



**JUST
TRANSITION
ISSUE**

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EDITORIAL

Dear fellow young European Greens,

We are very happy to introduce the newest printed edition on just transition to you!

The past year has been arguably more or less challenging than usual to all of us. As the gap between the ones that have the resources to thrive and the ones who don't, is growing, - exacerbated by the current crisis and the ones forthcoming - we all know that transition into a socially and environmentally just society is inevitable. However, Europe is at a crossroads: it can choose to take a road to an environmentally-friendly and just world for all, or fail to ensure a sustainable future.

Green & unequal Europe

In the 2050's, the climate and environmental crises have been averted at the very last minute. The rapid shift has created considerable inequalities globally and across Europe, leading to the establishment of two global camps: the winners, those who can enjoy a comfortable sustainable lifestyle dependent upon the labour and resource extraction from the poorer, mainly non-European countries. Entire states, faced with the burden of public debt created by severe austerity programmes, could not keep pace with the transition. Failing to transform into green, circular economies, they have become Europe's wasteland, where the last polluting industries locate. Their inhabitants - the losers of a green transition - cannot afford electric cars or organic food despite respective industries being heavily subsidized by the EU. Yet, they are lucky compared to the situation outside of Europe: in short, the green dream for the few has created unprecedented inequality for the many.

Green & just Europe

In our vision for 2050, Europe is a region of co-operation for innovation and building genuinely sustainable, and circular rural areas and cities. Putting common benefits to the forefront, ensuring inclusion, and well-being are the central values of societies - no one is left behind. A general consensus that the planet's resources are finite prevails, and sustainable lifestyles are adopted with the help of innovative tools. Residential and industrial areas are supplied with electricity from renewable resources and the once polluting industrial plants are turned into recreational spaces. The effective distribution of workload and working hours has multiple positive impacts on society: free time and working hours are balanced, allowing everyone to contribute to a society according to their resources. This will enable individuals to take better care of their mental and physical health, and hence, be happier. The European region provides its residents with universal basic income, homes, quality health care and food while welcoming refugees.

The future is not yet written. Everyday our ideas and actions shape the societies and the region in which we live in. Let us consider the bright vision as a compass and encouragement towards the future we imagine, and work for every day. Let us continue building ambitious plans and take action to achieve them. We have collected plans and visions from Young Greens all across Europe for this printed edition. At all times, we tried to remain conscious that to this day there are considerable inequalities within and between European countries. We hope the content reflects the diverse approaches that need to be considered in a just transition.

The edition would not have been made possible without the many wonderful authors that contributed to it, the kind support and cooperation of FYEG's Secretariat and the Executive Committee, or the financial support of the European Youth Foundation of Council of Europe - thank you!

We wish you a happy reading of the freshly printed 2021 edition on visions for just transition! We hope you enjoy these inspiring pieces and get empowered to continue your important work for a just transition.

Sincerely,

the Ecosprinter Editorial Board

WHY YOU REBEL

Jasper Strunk

Times are dire. Last year, Australia lost a fifth of its trees and billions of animals to wildfires. The fires were so massive that they created devastating weather systems. The enormous heat caused storms of sparks and smoke, and pyroclastic clouds formed over the flames sending lightning to areas dozens of kilometers away and igniting new fires. It was not so much a disaster but rather an annihilation. **Climate catastrophe has arrived.**

It wasn't until 2018/2019 that the climate crisis was broadly perceived as an actual crisis. The sad old story about drowning polar bears was successfully reframed as a life and death struggle of the human race. And thanks to school strikers, instead of a problem to be tackled by conscientious consumers, climate change became an obligation for our leaders to take action now in order to achieve real sustainability by 2030 at the latest. **Truth has been spoken.**

Yet, the appeal not to force premature deaths onto the world's youth has been declined by our governing elites.

Therefore, you rebel.

You might not rebel yet because you are routed by untruths, cynicism or collective habitual inaction. But each day you cut ties to hollow beliefs, each week your anger and depression is swelling up more, each month our moral bankruptcy crashes on you more severely than the month before. The governing elites deny the world's youth of living. Our elites deny you of living.

So, you stand up for your rights, but you still feel that the idea of a rebellion is kind of silly. That it has little potential and is hunting an illusion of a magical collective awakening. There-

fore, you decide to go with more realistic assumptions, move step by step, build coalitions and try to reform the system from within.

But to rebel is not a tactic or approach, it's a stance. It can play out in the streets, in parliaments, in churches or agencies. **To rebel is simply the deliberate non-cooperation with an unbearably immoral system.** The decisive non-cooperation with governments that propagate "everything's fine" while we already choke on the smoke. It is the insistence on telling the truth and acting accordingly. And those who speak and act truly these days find themselves fighting – by the most promising means – for fundamental change of our global civilization in order to achieve real sustainability. Any other approach is denying either the climate physics or the transcultural moral consent of not killing one's descendants. We have only five to ten years to change our civilisation bottom-up and on a global scale, while the governing elites oppose this change. This is not a drill!

You rebel, because the necessity and appropriateness of the most efficient means against a murderous system become more and more undeniable as ecocide goes on. In May 2020, the biggest sociological study on environmental issues to date, was conducted: out of 400,000 German and French participants 52 percent (Germany) and 68 percent (France) respectively, said - in the context of the climate and ecological crisis - that they "would tomorrow or in the coming months participate in a far-reaching revolt". **You rebel, because the time is now. You rebel, because not being killed is not an interest but your indispensable right.** As this conflict cannot be pacified it can only be solved by being escalated and won.

Rebel, because this system is over and humanity is not.



A WORLD MADE BY THE RICH FOR THE RICH: Why Tackling Inequalities is Key to a Just Transition

Claire Lejeune

The yearly Oxfam report on the state of inequalities¹ always triggers a periodical uproar: how is it possible that we have reached such a level of disparities? How can the rich have driven so far apart from the rest of us? And how is it that in a world where that level of wealth is made possible, there are still so many left with near to nothing? These questions float in the air for some time before being drowned in the usual flow of daily news. Nothing significant is ever done to rewire the economy.

Another report by the same organization has recently shed some light on a more specific dimension of these inequalities: the link between the level of wealth and the carbon footprint of individuals. The report *Confronting Carbon Inequality* released in September 2020² finds that *"the richest one percent of the world's population are responsible for more than twice as much carbon pollution as the 3.1 billion people who made up the poorest half of humanity during a critical 25-year period of unprecedented emissions growth"*. The rich and super-rich weigh down very heavily on the Earth and therefore contribute immensely to climate change. Tackling this issue should therefore be at the centre of discussions regarding just transition.

It is true, however, that the super-rich do their best to convince us all that they are on the right side and are actively contributing to the fight: huge donations are made to funds, trusts and charities that tackle poverty or devise solutions to combat the loss of ecosystems or find solutions to climate change (the Rockefeller foundation or the Bill and Melinda Gates foundation are but two examples amongst many others).

But what if their wealth was part of the problem? What if, however generous their donations and how sincere they are, the very fact that they were able to accumulate that level of wealth was the symptom of a broken system that is leading us all to climate breakdown? What if the mere existence of that level of wealth was simply incompatible with a just transition towards a sustainable world?

Indeed, it has become increasingly evident that the rich and super rich have great influence on how our world is shaped and on how our democratic systems (dys)function.

Many studies show how different it is to be poor in a country where the rich and super rich are many and influent, and to be "poor" in a country where those levels of wealth do

not exist or do so in smaller proportions³. The existence of these levels of wealth are not without consequences on the way each and every one of us view our own situation, nor is it without consequences on the structure of consumption. Levels of wellbeing, content and happiness nosedive everywhere the rich and super rich are influential: we perceive our situation in comparison to that of others, the huge amounts of wealth accumulated by some belittle our modest income and leaves us eternally unsatisfied. Furthermore, the tendency is contrasting: the rich become even richer and prices are driven upwards everywhere, disregarding the fact that the poor may be getting even poorer. This is what creates the "dualization" of the market, with increasing numbers of people being simply unable to take part in the it and having to rely on government handouts or the assistance of charities in order to simply make ends meet⁴, whilst others indulge in ever more extravagant and sophisticated expenses. Companies elaborate their innovations and new products first and foremost to cater to the needs of the wealthy, which means the more the wealthy are wealthy, the more the market is pulled away from the drive to tackle basic needs and focus on making their activities and production sustainable.

Our democratic systems also suffer immensely from the capture of wealth in a few hands. Indeed, the super rich tend to have disproportionate influence over the way policies are devised and on how our representatives are chosen. The US' "super PAC"⁵ system is particularly telling, but our European democracies are not left untouched by this problem. Focusing on the French case, the work of economist Julia Cagé insightfully shows how this makes the aspiration to "equality" and "equal voices" – that is the backbone of the very idea of democracy – completely out of reach⁶. Political parties are mainly funded by the wealthiest, candidates to the main elections are mainly white, male and part of the upper class, and their decisions are therefore substantially less likely to meet the interests of the poor, the discriminated and down-trodden⁷. As a result, policies cater to the aspirations of the wealthiest and side-line concerns about the ever-growing consequences of climate change and environmental degradation on underprivileged neighbourhoods and minorities. Not surprisingly, they also fail to make sure States have the sufficient level of budget to invest in the critical changes that must be made to ensure transition to sustainable economies (clean energy, thermal renovation, public transportation, organic farming...): since the 1970s the rich have been let off from the fiscal effort, which means we are missing out on significant amounts of capital that could be used to fund



LE CAPITALISME

Celui-là fait une guerre terrible, inexorable, chaque jour, à toutes les heures du jour. Mais ces messieurs de la confiance ne s'en occuperont pas....

L'Assiette au Beurre

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transition, and that instead is serving the whims of a few privileged households. The capture of positions in the public sphere by the richest also affects the way the media processes and prioritizes information: **it is quite telling, for instance, that so much media attention was given to the fact that ski resorts would remain closed during the second lockdown in France, whereas at the same time one in five French people now live below the poverty line and are therefore very far from being able to fund any form of vacation, let alone costly ski holidays.**

It is way overdue to do away with the myth of trickle-down economics: the fact that some people are super rich does not lead to general wellbeing; on the contrary, it is an important reason why we are not able to conduct the fair transition we all hope for, it is the reason why we continue to entertain dreams of ever more technology and ever more wealth, in a world where our main priorities should be making sure that generations present and future are able to live safely, cover their basic needs and be protected from the dire consequences of climate change. It is way overdue to make sure govern-

ments at last do away with the tax cuts for the super-rich, financial assets and multinationals⁹, and come up with fiscal systems that free up the considerable levels of capital needed to invest properly in just transition and organize a fair redistribution of wealth in our economies. This cannot be done without fixing our broken democracies: we need the voices of the struggling classes and minorities to be heard loud and clear, and we need political decisions to be made first and foremost according to the true priorities of our time - covering the basic needs of all before catering to the whims of the super-rich, preparing the future by making bold moves to tackle climate change, changing our culture from a culture of consumption and competition to a culture focused on wellbeing and cooperation.

