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# A Climate for Change



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# Time to find a new way to tell the story

Green European Journal Editorial Board

A common thread runs through the articles that make up this edition of the Green European Journal. The message is loud and clear: it is a call to action of the utmost urgency. The IPCC's fifth assessment report on climate change out this month is, as expected, categorical: unless we act now, dramatic changes in global temperatures will occur by the end of the century. In between the COP20 in Lima and the 2015 COP 21 summit in Paris there is a "window of opportunity". A mass mobilisation, allying citizens, activists and politicians, is the only way to breathe life back into a negotiations process in dead-lock.

On this there is consensus but the next question is less clear-cut. How do we bring about this mobilisation? At a time when representative democracy is said to be in crisis, when citizens are finding new ways to engage politically, and above all when economic concerns drown out all other discussions, how do we put the fight against climate change back at the top of the agenda, both for politicians sitting at negotiating tables and for citizens who may feel that other problems are of more pressing and more tangible significance in their own lives?

We need to tell the climate story in a way that inspires people to act for change, both in their own lives and through their political representatives. We need to reconnect the topic of climate change to people's daily lives and to avoid overwhelming them with a sense of powerlessness over an issue that seems abstract and global in scale.

We need to join the dots so that it becomes clear that many of the questions now seen in isolation (energy, pollution, jobs, poverty, migration etc.) are intrinsically bound up with one another, and that genuine change – that is also fair and democratic – can only be achieved by adopting a vision which includes all of these aspects.



The three parts of this edition correspond to three key dimensions of this challenge. We start by going back to the beginning of the global climate negotiations process, to trace the roots of the current impasse and the current weakness of the EU's position in the

global debates. We then return to the here and now to identify the main strategy and focus of Greens at the EU level in the run-up to Paris, and how this differs with the approach adopted hitherto.

The second dimension concerns the increasingly influential role of civil society actors, whether NGOs or grassroots initiatives. Building a strong link with these civil movements is crucial. But some have established themselves outside of, or even in opposition to, the political sphere, in protest at the lack of action. For Green political actors, this presents a serious challenge to forging a strong alliance with these actors and speaking with a common voice. Opening a dialogue is a first and essential step towards building a robust and complimentary coalition to amplify the message on the need for action.

We end with the local, regional and national levels. How do seemingly isolated issues, such as regional conflicts, localised natural phenomena or social tensions, impinge on the climate action needed at the global level? Putting these issues and debates in comparative perspective allows us to begin to draw parallels between contexts and cases which seem irreconcilably distinct.

While this edition does not provide a fixed roadmap for the way ahead, the ideas it contains provide leads for a new way of thinking and talking about the climate. Efforts taking place all around the world, whether in Parliament chambers, city halls or allotments, contribute to providing the basis for a renewed approach, enthusiasm and hope for what can be achieved if a genuine movement in the spirit of global solidarity takes hold. The main challenge ahead now, is for those with the common aim of seeing a climate policy that is just, democratic and effective, to join forces and speak to power with a message loud enough that it will be impossible to ignore. ■



Amy Dahan

# Europe and the fight against climate change

To understand how we came to the current state of stagnation in international climate change negotiations, we need to return to the very beginning, and trace how the process and the roles of the various actors have evolved. An analysis of the geopolitical balance demonstrates that we need a paradigm shift away from neoliberalism and technical, top-down ‘solutions’ if we are to make the changes needed to tackle climate change.

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## The fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)

**Rémi BEAU: The fifth Assessment Report of the IPCC has just been published. Can you remind us what science tells us about climate change and how the 'climate alarm' has developed?**

**Amy DAHAN:** The first time the climate alarm was sounded was a long time ago. It became so loud that the IPCC was set up in 1988. The IPCC is unique as far as organisations go, but it was modelled after the monitoring mechanism for the ozone layer. In the 1980s heightened concern for the hole in the ozone layer led to the establishment of a scientific monitoring group. The issue is less of a concern today, but the group still exists precisely because the Montreal protocol (1987) led to a drastic reduction in chlorofluorocarbon emissions.

The IPCC was set up in part because of the multilateral nature of the endeavour, founding the IPCC was quite complex, but a lot of stakeholders from a lot of different countries really wanted to better understand climate change related challenges. Basically the idea was to unite a group of scientific experts to elucidate some climate questions: the IPCC was born.

The IPCC's Fifth Assessment Report was recently published. The problem is simple: the situation is getting worse, much worse. Since 1870, we - all countries and regions combined - have emitted 550 gt of cumulated CO<sub>2</sub>. In 2013 alone, we emitted 9.9 gt

of CO<sub>2</sub> and this annual figure continues to increase! And this despite the fact that scientists agree that emission levels of around 800 gigatons of CO<sub>2</sub> would mean an increase in the world's average temperature of 2° C. Moreover, if we continue business as usual, rather than an average temperature increase of 2° C, we will experience an increase of 5° to 6° C with all of the consequences that follow.



There has been much criticism of measuring anthropogenic climate change in this way. After all, what does global average temperature mean? What does it refer to precisely? Therein lies some of the fundamental aspects of climate change: most phenomena referred to as climate change related are abstract, global, and not directly perceptible. To boot, it is irreversible. It's already happening even if we cannot feel it yet. For these reasons, climate change is hard to grasp, to understand and it creates cognitive dissonance.

As Northern countries experience extreme climate events, the shift towards adaptation is happening there too. Countries in the North are resigned to the fact that the war must be waged on two fronts: reduction and adaptation.

### The “Climate Regime” – Changes in the power struggle

**RB:** Could you explain the so-called “Climate Regime” from its origins to its progression and implementation? And could you give us an overview of the approximately 20 years of climate change negotiations?

**AD:** The Framework Convention was established in 1992 at the Earth Summit in Rio. It was implemented in 1994 and a year later the first Conference of the Parties (COP) was held. Since then one is held every year. Just like with any multilateral undertaking, the process is very cumbersome.

Over the course of the first decade, in the 1990s, the focus was on negotiating the Kyoto protocol. In the initial phase, the IPCC expert reports have been crucial. The scientific diagnosis of the danger of climate change served as a basis for the political process.

In the first ten years, negotiations were essentially between developed countries (who wanted to do the bare minimum), and developing countries. North/South relations were extremely polarised. To Southern countries, climate change was the North’s problem. The North was the culprit, the North had to act. The majority of developing countries thought that climate change was a fabrication meant to stunt their development. To this point, scientists did a great job educating on climate change. One of the IPCC’s greatest achievements was convincing Southern countries that climate change did indeed exist and that it was a real threat. Environmental NGOs assisted in the effort and it was so successful that developing



countries – notably the most vulnerable and poor – became active and instrumental in climate change action in the early 2000s.

The geopolitical balance shifted around 2002 and the reason is twofold. First, because emerging countries are by definition emerging, which changes everything. Second, because previously reluctant developing countries began to take a more active role in the negotiations and they placed the potential losses and damages that they might incur as a result of climate change at the centre of the debate.

On this subject the IPCC’s Group 2, which handles issues related to the most vulnerable regions of the world and the impact of climate change, is gaining importance. Adaptation is also increasing in prominence, in addition to greenhouse gas emission related issues.

As Northern countries experience extreme climate events, the shift towards adaptation is happening there too. Countries in the North are resigned to



the fact that the war must be waged on two fronts: reduction and adaptation. The first decade of the 2000s was marked by the realisation that global warming is a reality and that climate change is here.

This brings us to the 2010s. Currently the process is at a crucial point. First, to put it simply, since the Copenhagen conference, we have been at standstill in governance bodies. Now, I don't want just the negative to come out of this brief overview. There is increasing awareness of the challenges of the multilateral approach and its corollaries: COPs, the emergence of alternative climate fora, i.e., *fringe fora*, etc. NGOs have had a big role to play in this. Second, negotiations seem to be stuck.

Despite all of this, some countries have implemented policies on their own to reduce green house gas emissions. That means that some progress has been made, albeit not enough to fight climate deterioration. This does show that there is awareness of the problem. We can say that there is a veritable race between climate deterioration (that is moving much faster than we had initially believed) and local and national policies to slow it. International efforts are essentially absent.

**RB: Could you explain the various groups of countries influencing the climate debate?**

**AD:** Until recently, there were three big groups of countries weighing in on the climate negotiations: Europe, the United States and the G77. The G77, an extremely heterogeneous group, was initially made up of 77 countries and today has 132. It is currently

referred to as the G77 + China. We can sum up their respective positions as follows. The European Union has long been proactive in its climate policy and has consistently advocated a very ambitious binding treaty. The United States has consistently protected its own interests (economic and energy-wise), stating that it will not sign any treaty unless all countries – especially China – are signatories. China, with the G77, has always emphasised the responsibility of Northern countries in causing climate change. Very early, China became the spokesperson for developing countries, offering to defend the latter in all climate discussions.



This basic description becomes more complex as we look more closely at the disparate make-up of the G77. G77 countries have varying levels of development and extremely different interests. In fact, we can consider that there are subgroups within the larger group. The first subgroup is the BASIC (Brazil, South Africa, India, China) group, which unites the big emerging countries around a few common interests. These countries have developed so rapidly that they currently account for a significant share

To sum up, we have to bring the territorial specificity and the material side back to the core of the debate.

of today's CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Nonetheless, the BASIC group continues to insist that the Northern countries do the heavy lifting. The second subgroup is made up of the least advanced countries along with the countries that are most vulnerable to the effects of global warming. They have progressively distanced themselves from the emerging countries by pointing out that the BASIC countries' development is endangering them. This group includes the highly vulnerable small island states of Oceania and is known as AOSIS (Alliance of Small Island States). This division became so clear in Copenhagen that there was even talk of an effective split of the G77.

