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Policy Paper on Climate Action

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MILLENFOLKELIST
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EUROPEAN YOUTH
JEUNES

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Executive Summary

In the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Member States express their commitment to protect the planet from degradation and take urgent action on climate change. At the same time Education and skills, and environmental protection and fighting climate change are considered priority topics by at least half of the respondents to European Youth Eurobarometer survey published in January 2018. President Juncker mentioned that European young people are less engaged in traditional forms of participation despite their interest in politics. The paradox which appears is that Member states must design policies to combat climate change which will affect youth's lives in a couple of years, while the latter do not seem to be very interested in voting and engaging with decision making. YOUROTRIP project (short for "YOU.th RO.und TRIP for climate action") aspires to foster youth participation in democratic procedures of decision making through discussions on the high priority topic of climate change.

Through YOUROTRIP project, young people from Greece, France, Spain, Portugal, United Kingdom, Denmark, Romania and Austria met, formed 'Local Youth Councils', discussed and came up with ideas which are recommending as solutions to climate change. In the context of YOUROTRIP project young people met in September 2021 in Denmark and discussed about the topic of "Climate Justice", and in this document, are their policy recommendations on this matter.

Introduction

As stated in by Daisy Simmons (2020): "Climate change, an inherently social issue, can upset anyone's daily life in countless ways. But not all climate impacts are created equal or distributed equally. From extreme weather to rising sea levels, the effects of climate change often have disproportionate effects on historically marginalized or underserved communities.



'Climate justice' is a term, and more than that a movement, that acknowledges climate change can have differing social, economic, public health, and other adverse impacts on underprivileged populations. Advocates for climate justice are striving to have these inequities addressed head-on through long-term mitigation and adaptation strategies.

Analysis

The following are key factors to consider in thinking about climate justice:

1) Climate justice begins with recognizing key groups are differently affected by climate change.

From the United Nations and the IPCC to the NAACP, many organizations are connecting the dots between civil rights and climate change. As a UN blog describes it: "The impacts of climate change will not be borne equally or fairly, between rich and poor, women and men, and older and younger generations."

"Climate change is happening now and to all of us. No country or community is immune," according to UN Secretary-General António Guterres. "And, as is always the case, the poor and vulnerable are the first to suffer and the worst hit." Generally, many victims of climate change also have disproportionately low responsibility for causing the emissions responsible for climate change in the first place – particularly youth or people of any age living in developing countries that produce fewer emissions per capita than is the case in the major polluting countries."

2) Climate impacts can exacerbate inequitable social conditions.

Low-income communities, people of color, indigenous people, people with disabilities, older or very young people, women – all can be more susceptible to risks posed by climate impacts like raging storms and floods, increasing wildfire, severe heat, poor air quality, access to food and water, and disappearing shorelines.



Here are a few examples of how some communities may be more affected by these impacts than others – and may have fewer resources to handle those impacts, too:

Communities of color are often more at risk from air pollution, according to both the NAACP, the American Lung Association, and countless research papers.

Seniors, people with disabilities, and people with chronic illnesses may have a harder time living through periods of severe heat, or being able to quickly and safely evacuate from major storms or fire.

People with limited income may live in subsidized housing, which too often is located in a flood plain. Their housing options may also have inadequate insulation, mold problems, or air conditioning to effectively combat severe heat or cope with strong storms. Economically challenged people may also be hard-pressed to afford flood or fire insurance, rebuild homes, or pay for steep medical bills after catastrophe strikes.

Language barriers can make it difficult for immigrant communities to get early information about incoming storms or weather disasters or wildfires, or to communicate effectively with first responders in the midst of an evacuation order.

Some indigenous communities are already seeing their homes and livelihoods lost to rising sea levels or drought. For example, the Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw tribe has lost nearly all of its land and is relocating to higher ground.

Prolonged drought and flooding can affect food supply or distribution, making it harder for people to access affordable, healthy food.

Today's youth and future generations will experience more profound impacts of climate change as it worsens over time, from direct adverse health impacts to the financial implications of needing to shore-up infrastructure and other adaptation and mitigation needs." (Daisy Simmons, 2020)

"According to statistics published by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, since 2008 over 318 million people around the world have been forcibly