1. The most recent report, released on January 20th 2020, discloses that "world's billionaires have more wealth than 4.6 billion people". It can be found here: <https://bit.ly/2RmGPok>
2. <https://bit.ly/3vD1NhF>
3. This point is extensively tackled by Angus Deaton in *The Great Escape - Health, Wealth, and the Origins of Inequality*, Princeton University Press, 2014
4. This tendency was sharpened by the pandemic: in France, for example, the number of people relying on food banks to feed themselves soared, including amongst young people and students. According to an extensive study conducted in France, 50% of the people going to food banks during the pandemic were doing so for the first time: <https://bit.ly/2Sp27T1>
5. Super PAC (Political Action Committees) are groups that are able to accept unlimited political donations, by contrast with individuals who are allowed to give \$2,500 and corporations and unions who are strictly forbidden from making donations. These super PACs play a significant role in American elections and therefore give crucial leverage to the super wealthy in the electoral process.
6. *Libres et égaux en voix*, Julia Cagé, Fayard, 2020. J. Cagé is an influent economist who has worked in particular on links between the economy and the way our democracies evolve. Her previous work tackled the economy of the media, and this recent essay focuses on the underrepresentation of minorities in representative democracies -and ways to put an end to it.
7. As an example, a 2019 study estimates that "racial and ethnic minorities" make up 4% of the European Parliament, while making up 10% of the European population (however these figures are based on third-party assessment and not self-identification which introduces a certain level of bias) <https://bit.ly/2RjHIOL>
8. As an illustration, a 2019 study commissioned by the Greens/ EFA Group in the European Parliament and conducted by Petr Jankys shows that ETR (Effective Taxation Rates) in Europe are very low, much lower than the "official" taxation rate. The official rate in France was 33% in 2019 but P. Jankys finds that companies only ended up paying 17%. Furthermore, these levels are decreasing; in France corporate taxation was decreased to 28% in 2020 and should be further diminished to reach 25% in 2021, in spite of the pandemic and the need of public funds it creates. <https://bit.ly/3ufnQpR>

VOICES UNHEARD: Questioning the 'Just' in Climate Justice

Katrin Lammers, Zakia Soomauroo

At its very core, anthropogenic climate change and the way it is affecting humanity, is ultimately an issue of unprecedented injustice. The stories we tell will determine whether our society continues to self-destruct, or whether we can heal and thrive. However, how can we reconcile worldviews? How can we ensure justice is embedded in the foundation of the transition?

To explore this, we collected a summary of touching perspectives from the dialogues at our "Interconnected voices: Climate change, equity, and the way forward" conference in November 2020. The idea behind the conference was developed from noting the great need for more voices to come together to add to the public and policy discourse; to engage with the global community to learn from each other; and to share stories. With this essay, we want to echo those voices for a more representative and just conversation on climate justice.

Storytelling

The stories we tell about climate change matter because they analyze the way we think about the past and present, and therefore shape the future. Within climate sciences, there is a "danger of a single story" as noted by Imeh Ituen, a researcher at University of Hamburg. This "single story" does not take into consideration how the historical legacies of colonialism affect present abilities of mitigation and adaptation while ignoring loss and compensation. This also doesn't allow us to properly evaluate how gender, class, and race affect our understanding of the issue, its solutions, and where we stand.

A uniquely vulnerable group of communities – those living on islands - further drives home the importance of storytelling and giving all voices an equal chance to be heard. As Veta Wade, an ambassador for Island Innovation¹ living on Montserrat said; "living on an island brings the realities of climate change a step closer to the communities. It is all about storytelling and narratives since this is always the key to understanding the environment and engaging the community." However, these stories are often downplayed by research and projects focusing on technical solutions, which do not address the deep and inherent issues of just transitions. When we put the spotlight on stories related to the planet, it is important to keep in mind **"whose world is being talked about here? Whose apocalypse? Friday for whose futures? Rebellion against whose extinction? And Ende of which Gelände?"** as Mihir Sharma from the University of Bayreuth asked in his presentation.

Gender Perspectives

Women and girls remain underrepresented at all levels –

from policy, project planning and financing; to the legal system underpinning changes; to United Nations climate negotiations. The women and girls leading the numerous climate struggles around the world face constant backlash and are undermined by the media. The marginalization is especially true for women of color, rural women, Indigenous women and women from the so-called Global South³. Women and children are 14 times more likely to die in a disastrous climate event than men⁴. Yet their voices are constantly erased from the public sphere. Getting out of the crisis and achieving a sustainable future will mean that we need to include their voices and make gender inclusion a top priority.

The disparity between women's involvement and leadership, and the perceived value of our existence is summed up by Felipe Corral Montoya from Technische Universität Berlin: "Women are the forefront of all resistance movements that are of environmental and social activism in Colombia" yet "what energy transition are you talking about, if a woman is killed every 17 hours in this country [Colombia]?"

While women and girls are undeniably crucial voices and agents of change, our voices are more likely to not be heard, included, or even considered. Ikal Angelei from Friends of Lake Turkana⁵ summarized this perfectly: "Anti-patriarchal struggle cuts across every struggle for justice".



Indigenous Voices

Jama Wapichana, representing the Wapishana Indigenous Peoples of Brazil and Guyana, said in her talk "Nature is our mother and we are part of her [...]. We are connected to nature and respect her" showing their deep connection to nature and non-exploitative way of life. Joan Carling, representing the Indigenous Peoples Major Group for Sustainable Development⁶, underlines the fact that climate justice is at the

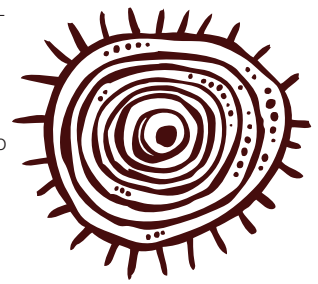
heart of indigenous people's survival. Her statement "for indigenous peoples, climate justice requires the recognition and protection of our inherent rights to our lands, territories and resources and to self-determination and the sustainable and equitable use of natural resources" is more than just a requirement that should have been met a long time ago. It also gives a glimpse on visions and solutions that are applied in ancient and indigenous knowledge for centuries.

Moving Forward

Studies also show that just transitions need to be **developed from traditional knowledge and modern science applying community and eco-system based approaches**, as is already practiced in many indigenous communities around the globe. Joan Carling connects to this fact when she recounts, "Indigenous communities are one with their land. This relation is reflected in the values of doing no harm, maintaining peace and conserving futures for the coming generation; forming the framework for sustainability." There is an organically grown and strong commitment to a sustainable lifestyle that got lost through industrialization and the proliferation of neo-liberal values and systems. For example, Adrian Lasimbang representing the Indigenous Peoples Network of Malaysia said, "Indigenous communities have the ability to embrace renewable energy and protect the environment and this merits recognition." So let us start the recognition and learn from each other in **diverse and representative research groups applying creative solution-finding considering non-western perspectives and traditions**. One key statement from our workshop "Rights Based Approach for Climate Justice" was that "we need to build partnerships with indigenous peoples as rights-holders, and stewards of nature who are providing solutions to climate change."



One fact we found especially inspiring during this workshop was the consensus-based decision making of tribes in the Philippines as described by Lulu Jimenez. She also highlighted the well-established communication and alignment of different tribes in her region within their campaign against large hydropower dams endangering their territories. **It seemed to us like a deeply participative and respectful process empowering those not in power.**



Just transitions need a **truly participative and inclusive global solution-development**. Ikal stated, "the participatory approach is always good - but not participatory on paper." She mentioned that participative processes require more time leading to some stakeholders losing patience. However, in her opinion, taking the extra time is worth it: "It is such a smooth sail after that!" Research underlines this fact and found out that **participative decisions are much more respected and implemented compared to top-down processes and at the end more effective**.

To conclude, just transitions require a constant **critical reflection of current institutional, societal, contextual, and empirical biases tackling existing unjust global power structures and discrimination**. This applies to the cause and effect of ongoing climate change impacts, to the preparedness, capacity and resources to tackle these as well as to participation in decision and solution development. As Mihir Sharma opened his talk: **"Climate Change – Whose crisis?"**

This is why we should always critically reflect on some essential questions from time to time:

- Whom do we believe we are representing?
- Whom are we speaking for?
- Whom do we imagine ourselves fighting on behalf of?
- Is this a safe and just space?
- Who has the most to teach us and the least opportunities to do so?

1. <https://islandinnovation.co/>
2. Allusion to the anti-coal movement in Germany called "Ende Gelände" which translates literally into "End of compound". The question posed here translates as: "End of which compound?"
3. Essay on the term „Global South“ <https://bit.ly/3f5AXs7>
4. Peterson, K. (2007). "Reaching Out to Women When Disaster Strikes." Soroptimist White Paper, <http://www.soroptimist.org>
5. Friends of Lake Turkana (FoLT) is a grassroots organization founded in 2011 that works with and on behalf of the communities within the greater Lake Turkana basin to demand their collective social, environmental, economic, cultural and territorial rights. <https://www.friendsoflaketurkana.org>
6. <https://indigenouspeoples-sdg.org>

THERE IS NO CLIMATE JUSTICE WITHOUT GENDER JUSTICE!

Anouk Noelle Nicklas

The climate crisis is a massively gender related topic, which needs to be seen and treated as such.

With the global *Fridays for Future* occupying streets to the millions in 2019, the climate crisis and the urgency to fight it, seem to finally have a steady place on the political agenda. Current politics are still far away from remaining in the carbon budget to meet the 1,5°-goal set in the Paris Agreement. To tackle the climate crisis, we need to see all of its intersections. Gender justice is one of these.

The effects of the climate crisis are not gender neutral¹. **Climate change does not affect everyone in the same way, its effects differentiate a lot depending on gender.** Women and people of other genders, made vulnerable by societal structures, suffer from climate change more than men do².

Women are more likely to be killed in natural disasters³. They are more likely to be bound to their home, and less likely to

be able to swim⁴. Women make up the vast majority of the world's poorest population⁵. With growing poverty, the disparity of the effects of climate change grows. Secondary effects of climate change, for example economic losses disproportionately affect women. They make up around 80 percent of all climate refugees⁶. At the same time women's physical and economic mobility is reduced by patriarchal structures. The climate crisis is threatening women's welfare and equality. Patriarchy reduces women's chances of surviving in a world affected by climate change. This is particularly true in the global South, where women's smallholder farms are more exposed to climate change⁷.

Women from a low economic standing suffer from climate change the most, yet they have the least opportunities to change existing policies⁸. Patriarchy does not just put women on the front line of climate change, it also diminishes their chances to influence politics and economics⁹. A gender unjust society, therefore, burdens women on multiple levels.





At the same time women contribute less to the causes of climate change than men. For example, they eat less meat and use less energy than men for their mobility and by this produce less CO₂-emissions¹⁰.

Yet, gender justice seems to be absent from most public debates and approaches on climate change. This needs to change fast. Gender relations of climate change have to break through the borders of scientific research and become public knowledge.

Women must finally be heard in environmental research and politics. At the moment, they are excluded from processes and structures, and the decisions are being made mostly by white men. To quote Ruth Bader-Ginsburg: "Women belong in all places where decisions are being made." This should be the case everywhere but is especially important for topics as gender related as climate change. We have to finally put androcentrism, which is the habit to place the male experience and viewpoint at the center, where it belongs – the trash can.