### **Breaking out of the deadlock**

**RB: In your opinion, how can we move beyond the standstill in international climate talks?**

**AD:** What we really need is a paradigm shift. We cannot keep having international climate talks like we have until now. It's a waste of time, we are not committing to anything. If we keep focusing solely on long-term objectives, or on whether or not international climate treaties should be binding, we will never actually tackle the problem.

We should be asking ourselves some concrete questions and taking on material issues for which we must find solutions such as: how can we produce clean energy? What techniques can be used to reduce emissions? To sum up, we have to bring the territorial specificity and the material side back to the core of the debate.

On this point, it is true that while the negotiation process remained firmly stuck in a sort of neo-liberal framework – while we waited for the markets to self-regulate and solve the climate problem – some countries realised the unsustainability of this and the need to re-evaluate the entire development model in place in Northern countries, and that has been replicated in other countries around the world. Developing countries and emerging countries realise that this development model is not viable, not only for the planet, but also for them. For example, in China, we've seen that because of the related problem of air pollution, climate related issues are beginning to be addressed, albeit too slowly.

Some countries have adopted the "ecological modernisation" paradigm and are attempting to establish their leadership in the area. Germany is the most advanced example.

Other examples, in another way, are South Korea, and especially China, which aims to produce and sell solar panels to the world.

In this context, an international agreement on climate change must seek to free itself from the runaway economic competition amongst States that has done more harm than good. That is why it is crucial to move past the current standstill in international efforts to fight climate change.

**RB: To overcome the current impasse, it is important to understand the causes. What are the main reasons for the lack of progress in negotiations?**

The depletion of the ozone layer was caused by pollution by chlorofluorocarbons. So, the solution came down to finding an alternative to chlorofluorocarbons. But obviously, climate change is completely different. CO<sub>2</sub> is not a pollutant. It is a part of everything we do.

**AD:** Historically, several rules have been identified as having derailed negotiations. Also, as I stated previously, some parts of the structure hampered the process as well.

First, the way in which international efforts to tackle the hole in the ozone layer served as a model for climate change negotiations resulted in a misunderstanding of the issue.

The depletion of the ozone layer was caused by pollution by chlorofluorocarbons. So, the solution came down to finding an alternative to chlorofluorocarbons. But obviously, climate change is completely different. CO<sub>2</sub> is not a pollutant. It is a part of everything we do, it is a part of our life, and our physiological cycles. I believe that by attacking the problem from the outset as if it were a problem of global pollution, prevented us from fully comprehending the challenge.

The second major cause of the impasse is the role that the United States has played. The US participated in the drafting of the Kyoto Protocol (which aimed to distribute the burden amongst the Northern countries), but never ratified it. As soon as there were enough signatories, the Protocol went into force in 2004: without the US. Yet, everyone keeps acting as if the US will one day ratify the protocol. It is almost as if we just keep waiting for them.

The third cause – and I'd like to emphasise this point – is the neoliberal economic framework of the 1990s, according to which the market would work

everything out! Regulation was out of the question, re-evaluating our production modes and energy models was unthinkable. Negotiations only dealt with the “end of the line” and never the source. The questioning surrounded the products and the pollution, but never how we produced.

In this context, the negotiations focused on two questions: defining a timeline over the course of which long-term objectives would be met and the implementation of the CO<sub>2</sub> exchange. Yet again, these two points turned out to be bitterly sterile.

The timeline set objectives that were too far in the future and too abstract and the CO<sub>2</sub> exchange doesn't work. It hasn't generated enough financial flow to support investment in “green technologies.” The price of carbon is too low to hope that it will “decarbonize” the economy. From this standpoint, the key element in the liberal approach to fighting climate change has been a failure.



We must shift away from the “Top-Down” paradigm that has prevailed until now and that was supported by long-term objectives and the CO<sub>2</sub> exchange, and move towards a “Bottom-Up” approach based on material issues and the actual problems facing the various countries.

The world changed enormously in 20 years – globalisation of trade has accelerated, emerging countries have developed extremely rapidly, and the world’s energy landscape has been transformed. This all must be taken into account in efforts to move past the impasse. That’s why negotiations must be freed from the cumbersome process that slowed down negotiations. We must shift away from the “Top-Down” paradigm that has prevailed until now and that was supported by long-term objectives and the CO<sub>2</sub> exchange, and move towards a “Bottom-Up” approach based on material issues and the actual problems facing the various countries. On this issue, I believe that it will be crucial for the negotiations to recognise that States have different specific interests and that they will defend those interests in international climate change fora. Some of these interests run counter to efforts to fight global warming. It is not by ignoring this fact that we will be able to make progress in negotiations. On the contrary, the various geopolitical interests must be integrated into the negotiation process.

At the same time – and this would be my last recommendation – to get out of this rut, we must unlock the climate issues, while clearly identifying the subjects that are specific to the climate regime. Internationally, climate change negotiations are too isolated from other multilateral processes. Every day, in the international arena, decisions are made that run contrary to the fight against climate change. This contradiction between the acceptance that the whole world must take part in climate change negotiations and the simultaneous cordoning off of climate change issues slows down the process and condemns it to a standstill. ■

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# Greens can be the political voice of the climate movement



Bas Eickhout

Many of those taking to the streets to protest against injustice and inequality are disillusioned with party politics and institutions. So how can Green elected representatives at the European level show that they share these concerns and that they can be a credible voice to represent citizens in the political arena?

In the run-up up to Paris 2015, Greens in the European Parliament are seeking to deliver a message of democratisation and empowerment, explains MEP Bas Eickhout.

With regards to the international negotiations, it's interesting to see that, increasingly, Europe is no longer a driving force behind the process but is becoming more a delaying force.

### Europe has been left behind

**GEJ: What is your diagnosis of the current status of the international climate change negotiations in light of the most recent developments?**

With regards to the international negotiations, it's interesting to see that, increasingly, Europe is no longer a driving force behind the process but is becoming more a delaying force. At least, that is the danger we are in. The most interesting development is in China, where it seems as though the Chinese government are going to enact tough regulation on their coal-fired power plants, for example by bringing in very strict emissions standards. Admittedly, this is driven by air pollution, not climate change per se. Nevertheless, it will have a tremendous impact on the negotiations because, if China is really going to get tough on its emissions, then they can promise this on the international stage and totally change the dynamics of the negotiations. Compared to Copenhagen, the biggest change is the position of China and the fact that Europe is internally divided and not able to be a leader in the international negotiations.



**GEJ: Where do you think this change in the European approach stems from, and how might this be affected by the new EU Parliament and Commission?**

Well, I think that remains to be seen but there are several reasons we could mention for the change in Europe's role. First is of course the economic crisis, the euro crisis, which has totally taken up the attention and activity of the member states and their politicians, so that climate is not a priority but rather is put on the back-burner.

Secondly, Central European countries, led by Poland, have been taking a far more prominent role, but some have also been driving the negotiations in a more negative way.

The third reason is a more general reluctance from member states to give the EU a strong mandate for climate and energy. This is mainly driven by the United Kingdom. For example, they might be outspoken on climate but they don't want anything at all on renewables or efficiency. They are pushing for there to be unanimity on any further decisions on climate change which restricts 'Brussels' more and more. The Netherlands and France are also moving this way, taking a more Eurosceptic line. Altogether, this is bringing Europe to a standstill on climate change negotiations, which is really painful one year away from Paris.

**GEJ: Could a stronger position on behalf of China or more pressure coming from alliances of developing countries reinvigorate the process? Or is that too optimistic?**

I am starting to become more optimistic about the global negotiations than the European negotiations. As well as China, another big player is the United States. There you really see that more social movements are becoming very active on the issue of climate change. Of course, there was the climate march we saw in September with hundreds of thousands of people. From the European perspective, you could say that it was not so successful, certainly in terms of numbers. It seems as if in the US, the focus of the previous Occupy movement has moved towards climate activism, with a similar message, one about equality and disappointment in politics, and asking politicians to act. Although the political system is very polarised which makes change difficult, it seems the climate debate there is changing and this social movement is also bringing more momentum. This, together with developments in China and other developing countries gives the feeling that something could happen towards Paris.

### **Bridging the gap: Greens and social movements**

**GEJ: What do you think that Greens can be doing to create better relations with these movements and to build on the momentum that is there, in order to mobilise a greater number of people?**

If you focus on climate alone, it is difficult to get a lot of attention in Europe because of the economic situation. But if you focus on the energy debate, there what is key is that the push for renewables is also about empowering societies, to take control of their own energy supply, and this is where we

converge with the social movements. The idea is that renewables are a force that is leading to the decentralisation of our energy supply, which is also a democratisation of energy. That is exactly the argument that will get more people active and enthusiastic. And that is really the positive message that we, as Greens, are working on, to make this campaign more part of a social movement and not only a climate movement per se.



**GEJ: What do you see as new emerging trends and tools, for example social media or digital campaigning in general, which could be useful for encouraging social movements?**

There are so many social movements at the moment, working on different things, but they are all frustrated by the political elite, who don't seem to understand why people are losing their faith in politics. They see politics as driven by big business and big corporations who have direct links with politicians to get their agenda across while the people are disempowered.

We are not anti-politics – we do believe in political solutions – but at the same time, we are also not part of the political mainstream. So in that sense, the Greens have a unique position.

You see this by the fact that many NGOs are active on TTIP, financial issues, banking regulations, and so on, as well as climate change.

We need to link up those forces more as they have different focuses but also a common concern. The Greens are theoretically the force that could unite them because we are one of the few forces who still see the potential of global politics, and who want to change the system through politics. We are not anti-politics, we do believe in political solutions, but at the same time, we are also not part of the political mainstream. So in that sense, the Greens have a unique position and could be the link between politics and all those social movements. Of course, this can be done partly through social media but there is already a lot of activity in this area and somehow we have to strengthen the link to the Greens as the political voice of the social movements. Because although we might be disappointed and prefer a world without politics, in the end most of the people realise that we still do need a political voice and Greens aspire to becoming this voice for social movements. I think that's also part of a trend towards a more modern way of doing politics, which is becoming less and less about membership of a political party.