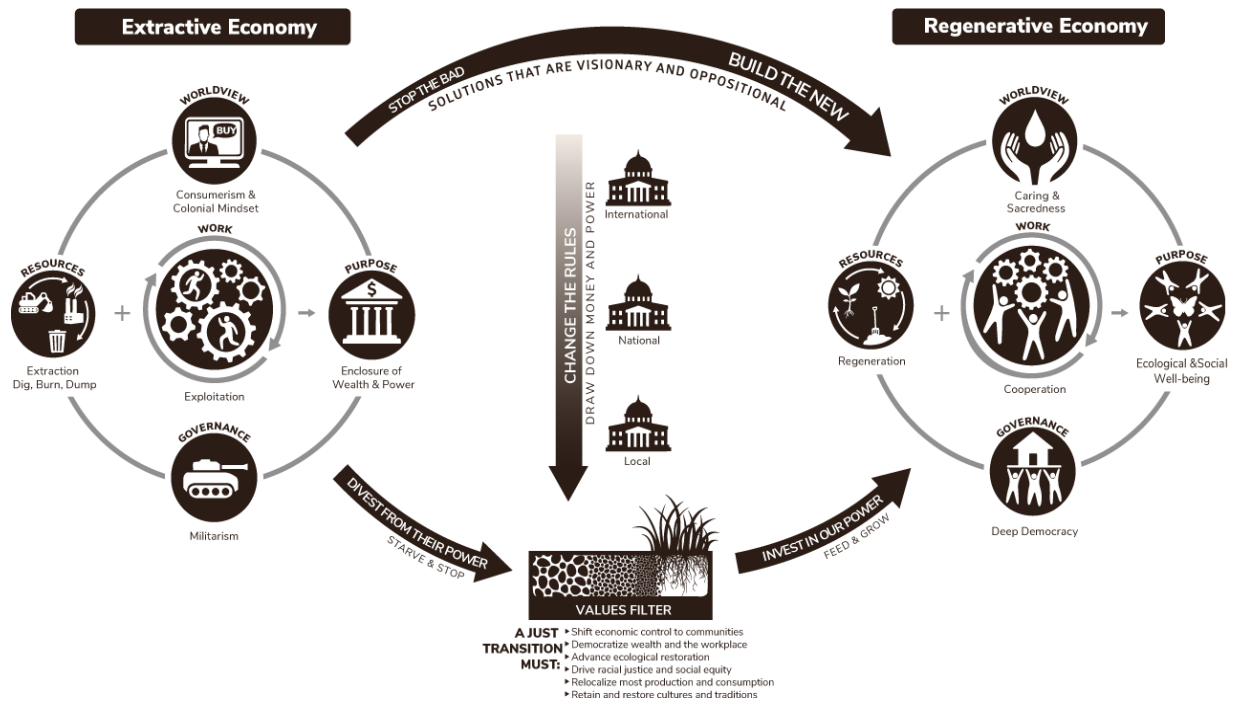


displaced by floods, windstorms, earthquakes or droughts, 30.7 million in 2020 alone. This is equivalent to one person being displaced every second. Depending on the frequency and scale of the major natural disasters occurring, there are significant fluctuations in the total number of displaced people from one year to the next, yet the trend over recent decades has been a growing one. Many find refuge within their own country, but some are forced to go abroad. In the summer of 2021, Europe witnessed heavy and unprecedented flooding, particularly in Belgium and Germany, and heat domes in the Mediterranean region. Scientists relate this directly to climate change. All things considered, the number of 'climate refugees' looks set to rise." (European Parliament, 2019)

Good practices

1. Climate Justice Alliance (CJA) is formed in 2013 and is working to bring race, gender, and class considerations to the center of the climate action discussion. They are a growing member alliance of 84 urban and rural frontline communities, organizations and supporting networks in the climate justice movement. The main objectives of CJA are:
 - 1) To inspire and organize bold action by communities on the frontlines of climate change to challenge the extractive economy that is harming people and ecosystems;
 - 2) To build resilient, regenerative and equitable economies rooted in place-based webs of social and ecological relationships;
 - 3) To expose false promises posed as 'solutions' to the climate crisis, so that precious resources are not allocated to programs that exacerbate social or economic inequality or cause further ecological disruption;
 - 4) To confront governments and industry to act boldly on climate change.

The organization is following the Just Transition policies strategies. Just Transition is a vision-led, unifying and place-based set of principles, processes, and practices that build economic and political power to shift from an extractive economy to a regenerative economy. This means approaching production and consumption cycles holistically and waste-free. The transition itself must be just and equitable; redressing past harms and creating new relationships of power for the future through reparations.



2. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) is a civil rights organization in the United States, formed in 1909 with the mission to ensure the political, educational, social, and economic equality of rights of all persons and to eliminate race-based discrimination.

The NAACP is also advocating in the field of Environmental Justice, for efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and advance clean energy while promoting food justice, transportation equity, and civil rights in emergency planning. More in detail, NAACP:

- Works to address the many practices that are harming communities nationwide and worldwide.
- Implements campaigns to pass renewable energy and energy efficiency standards while simultaneously working to provide safer, more sustainable mechanisms for managing energy needs for our communities and beyond
- Fights for the policies needed to rectify these impacts and advance a society that fosters sustainable, cooperative, regenerative communities that uphold all rights for all people in harmony with the earth.
- Strengthens development, monitoring, and enforcement of regulations at federal, state, and local levels





- Supports small businesses, unions, and others to develop demonstration projects to ensure that communities of color are accessing revenue generation opportunities in the new energy economy.