Right now, only around 25 percent of the world's parliamentarians are women¹¹ and 40,4 percent of the Members of the European Parliament are women. France, Austria and the Netherlands are equally represented by women and men. Only Sweden and Finland are currently represented by more women than men in the European Parliament¹². That is even though there is scientific evidence that women substantially improve decision-making processes and are crucial to fighting the climate crisis¹³. For example, women respond better to the specific needs and situations of citizens than men do¹⁴.

The interdependence of climate and gender justice needs to be publicly recognized. Awareness is a first step, but it is not enough: what we need is a fundamental transformation. Women and other genders need their fair share in politics, economy and other decision-making processes. They need equal access to these positions and processes as well as the financial and personal resources to be able to take part in them. Representation and diversity are inevitable for green politics.

We cannot fight the climate crisis without simultaneously fighting the patriarchy. There is no climate justice without gender justice.

1. No climate justice without gender justice: an overview of the issues, Terry, 2009
2. <https://bit.ly/3xFU9oC>, visited: 17th January 2021
3. More Women Die in Natural Disasters—Why? And What Can Be Done?, Howe, 2019
4. Applying intersectionality to our climate change response, Hoffmeester, 2018
5. <https://bit.ly/3ui8oOa>, visited: 18th January 2021
6. Applying intersectionality to our climate change response, Hoffmeester, 2018
7. Zwischen Geschlechterblindheit und Gender Justice - „Gender und Klimawandel“ in der inter- und transnationalen Politik, Schalatek, 2011
8. <https://bit.ly/3ui15pN>, visited: 17th January 2021
9. <https://bit.ly/3xFUzvc>, visited: 18th January 2021
10. Men are worse for the environment than women, according to actual science, Lanigan, 2019
11. <https://bit.ly/3gZ5daA>, visited: 15th January 2021
12. <https://bit.ly/3xllYVI>, visited: 18th January 2021
13. Gendered Vulnerability: How Women Work Harder to Stay in Office, Steigerwald/Lazarus, 2018
14. <https://bit.ly/3tds04H>, visited: 18th January 2021

IN CONVERSATION WITH HINDU CLIMATE ACTION: A Spiritually Inclusive and Just Future

Sanjana Idnani

Sanjana chatted on the phone with Priya Koria, co-founder of Hindu Climate Action, a UK-based movement that aims to use Hindu scripture to raise awareness about climate change, inspire the Hindu community to go green, and to make climate change more accessible to the UK Hindu community.

*Īśāvāsyaṁidaṁ sarvaṁ yatkiñca jagatyāṁ jagat |
Tena tyaktena bhūñjīthā mā gṛdhaḥ kasya sviddhanam.*

'All are part of this world, are abodes of God! Leaving them and thus protecting (yourself), do not desire the wealth of anyone!'

– *Īsopaniṣad 1¹*

After an unprecedented year of crisis and change, each and every one of us has been forced to confront the realities of a system that has been underfunded, relies on excessive consumption, and exploitation. The pandemic, of course, has been at the forefront of our minds for the majority of the year but 2020 has also revealed the pressing climate emergency that is at our tails. The planet is at a turning point and so are we. When we rebuild, how do we ensure we include everyone on our planet, both people and the breath of life that shares this world with us? And how can we uplift and inspire all communities to take action? I asked Priya Koria, whose work with the Hindu community tackles some of these questions, to tell me more about why making the climate movement more inclusive to the Hindu movement was so important to her.

First, I asked Priya if she could tell me a little bit more about the work she is doing to encourage the Hindu community to go green and to be part of building a better future.

There is power in numbers. The immense impact of the school strikes led by Greta Thunberg showcases this clearly, and so a just way forward must focus on inspiring and including influential communities to get involved in collective action. Just as youth can be powerful when mobilised, Hindus could add real power to the climate movement, with 817,000 Hindus in England and Wales alone according to the 2011 census. Yet, Priya highlighted that **"climate information isn't often tailored to Hindus or South Asians even though our scriptures encourage a lifestyle that is inherently environmental.** Hindu principles such as dharma (righteousness), ahimsa (non-harm) and Karuna (compassion) all encompass living in balance with nature." Through Hindu Climate Action, Priya hopes to reconnect Hindus to the spiritual roots of environmentalism and make the climate movement more open to them.

Building on this, I asked Priya how Vedic spiritual knowledge can help our approach to the climate crisis and why it is important that it is not overlooked?

Priya talked about how the prescribed vegetarian diet of the Vedic scriptures encourages a more sustainable and healthy approach to living, which has now also been proven by scientists. Further, the Vedic scriptures encourage a balanced lifestyle where individuals only consume what they need and renounce an overly materialistic lifestyle.

'And that determination by which one holds fast to fruitive result in religion, economic development and sense gratification is of the nature of passion, O Arjuna.' – Bhagavad Gita, 18.34³

While it might be easy to overlook these ideas in favour of a simple approach with consistent scientific methodology to inspire people, Priya highlights the virtues of a more intersectional approach. Spiritual science or modern science; they both dictate the same idea that we need to ensure we take good care of our planet but are just different ways of communicating it. If framing Vedic scriptures in an environmental context can help South Asian communities recognise the importance of conscious consumerism and environmentally friendly worship and encourage them to start to incorporate it into their ideas of a dharmic life, we could have a whole host of people taking a step in the right direction and contributing significantly to achieving our climate targets.

Even though it only started in July 2020, Hindu Climate Action (HCA) has already made great progress in its outreach and activism work within Hindu communities, having already run 16 talks and workshops with *mandirs* and other religious organisations about the Climate Crisis and action that can be taken. In addition, they have launched an 'In Conversation With' campaign and the first event managed to get over 1.8k views!

Given the great momentum that the movement has got, I asked Priya where she saw HCA going in the future and what plans she had for the upcoming year.

Priya hopes that she will be able to expand the conversations that she has already started into the next year with plans to hold events with Greenpeace as well as with other Hindu climate organisations and activists:

"We hope that through showcasing these community members who are involved in the movement and are taking action, that more and more people will feel inspired to fight for this important cause."

Hindu Climate Action also has plans to create a resource bank that will act as a go-to for Hindu dharma and climate content, including a guide to celebrating festivals with a smaller carbon footprint and resources available in different South Asian languages to further improve accessibility to the climate movement.

Finally, I asked Priya how Hindu Climate Action can help us navigate a post-Covid future that works for people and the planet. She answered:

"During lockdown we have seen a decrease in carbon emissions and some improvements to the general climate situation. Tellingly, this has been due to a decline in human activity showing how much of the work we, as humans, have to put in to save our planet. Dharma tells us to work towards a future which contributes to a peaceful and harmonious world. We must therefore adopt a green recovery by investing in renewable energy infrastructure and sustainable farming, we can create a sustainable future for all living beings."

Further, the principle of *sewa* (selfless service) can help us consider ways in which to help people adversely affected by this pandemic to recover. Volunteering to work with the homeless, advocating for refugee and minority rights, and fighting for a future where everyone is able access their basic needs and work in harmonious and good conditions should be some of the main priorities for Hindu practitioners. Now, more than ever, the world needs us to consider how we can move forward collectively and globally to live and work in a better way. Now, more than ever, **we need to recognise that a just future requires the consideration of both modern science and pre-colonial cultural and indigenous practices to build and communicate this future.**

1. This is taken from a Vedic Scripture called the Isopanisad (also known as the Isha Upanishad). This is part of a wider body of texts called The Upanishads which develop and explain the fundamental philosophical tenets of the Vedic way of life (see below for an explanation of the term Vedic).

2. The term 'Veda' means fundamental knowledge or wisdom. Vedic knowledge comes from scriptures that are considered spiritual and authoritative by Hindus, Jains, Sikhs and Buddhists. Hindu principles about how to live, work, act and what the purpose of all these things are, is derived from Vedic scriptures.

3. The Bhagavad Gita is another key scripture within the Hindu canon. It translates literally to 'The Song of God' and was spoken by Lord Krishna. It is a relatively short but deeply insightful scripture that sums up the key principles of Hindu thought.



Priya Koria is a final year master's student reading Chemistry at the University of Bristol. Passionate about working with the community and making information accessible for everyone, she joined a group of like-minded individuals and co-founded Hindu Climate Action. She is in charge of HCAs online strategy and uses multiple platforms to raise awareness of HCAs work, further using these platforms and the "In Conversation With..." series to raise awareness about climate issues

The Advocacy Trap

Ariadna Romans

What struggles will green youth activism face in the 21st century?

The new wave of green movements, led mainly by young people, has very different characteristics from those of previous generations. With a strong commitment to the collective, defending diversity and the desire for greater solidarity, this wave will also face its problems. One of the major ones will be the advocacy trap, which will put a brake on the ability of activists to advance their demands and make the necessary changes.

Three Centuries of Struggle

Although the green movements first emerged in the second half of the 20th century, they have re-emerged in recent years due to the increasing awareness of the threats that climate change poses. During the 19th century the socialist movement used to be the movement of the intersectionality of causes and the fight for social, labour and societal issues. Now the green movements priorities focus on not only the aspects related to humanity but also on nature and our relationship with the other¹. Of course, caring for the environment was demanded earlier, but not in such a holistic and global conception. However, it was not until the end of the 20th century that the movement achieved relevance and, above all, a spread within different groups of our society. The fact that policy makers, politicians and CEOs are starting to care about the sustainable aspect of their actions (although this might well be for greenwashing purposes) is a sign that, at least, the topic has gained significant relevance in our society.

One important aspect of the green movements is that, unlike previous social movements, this one is led by **young inexperienced leaders**. The so-called "Generation Z" is the one that leads this new path, and it seems to be caused by the feeling of the urgency that climate change causes. As the sociologist at the University of Maryland, Dana Fisher, affirmed in the previous piece from Nature, "Young people are getting so much attention that it draws more young people into the movement". Despite having very different causes, issues and objectives², there is one common aspect of these new interests in green issues by young activists that this article wants to highlight. Unlike some other movements that were led by a "hero", these activists have no intention to become other than a role model to the people who follow them³, and they understand the importance of the collective action in order to achieve the goals they fight for.

The green movement, despite having some famous faces such as Greta Thunberg, is not a movement created around the figure of a single person or "hero" but is conceived as a path that we all need to join and promote as individuals. For this reason, empowering the individuals generates a new wave of solidarity, comprehending that the impact I can make locally will have effects or contribute to the impact

other members of the movement will have worldwide. This new sense of solidarity among different locations, areas and themes is, for instance, the key definitory aspect of such a movement.

Are They Really Listening?

With the emergence of leaders such as Greta Thunberg, the famous young activist from Sweden, it seems as if, for the first time in a while, adults are listening to the youth's demands. For instance, UN Secretary General António Guterres has endorsed the school strikes, affirming that: "My generation has failed to respond properly to the dramatic challenge of climate change. This is deeply felt by young people. No wonder they are angry." However, are the political decision makers really listening? Or is it just part of a greenwashing strategy to reach the interest of the younger ones? In this scenario, what should young activists do? Stop their demands and block their possible instrumentalisation from international organisations or, on the contrary, use this instrumentalisation in order to better achieve their goals?