### A climate of frustration

**GEJ: In the last GEJ edition on democracy, we explored the idea that people have not lost interest in politics but are finding a new way to engage in politics. Have the Greens lost their connection to the grassroots, and if so, how do we get it back and re-connect?**

Partly, we lost it. Of course, the Greens gained a lot of success through being active at the political level, which is positive, as I say we believe in change through political solutions, but you also have to be careful not to become part of the political system which people are so annoyed about. I think, certainly in some countries, the Greens are not perceived any more as a different force but just as one of those political parties. So partly because of this we lost it, but also, and this is a bigger problem, because people are so disappointed in politics. They are not losing interest but they are losing faith, not in politics, but in policy-makers. And in this context of disappointment it is difficult to get them trusting again in a political party.





We have to get to the hearts of people and that's why we have to talk more about empowerment, about democratisation. Giving people a say about *your* energy.

Interestingly, there was a very successful initiative organised by a Dutch foundation on climate, who started buying solar panels from China and selling them in the Netherlands, but without any dependence on any kinds of political subsidy schemes, as they were disappointed with the policy-makers and preferred to just 'do it themselves'. When they participated in the climate march, despite initially not wanting to include politicians, in the end they realised they needed a political voice and so invited me to speak on stage. I thought that was a good success for the Greens in that, in the end, they overcame their own resistance and did link up with politicians and fortunately enough it was the Greens. This is the biggest challenge for us; how to overcome that resistance to politics. That is the one-billion dollar question: whether Greens can become that force. I think we can, I think we have the best papers for that, but how do we achieve it?

**GEJ: Greens are often criticised for relying on statistics in their political campaigning. Do you think that adopting 'populism but with the right politics' could be a potential strategy?**

Populism manages to appeal to people's feelings, at the heart, and not just the brains. Greens have a tendency to aim at the brains but we all know that the bigger movements come from the heart. So you could call that populism, but as I said the biggest difference is that we are not anti-politics, we don't say "f\*\*\* the system" and give up on all politics. We are a movement who say "we should be your political voice". We have to get to the hearts of people and that's why we have to talk more

about empowerment, about democratisation. Giving people a say about *your* energy. It's kind of a symbol of empowering people. I think that is the heartbeat we need to address and I think that is key.

**Paris 2015 in sight**

**GEJ: Looking towards the next negotiations in Paris, do you think a mass mobilisation will make a difference in terms of the outcome? Or will it depend on bargaining between negotiators?**

You need the mobilisation but it needs to come earlier on. If we only get a final march in Paris in the first week, then it will not majorly influence the negotiations any more. This is because leaders will try to do most of the work ahead of time and keep the last political decisions for Paris and then you are more or less working in a fixed frame. That is of course why Greens are needed because, on the one hand, they should be the voice of what is happening on the streets but, at the same time, we need to be present to influence the negotiations.

At the moment, in our parliamentary work, we find the issue of energy dependency is really getting things moving politically. It may not be the one that is getting people immediately on the streets, but it could at least get the EU into a more central position in the negotiations for a better chance of successes in Paris. For me, those are two different strategies. You have the strategy towards the people, which needs to be happening now up to Paris, but also beyond because we all know the deal there will only be the start.



**GEJ: What role can locally-based initiatives such as the “Green City” movement play in this discussion on energy?**

The cities are often more linked to what people want than the higher-up politicians and that is the reason why we, the political group, but also the EGP [European Green Party] are trying to connect with these ‘Green cities’ that are doing these initiatives and where, most of the time, the Greens are well represented. It is important to support this to show that, despite the formal negotiations, which will get bogged down on percentages and legal texts, that beyond that, what happens at the city level is promising and can achieve a lot, by becoming energy-neutral, carbon-neutral, and so on, independently of the formal targets. So that is also a part of our campaign, as well as connecting with our Green councillors, which we have quite a lot of, all over Europe.

**GEJ: Where do you think Greens in the European Parliament should focus their efforts in the coming months to try and get the best possible outcome for a binding agreement?**

It needs to be a combination of what we have discussed. You won’t have success at the European level unless you have the member states and the national parties with you, therefore we are in close cooperation with the EGP, which at the same time is trying to get the local councillors active. Secondly, we are really focusing on positive campaigning around the empowerment of people around the energy issue. We want to show people working on local renewable energy projects that they are not alone, that it is happening all over Europe, to show that an energy transition is possible. Thirdly, there is the parliamentary work, the political work that is trying to get more politicians on your side by focussing on linking climate change and energy security policies, to show that those two concerns can go hand-in-hand. I think those three activities altogether should result in a campaign, which we then try to connect to NGOs who are active and then hopefully a bigger movement that could result in Europe becoming a driving force, instead of a braking force. ■

*Bas Eickhout has been a Member of the European Parliament in the Greens/EFA group since 2009 and is a member of the Parliament’s Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety.*

# The run-up to Paris 2015: a change of paradigm in the climate movement



Delphine Chalençon

The bitter disappointment at the failure of previous climate summits dealt a serious blow to climate activism. But now, with COP 21 on the horizon, a new movement is building across Europe. Greens have the opportunity to be a voice for this movement, but only if they succeed in convincing citizens that they hear their demands for change and will see their commitments through.

Within society, slowly but surely, a small but increasingly active and positive movement is taking shape.

### **New hope after bitter disappointment**

In December 2015, at the UN climate summit in Paris, world leaders will once again try and come up with a deal to limit the impact of global warming before it spirals out of control.

Hopes were extremely high in 2009, when representatives of Government and Heads of State met in Copenhagen for the 15th Conference of the Parties in order to come up with a plan to reduce world carbon emissions to a safe level. Unfortunately, the incredible mobilisation of citizens coupled with heightened media and policy interest did not suffice to convince leaders to go beyond national interest. This beautiful enthusiasm – which also created huge expectations – led nowhere. At the last minute, a petty deal without real ambitious commitments brokered between China, South Africa, India, Brazil and the US put an end to citizens' hopes of seeing the whole world unite in a single common fight.

The outcome of the conference paralysed the whole Green movement. Citizens, NGOs and Green parties – which had spent so much time and effort engaging with society, various business sectors and the media – woke up stunned the day after the summit, feeling absolutely powerless. The so-called climate fatigue that ensued from this blow lasted a long time.

But the mood is now changing. And it is changing for the better. In the last five years, citizens and the Green movement have taken the time to recover but also to organise themselves. They did not just sit back and wait but took the time to digest and reflect. Within society, slowly but surely, a small but increasingly active and positive movement is taking



shape. In different parts of society, small changes can be perceived. A huge number of people have come to realise that the way our societies are organised has shown its limits and that things must change. The sharing economy, helped by the rapid development of technologies but mainly due to citizens' creativity, is spreading more and more. Local communities get together and organise their own decentralised energy projects; co-operative structures, family-sized businesses are being created every day; new currency and payment systems are being trialed. The green, circular economy is taking shape. All of this constitutes a real alternative movement that was considered as too idealistic or insignificant a few years ago, but which is now growing and which will sooner or later have to become the norm.

Some might say that things got worse, and one would struggle to prove them wrong: the impacts of climate change can be felt everywhere across the globe and the latest reports from the UNFCCC have never been so alarming. Everywhere in Europe and beyond, national interest seems to get in the way

Everywhere in Europe and beyond, national interest seems to get in the way of all common initiatives, giving the impression of stagnation or worse, moving backwards.

of all common initiatives, giving the impression of stagnation or worse, moving backwards.

Although world leaders might not be willing to transcend their far too narrow vision and selfish interests, and despite some citizens losing faith in the ability of their representatives to improve their quality of life, it does not mean that nothing important or positive is under way.

### A historic opportunity for Greens

The biggest climate march in history that took place in New York City and in many cities in the world showed that people are ready for something different. Citizens are playing an active role and making concrete demands, one of the primary ones being that world leaders rapidly abandon all types of fossil fuels and increase the share of renewable energy sources.

Only a few months away from the COP 21 in Paris, the Greens now have a fantastic opportunity and role to play: they can give more voice to this parallel movement and economy that is being shaped day-by-day by millions of people across the globe. They can ensure that this so-called alternative movement gets bigger and bigger, that the demands made by citizens are listened to in the political sphere and that the Green, circular economy that puts the citizen and the environment at the core of all its policies becomes the norm. Greens must now show to citizens that they are witnessing these demands and changes that other political groups refuse to see, marginalise or look down upon.



The climate will receive more and more interest from politicians and media in the run-up to the COP and this is an opportunity that our movement must seize. For a long time, the Greens have demonstrated that many Green and cost-efficient solutions exist to solve the different financial, economic and social crises afflicting our world today. The time has come now to lead on a subject that has always been the core of their values and show other political parties that what was considered too idealistic several years ago is now spreading throughout the world. Citizens need our help to make their voices louder and to bring about the change that they are so eager to see come true. ■

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Ignacio Fresco  
Vanzini

# The EU in climate negotiations: losing the lead

On the 20th of September we witnessed with excitement the greatest international mobilisation against climate change ever held. Hundreds of thousands of people rallied to demand changes in climate policy. Changes appear to be occurring, not only for civil society, but also at a governmental level, which impact the current climatic trend. However, although many countries have already taken significant steps in reducing their carbon footprint, an international agreement covering all aspects of climate change has still failed to be reached.

