about a program that enables up to 100 pacific island residents per year to enter the country. The idea was brought up as part of the Green party's pre-election policy and suggests a newly established visa category addressing people displaced by climate change. A visa track to specifically address people displaced by weather and climate can be seen as a first step towards

## “ A POTENTIAL RELOCATION PLACE FOR THE ISLAND'S ENTIRE POPULATION

empowering citizens of the endangered small island states and would constitute a very important precedent case. Not a sufficient one, however, as climate change could become the main cause of human migration in the world and will constitute one of the biggest challenges for the international community throughout the 21st century. Yet, rather than assuming responsibility, the majority of countries tend to choose harder restrictions on migration. These isolation policies, however, do leave the most vulnerable to their fate. Of all people those who contributed the least to the forces that drive this tidal wave of climate induced sea level rises. ●



# WHY WE SHOULD NOT KILL OUR DARLINGS



In Disney's adaptation of Hans Christian Andersen's fairytale "The Little Mermaid", Ariel and her tiny blue-yellow friend Flounder go treasure hunting in a scary sunken ship. It is dark and spooky, and then, to their big horror, one of the shadows actually turns out to be thrown by a big bad shark that wants to eat them. Luckily, our heroes manage to outwit him (because he is a bit stupid as well) and escape by a hairbreadth.

**D**ue to pop culture and our archaic fear of predators, it is not surprising that we have adopted the image of sharks being evil badass killer machines. Truth is, though, that this image is nothing but humans ascribing to an animal random characteristics that we made up through language. However, the consequences are drastic: this image of sharks being monsters seems to legitimate their slaughtering, even when in reality, it is absolutely unlikely for a human to be attacked by a shark.

**IN A BROADER** definition, they have namely populated the earth for 420 million years, thus basically being living fossils that should deserve special attention, one could argue. Still, focusing on rebuilding stocks of 'edible' fish is higher on the agenda than to protect, let's say, sharks. Or jellyfish or plankton. These are namely species that do not seem to directly be of use for humans, plus, they are not perceived as 'cute', like dolphins, for instance, due to above mentioned narratives. Further, there is this phenomenon that unless environmental issues are put into a social context, as in making sure the effect on human well-being is made clear, they may not get as much attention. What I am saying is that by no means we should shift our focus away from 'cute' animals to be protected. But we should also include the 'uncute' ones like sharks. Arguably they are just as important for the ecosystem as dolphins. The higher the biological

diversity of species in the ocean, the stronger the resistance against changes, even climate change.

**BUT WHY ARE** sharks then slaughtered in the first place? The causation is not very transparent, and there are several factors that count in. One example, sharks are caught 'accidentally' as by-catch by industrial trawlers. Further, though catching sharks is illegal in many regions, some fisherman simply head for countries where this is not a crime instead. Unfortunately, these sharks are not even 'used' as a whole. Usually, the only parts that is processed are their fins, as these can be sold for a good price in certain markets, for example, to be used for shark fin soup or for 'medicine'.

**WE KNOW LESS** about the oceans than we know about outer space. Yet, we let industrial fishing including devastating 'side-effects' like by-catch and circumventing quotas drastically extinct life in the seas. And that is only one example - the destruction of habitats, pollution, rapid climate change and several other man-made influences do their contribution to the problem. What must be kept in mind is that not only our direct action takes its tribute. All these changes that happen to the oceans, may they be big or small, man-made or indirect consequences, happen within a bigger picture and affect the circle of life.

**IN NATURE, EVERYTHING** is tied together and depends on the other components. Changes in the





## “US HUMANS LOVE TO MAKE UP THINGS LIKE THE EVIL, BAD, AND A BIT STUPID SHARK

food chain, in the diversity of species and thus in the ecosystem do affect other small wheels in the big system. If sharks were to die out, to stay with this example, other species' populations maybe were to explode or to go extinct as well, affecting the biomass of plankton and thus the oceans' ability to bind carbon-dioxide. In other words, not only life in the oceans will be affected, but also life on the land, in the air, our planet's climate, and ultimately, also us humans. We just don't know yet in what dimension or with which consequences. Changes happen on an ongoing basis. Extinction is a natural part of evolution, and so is the emergence of new species. The problem is, though, that the balance in this process is being disrupted by humans at remarkably high speed.

**WE CAN'T MAKE** undone what we, the humans, have done so far. Still, there is hope. Besides some official attempts like the introduction of catch regulations or more exhaustive research, there are various ac-

tivist groups and organizations that fight against extinction of species in the ocean and for protecting marine life. Even the Vatican has taken action in hosting conferences about counteracting extinction of species and promoting biological diversity.

**US HUMANS LOVE** to make up things like the evil bad and a bit stupid shark to laugh about. But unfortunately, in “The Little Mermaid” it is not Ariel that we should identify with because she gets away. Rather, we are like the slightly simple-minded and greedy shark, that, in attempt to catch its prey, gets stuck in a man-made trap. Unfortunately, the movie makers never told what happened to the nasty shark afterwards. Let's, for our very own sake, hope he managed to cheat the gallows and will never make the same mistake again. ●



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