Despite the constant efforts of advocating the system for a radical change of paradigm, it is not until the powerful elites consider the warnings as a real threat that they will promote a push for a change. The capacity of the youth to raise awareness and advocate for improvements is key for these warnings to have any effect at all. **However, there is always the doubt of whether they are really committed or only using the demands of young activists to use it in favour of their own interests.** This situation refers to what I call "the advocacy trap". The trap, thus, consists of a constant feeling of confusion on the impact the activist's actions have, provoking a loss of hope, a reduction in demands or even an abandonment of some more marginal causes.

Despite this obstacle, in the long run and with sufficient support, the claims and actions of this new generation of activists can end up generating great progress and be proven extremely efficient. The energy of their emergence must be contained in order not to let the advocacy trap affect their path. The feminist movement, for instance, was at first used to instrumentalise the demands of women in favour of the hegemonic dynamics, but with time and a constant pressure and insistence from different social poles it has led to

feminist policies, changes in the social mindset and norms or legislation against gender inequality. Will this new trend of activism be able to break the trap? Despite having little chance to do so, they have something that previous activists did not have: a new digital playground.

Future Tendencies

For today's youth, climate activism seems to be linked to a broader world view of solidarity and a set of values connected to the idea of equality for prosperity. Far from the individualistic focus from previous social movements, constructed around the figure of a leader or individual organisation, the green movements are fostering a more diversified strategy of activism and leadership. Despite this appearing as a random factor or point in the evolution of the young activist movement, its effects could be bigger than what we expect.

The embrace of new forms of solidarity by this new wave of activism represents a rupture with the individualistic dynamics of previous social movements and a breath of fresh air in the activist arena. The rejection of such dynamics is not only a denial of the consolidation of such structure in our political systems but also a hack to its continuity. The

recognition of a diversified and solidary strategy brings the collective relations a new dynamic itself, focused on what the individual can contribute to the common well-being and not how the individual can make profit from the collectivity, as it happens in capitalism. These changes will have two possible results: a greener capitalism or a systemic change. Both options will bring more prosperity and wellbeing.

This rupture with the systemic dynamics also generates a solution to the advocacy trap. If it is the purpose and not the personification of a movement what is promoted by the green movements, it will pose more obstacles towards the use of their demands on a self-interested intention by political leaders or institutions. Consequently, such demands will be advocated into a more plural, inclusive and prosperity-oriented action, consolidating the democratic mechanisms of our societies.

1. "Why young climate activists have captured the world's attention" (Nature, 18.09.2020): <https://go.nature.com/3kdPJP8>

2. "4 ways to be a real youth activist" (World Economic Forum, 07.07.2020): <http://bit.ly/3kaihsV>

3. "6 Tips for Becoming a Youth Activist (As Told by a Youth Activist)" (Mother Jones, 04.06.2020): <http://bit.ly/2PpGiOv>



JUST TRANSITION WITH SOCIAL JUSTICE

Ecolojovem

The policies that we implement in the coming years will irreversibly determine the survival of thousands of species, including humans, and the planet as we know it. Despite all the warnings and speeches, the economic paradigm and environmental issues are still predominant in public debates.

In the case of Portugal, we have a long way to achieve carbon neutrality. Ambitious policies and a major transformation are needed in all sectors, in the transport of people and goods, in agriculture, in animal production and in the residential sector.

We need to recover strategic sectors with massive public investment directed for example to public transport, increase energy efficiency, decentralize and democratize energy production, abandon the linear economic model and reformulate production and distribution chains with shorter circuits, preferably national and regional and recovering food sovereignty.

In more detail, this means that investment in public transport, in order to have an effective, accessible and attractive transport network, is crucial for people to abandon individual transport and to ensure environmental balance, social justice and developed cities. On the other hand, the circular economy contrasts with the traditional model, the linear economic model based on the "produce-use-throw-away" principle. This model requires vast amounts of materials at low price, easy access and lots of energy. These are fundamental steps for ecologists to achieve a greener society. Therefore, the circular economy is a priority.

By the end of 2021 the Sines and Pego coal power plants will be shut down - these are the largest emitters of greenhouse gases (GHG) in Portugal. *Ecolojovem – Os Verdes* considers this a very good and important measure from an environmental point of view. **However, we are ecologists concerned both about climate and social issues.**

Measures for the energy transition cannot be a new contributing factor in increasing unemployment and external dependence. One of the worst mistakes is to present the energy transition as a threat to employment and workers' rights.

For example, Sines and Pego coal plants employ about 650 workers and, when they close, these jobs should be converted into green jobs. In the specific case of Pego, the whole region depends heavily on the plant and, in the future, we need a sustainable alternative, to make the whole region greener and to develop projects that make the region grow in a balanced way.

It is necessary to minimize the economic and social impacts in the affected regions, safeguard the jobs, with the requalification of the workers. It is also necessary to guarantee that there is no compensation for the operators that explore the coal plants.

It is an opportunity to implement alternative and green solutions, transition to clean and renewable sources, create jobs and value workers.

There is no environmental justice without social justice and we defend an ecologically balanced, transparent response involving the population, municipalities and workers.

The distribution of financial resources at European level should reflect the capacity of Member States for this transition, taking into account the socio-economic and environmental impacts on the communities most affected by the measures adopted to reduce carbon dependence. Moreover, there should be no conditionalities that restrict their use. Nothing will change with publicity only, and the public resources for the climate response are very low.

This is, we have seen many announcements and compromises, but we need concrete and urgent action, and the measures are taking a long time. The weather and the planet cannot wait any longer. **The environment is not a trend that looks good in speeches, so we say we need actions and changes now!**

On the other hand, it does not make any sense that the government wants to prospect and explore fossil resources in Portugal. The exploitation of fossil resources in the country has environmental damage, which is not a good deal for the planet nor for the people.

For example, in this regard the Portuguese Government had projects for oil and gas research and exploration in Batalha, Pombal, Alentejo and Algarve. However, Portugal closed the door to these projects. This was achieved thanks to the struggle of the people, associations and The Greens. In consequence, Australis, the last company that was looking for hydrocarbons in the country, renounced concession contracts. It is important that this decision is maintained and that there are no setbacks.

An ecological, fair and coherent energy transition helps answering the climate and social crisis, with solutions for equality.

This global crisis caused by Covid-19 has shown that we need to be more resilient, better prepared and stronger for the various crises that may occur.

Portugal needs to do much more than what it is doing. The principle of social justice and environmental justice must be at the centre of the agenda for post-pandemic recovery, ensuring that nobody is left behind, while at the same time taking into consideration solidarity with other parts of the world and the future generations.

The Portuguese Young Greens "Ecolojovem - Os Verdes" were founded in 1989. Ecolojovem refuses the sadness of passivity, of conformism, the mediocrity of submission. They strive for quality, justice, and peace and believe in transformation, the work of young people's capacity for participation and intervention. They are a full member organization of FYEG.



Home Insecurity in Serbia

Nina Šašić

It may seem absurd that in Serbia housing is a major issue, considering the facts that more than 95% of homes are privately owned and that there is a notable percentage of empty housing. It seems even more absurd, if unsurprising, that the institutional and legal framework put in place to help those who survive on the very edge of livability has broken down so badly that citizens have self-organized to perform the function of said framework.

An overwhelming percentage of people in Serbia own inherited housing, and therefore do not face the instability of renting on an increasingly volatile market. Still, due to the ever-soaring price of living and the stubbornly stagnant wages, many of the poorest residents face the possibility of evictions because of unpaid electricity bills as low as €4,000 as well as other, increasingly nonsensical and arbitrary criteria. The national social assistance system places severe restrictions when it comes to eligibility, and the aid itself is often insufficient to support the families it is granted to. The minimum wage is too low for people to be able to afford basic necessities, and many of the most disadvantaged citizens – mainly those of already vulnerable and marginalized communities – are forced to virtually work themselves to death and/or turn to unconventional and often illegal activities, such as begging and petty crime, in order to make a living.

Where government institutions and programs have failed people, local organizations and initiatives have stepped in. Multiple groups of citizens have self-organized and set up networks to fulfill the functions of the failing institutions and are offering different kinds of support and help to those who live on the streets, in abject poverty, or lack a stable source of food. In doing so, they have created a para-institutional support system. Members of these groups organize and conduct all kinds of activities: a local collective called "Združena akcija krov nad glavom" (Joint Action Roof over the Head) physically protects people from being thrown out of their homes, another one, Initiative ALL, offers legal and administrative assistance to those facing court hearings or trying to obtain social benefits, and a third one, "Solidarna kuhinja" (Solidarity Kitchen) independently prepares and distributes meals to Belgrade's homeless and poor. An organization publishing a magazine, "LiceUlice" (Face of the Street) employs people from marginalized communities, including those living on the streets, and a coffee shop called "16" employs youths living in informal settlements. The most prominent institution offering shelter, food, school supplies, cultural activities and the like to homeless youths is "Centar za integraciju mladih" (Center for Youth Integration), which is an NGO.

The world health crisis brought on by the coronavirus pandemic has only aggravated these issues. During the lockdowns and the austerity measures, people were asked to



stay in their homes as much as possible and to avoid social interactions, as well as to work from home if possible. Those who lack a roof over their heads or housing basics such as plumbing and electricity were not taken into consideration. Inicijativa za ekonomska i socijalna prava A11 (The A11 Initiative for Economic and Social Rights), a local organization that works on defending citizens' economic and social rights wrote to the government, requesting the formation of a body that would be tasked with solving issues arising for the extremely poor and homeless, but received no feedback. The only government institution which serves as temporary shelter for the homeless has been closed for the better part of the year, and it has been reported that those who found themselves inside were prevented from leaving on pain of not being able to get back in. Conversely, since the beginning of the pandemic, many of the local initiatives and organizations have demonstrated great potential by expanding both their reach and the range of their services, as well as intensifying their activities.

The efforts of these local initiatives and organizations working from different angles to help the homeless and the poor have shed light on one elementary truth: that we as citizens, we as societies, must acknowledge that the issue at hand is systemic and that it is insufficient to only treat the symptoms without addressing the root cause, which is a lack of adequate social assistance by the state. The government is the entity that should, by law, provide the crucial security nets that protect people from ending up in the streets or not being able to live on a minimum wage.

Yet, although providing social assistance is the obligation of several government institutions and programs, it is being left to citizens and neighbors. It is time we opposed this shameful practice. **We cannot allow the government to continue underperforming and effectively outsourcing its obligations and its institutions' work to handfuls of philanthropists, volunteer activists and Good Samaritans.** Moreover, nothing can be achieved by sporadic, limited-effect actions within the bounds of nation states.

Such universal and dire issues must be dealt with systemically and on a global level, and viable solutions need to be incorporated in green political movements. A green transition that ignores social issues leads to social crises and is therefore unsustainable. There can be no greener future without social justice and the strengthening of social security systems.