### **Taking responsibility**

At the end of next year the Conference of the Parties, known as COP21, will take place in Paris, in the framework of the United Nations Convention on Climate Change. At this Conference, commitments will be sought through a binding international agreement. The aim is, firstly, to ensure that every country pursues a new target in reducing its greenhouse gases emissions, and secondly, to establish new assistance mechanisms for those countries which are less capable of adapting to climate change effects, in order to enable them to face the consequences of climate change without excessive costs to their economies. Therefore, the Conference purports to be an important step forward in the fight against climate change. And this is not only because of its aims, but also due the fact that this time it might be possible to include, eventually, the entire world.

The Kyoto Protocol, signed in 1997 and in force since 2005, established a target to be attained between 2008 and 2012: to reduce 5% of greenhouse gases emissions by reference to the year 1990 (base-year for emissions calculation). However, it was done without the ratification of the United States and was subsequently abandoned by Canada. This protocol, the effects of which were supposed to be evident by the end of 2012, had to be postponed until 2020 in the Conference of Qatar (COP18, 2012) as it was impossible to reach a new legally binding agreement at the Copenhagen Conference in 2009, the purpose

of which was to achieve a new more ambitious binding agreement that would replace Kyoto.

The lack of agreement in the Conference of Copenhagen was a huge missed opportunity and an important setback for the European Union. Partly due to the fact that the meeting was not well prepared and it was carried out in the middle of the financial crisis, a moment when talking about tackling climate change was synonymous with additional expenditure and being a brake on the economy. But also because this time the EU lacked the leadership it had displayed during the previous decades. Indeed, all the leadership that the EU had succeeded in demonstrating in previous years disappeared in Copenhagen due to a large institutional incoherence and internal division. Undoubtedly, the lack of ambition the EU brought to the climate change summit in Copenhagen was also a decisive factor in its loss of its leading role.

### **Internal tools with global impacts**

Before losing its leadership role, the EU was the global Green standard-setter. In 2009, the EU adopted an emissions reduction target called "Europe 2020 strategy", which involves, among other goals, a target for greenhouse gas emissions to be 20% lower than in 1990, for 20% of energy consumption to come from renewable sources, and a 20% increase in energy efficiency. And five years before the deadline expires, the targets proposed are almost met.

This ability to bind third countries and actors to reduce their emissions of CO<sub>2</sub> through internal measures is, without a doubt, a great step forward in the globalisation of the climate problem.



Furthermore, the EU has also succeeded in implementing internal measures which impact actors outside the EU. For example, the so called “Emission Trading System”, which is the key tool in fighting climate change by reducing industrial CO<sub>2</sub> emission in the EU, also includes binding measures for all the international aviation operators landing or departing in the EU. The flight operators have to count the emissions of the whole flight, and hence also the flight outside the EU, with the possibility for the Member States of the EU to take enforcement actions if an operator does not surrender the corresponding greenhouse gas allowances. This, of course, brought major international political protest and judicial conflicts, especially from American, Indian and Chinese aviation companies, which are also obliged to reduce their emissions despite not being European companies.

This ability to bind third countries and actors to reduce their emissions of CO<sub>2</sub> through internal measures is, without a doubt, a great step forward

in the globalisation of the climate problem. This was possible, in part, thanks to the inclusion in the Lisbon Treaty of the objective to achieve a “high level of environmental protection”, with special emphasis in the fight against climate change. It goes without saying that this “constitutionalisation” of the problem was largely a victory of the green movement in Europe. Such measures, of course, have not come without criticism, particularly regarding their lack of ambition and the effectiveness of the Emission Trading System, especially considering that the mechanisms have not functioned as expected and that some clauses were temporarily suspended.

While these criticisms are more than justified and should be shared, what also appears certain is that thanks to the fact that there was political will to set specific targets and deadlines, it was possible to reach certain agreements by using internal tools. This is relevant since as important as getting ambitious aims is to use the appropriate tools to achieve them.

### **Finding the political will to lead**

Whether we consider the “European 2020 strategy” sufficiently ambitious or not, at that moment it was the most ambitious unilateral offer on the table with the aim of reducing greenhouse emissions by 2020, while other actors had not even talked about what they were going to do. This political will to reach an agreement allowed the EU to gain a certain reputation as a leader in the international arena. Thus, whether the EU is currently a leader or not, it is a fact that often being perceived as a leader by others can be enough to actually become one.



Unlike in the Copenhagen Summit, where the predisposition to reach a binding agreement was non-existent and all the work was left to the very last moment, in Paris the situation seems to have improved.

Some countries, such as Japan, consider that there is a large correspondence between what the EU says and what it does. Other countries, such as China, India and Indonesia, perceive the EU as a leader since its capacity to establish and implement internal concrete measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions serves as an example and inspiration to others, especially to other developed countries. It would be therefore unfair to completely deny the EU's influence on climate matters.



Nevertheless, it would not be an exaggeration to characterise the EU's style of leadership as "soft" and/or "weak" in its strategy. On the one hand, the EU does not appear to possess enough political and economic power to compel other countries to tackle climate change. On the other hand, having internal measures that could set an example for others does not seem to have a real impact in either developed or developing countries. Moreover, large changes in environmental and climate matters which are taking place, especially in the Latin American

continent (such as the "*Ley de la Madre Tierra*" (Law of the Mother Earth) in Bolivia or the "*Legislación para el Buen Vivir*" (Legislation for Good Living) in Ecuador, follow a completely different doctrinal and ideological approach to the one that prevails in the Old Continent.

Furthermore, if we add to this characterisation of "soft" leadership the afore-mentioned failure of the EU in the Copenhagen Summit and its lack of ambition in the recent targets for 2030, it does not seem possible for the EU to play a decisive pro-active part in the Conference of the Parties that will take place in Paris next year. With regards to the replacement of the "European 2020 Strategy", in early 2014 the European Commission had set the target of reducing 40% of the EU emissions and to increase to 27% the share of renewable energies by 2030. However, these targets run the risk of being worthless if the commitments are not translated into concrete and precise obligations for the Member States, given that no enforcement actions can be taken. The refusal of the United Kingdom and Poland to accept specific targets "imposed by the EU" played a crucial role in this lack of agreement, which illustrate the difficulties in creating internal consensus on climate matters.

With this in mind, it would not be surprising if the EU went to the negotiations without greatly changing its role of "soft" leader. But unlike in the Copenhagen Summit, where the predisposition to reach a binding agreement was non-existent and all the work was left to the very last moment, in Paris the situation seems to have improved. Firstly, the EU has the necessary

will to demonstrate that it has not given up on its aspiration to lead the climate policies and that it is necessary to put the climate matters at the forefront of the political agenda. Secondly, on this occasion all the countries seem theoretically predisposed to reach a binding international agreement. While it is true that the United States is reluctant to reach a binding International Treaty because of the usual hostility of its Senate to any imposed external measure, it is widely recognised that it is necessary to move forward and that every country must adopt further internal actions and obligations, including penalties and sanctions for noncompliance. And lastly, before

the Paris Summit in December 2015 the Conference of the Parties takes place in Lima, Peru (COP20), which is intended to act as a roadmap for COP21. It remains now only to observe and demand, from civil society, that there be a high degree of consensus in Lima prior to the future agreement of Paris. ■

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# About time: the case for UNFCCC commitment periods



Morgan Henley

The difference between five and ten year commitment periods for international climate negotiations shouldn't be underestimated – with the science, technology and politics moving so fast, it's vital we regularly re-assess our plans.

It is precisely these kinds of under-ambitious deals which are leading many other nations to call for shorter term commitment periods for the UNFCCC.

The difference between five or ten years may seem trivial when you are talking about an issue with the gravity of climate change. So when it comes to UNFCCC commitment periods, it can be easy to think it's more of a detail than a crucial point. What's the difference between five or ten years anyway?

To put it into perspective, let's look at the world 15 years ago. It was 1999 and Y2K was one of our biggest fears, NATO was in the midst of bombing Yugoslavia, US President Bill Clinton was on trial for the Lewinsky affair, the euro had just been created, and Putin was the fresh new face of the Kremlin.

Apart from the seemingly never-ending rule of Putin, it's easy to see that in 15 years, things have changed quite a bit. Yet if you move ahead five years to ten years ago, it looks a little more like the world as we know it today. By 2004 Facebook had made it's debut, the US was in Iraq despite knowing they didn't have any weapons of mass destruction, the EU expansion was happening, and the Orange Revolution was underway in Ukraine. All this to say: five years can make a significant difference.

So as the current climate negotiations get underway this December in Peru, timing is going to be crucial. Peru (Lima) is going to be instrumental in crafting the following year's agreement that is set to be signed in Paris. If this agreement is going to be the "one" that rights the wrongs of Copenhagen and Kyoto, and finally give us the "UN answer" to climate change, even the details such as commitment periods will be essential.

### **The debate**

Today the parties are split between the option of either five or ten year commitment periods. The five year commitment period is advocated by many to be more appropriate given how rapidly technology advances which could boost renewable targets. Further, given that governments have less time to meet their targets, it encourages earlier action instead of putting it off, possibly to be another future administration's chore later.

With the ten year 2020-2030 proposal there would be a review in the middle, which is argued would lead to adjustments of the agreement if necessary. The EU has advocated this option with the rationale that this will boost investment and security for the obviously crucial private sector support. It also would conveniently correspond to the EU 2030 Energy Package.

This is the 2030 Energy Package that has markedly low ambitions. Experts have pointed out repeatedly that the necessary reductions to avoid the worst impacts of climate change are not encapsulated in the EU's recent package, and unfortunately are likely to freeze the EU's climate change aspirations until 2030. It is precisely these kinds of under-ambitious deals which are leading many other nations to call for shorter term commitment periods for the UNFCCC.