Conclusion

Climate change has been described as the biggest threat to public health this century. Some people and places will be more exposed than others to the direct impacts of climate change, such as sea level rise, or extreme weather, due to where they live. Within these places, some people will be more vulnerable to the impacts, as they will be more sensitive to negative effects on their health or wellbeing or may have less capacity to respond. However, vulnerability is not inherent in particular groups – it is determined by a mix of social, economic, environmental and cultural factors, as well as institutional practices.

The impacts of climate change will not be borne equally or fairly, between rich and poor, women and men, and older and younger generations. This is the central argument of “climate justice” – a reshaping of climate action from a technical effort to cut emissions into an approach that also addresses human rights and social inequality.

Pioneered by activists from the global south in response to the threats facing their homelands, today the term “climate justice” is widely used by researchers, NGOs and politicians seeking to address related injustices throughout society. Identifying the urgency and the consequences of climate change, instead of “false solutions”, climate justice activists want to see solutions to climate change that not only effectively cut emissions but also ensure that no communities are left behind. This makes a “just transition”, in which workers and their communities are supported in the shift to a low-carbon economy, central to the idea of climate justice.



Recommendations

1. Climate Refugees

- Establishment of an official definition of climate refugee
- Establishment of legal protection to climate refugees and recognition of their legal status to claim asylum.
- Financial support and funding to European citizens for hosting climate refugees and integrating programs in host states
- Increase foreign aid as preventive measure in European level
- Implement legal suggestions made by the UNHCR, regarding legal protections.
- Introduce climate awareness to EU citizens, led by the affected community

2. Biodiversity Loss

Biodiversity loss is the decline or disappearance of biological diversity, understood as the variety of living things that inhabit the planet. Ecological changes, such as wildfire, floods, and volcanic eruptions, change ecosystems drastically by eliminating local populations of some species and transforming whole biological communities. Our recommendations to address this phenomenon are:

- Protecting natural habitats, stop deforestations and impose heavy fines and sanctions to prevent it
- Adjusting urban environments with adding more greenery variety for example by implementing rooftop gardens and farms and community gardens
- Financing the transition to polyculture and organic agriculture
- Finance biodiversity programs as well as educational programs that include in the curriculum the importance of biodiversity depending on the country climate and needs
- Finance the local farming for them to be able to sell their products cheaper
- Finance and encourage agrotourism and alternative forms of tourism



- Finance and organize trainings to teach people how to expand the biodiversity even in their homes in a sustainable way.

3. New pandemics and outbreaks

Climate changes results in several risk factors for the emergence of disease outbreaks, and potential pandemics, in humans and other species. Rise of temperatures influences patterns of migration and the habitats of many species and extreme weather events such as wildfires, floods, and others which after the natural cycles that stabilize healthy contact between humans and other species, as well as between other species. When these instances take place, humans have contact with species that they aren't supposed to or never had before, therefore becoming susceptible to new outbreaks of both known and unknown diseases. In order to focus this issue, we propose that serious preparation and prevention measures are implemented.

Taking all the above into consideration, we propose that new constructions are built, having architecture design to withstand extreme weather events, such as water and earthquake resistant constructions. Constructions should also be able to sustain significant weight on the rooftops, promoting green building and the creation of urban farms. This will also help in decreasing extreme heat inside the building and is overall a community-building practice.

Finally, promoting insects netting, in order to keep climate-sensitive mosquito-carried disease, such as dengue or malaria, away, as well as solar panels.

Moreover, during the current pandemic of Covid-19, our societies, above all, presented lack of preventive measures and insufficient management. We should tackle before climate-change induced diseases cause more outbreaks, by having medically qualified teams and facilities with easy to-go equipment in places all around the world, as well as water, food, shelter, evacuation plans and psychological support for those affected.

Materials to prevent pests from spreading, such as nets should be provided but it is also important to monitor species around populations to keep numbers controlled and test them. This way if climate change forces contact with humans from migrations and other populations will be safer.



We're in favor of establishing vigilance systems around the world for both disease outbreaks and potentially dangerous weather events, as to better prevent this threat. This way, when a disease shows up in our patient this can be properly registered and communicated to the people in order to prevent further infection. Vigilance systems for weather events allows for evacuation and eliminate the risk of dangerous outbreaks.

Last but not least, we should educate people and bring awareness to how climate change affects new arising outbreaks. There should be information and educational campaigns, especially in the education system, including non-formal activities and workshops that present the importance of this topic. Awareness events should be funded for the general public in benefit of global knowledge and more preventative measures.

In sum, prevention and preparation is essential, In order to minimize the impacts of climate change in public healthy, and we strongly feel that this can be practically tackled by the measures suggested above. As our knowledge advances, we hope to apply it effectively, for a safer, healthier Earth.

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