Why Environmentally Friendly Products Cannot Fight Climate Change Alone

Robin Ehl

Since the wave of environmental protests hit Europe, one can have the impression that a lot is being done to respond to the demands of the protesters to counter climate change, and to address environmental destruction. Organic grocery stores are popping up in towns and cities, vegan food festivals are taking place almost every day, and small boutiques selling fair trade organic clothing are opening in the busiest shopping malls. Thanks to what is sometimes framed as dollar voting, it might seem that consumers now have the choice between different products, which creates the impression that they can influence production and ultimately avert the climate catastrophe by means of “mindful” consumption.

Instead of buying a shirt produced by children in Bangladesh, buying a fair-trade certified shirt made from organic cotton grown in Turkey and weaved in Portugal promises to contribute to a world with less exploitation and pollution. Instead of eating cheap meat with residues of antibiotics, the vegan burger promises not only to be healthy but also to be less resource intensive in its production. In addition, there is now a multitude of companies that offer carbon offsetting for flights or other activities harmful to the environment. Emission trading schemes are created in more and more countries, including the EU. Yet, all of these proposals build upon a neoliberal economic framework, reducing state intervention to a minimum and relying on the rational decision of individual actors. **Even though they aim at responding to some of the most urgent preoccupations environmental activists are fighting for, they are cherry-picking only some demands, while neglecting the fact that holistic change is necessary to truly address the roots of the problem and to respond to the demands of environmental activists.**

These current developments, which may appear as big steps forward, are often structured around the agency of the individual. In order to have an impact, dollar voting relies on the consumer to choose an environmentally friendly product over an alternative conventional product. Popularized by the public choice theorist James M. Buchanan (1954), dollar voting refers to a liberal conception of democracy, where citizens have the same rights and leverage to influence decision-making. But in contrast to casting a ballot, choosing between different products requires spending monetary resources. It comes as no surprise that environmentally friendly products cost more, which is why –if sticking to this analogy– voting decisions in stores are not free. Due to financial circumstances, some consumers cannot buy products that are produced respecting certain environmental or social

standards. Because they already spend all their available resources on meeting their basic needs, it appears as if they are forced to opt for “conventional” products, even if they are aware of the detrimental environmental impact and low social standards under which they have been produced.

Even though buying those products can effectively reduce the negative impacts on the environment or grant workers a decent workplace, it is as if already the bare existence of those alternative products would signal to all those who





cannot afford those environmentally friendly products, that they cannot protect the environment in consequence. It is as if, hypothetically, the existence of those products would signal to everyone: "Only if you are part of the world's wealthier people, you can afford to care about your environment. So do aim at becoming wealthy if you wish to protect your environment." Consequently, those who are less affluent seem to have no other choice but to contribute to environmental destruction as long as they do not have the monetary means to do otherwise. This is counterfactual and has been substantiated by a series of studies that show how economically wealthier people tend to have a negative impact on the environment. Oxfam and the Stockholm Environment Institute estimate, for instance, **that over half of the global carbon emissions were caused by the richest 10% of the global population during the period of 1990 to 2015¹.**

Taking one step back, it appears that the existence of products which voluntarily respect environmental and social well-being regulations also implies an ontological shift of the relationship between humans and their environment, or as Philippe Descola puts it, the dualism of nature and culture². Following Descola, nature is a cultural construction that varies from culture to culture³. If humans have tended to highlight their differences from non-humans since the Enlightenment in Europe and North America, and if industrial progress allows to deepen the perceived divide between nature and culture, then environmentally friendly products try to reconnect with nature. By buying them, consumers demonstrate that they care about the environment and affirm not only their connection but also their dependency on nature. Even though it remains an impersonal and much more distant connection, since it is structured around the exchange of commodities⁴. The intention is clear: since the consumers care about the environment, they do not want to contribute to environmental destruction. In return, acknowledging their impact on the environment comes with acknowledging the connection to the producers as well as to the non-human. After all, without the producers or the non-humans there would not be a product nor a consumer.

When taking into account that those products are only

accessible to the wealthiest because they are exchanged at a higher price, it then becomes clear that nature is refused to the poorest participants in the market economy⁵. Since the market offers an alternative to products that are polluting, **it appears as if it would not be the fault of the economic system, but the one of the consumers, if the latter does not choose to care for the environment by buying conventional products. It appears that all those who seemingly voluntarily choose products that degrade and pollute the environment, choose to live in a dualistic world where culture is strictly separated from nature and where humans can pollute the environment since they are not dependent on it. But who would voluntarily want to be a jerk?**

Furthermore, as the offer of environmentally friendly products has increased⁶, global economic inequalities increased as well⁷. Against this context, it appears that the division is deepening between consumers who can reconnect to their environments and those who cannot. When only focusing on the impact of products in comparison to the dualism of nature and culture, it is as if being rich enables one to adhere to a softer division of nature and culture, whereas lacking monetary resources within a consumer society leads to a way of living that precludes the dependency of humans on their non-human environments.

Secondly, the existence of products that respect certain environmental standards, or the invention of new products, such as carbon offsetting, seemingly creates an additional legitimization for the existence of neoliberal markets. By offering products that are exchanged in markets, or that create new markets, as is the case with carbon offsetting, the neoliberal economy proves that it is able to react to demands called out by climate protesters around the world. These calls have reached broad support, leading to a greater environmental awareness and adoption of environmentally friendly lifestyles among an increasing number of some consumers. Hence, products have been created in the neoliberal economy that apparently satisfy the recent call for a lifestyle that is no longer ignorant of the environmental and social consequences of consumption based on exploitation.

Yet, there is an important difference to be made: **Even though the market might have successfully adapted to a new demand, it has not solved the climate crisis, nor tackled environmental degradation.** Even though there are now products that can satisfy the individual need for a way of living respectful of the environment and workers, individual needs do not fight climate change and environmental degradation on their own. There are two important aspects to consider: on the one hand, those “environmentally friendly products” principally satisfy the need of the consumer without necessarily decreasing the negative environmental impact. An example are avocados, which appear to be a healthy and less-resource consuming alternative to meat, but which instead come with many other negative impacts. For instance, they are often produced in regions where water-scarcity is frequent. However, their production requires a lot of water. On the other hand, as shown above, “environmentally friendly products” are only accessible to an affluent upper-class, and, especially for carbon offsetting and carbon trading, may operate in contexts with a problematic colonial legacy⁸. Thus, they are far from increasing the access to a respectful way of living for all.

As the solutions developed in the framework of a neoliberal market economy are only accessible to a handful of people mainly in the global North, the solutions to environmental degradation proposed by the neoliberal market economy are only an empty promise. They are embedded in exclusions and can, thus, not contribute to a holistic change.

Moreover, by suggesting that there are solutions for the individual, the neoliberal market aims at reinforcing its hegemonic position. For those wealthy consumers with a strong environmental consciousness, the neoliberal market shapes the wants and needs by assuring that environmentally friendly products are a solution to the climate crisis and environmental degradation. By doing so, it institutionalizes a solution and may prevent these consumers from opposing the idea of a neoliberal market as such. On a theoretical level, neoliberal economic markets then govern using what Michel Foucault called “governmentality”, which can approximately be brought down to the catchphrase of “conduct of conduct”⁹. In this sense, the neoliberal market builds upon the desire to change the world and responds by offering consumer goods that promise to do so. When the consumers then opt for those products, they do so willingly and based on a rational decision, since those products promise to fulfill their needs. Furthermore, as defined by Foucault, this could be interpreted as governing “according to the rationality of the governed themselves”¹⁰.

From this perspective it quickly appears that choosing environmentally friendly products only seems to be an explicit choice for the individual customer, when it is foremost an act embedded in a far bigger network of power: the hegemony of a neoliberal market economy. **This network of power shifts the blame for environmental degradation on the consumers while strengthening its own position, as if there would be no alternative to it**¹¹.

Accordingly, green policy proposals would only be subjected to the hegemonic position of the neoliberal framework if they

stick to this particular framework of the neoliberal market. They would simply reinforce the dominant position of the market which, in the short run, might offer opportunities for a way of living that is more respectful of the environment and contributes less to inequalities, but which remains exclusively accessible to some privileged individuals. This is why the neoliberal market proposes solutions neither to environmental degradation nor to the climate crisis.

In order to remedy this shortcoming, a holistic change is necessary, one that breaks free from the neoliberal economic system, the rational decision-making of the individual which is attached to it, and that questions the dualistic division of nature and culture on which it is constructed.

1. Oxfam, “Confronting Carbon Inequality. Putting Climate Justice at the Heart of the Covid-19 Recovery” (Oxfam, September 21, 2020), 2–3, <https://bit.ly/3uplEk8>

2. Philippe Descola, *Beyond Nature and Culture*, trans. Janet Lloyd, Paperback edition (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 2014).

3. Philippe Descola, *Anthropologie de la nature. Leçon inaugurale prononcée le jeudi 29 mars 2001*, *Leçons inaugurales* (2001; repr., Paris: Collège de France, 2013), 13, <https://bit.ly/2SjHdV8>

4. Here, an analogy can be drawn with Karl Marx’s commodity fetishism (Marx, 1867/1909, p. 83). For Marx, social relations appear as relations between things, which is why even if products respecting specific social and environmental norms are brought, the relationships with the producers remain impersonal, since instead of being a direct relationship, it is mediated through the product.

5. It is important to stress that the scope of this article is limited to participants of a globalized market economy. There are of course a multitude of actors who are participating in this globalized economy only to a limited extent and who do not adhere to a strict separation of nature and culture. But just because they are less participating in global neoliberal markets, they are largely outside of the decision-making between environmentally friendly products and conventional products that do not respect specific volunteer standards.

6. For example, the areas on which is cultivated organic food increased by 70% from 2009 to 2019 in the EU and the global sales of fair-trade certified goods have more than doubled between 2012 and 2018 to €9.8 billion. European Commission, “Organic Farming in the EU. A Fast Growing Sector,” *EU Agricultural Markets Briefs*, March 2019; Fairtrade International, “An Overview of Our Impact,” accessed October 31, 2020, <https://bit.ly/3aZorsI>

7. Economic inequality has risen in countries that represent more than 70% of the world’s population. Rising inequality was mainly caused by a strong surge of high incomes. United Nations, “World Social Report 2020. Inequality in a Rapidly Changing World,” 2020, 21–22; 26, <https://bit.ly/2PSRsPy>

8. For a critical perspective on carbon offsetting and REDD+, see for example: A. G. Bumpus and Diana Liverman, “Carbon Colonialism? Offsets, Greenhouse Gas Reductions, and Sustainable Development,” in *Global Political Ecology*, ed. Richard Peet, Paul Robbins, and Michael Watts (Abingdon, New York, NY: Routledge, 2010), 203–24; Yolanda Ariadne Collins, “Colonial Residue: REDD+, Territorialisation and the Racialized Subject in Guyana and Suriname,” *Geoforum* 106 (November 1, 2019): 38–47, <https://bit.ly/3tf90Ty>; Nicolás Kosoy and Esteve Corbera, “Payments for Ecosystem Services as Commodity Fetishism,” *Ecological Economics* 69, no. 6 (April 2010): 1228–36, <https://bit.ly/3vLlbi7>; Kristen Lyons and Peter Westoby, “Carbon Colonialism and the New Land Grab: Plantation Forestry in Uganda and Its Livelihood Impacts,” *Journal of Rural Studies* 36 (October 1, 2014): 13–21, <https://bit.ly/3b3gyCt>

9. Michel Foucault, “The Subject and Power,” in *Essential Works of Foucault. 1954-1984*, ed. Paul Rabinow and James D. Faubion, vol. 3 (1982; repr., London: The New Press, 2003), 341.

10. Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France 1978-79*, ed. Michel Senellart, trans. Graham Burchell, Michel Foucault’s Lectures at the Collège de France (1978–1979; repr., New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 313.

11. For instance, 100 companies alone are responsible for more than 70% of the global greenhouse gas emissions. See: <https://bit.ly/3eileXm>

TRANSFORMING TRANSPORT FOR TRUE TRANSITIONING

2021 – Corona Chronicles, Climate Action and the European Year of Rail

Tatjana Söding

Whether you believe it or not: the European Parliament has officially declared the year 2021 as the European Year of Rail. The tradition of European Years promoting a particular political theme through national awareness campaigns and legislative decisions on the European level dates back to 1983. What might strike some as surprising however, is to declare 2021 as a year in which rail mobility is to be widened, strengthened, and popularized while this very same year will likely be dominated by continued constraints on individual mobility. Staggering infection rates of SARS-CoV-2 and alarming calls for social distancing and travel restrictions rightly seem at odds with the European Union's (EU) ambition to promote rail travel and freight transportation in the upcoming twelve months. After all, globalized hyper-mobility plays a crucial role in the speedy geographical expansion of the SARS-Virus; the time-space compression of international travel has had decisive influence on exacerbating the destructive effect of the Covid-19-pandemic worldwide. Yet, and interestingly enough, it is for this very reason that the decision for the European Year of 2021 to promote rail travel and freight transportation is both timely and crucial.

2020 has not only witnessed a pandemic holding the globe in a tight grip. 2020 was the year in which industrial manufacturing and international tourism came to an unimaginable stand still – and while damaging for national economies, it allowed most countries to align with their respective CO₂ reduction commitments made under the 2015 Paris Agreement. 2020 was also the year in which the European Commission announced its European Green Deal, a political framework aiming towards achieving carbon neutrality in Europe in 2050. The Green Deal assigns the decarbonisation of the transportation sector a key role in reaching its climate targets. Regrettably, it is not due to the sector's leading role in sustainability; after all, EU-wide transport-related emissions account for one-quarter of the Union's total greenhouse gas emissions. While individual households, the agricultural sector, the industry, and the energy sector have all achieved slight reductions in CO₂ emissions since 1990, the transportation sector has seen a further increase in CO₂ consumption in that same period. While road transportation still squares first, aviation is the only sector that increased its share: aviation-related emissions rose from 7,2 percent in 1990 to 13,9 in 2017. For the EU to reach its ultimate target of carbon neutrality by 2050, the transportation sector alone is envisioned to

emit 90% less compared to 1990 levels.

While it becomes evident that a focus on transforming transportation needs to become part and parcel of the EU's sustainability strategy, the anticipated gains for climate justice should not come at the cost of significant benefits brought about by increased geographical connectivity. The popularity of the European Union's Erasmus+ Programme, the world's largest funded exchange program, is exemplary for the tremendous possibilities brought about by Intereuropean mobility: every year, more than 300.000 young Europeans travel across the continent to experience Europe, immerse themselves in a diversity of cultures, and foster friendships in far-away places. But with over 75% of Erasmus participants choosing the plane when travelling to and from their exchange university, the Erasmus Programme significantly contributes to the EU's CO₂ footprint. Luckily, the wheel needs no reinvention: rail transportation is coming to the rescue of climate protectors and travel enthusiasts alike. Thanks to high levels of electrification, the rail sector was able to achieve a reduction of 66% indirect CO₂ emissions within the same period that the aviation sector saw its emissions rise. This allows the rail industry to champion sustainable travel, contributing a marginal 0.5% of emissions produced by EU-wide travel and freight transportation. Alas, politically created competitive advantages of the aviation sector – the kerosene tax being just one of them – contribute to a continued popularity of plane travel. Individuals are not to blame: with most Erasmus participants bearing their own travel costs, sustainable modes of traveling on a European scale are unattainable for many, especially those from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

With the introduction of the European Green Deal and the elevation of the European Union's intermediary climate targets, from a previously envisioned reduction of CO₂ emissions of 40% by 2030 to 55%, the year 2020 can be said to have been that of grand promises. But climate action does not become reality through promises alone. It necessitates detailed and precise proposals and their stringent and prompt implementation. It requires an active civil society that demands concrete action from its politicians and is itself engaged in creative problem-solving. With the initiation of the European Year of Rail, the EU seeks to transform the transportation sector by "putting users first and providing them with more affordable, accessible, healthier and cleaner alternatives

RAIL CROSSING CROSSROAD

to their current mobility habits⁹. For the remainder of the European Year of Rail, citizens should use this window of opportunity and approach the bodies of the European Union with specific ideas for filling the void yawning between grand goals and restraint implementation.

One example for this sort of societal engagement is the initiative Erasmus by Train, seeking to tackle the reduction of the Erasmus-related CO₂ emissions (disclaimer: the author is part of the initiative). We demand the European Union to provide each participant of an Erasmus exchange with a free Interrail ticket to travel across Europe via rail without additional cost. Sustainable travel becomes more affordable for all and the cost barrier to participate in the exchange program is lowered. This effect not only allows for the transition towards a more socially just and sustainable Erasmus Programme, there is yet another positive side effect: slower and longer travel grants participants the opportunity to witness the changes in landscapes, cultures, and people en route from their home to their exchange destination. As promises of sustainability become institutionalized in EU programs, the very idea of the European Union becomes more tangible through this travel experience. Besides its tremendous benefits, Erasmus by Train alone does not make for a comprehensive transformation of the transportation sector. The European Year of Rail widens a window of opportunity previously opened by the European Green Deal and provides momentum for pushing innovative ideas for initiating a switch to train transportation of both passengers and freight – to allow for a just and sustainable transformation of the EU-wide transportation sector. Citizens should feel encouraged to step forward

demanding a kerosene tax, the expansion of a European rail network with suitable cross-border infrastructure, international booking systems, night trains, and subsidies for freight transported by rail.

The Covid-19 pandemic has brought tremendous challenges to previously successful strategies of climate activism. Simultaneously, it has brought the previously persistent status quo to its knees. According to the idea of building back greener, now is the time to ensure that new economic and mobility models are geared towards the railways. The European Year of Rail 2021, coinciding with an ongoing struggle against the Covid-19 pandemic, might not provide the opportune conditions to experience rail travel. But by coinciding with another year of global warming, deforestation, and factory farming, it's crucial timing to promote the transportation sector's key role in a just and sustainable transition is highlighted. Bringing it full circle, the sustainability gains achieved through decarbonisation of the transportation sector and a shift towards rail travel play a crucial role in the prevention of future pandemics: not only does the CO₂ reduction contribute to healthier ecosystems – the most important natural barriers containing the spread of the viruses – rail travel makes goods and people travel around the world a little slower – this time-space decompression is a crucial social barrier for the spread of future viruses. The European Year of the Rail hence provides a timely opportunity to bring back civil engagement and demand strategic action for the transformation towards just and sustainable transportation. On your marks, get set, go.

INADEQUATE POLICY ACTIVATES GRASSROOTS ACTIONS: The story of RE-PEAT and the EU's Common Agricultural Policy

Bethany & Frankie

The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is a EU subsidy scheme for the farming sector which makes out about one third of the EU's budget. Its subsidies represent not only an important source of incomes for farmers, but the allocation schemes significantly contribute to shaping the EU's countryside. Thus, the revision of the rulebook for the CAP every seven years is hotly debated, as it determines how subsidies are allocated to which type of farming practices, for example conventional or organic agriculture.

What comes to your mind when I say "Common Agricultural Policy"? Perhaps the word common conjures an image of farmers, rural communities, city-dwellers, delivery drivers, vegans, meat-eaters and more, sitting down to a shared picnic. Or maybe it draws to mind the end of World War II and the beginning of a collaborative European region - later

to become the European Union. Perhaps even more likely, it reminds you of the powerful youth-led campaign calling for a more sustainable and ambitious agricultural plan in the EU (flooding the Twitter-sphere with the hashtag "WithdrawThis-CAP"). Somewhat less likely is an association of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) with the systematic and incentivised drainage of peatlands.

In fact, it was the EU's CAP and its (mis)treatment of peatlands that galvanized a collective named RE-PEAT to take action on this very topic. The seed of RE-PEAT was sown when a few members of the current team went on a field trip to a German peatland. They came to realise the vast climate and ecological value of healthy peatlands and the absurdity that this highly influential policy actively eradicates them. They asked themselves:

How could it be that a policy like this exists, in the midst of climate breakdown?

And what can we - as young people and as European citizens - do about this?

For those new to peatlands, they take up just 3% of the planet's combined freshwater and land-surface area but are an ecosystem like no other. Formed of layers of partially decomposed plant matter, peatlands are the largest terrestrial carbon store on earth - containing double the carbon of all forests combined. Yet, when drained, the captured carbon stored in the peatland's acidic water is re-oxidised and converted into carbon dioxide.

Today, drained peatlands emit almost double the CO₂ compared with the aviation industry!¹

But let's not reduce the peatland story to their carbon content.

These vibrant ecosystems are the melting pots of water and earth. They house a range of niche plants atop of their sour bellies and are home to many creatures, migratory birds and other-worldly bacteria. Peatlands also contain history in their layers, making them the record-keepers of ancient life and death.

In 2020, RE-PEAT created the *Peat Anthology, EU Edition*² to make information and appreciation of peatlands common knowledge, and to prove to the CAP policy-makers that

people care about their decisions. The anthology contains a collection of stories and intimate connections to peatlands and is a powerful and evocative case for the preservation of and respect for peatland ecosystems.

Unfortunately, the MEP's voted to pass a decidedly unambitious, non-robust and climatically unaware CAP, one that stands as an obstacle to realising the European Green Deal. This policy neither uses agriculture as a tool against the environmental challenges we face, nor to address socio-economic challenges faced by farmers and rural regions of the EU.

However, **not all is lost. There is a two-year transition period, during which Member States, the European Council and the European Parliament can reassess and rethink the current version of the CAP.** We will be continuing to follow the developments and put pressure on where we can to allow peatlands a voice during this period and beyond.

What more is there to say, except let's get stuck in!

1. Wetlands.org. (n.d.). Briefing paper: accelerating action to Save Peat for Less Heat! Available at <https://bit.ly/3vLIRfA> [Accessed 18 January 2020]

2. Available at <https://bit.ly/3h3DPbA>

How are Green MEPs Fighting for a Just Transition in the European Parliament?

Manon Maalouli, Katja Reiher, Robin Ehl

With the new Commission of Von Der Leyen and the ongoing Green Deal talks put forward by it, the Commission has never seemed as progressive. In parallel, young people are leading the protests offline and online, staying on top of the news, demanding to #WithdrawTheCAP, #StopFossilFuel or #SayNoEUMercosur.