The rationale behind this proposal is to avoid what is called in climate negotiation lingo “locking in low commitment.” Given the current political atmosphere and the attitudes towards climate change and clean energy investment of major emitters, not only the EU, this is a serious concern. Many reasonably fear that the global political leaders of today will only be able to agree on weak targets, which will create an under-performing status quo. If the past is any indicator, when a country breaks from the status quo within the UNFCCC, it is rarely for the good.

This low ambition would then be frozen into an agreement until 2030, which can keep many countries around the world under-performing on emissions reductions and renewable investments. For the EU in particular, research has shown that the bloc could have surpassed their emissions reductions but didn't because it had already met the relatively low Kyoto Protocol targets. A dysfunctional EU emissions trading (ETS) mechanism doesn't help...

Given the reputation and reality of the climate negotiations themselves, having to craft another agreement and go through the cumbersome process of negotiating any more than absolutely necessary does at first seem like a nightmare. For the EU, coming battle worn from the 2030 negotiations, this sentiment is apt. After the long and trying process of getting together the 2030 targets, it appears that the idea of putting together new numbers for 2025 right now is just too cumbersome for many in the EU Commission, leaving the UNFCCC to be an afterthought of the 2030 package.

After the EU 2030 package is decided upon, it is up to the EU whether they will come up with a plan that accommodates a 2025 timeline as well or continue to defend the 2030 position. There is mounting pressure on the EU to support short-term goals from developing countries and environmental NGOs, such as the Climate Action Network, the major global network of NGOs who work against climate change. They have been calling on the EU to change their position as they see that the fear and low ambition of the EU 2030 package could seep into the UNFCCC. Included in this opposition is a seemingly unlikely player – the US.

### **Why the US?**

As of late, the US, despite being the notorious climate change negotiation spoiler of the past, has given some hope on emissions reductions. Whilst Obama has been far from the climate champion the world once hoped he would be, his recent 30% emission reduction regulation for existing power plants is

Climate change apathy in Washington also seems to be losing strength in other areas, as shown by the recent report released from the Pentagon on the security costs of inaction on climate change.

some sign of progress. Climate change apathy in Washington also seems to be losing strength in other areas, as shown by the recent report released from the Pentagon on the security costs of inaction on climate change.



Yet despite these signs of movement, the reality of climate change politics in the US is still stormy - warranting the advocacy of a short term commitment period. US negotiators and leadership have repeatedly urged that any legally binding agreement that will need the US Congress's approval is sure to get rejected by Republicans. Some may regard this as one of the US' sly negotiating tactics, but to do so would ignore the stark reality of the political landscape in the US.

The recent mid-term elections in the US showed the depths of the Republican party's hostility to climate change-directed legislation. Many of the potential Republican Presidential hopefuls such as Florida Senator Marco Rubio, Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal, and Wisconsin Representative Paul Ryan, have publicly denied climate change – and the list goes on. It has even reached the point where climate change scepticism within the Republican party has received so much public attention and criticism that signs of change in rhetoric have started to appear. The tactic of the Republicans to avoid questions of climate change by claiming to “not be a scientist,” proved more to be fodder for speeches from the Democrats and online campaigns from environmental NGOs than reassuring words for a climate-sceptic American public.

For the US negotiators, the hope is that a more favourable political scenario will develop in the future and the Republican's rampant climate denial will eventually subside. One way this could happen is if technology progresses enough to make the economic case for renewables undeniable to the American people. Given that this is already happening, and given the rate at which technological advances happen is surpassing expectations, we have reason to believe that the US position could actually improve. Fossil fuel divestment has the potential to also shake things up in this regard, and decisions from major figures such as the Rockefellers to get their substantial investments out of fossil fuels could be a sign of more to come.

The EU will play an important role in these negotiations as ever. The EU needs not only to legitimise its reputation as a global leader in progressive climate legislation, it also needs to send a sign to other governments that being tough on climate change is possible. Yet if they let the disappointing EU 2030 package give a pass to the rest of the world on a lack of climate change action, we will have bigger things to worry about than just weak EU energy targets. ■

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Ugo Bessière

# Alternatiba: trusting in our collective capacity for change

In the wake of the release of the 5th IPCC report, 12,000 people gathered in Bayonne, France on the 6th of October 2013, to present ways in which climate change can be combatted. They formed “Alternatiba” – an initiative to spread alternative green ways of living across Europe.



Indirectly, thousands of participants are busily bringing a renewed world of the imagination to life, on a human scale and built to fit our planet. Citizens are innovating to prepare a positive and resilient future.

The IPCC's scientists say we have ten years left in which to save the climate. Faced for the first time by the finite nature of the planet, we have to confront a climatic, ecological, economic and social crisis which challenges the lifestyles of the so-called developed countries.

While we would have expected proposals to be made without delay to guide this deadly model towards healthier and more lasting practices, our institutions and politicians seem powerless. Twentieth century solutions don't work anymore and the conservatism of the lobbies puts a brake on the renewal potential of our visions of the world.

But they are not the only ones. The whole of our society finds it difficult to acknowledge the magnitude of the challenges confronting it, which will oblige us to review the production and consumption methods to which we have become so comfortably accustomed. When are we finally going to leave the over-beaten track of productivity worship? Will the last generation capable of changing everything do nothing about it?



### **The “Alternatiba” Planet B, where it feels good to be alive**

Well, we'd be wrong to resign ourselves: alternative lifestyles making it possible to live with respect for mankind and nature already exist. Local and complementary currencies, green habitats, relocated activities and short-circuits, a moderated use of energy, renewable energies, organic farming, permaculture, public awareness campaigns, the media-sphere, democratic alternatives with the poet is still right: “Another world does exist, and it is in this one”.

Indirectly, thousands of participants are busily bringing a renewed world of the imagination to life, on a human scale and built to fit our planet. Citizens are innovating to prepare a positive and resilient future. Through their actions, they are bringing community, solidarity, sharing and humility back into fashion.

Above all, these “alternatives” enable us to envisage the emergence of a “Planet B” which will be lasting, reliable and fraternal, a credible alternative to Planet A, ravaged by the consequences of climate change. The latter is the kind of planet we'll be bequeathing to our children if we don't take action now.

It is this Planet B which the Alternatiba campaign for responsible citizenship seeks to bring into existence in the public space, as close as possible to people. What is our objective? To show gently that the widespread adoption of such alternatives can resolve the various crises, if each one of us chooses to use them – and even enjoy them – without returning to the Stone Age!

We'd like to engage with everyone, because we believe it is by waking the sleeping that the social and ecological transition will take shape. And the men and women present in the village are the only judges of the alternatives presented there.

### **Reaching a wider public – beyond the circle of the converted**

The “niche” militancy of the 20th century made it possible to develop unprecedented expertise in responsible citizenship and to win a few isolated battles, but it failed to mobilise society as a whole. We want to go beyond the convinced militants and reach an audience of unaware people who are not much interested in the existing alternatives, or are even hostile to them.



We'd like to engage with everyone, because we believe it is by waking the sleeping that the social and ecological transition will take shape. And the men and women present in the village are the only judges of the alternatives presented there.

Although we think that societal change will be organised from the bottom up, we also know that support from institutions at the top is essential. We also want to stir up our lethargic leaders and invite them to build another model with us. Resilience invites us to explore as many “change tracks” as possible and the more ideas we have “on the go”, the less we'll risk going wrong. The diversity, intelligence and strength of collective action are what will enable us to rise to this unprecedented challenge.

### **A movement which remobilises the young and challenges certainties**

Although Alternatiba hopes to remain independent of the traditional political parties, it obviously has a political dimension because what is really at stake is to offer a mechanism for reading the alternative world which we consider capable of providing solutions better suited to the way we live now.

Alternatiba is investing in training a new generation of militants who will disseminate a virtuous collective imagination capable of overcoming the malfunctions of the industrial revolution, overtaking the growth system and at the same time maintaining what we have achieved as regards social justice, while denouncing false solutions and “green disguises”.

These militants, many of them young but some not so young, are eager to overturn the certainties of the last century and count on the creativity of socially responsible people.

Alternatiba's most important role is to enable citizens to trust in their capacity to change things, to participate here and now in the transitions necessary to transform our methods of production, consumption, transport, territorial development and so on. In short, to “change the system so as not to change the climate”.

So Alternatiba is not just another association fighting in a specific field – there are plenty of those which are doing a really good job – but rather a dynamic, people's process, designed to connect with what already exists, to unite rather than divide, a process which would rather provide practical solutions than make people feel guilty.

And why shouldn't we meet one another to discuss it at a local bar or concert? Because, above all, Alternatiba is a popular celebration, one which has taken over the public space with the aim of creating a link there between generations, cultures and social classes just like what happens at a public dance in the village square.



### **A horizontal and transparent working method**

Alternatiba operates with the aim of being independent and transparent, according to the principles of non-violent communication, direct participative democracy and self-management.

A methodological kit has been created to guide those who would like to embark on the adventure. However, each Alternatiba is free to define the tools and methods it considers most suitable, as well as the values underlying the project which are often specified in a local charter.

Most of the time, we are organised into interlinked committees designed to handle the organisation of the event (for example, the thematic content committee and the logistics committee) and into thematic committees each representing a space in the village (for example, the food committee and the energy committee).

Each of these committees is self-governing and has a coordinator who is not a hierarchical superior but is responsible for ensuring communication with the other coordinators. All decisions are made by mutual consent in a general coordination operation, which implies debating until a shared solution is found.

Each Alternatiba local coordination operation forms part of the Alternatiba European coordination meeting which is held every three or four months in a different town.

### **Alternatives for everyone everywhere!**

Bayonne, the founding village, was launched in October 2013, followed by Agen, Gonesse, Nantes, Paris, Lille, Ciboure-Socoa and Bordeaux in September and October 2014: in all, more than 62,000 people have already visited our villages which offer alternatives to climate change.

But that's not all: nearly 1,700 volunteers took part in preparing and setting up these first eight Alternatiba's, in addition to the thousands of exhibitors, participants and artists who supported the events. Between 10,000-20,000 people attended their

The struggle against the future energy crisis and climate change is not only a constraint, it is also an enormous opportunity to build a more human future together.

concerts and round table discussions about climate deregulation, the COP21, false solutions, alternatives and social and ecological transition campaigns.

The Alternatiba momentum is building and will continue throughout 2015. In fact, 38 other Alternatiba's are now at the preparatory stage in France and several other European countries. It is also planned to hold a 5,000 kilometre tandem Tour de France before the COP21 in the summer of 2015 with the aim of linking all these initiatives.

### **A year before the COP21 in Paris and climate change is in our sights**

Alternatiba belongs to the Citizens' Transition Collective and the Climate 21 coalition. We wanted to fight global warming or, rather, to set up a post-carbon and repositioned societal organisation, the flagship of the alternative-promoting villages.

In fact, once the climate battle has been lost it can never again be won, however often laws promoting it are voted through afterwards. Understanding that means understanding that if the climate crisis spirals out of control, it will become the mother of all crises. The struggle against the future energy crisis and climate change is not only a constraint, it is also an enormous opportunity to build a more human future together.



A year before the COP21 (the important United Nations summit meeting on the climate due to take place in Paris at the end of 2015), the European Alternatiba Coordination organisation calls on the population, and more especially the younger generation, to strengthen this massive drive by the Alternibas.

Let us forget our differences, gather as much strength as we can for the future and overtake our leaders! Let us show them the way to launch the transition! Let's show them how determined we are.

For ourselves and for our children. ■

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<http://alternatiba.eu/ressources/>

# The winding road to Paris



Jagoda Munić

The UN and EU, taken over by 'corporate capture' aren't doing enough to tackle climate change. Non-governmental organisations are concentrating their efforts on fostering a broad movement that will go beyond Paris 2015, because if governments do fail to deliver, action to tackle climate change will remain essential.

### Can the UNFCCC deliver action on climate change?

Two decades of climate negotiations on how to bring down the emissions of CO<sub>2</sub> in order to avoid drastic and dangerous climate change haven't brought the action we need. Indeed, emissions have gone up instead of down. Bearing this in mind, it is fair to question the process; and to ask ourselves why our governments cannot agree on a binding agreement that would then be implemented in practice. Even if they do agree to have a new protocol covering the period post 2020, this leaves us with a vacuum of five precious years of inaction, and the question is whether such an agreement would deliver a quick enough reduction of emissions to prevent disaster. The danger too is that any post-2020 deal agreed will be so weak as to be not worth the paper it is written on.

Scientists tell us that the window of opportunity is closing and that we need to act quickly with drastic reductions in emissions. So the question is why our governments are acting in this very unreasonable way? And why we fail to deliver on climate agreement, when we have managed to have a quite successful agreement on ozone depletion?

Answers to these questions might vary, but perhaps the most important is that in the last 20 years we have had a process of corporate influence over the states and the UN system. The corporate sector has heavily influenced our governments and UN structures so much so that we can speak of "corporate capture", with lobbyists having a major impact on decision-making. By saving business as usual, instead of the climate, our governments are prioritising profit over people and natural ecosystems.

At COP 19 in Warsaw in 2013, this influence was so obvious that the majority of civil society literally walked out the meeting place with the message: "Polluters talk – we walk". While the walk-out was only temporary, the question is how we can gain back the power of the people over corporations in UN spaces and on the national level. Focusing on COPs alone has not delivered results, and shouldn't be the only space we work on and talk about climate change in. We should take the issue into the mainstream – it has to be a topic of debates in cafes, the reason for protests on the streets and the basis for communities to organise around projects such as sustainable transport, community energy and other forms of sustainable living.



We must also talk about the dirty energy that not only causes climate change but devastates and pollutes local communities and diverts finance from clean energy alternatives. Only mass mobilisation will put enough pressure for our governments to finally act. In this sense, I hope that the hundreds of

We must build a movement that goes beyond Paris 2015, because if governments do fail to deliver, as we suspect they might, we still need action to tackle climate change.

thousands of people marching on September 20th in New York was just a start. The more pressure we create, the more our governments will be willing to act. And we need this action to be a new binding global agreement to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> and introduce ambitious measures on national levels.

Not only do we need a new globally binding agreement, but such an agreement must be ambitious and based on the scientific evidence, not politics, in order to avoid dangerous climate change. What we now have is saving business as usual, not the climate.

The agreement also needs to take into account the historical responsibility of developed countries that have the means and responsibility to carry the biggest burden in cutting the emissions, due to accumulated "climate debt".

We also need to tackle consumption issues and the unfair distribution of resources. For instance, the current distribution of energy use is also fundamentally unjust. One fifth of the world's population, or 1.3 billion people, have no access to electricity, while another fifth has limited access. At the same time, energy consumption per head in the USA and Canada is roughly twice that of Europe or Japan, more than ten times that of China, nearly 20 times that of India, and about 50 times as high as in the poorest countries of sub-Saharan Africa. In short, we need to have binding, fair and mandatory international legislation urgently, and it is up to social movements to push our governments to achieve this.

Some argue that we have witnessed the death of multilateralism and that's why we cannot reach an international agreement. To me, it seems we have a problem of skewed values and priorities, since in the case of international trade agreements there is the will to agree on mandatory rules with strong punishments for states that do not obey the agreements. This shows that we do have tools at the international level, but there is a lack of political will, vision and courage to act.

We must build a movement that goes beyond Paris 2015, because if governments do fail to deliver, as we suspect they might, we still need action to tackle climate change. We cannot have another post-Copenhagen moment where the climate movement collapses because of failed negotiations. We must build a sustainable movement beyond the negotiations that tackles dirty energy and its financing, that builds true solutions to the crisis like sustainable community power.

### **Is the EU doing enough?**

European emissions targets are far from enough to deal with what science tells us, and are delaying the cuts too far in the future. EU policies rely too much on market mechanisms, e.g. trading schemes such as the EU-Emissions Trading Scheme, which has proved a failure in recent years. Pushing for more market-based solutions, both on a European and international level, would not lead to the cuts in emissions needed, as it is enabling polluters to get an easy way out and to continue polluting. The EU should and could be a global climate

The EU should and could be a global climate leader, by increasing energy efficiency, cutting down consumption and shifting towards renewable energy.

leader, by increasing energy efficiency, cutting down consumption and shifting towards renewable energy. To achieve this, priority should be given to other policy options - not market mechanisms - such as regulation, taxation and subsidies, which are able to deliver the scale and speed of emissions reductions that are necessary to avoid catastrophic climate change. Carbon markets cannot be a replacement for mandatory targets under a binding international climate agreement, and adequate and appropriate public funding for climate finance in developing countries.

### **Time to disinvest and boycott fossil fuels**

A total of 57% of greenhouse gas emissions come from burning fossil fuels. Burning coal is the largest single source of carbon dioxide emissions in the world. In 2012, 43% of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from fuel combustion were produced by coal, and abandoning coal would reduce Greenhouse gas emissions by nearly 25%. Rapidly abandoning the burning of coal should be the first priority. While electricity needs could be fulfilled by renewables, we still use coal and waste a lot of energy on heating and cooling energy inefficient buildings. Investment in retrofitting and better building and urban re-design will lead to drastic cuts in energy consumption.



At Friends of the Earth International, we argue that we must move away from dirty energy (not just fossil fuels – read *Good Energy, Bad Energy*<sup>1</sup> to learn more) towards a just, sustainable, climate-safe energy system. Our vision is guided by the principle of energy sovereignty, which is the right of people to have access to energy and to choose sustainable energy sources and sustainable consumption patterns that will lead them towards sustainable societies.

Such a system should provide energy access for all as a basic human right, would be climate-safe and be based on locally appropriate, low-impact technologies. Moreover, it would be under direct democratic control and governed in the public interest, and would ensure the rights of energy sector workers and their influence over how their workplaces are run. It would be small-scale and as decentralised as possible and would ensure the right to free, prior and informed consent and rights of

<sup>1</sup> [www.foei.org/good-energy-bad-energy](http://www.foei.org/good-energy-bad-energy)



Contrary to popular belief, changing the socio-economic system is much easier and cheaper than changing the climate of the planet and devastating its ecosystems beyond recovery.

redress for affected communities. We need a system in which energy use will be fair and balanced with minimal energy waste.

Aside from the energy sector, we need to readdress other sectors too, in particular, food production and agriculture, transport and urban planning. We need to tackle issues of overconsumption and equitable access, use of resources, and historical responsibility. We do have both knowledge and technology to address the issue of climate change and other environmental problems and we can create sustainable societies. But in order to do so, we need to get our priorities right. We need to redesign our socio-economic system in a way that sustains rather than devastates the Earth's ecosystems. Contrary to popular belief, changing the socio-economic system

is much easier and cheaper than changing the climate of the planet and devastating its ecosystems beyond recovery. Climate change will change our societies and economy, not for better but for worse, so it is wise to do it the other way around.

To put it simply, we have a choice to make – either we will save the lives of many or continue to profit the few. Either we kill neoliberalism, or neoliberalism will kill us. It is time to create our future, it is time to act, and we need everybody everywhere to do so. ■

*Jagoda Munić was elected as a Chairperson of Friends of the Earth International in 2012, after serving as a member of FOEI executive committee for 8 years and was the FOEI treasurer from 2007 to 2012 and to Zelena akcija / FOE Croatia since 1997.*



Kennedy Liti Mbeva

# Africa needs a fair and equitable Global Climate Agreement

The two things that will shape Africa's progress in the coming years and decades are its population demographics and climate change. The confluence of these two phenomena will undoubtedly tip the scales of development in Africa. How they are managed, now and in the future, will determine to which side the scales will tip.