Have we achieved some change or is business as usual still winning behind the curtains?

We asked Green Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) from Austria, Italy, Poland, Germany and Sweden for their insights, to better understand whether the European Union is truly leading the way to achieve a just transition as it seems to claim.

The Tools to Push for a Just Transition are in the European Commission's Hands

With the proposal for a European Green Deal in 2019, that promised Just Transition, the European Union became the centre stage of the discussion on a greener future.

We all agree, the EU and the member states have taken "the right direction", says Thomas Waitz: "Henceforth, the devil lies in the details": How much money do we want to invest to make the EU carbon neutral? How can we make sure that this transition is socially just? **In which sectors and regions should the money be spent? How can the EU contribute to system change globally?**

Currently a lot of money is directed into the Covid-19 recovery, which could be used for financing a shift towards a just transition. The questions stated above are crucial especially for the recovery plans for the time beyond the Covid-19 pandemic as these investments will shape the EU for many years to come. Even though the member states agreed on supporting environmental policies with their national climate plans, some of these plans lag far behind the expectations. For example, in Germany, 4 out of 5 Euros will be spent on already predetermined projects decided before it was clear that the EU would take on debts for the Covid-19 recovery¹. This

comes down to having the EU finance projects already decided on the national level rather than financing new projects to support the country in achieving more ambitious climate goals, criticizes Michael Bloss: "That is not really helpful". This is the case for many EU countries, including Greece². At the same time, some criticized initiatives have been withdrawn from the national recovery plans. This was for example the case in Italy, where plans to include the financing of a carbon storage facility at the coast of Ravenna have been withdrawn from Italy's recovery plan after protests. Carbon storage facilities aim at capturing carbon emitted into the air and store it in large underground reservoirs. Eleanora Evi criticizes this technology because it would provide false solutions, as emissions should be reduced at their sources. Thus, she welcomes the decision to exclude it from Italy's recovery plan.

However, some argue that a uniform EU response is not always the best answer. In this spirit, Swedish MEP Jakob Dalunde, who generally supports EU-wide climate actions such as the EU's emission trading system, proposed that some policies can be more just, if decided on the national level. For instance, he believes a high European-wide carbon tax could be socially just, if coupled with a fund for investments in local social and green projects. Often, he says, sustainability is easier implemented on

the national level: For example, if using a car becomes more expensive, alternatives should be provided for all income classes, such as decreasing income tax for lower incomes or by developing the public transportation system or bike lanes. Yet, "it's not the European Union that can build a new metro station". Thus, ambitious climate action coupled with a national social justice dimension could lead to even more equality among Member States, if it is at least co-funded by the EU.

Sylwia Spurek highlights that the European Commission does not yet use all the tools it has at its disposal, which would be key for making sure that just transition funds go into sustainable projects instead of outdated ones. One option would be to strengthen mainstreaming of environmental and climate policies into other policies of the EU by increasing the conditionality of EU funds, which has been discussed for several years now³. "It is high time to use these tools and become a game-changer". Eleanora Evi adds: "I don't have the magic recipe, but I really feel that if we put solidarity on the table, economic resources and tools that can help those countries and regions that are lagging behind, this could help to put everybody on the same line."

Leave no one Behind

Just transition is a broad term that

encompasses the shift that we need our society to make, *“from the old economic schools of thought which are blind to environmental and climate realities, to future-proof models allowing us to thrive within planetary boundaries”*, said Thomas Waitz, an Austrian MEP and a co-chair of the European Green Party. However, the transition toward sustainability can be taken without an understanding of its immense consequences on people: **Not only is fairness the right way to do it, “it’s only politically possible when the social dimension is included”**, cautioned Jakob Dalunde. “It is not necessarily the same person losing their job in a Polish coal mine that gets the new job in a Danish windmill farm”. For the transition to be just, it needs to put the workers in the center and make sure “it’s not the poor people who have to bear the costs”, Michael Bloss adds: “Most of the time it is really good to first listen to them telling their sorrows and maybe afterwards we will be able to address some of their perceived threats.”

Then Italian MEP Eleonora Evi raises the importance of equal representation of EU citizens in the decision-making process. The debate around the ways to achieve a just transition needs to be as inclusive as possible and pay particular attention to minorities who already face discrimination. **This is often true for women who are disproportionately affected by climate change around the world, and in particular in the poorest parts of the world.** Too often, women are left out of the elaboration of climate-policies: “There is no democracy, no substantial solid decisions without equality. Including more women in the decision-making process is crucial for making this process a democratic one”, insists Sylwia Spurek. Protecting the most vulnerable ones from the impact of climate change, is not only about making sure European women are protected, but also that trade agreements and negotiations with other countries introduce relevant procedures in regard to women from the countries of the Global South. What’s more, Eleonora Evi points out that where women are involved in decision-making, there are “remarkable approaches in terms of cooperation and resilience”.

A transition towards a carbon neutral society will inevitably have effects on

the way Europeans work. Thus, **a just representation of European citizens in the debate is indeed key to achieve fair decisions.** This is illustrated with the example of coal mines that will need to close. In this regard, Michael Bloss estimates that “those who own the mines won’t suffer as much as those who work in the mines”, and thus calls to support the workers. Eleonora Evi proposes to support workers in general, for example by widening access to permanent employment contracts, to guarantee security for employees in the long run. Even though a European directive of 1999 already aims at fighting abuse of fixed-term contracts, this form of employment is steadily on the rise in Europe. For her, combating fixed-term contracts is a central precondition to a just transition: “We are seeing abuse of these fixed-term contracts that lead to precariousness for too many workers. And this has to change.”

Raising Awareness, Key to Achieve a Just Transition

Besides financially supporting green projects and social security, the EU needs to play a bigger role in strengthening the independence of media and the rule of law across Europe. Particularly in Poland, Sylwia Spurek calls for real actions against the political censorship of the media which do not respond to their “public mission right now”. It is fundamental, not only to ensure democracy, but to protect the role of the media to “raise awareness, inform in about the reality, about the changes, about developments”. First, not only in order to change our individual habits, but also to vote for politicians truly working for Just Transition. Second, it is key to demystify green policies and debunk many stereotypes related to the impact of a green transition on citizens. “It’s a question of communicating and raising awareness that the shift to renewables does not mean that your electricity bill is going to rise. It’s actually quite the opposite: the price for constructing renewable energy sources is decreasing continuously, making them more competitive than ever. If citizens realise that renewables are not going to make living more expensive but rather provide them with clear air, less pollution and less noise, I think we can win their support quite easily.”, explains Thomas

Waitz. Worldwide the cost of renewables continues to fall, most drastically for solar energy, making it an increasingly attractive investment⁴.

Every Discussion About a Green Transition is a Discussion About Energy Transition

When discussing environmental issues – from schools to the European Parliament – chances are high that you will talk about solar and wind power, or in other words: the energy transition.

In Poland, where energy is mainly produced from coal and lignite, climate deniers are still influential:

“Polish energy has been subsidized with public money for years now”

– Sylwia Spurek.

According to the newest Polish climate plan, the country will still be using coal in 2030. In this context, the EU could increase its pressure and give Poland the needed support to achieve climate targets, suggests Sylwia Spurek and her colleagues. “Poland could be a big beneficiary of the Just Transition budget. I think money will talk at last, and we will decide to adopt climate neutrality targets”, Sylwia Spurek hopes.

Furthermore, Michael Bloss denounces an argument commonly used by the fossil fuel industry of the impact of the energy transition on job losses: The renewable energy sector actually has a far higher job potential. The European Commission estimated before the outbreak of the pandemic that 1.2 million additional jobs could be created in the EU if the 1.5°C goal of the Paris Climate Agreement would be implemented⁵. In addition, former coal workers could still be employed in the renaturalization of the coal pits for at least 15 years after the sites have shut down.

Agriculture as a Sector with High Stakes

A further sector with significant challenges, but also with huge potential, is the agricultural sector. Many MEPs of



the Greens/EFA group highlight the high influence of agrifood lobby groups on the EU's agricultural policies, such as the negotiations around the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), the EU's farming subsidies. While there are many ways for the CAP to support a just transition, Thomas Waitz also highlighted that EU subsidies to farmers could be canceled if they are caught illegally employing workers on their fields. In this way, the social protection of agricultural workers could be strengthened. But for now, there has not been a fundamental reform of the CAP, which is criticized for supporting large-scale industrial farming. Thomas Waitz blamed excessive lobbying of the agrifood industry during the negotiations at the European Parliament for the lack of ambitious environmental protection while pointing out that the work of activist movements and NGOs on #WithdrawTheCAP is greatly appreciated.

The Commission also seems to have watered down its originally progressive ambitions for the CAP, which shocked a lot of green MEPs. In a leaked version of a new farming strategy, which is part of the Green Deal, the Commission had proposed progressive measures to reduce the environmental impact of livestock farming. But most of these measures were then removed in the final version, which shows the influence of the meat lobby for Sylwia Spurek: "I can understand that they need to do everything to make the status quo still exist. But when we are talking about the climate catastrophe, it's really not responsible to act against these progressive changes." For a just transition in livestock farming, she suggests limiting the operations of large-scale industrial

farms, which would be beneficial for the quality of life and fundamental rights of rural populations. Jakop Dalunde agrees: "Not a single euro should go to supporting meat factories."

Law Enforcement as a Leverage for a Just Transition

Actions taken on the European level can help reduce vast differences between states and share the initial burden of climate action equally. These differences are demonstrated in Italy where the illegal exports of plastic waste to Eastern European countries is often unlawfully burnt or deposited⁶. To put an end to such practices, Eleonora Evi called for considerable strengthening of implementation and enforcement of environmental laws. Similarly, Thomas Waitz highlights that there are currently many discrepancies in their application. Thus, implementation and enforcement have to be reinforced by the European Commission, the Member States, and by citizens who can denounce environmental law violations through petitions or complaints. "I believe that citizens can play a big role and thanks to them, some infringement procedures have been launched", Thomas Waitz comments.

Which Strategies for Greens?

It is crucial that such Green proposals have majorities in the European Parliament. This is not always the case, and sometimes Green legislative proposals are not even discussed in plenary sessions. Nevertheless, the situation has changed in the past years for the Greens in the European Parliament.

Firstly, their influence has grown con-

siderably, as the last European election, the two largest groups in the Parliament, the conservative EPP group and the Socialists and Democrats (S&D) group, no longer have a majority. Instead, the Greens/EFA group won seats. For Jakop Dalunde, this explains also the recent interest of the Commission in environmental policies: "They need our votes. If they didn't need our votes, of course they wouldn't be as green."

As a result, a Just Transition towards a green Europe is now actively discussed on the European level and the Commission has stepped up its climate action efforts. At first sight, this could be interpreted as if all the groups in the Parliament now would fight for a Just Transition. However, Green MEPs contacted by the Ecosprinter criticized that a lot of the current proposals would only focus on specific sectors or regions, while in reality, green visions should encompass a holistic change, as Sylwia Spurek highlights: "We need to tackle not only the most obvious sectors like the transport sector but all the sectors which have a negative impact on the environment."