That “climate change is the biggest market failure in human history” is an apt representation of the challenge posed by this phenomenon.

### The demographic dividend

The growing significance attached to discussions on the population demographic challenge – or opportunity – posed by Africa’s rapidly changing population structure is testament to the importance of this phenomenon to Africa’s present and future. Technocrats, bureaucrats and other stakeholders and spectators have been wrestling with this issue for quite some time now. For a start, Africa is the youngest continent in the world in terms of population, with about two thirds of the population below 25 years of age. This is a profound development that has stirred incessant debate on how to fully and effectively tap the potential offered by this section of the population, thus the erstwhile emergence of the term *demographic dividend*. Subsequently, efforts to tap this potential have been dubbed *yielding the demographic dividend*. Intuitively, this phenomenon will be a game changer; however, it is not the only variable in this serious game.

### The shadow of climate change

In September 2014, world leaders met at the UN headquarters in New York for the UN Secretary General’s Climate Summit. This was a profound development in global efforts to address the climate change challenge, which has been gaining traction in the global agenda. The main aim of the summit was to raise ambition and catalyse action towards addressing climate change, with a major focus on raising the political appetite and commitment to secure an effective global climate change agreement in 2015. A few days prior to this Summit, hundreds of thousands of protestors took to the streets in New York, and the world over, in the biggest climate

change march in history, calling for climate action. But more importantly, this is not a purely political issue; scientific evidence has been building on the human cause of dangerous climate change, most notably through the reports by the UN’s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

These developments, and other complementary efforts and actions clearly underscore the significance of the climate change challenge on human development. The scientific reports have consistently indicated that Africa is suffering disproportionately from the impacts of climate change, yet its contribution to this problem is minimal; quite an unfortunate paradox, and one of great concern to me, as a young African. This challenge becomes more significant considering that small-holder agriculture is the mainstay of most of the economies in Africa, as well as employing a majority of the labour force in the continent. Therefore, the impacts of climate change will bear heavily upon the demographic dividend. Thus, it is beyond doubt that the climate change challenge hangs like the proverbial Sword of Damocles over efforts to yield Africa’s demographic dividend.

### The nexus

That ‘climate change is the biggest market failure in human history’ (<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200708/cmselect/cmtreasy/231/231.pdf>) is an apt representation of the challenge posed by this phenomenon. There is no doubt that Africa is a major centre stage where this ominously potent observation is playing out. Of major interest to young

The sad reality is that these worthwhile efforts to ramp up the significance and contribution of agriculture to address food insecurity and unemployment are being undermined by the devastating impacts of climate change.

Africans is the increasingly complex challenge posed by the nexus of climate change and the growing youth demographic in Africa. And there is no clearer example than the impact climate change is having on agriculture in Africa.



The global population is growing, and concerns on how to feed this population are also growing. With Africa having a significant proportion of arable land, it holds great significance in addressing this challenge. However, since charity begins at home, the immediate concern is how to feed Africa's population.

It is quite interesting and quite encouraging to note that agriculture is emerging as a major sector bound to provide employment opportunities to the expanding youth population in Africa, as well as addressing the food security issue. In my own country, Kenya, many young, highly educated young people are taking agriculture with much zeal and professionalism. This is a stark contrast from the previous trend, where agriculture was viewed as a job for poorly educated, demoralised, old rural folk. This

was clearly manifested by the traditional image of a farmer: about 70 years of age, poor and demoralised.

The sad reality is that these worthwhile efforts to ramp up the significance and contribution of agriculture to address food insecurity and unemployment are being undermined by the devastating impacts of climate change. Reliance on rain-fed agriculture is proving untenable, while other viable options such as climate smart agriculture are quite costly in undertaking, requiring significant external financing to prop them up.

### **Emergent solutions**

There is no silver bullet to effectively address the challenge posed by the confluence of climate change and the growing youth population in Africa. Several arenas and platforms to address this challenge currently exist, while others continue to emerge.

Countries are currently engaged in negotiations, under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), to come up with a global climate agreement by the end of the year 2015. This agreement will seek to commit countries to actions that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions, the main driver of human-induced climate change. However, this is not the first time that nations are attempting to cobble such a deal. Previous attempts have been unfruitful and inadequate; the 2009 Copenhagen Accord is perhaps the most famous failure, which culminated in acrimonious fallout among the world's top emitters of greenhouse gases not committing to a binding agreement. The current attempt looks

Securing a fair and equitable global climate agreement is not an option; rather, it is an inevitable intervention. The issue of equity has to be at the heart of this agreement.

more promising, largely due to one underlying tenet: equity. The basics of the new agreement are framed by a normative framework of equity, with various equity reference frameworks being developed. This includes the principle of Common But Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capacities (CBDR&RC), Intergenerational Equity and Equitable Access to Sustainable Development, among others. How to factor in these principles is the main issue of contestation in global climate politics.



### All about equity

The key underlying issue in the population demographic and climate challenges is distributive justice. How do we distribute the resources we currently have to current and future generations? In tandem, do we kick the can of the climate change challenge down the road for future generations to grapple with it, or do we solve it now? How these key issues will be addressed will determine the population's demographic dividend in Africa. This will entail having factors of production that will enable the young Africans to create employment opportunities, and enhance food security. But

this cannot be effectively realised in a climate-constrained world.

### A fair and equitable global climate agreement

Securing a fair and equitable global climate agreement is not an option; rather, it is an inevitable intervention. The issue of equity has to be at the heart of this agreement. This will entail ensuring that financial resources are mobilised and allocated to alleviate the ravages of climate change. Climate change adaptation should be given much more focus and funding than it is currently receiving.

The issue of technology development and transfer also has to be clearly dealt with, so as to foster climate-resilient development, such as climate-smart agriculture. Further, the issue of intergenerational equity should be encoded and operationalised in the new agreement. The UN System Wide Action Plan on Youth is a clear precedent and beacon that should foster the integration of intergenerational equity in the agreement.

With the inevitability that Africa's changing demographics and climate change will shape its political economy, the die is already cast. Thus the upcoming global climate agreement must be built upon a fair and equitable foundation. Hence, the "equitable" question remains: will the leaders rise to the occasion? African youth are watching (and working)! ■

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Adam Ostolski

# Poland needs a tripartite climate commission

In the Polish context, where environmental awareness and resistance to an energy transition is strong, a broad alliance among diverse actors in society is needed to tackle climate change, such as trade unions and other potential partners.

*The text comes from the special, bilingual edition of Zielone Wiadomości (Green News) magazine prepared for COP19 in Warsaw last year.*

Poland's climate policy – burying its head in the sand in the face of the dangers associated with climate change – has one very striking feature. We can observe an astonishing agreement between players with conflicting interests. The government of Donald Tusk is supported in this matter both by the PKPP Lewiatan (the employers' association, and a member of BUSINESSEUROPE), and by the trade union Solidarność. This trio is defending energy generation based on fossil fuels, both in Poland and at the European level.

At the same time we can see more and more climate refugees at the borders of our continent, fleeing from the Global South, where the climate crisis hits the hardest. But changes are also affecting our country, and their effects will only intensify. Even today we are witnessing in Poland more frequent tornados, more intense storms, more devastating floods and droughts. The effects of climate change observed in daily life will manifest themselves for example through higher food prices. Our children are going to be hit even harder.

The trade unions have their reasons to be cautious about climate policies. We have regularly observed how the roller of modernisation viciously crushed human lives in our country. But even with their heads in the sand they should be more cautious when the government, defending "Polish coal", has no plan B. There will eventually come a time when the emissions of greenhouse gases will be decreased. If we will have to do it rapidly, without the much-

needed infrastructure and strategy, we may end up with another round of shock therapy, which will make the draconian reforms of Leszek Balcerowicz or Jerzy Buzek look like mild changes in retrospect.



Environmental movements, trade unions and green business have a common interest in making the government pursue a more responsible path. This may be the time to come together, sit at the same table and try to create together a scenario for a transition that would be ecologically sustainable, economically feasible and socially just. The starting points of the discussion will probably be miles apart from one another – it is plain to see the different perspectives: that "business is business" (even if it is Green one), that the workers will be keen on defending their jobs, and that the environmentalists want polluting chimneys to be shut down as soon as possible, come what may. But as soon as we can understand these obstacles, it will be possible to break the gridlock and meet halfway.

Thinking about Green energy as an investment in our future is not compatible with the short-term business cycle. It is the government that should see the importance of such action, but it is precisely the government that is failing.

### **Greens need to engage with social partners**

Environmental NGOs face problems not only with the Polish government, but also with public opinion. We all love green energy, but when it comes to the discussion on a specific mine or power plant, the vision of an economy based on “Polish coal” becomes harder to let go of. The ecological awareness in Poland is not only one of the lowest in Europe, but is also constantly declining. Green business is quite lonely amongst other employers – it is obvious that most other enterprises are interested in cheap energy without thinking about the external costs it may generate. Thinking about Green energy as an investment in our future is not compatible with the short-term business cycle. It is the government that should see the importance of such action, but it is precisely the government that is failing. The environmentalists and Green business would gain an important supporter if they would hear out the labour movement.

Trade unionists need to choose if they want to defend the status quo in the energy sector, that is unsustainable in the long run, or to guarantee

a better position of workers in the economy of the future. Only they can keep an eye on this transformation (by actively taking part in it), so that the ambitious climate policy will mean not only reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and investment in new, advanced technologies, but also a just transition and defending workers’ rights.