All aspects considered, there is a lot at stake with still a long way to go and nearly no time left to make this transition a just transition. Michael Bloss puts this challenge into a historical context: **"We have always managed it thus we should trust us and our abilities to manage this change too as before. Transition as we have before."**

1. See: Euractiv (2021) Green MEP accuses Germany of 'setting a bad example' in its recovery plan. <https://bit.ly/3xQUJx>

2. See Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (2021) The Recovery Plan in Greece. Setting the Course for a Climate-Neutral and Digital Future? <https://bit.ly/3b0TEMk>

3. See for example: IDDRI (2020) Resilience and Green recovery in Europe: the critical role of the EU Adaptation Strategy. <https://bit.ly/3b3n2l2>

4. IRENA (2020) How Falling Costs Make Renewables a Cost-effective Investment. <https://bit.ly/3egDSIH>

5. See European Commission (2020) "Employment in the energy sector". <https://bit.ly/3nTDGZp>

6. DW (2020) My Europe: Illegal garbage dumps reflect EU's east-west divide. <https://bit.ly/3ulMgCx>

Institute for Regenerative Innovation

Križevci 2030

Ivana Šatrak

As I sip my afternoon tea made out of hemp grown 50 meters from where I am sitting, I imagine how distant this seemed in 2020. Relaxing on the deck at the top of the Križevci Institute for Regenerative Innovation, in our restaurant that carries only local grown food and products we processed, I'm enjoying the late summer breeze.

The waiter asks me if I would like to order some brunch. Today's special is a new salad mix, the Lab below managed to grow in just two weeks. I respectfully decline as my break is almost over. As I look across the restaurant, I notice people laughing while sharing new ideas. Some faces are not familiar, I suppose they are tourists staying at our self-sufficient hostel next door.

I look at the solar clock on the wall, it's 3:05 pm, time to go back to work. I stand up and a whiff of sweet smell from the flower field border surrounds me. I am overwhelmed with a feeling of peace and happiness. I walk toward the staircase with a smile on my face, saying hello to everyone I see. On the staircase I bump into Marija, our Urban Development and Energy Innovation department manager, and she halts me with excitement: "We did it! We found the right consistency of the eco building material that can withstand all natural and unnatural catastrophes. The larger scale production starts next week! Oh, I have to go, I have to go." As she swiftly walks away, I am overfilled with joy. We have been trying for so long to find the most efficient formula and to provide relief for cities still struggling with catastrophes that left their citizens without homes. I rushed into my office to call our partners in Congo, Brazil and Papua to let them know we made progress and that they can expect the materials soon. After I have finished the call, I go down to the Lab to congratulate the team and hear what other teams are up to in their departments.

First, I stop by the Alternative Food Production and Processing (AFPP) department, the one that served as the first idea for our Institute for Regenerative Innovation. The head of the department, Ivan, greets me with a frown. I ask him what is wrong. He immediately starts sharing that our indoor-outdoor insect pollination program has caught a snag - we lost the bees in the vents again and the team has to catch the queen, it's taking hours. I tell Ivan that it sounds like we need more plants for them and that I will send a request to the City to acquire more space so we can relocate some of the insects. Our production is growing at such a fast pace, it seems it is hard to keep up. 6 000 square meters of indoor and 70 000 square meters of outdoor space in different areas of the Municipality seems a lot, but not at the pace our business is growing.

In 2021 we decided to take a leap of faith, invited all the local stakeholders to a meeting and presented to them our ambitious plan and the necessity for it, not just in our community but all over the world. Everyone decided to contribute to the development of the Institute, especially the Mayor who saw that the idea was aligned with the Development Strategy of the City. We contacted a few Ministries, managed to get some seed funding, then bought and renovated the building I'm in right now.

Two years into the Institute development, people started being more involved, giving their unused land as an investment for small-scale experimental projects and getting their return percentage from successful product sales. Soon after the Institute was officially opened, we started to employ scientists and workers from different backgrounds, being guided by inclusivity and equal opportunity. Most of the first job positions we opened were directed toward the employment of long-term unemployed citizens, for whom we provided education and training. Now we are employing 874 people at the Institute from all over the world - working across 48 pilot sites for green technology, building materials, food production, self-sustainable hostel and spa, small production facilities for plastic alternatives, a zero-waste store, and education programs. Who would have thought in 2021 that little Križevci could become such a destination for innovators and creators of a better future.

Our main facility - where everything started - now has 10 departments that are using sectioned and communal lab equipment and resources. After the AFPP was opened, next came the Green Technology department that started working on upscaling the technology we had and piloting new products. One of the most popular ones was the AI Solar Smart Home System for electricity, heating, water and waste purification that could be built into a home in one day.

After that, Urban Development and Energy Innovation department, Health and Climate department, Eco Tourism department, Regenerative Society department, Waste Innovation and Disposal department, Education department, Start-up Accelerator department and Local Economy department were developed. They work individually, but are also partnering and intertwining different projects, giving quality outputs that overcome many obstacles of climate change. We became a 'go-to' learning place for other cities and countries, scaling our model outside the City of Križevci.

Our food systems and green technology is implemented all over the world, solving small and big climate change issues. Our Regenerative Society department and Education depart-

ment are acquiring governance solutions and educational opportunities in every corner of the world, as they have offices on every continent. The Health and Climate department works on solutions for health relief in areas that didn't adapt to climate change quickly enough. We are supported by many industries, humanitarian organisations and governments, and we support them to change and to make the world a greener and a safer place.

To think that I'm still equally excited about this after 10 years of work is a sign that we've made a legacy on a simple vision of a better future. As I'm reminiscing, I take a walk through our food production facility, breathing in the smell of flowers and herbs, enjoying the subtle buzzing of bees. Between different plants I manage to pick a red strawberry and bite it, the taste reminds me of my grandmas' strawberries- sweet and fragrant. It's quite sad that many parts of the world are

struggling to grow healthy food outdoors now, but luckily, we are finding new ways to overcome this every day.

On the street, I can see that the children are coming back from the forest preschool program. They pass the Green hostel, which was built from sustainable materials and is completely self-sufficient; my dream in 2020. Nataša, the preschool teacher waves and I call the group to come over. The production assistant brings a package of berries and children delightfully start eating. After a quick chat with Nataša and the children, I say goodbye and go home. 10 years ago, I would have been deeply worried for their future, today I am again filled with hope.

Life in Križevci is thriving all around me. We made it.

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Meet Ecosprinter Editorial Board



Robin Ehl is fighting for social and environmental justice and currently enrolled in a master's in European studies. Whenever possible, he spends time on his racing bike.



Katja Raiher is a psychology student in the city of Lüneburg, Northern Germany. She is passionate about local politics, green economics and dancing.



Manon Maalouli is currently a community manager for the Belgian French-speaking Green party. To log out, Manon likes to dance and play basketball without following the rules.



Passionate about circular and doughnut economics, **Emilia Syväjärvi** currently writes her thesis about Amsterdam's City Doughnut transition. She studies public governance and political science and unplugs by going for a long walk or a run in forest.

Meet the Writers



Bethany Copsey is a graduate of environmental policy and science, with a particular interest in political and soil ecology. She's a member of REPEAT and is planning to study soil science further with her masters. She is interested in ecologies of all kinds and making links between them - be that political ecology or soil ecology.



The Portuguese Young Greens "**Ecolojovem - Os Verdes**" were founded in 1989. Ecolojovem refuses the sadness of passivity, of conformism, the mediocrity of submission. They strive for quality, justice, and peace and believe in transformation, the work of young people's capacity for participation and intervention. They are a full member organization of FYEG.



Sanjana Idnani is a second year English Literature student at the University of Bristol and an aspiring journalist. Her writing interests include climate change, inclusivity, and the arts. She is also a member of the UK Green Party and works with the Greens of Colour Social Media Team.



Ariadna Romans is a trained political scientist and a student of philosophy. She currently works as a consultant at ideograma and collaborates with the project Young Mediterranean Voices. She was president of deba-t.org, Barcelona. Her interests lie in sustainable development, geopolitics, social and civil rights, as well as in digital ethics.



Zakia Soomauroo's PhD research is broadly concerned with the dimensions of socio-technical transitions, the mobility of people, and climate change, with a focus on urban environments and small islands. She is passionate about the environment, social equity, and the need for defending human rights.



In her PhD research, **Katrin Lammers** looks at electricity access and climate change impacts on Southeast Asian islands. Sustainable electricity access is a prerequisite for many adaptation measures. Therefore, she investigates how climate change resilient energy systems may look like in order to sustain positive adaptation potentials for the local communities. Katrin is concerned about climate change and is part of the climate justice movement. She is especially passionate about environmental protection, energy transition and social equity and supports actions with her own body, research and volunteer work.



Nina Šašić is an ethnologist and cultural anthropologist with a passion for visual anthropology. She is equal parts obsessed with youth and popular culture and with social justice. She has experience in research and advocacy and policy-related work in the civil society sector, most notably regarding public health, participatory architecture and marginalized community issues. In her free time she likes petting all the animals, trying out different cuisines and daydreaming about the eco-socialist revolution.



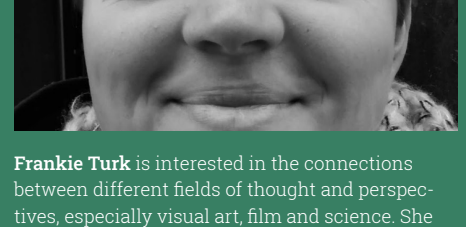
Jasper Strunk is from Lüneburg, Germany, is finishing his studies on social psychology and ethics. He describes himself as a "1.5 Ultra" in firm disapproval of civilisation to collapse. Being involved in the Extinction Rebellion, he constantly explores appropriate and hopefully effective ways to change humanity's course. He trusts the people and has a fancy for the future.



Claire Lejeune, 26, is a green activist based in the Paris suburbs, who was formally co-secretary for the Jeunes Ecologistes. She studies philosophy and public affairs and is particularly interested in how social justice is linked with the fight against climate change.



Ivana Šatrak is from Križevci. She's an SDG ambassador for Koprivnica-Križevci county. She works at a local cooperative KLIK as an Expert Advisor. Her work is focused on creating educational programs and innovative approaches to citizen engagement while making Križevci a greener city. She likes art, animals and people that want to save the world.



Frankie Turk is interested in the connections between different fields of thought and perspectives, especially visual art, film and science. She has been active in climate justice advocacy for a number of years, and believes that peatlands are one of the most under-rated ecosystems that exist today. She sees that peatlands are spaces for deep reflection, climate mitigation, adaptation and political transformation!



Anouk Noelle Nicklas is spokesperson of the young greens in Heidelberg, Germany. She is currently finishing her law studies and working on being accepted as a PhD student in criminal law. She is passionate about feminism, domestic politics and antifascism.



Tatjana Söding is a co-founding member of Erasmus by Train e.V. She holds a Bachelor's in Liberal Arts from University College Maastricht and is currently studying Human Ecology at Lund University. Being passionate about environmental justice, Tatjana is exploring ways in which a transport and energy transition can be reached through degrowth strategies.



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