Why is it so hard to undermine the current climate policies of the Polish government – even if they mean risking the long term security of Poles? The main problem is that it likes to portray its policies as the “raison d’État” supported by “everyone”. To change that perception we need not only the scattered voices of those who have already committed themselves to saving the climate. We need a broader alliance, and unexpected allies on our side. ■

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# Poverty and the climate crisis are two sides of the same challenge



Isabel Castro

Poverty and the ecological crisis are different symptoms of the same crisis Europe and the world are experiencing. Only a responsible commitment based on social justice, eco-development and sustainability can assure a safe common future. The case of Portugal illustrates the challenges faced worldwide.

Incertitude is no longer an alibi. The scientific evidence proved climate change is a concrete phenomenon mostly caused by anthropogenic emissions of greenhouse gases.

### Little time for a major challenge

The United Nations Conference taking place in Lima in December 2014, to prepare the post-Kyoto process and achieve a global agreement on climate change in Paris 2015, is quite likely to be the last opportunity to adopt a global commitment to deal with this major challenge of the 21st century.

The many promises, deadlocks and failures witnessed throughout this process are well known, but can't be tolerated anymore. This was the impulse behind the global action last September 21st. Millions of people worldwide rose up to protest in impressive street demonstrations calling for action and a responsible agreement to save the planet; a commitment for the future.

### There is no alibi

The conference takes place in a peculiar context.

- Incertitude is no longer an alibi. The scientific evidence proved climate change is a concrete phenomenon mostly caused by anthropogenic emissions of greenhouse gases. The most recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report<sup>1</sup> is a consistent scientific analysis, a reference that everybody should be aware of.
- The business-as-usual attitude has caused unsustainable economic, social and human costs, and twice the investment needed to reduce emissions and develop measures for mitigation and adaptation to protect the climate system;<sup>2</sup>

- Environmental degradation and biodiversity loss are immense and impossible to even quantify;<sup>3</sup>
- New climate refugees and the terrorist threat are strong reasons enough to look for a new energy paradigm which is oil free and sustainable;

In short, the only way for humanity to get out of the dangerous situation that the financial and ecological crisis caused, with its unbearable levels of poverty, inequality and environmental degradation, is adopting a radical and different political agenda, based on social justice, eco-development and sustainability.

### Different signals, same problem

The Portuguese reality is extremely complex in terms of climate change, adding specific problems and dimensions to the general impact, particularly in terms of water resources, coastal zones, human health, soils, forests, agriculture, biodiversity, oceans, and fisheries.

The scenarios and effects studied and developed in models for the Iberian Peninsula, compared with other European regions, are very disturbing.<sup>4</sup> In Portugal they are aggravated by wrong-headed politics, geographical issues and the existence of a huge Atlantic Ocean front. Climate change is a national problem and a challenge we should face.

<sup>1</sup> 5th Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, published in April 2014.

<sup>2</sup> A Blueprint For a Safer Planet : How to Manage Climate Change and Create a New Era of Progress and Prosperity, Nicholas Stern (2009).

<sup>3</sup> The Living Planet Report, (W.W.W.), (September 2014).

<sup>4</sup> Climate Change in Portugal Scenarios, Impacts and Adaptations Measures, SIAM PROJECT I (2002).F.D.Santos, K. Forbes, R. Moita (editors). SIAM II is being developed.

Despite the severity of climate change and the quite obvious economic and human impacts, Portuguese society seems to stand on the sidelines of this debate.

In short, the following is expected and indeed is already occurring:

- A temperature increase, with peaks along the year, alongside the related morbidity and mortality; the worsening of extreme events; heavier rainfall, often in concentrated periods and areas, causing more floods and damages and alternating with more usual periods of drought. The outcome is the degradation of drinking water quality, scarcer water resources in some regions, and new diseases.
- The degradation of the soils, with severe erosion; and the dangerous increase in the risk of wildfires in the forests, resulting from global warming and the significant spread of exotic fast-growth species (e.g. eucalyptus).
- A significant degradation of air quality, resulting from traffic pollution and industrial emissions, causing health problems. Heavy human and economic care costs are associated with this.
- Extreme weather events along the Atlantic coastal areas, where 80% of both population and economic activity are concentrated, with the warming and rising of sea water, the significant narrowing of shorelines, the growing violent impact of the waves, and changes in the coastal systems. This results in economic damage (urban areas, tourism and insurance), but also environmental damage, since the most significant wetlands, habitats, lagoon systems and estuarine areas (some protected by international conventions) are located there.

### **The non-debate in the world debate**

Despite the severity of climate change and the quite obvious economic and human impacts, Portuguese society seems to stand on the sidelines of this debate. Everybody, from the government, to the media, the Parliament, the public institutions and the political parties (both left and right), the NGO's, the trade unions, enterprise, the universities and so on remain focused on the national agenda, ignoring the subject completely and the international debate going on as if it was an insignificant one.

A Eurobarometer report from 2014<sup>5</sup> provides interesting and contradictory elements for reflection. The evolution of Europeans' perception (from 2011 to 2014) regarding climate change shows that most of them recognise climate change as a serious problem. However, since 2011 there has been a decline in this proportion, which indicates there is a notable increase in the number of Europeans for whom poverty, hunger and lack of drinking water have become the main areas of concern. The economic situation is ranked as the second highest priority, instead of climate change.

In Portugal, that negative tendency seems especially clear as only 6% of the Portuguese people – the lowest proportion of all European countries – perceive climate change as a serious problem.

In fact, austerity politics and its dramatic consequences for people's lives eclipsed the other

<sup>5</sup> Special Eurobarometer 409 Climate Change Report (December 2013). [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/index_en.htm)

The efforts made in Portugal some years ago, to give a certain priority to the renewable energy sector, despite lacking an integrated political strategy, proved – even with its limits – to be a good option.

national problems and discussions. All the political rhetoric – official or not, from left to right parties – is concentrated on unemployment and growth. The short-term perspective on problems has been reinforced. Therefore, the out of date and perverse approach to environmental issues as if they were an obstacle to prosperity, i.e. growth, has been rediscovered and exacerbated.

Signals of hope, however, can be identified through the belief that the efforts to use energy differently and fight climate change can help to boost growth and jobs within the EU. So, while poverty and the economy are seen as a more immediate concern by more Europeans, the majority of them agree that tackling climate issues, reducing our fossil fuel imports and improving energy efficiency can bring important economic benefits. Among the countries where this view is held particularly strong are Spain, Sweden, Portugal, Malta, Ireland, Cyprus and Greece, several of which have been significantly affected by the economic crisis.

### **A missed opportunity**

The efforts made in Portugal some years ago, to give a certain priority to the renewable energy sector, despite lacking an integrated political strategy, proved – even with its limits – to be a good option, with considerable results in the reduction of energy dependence, while increasing GDP growth and employment. This is the main conclusion of a recently published study<sup>6</sup> promoted by the Portuguese Association of Renewable Energy, (APREN).



*Green energy in Maxial, Portugal*

Renewable energy in Portugal, nowadays representing 27% of the total of energy – mostly wind, hydro, solar, biomass – has increased rapidly and in 2013 alone created 40,000 new jobs (more than the previous year) nearly 38,000 of them stemming from the sector's indirect impact in other sectors. According to the same document, other

<sup>6</sup> Study promoted by APREN Association of the Enterprises of the Renewable Energy, (September 2014 author Deloitte) About the Macro Economic Impact of Renewable Energy in Portugal, the Evolution and the Perspectives Until 2030.

significant impacts can be identified, in terms of GDP growth, and decreases in energy dependence, greenhouse gas emissions and imports.

Much more can be done. The potential to obtain much better results is there, as the same study confirms, for instance in terms of employment, with 26,000 new jobs by 2030, but also in many other important economic areas, providing better social and economic standards.

That's why it is unacceptable, especially in the present national context, that public policies have been suspended or even scrapped. Some strategic sectors, like energy, have been privatised (the Troika adjustment programme) and taken over by a Chinese corporation. On the other hand, it's not reasonable that the Portuguese government, as well as the European authorities, insist on failed austerity measures, imposing programmes and restrictions not compatible with the necessary investment to implement strategic public policies able to solve some of the important challenges Portugal and Europe are facing, such as, the climate change.

Many ambitious policies were stopped and need urgently be maintained and improved, now in a different and global perspective and for the public common benefit. For instance: to stimulate a sustainable system of public transport policies, unlike those the European austerity policies recommends; to implement a public national energy saving and efficiency programme for housing, services,

transport, the public sector, small enterprises, industry - that could represent more than 1% of GDP growth and with the potential to achieve better standards (30% less energy consumption and imports). We need obviously to keep the attention in the previous renewable areas, in order to increase their export (no longer to assure rents for a minority) but also to provide the missing means to develop the enormous potential the renewable sector still has, in terms of wages, solar and geothermic, improving their use (since they have been underestimated by the private sector). Also to ensure a sustainable land and forest use – no longer orientated towards the cellulose industry profit – but for climate control and preservation of biodiversity.

These are the main questions that an ambitious and coherent national and European political agenda should support, in the international forum and inside its own institutions to face climate challenge, keep the leadership in this process and to assume the ethical responsibility in relation to next generations. But, also to find a way to emerge from the deep social, economic and political crisis we are living.

To obtain good results we need, however, to assure the existence of strong and healthy companies, the preservation and reinforcement of public institutions, the participation of civil society, and to keep the knowledge and capacity inside the country. We also need a stable technician-scientific research setting, the engagement of universities, and a sustained effort in terms of investment in R&D. Yet today we have the opposite conditions.

### People can make the difference

The new global agreement for eco-development and to stop climate change means our way of living, producing and consuming needs a different political, economic, legislative, educational and fiscal agenda. It also requires, as a result of the ethical and cultural dimension it carries, information, transparency and public participation, in order to change attitudes and the process in general.

It is fundamental that we mobilise everybody to this cause. The time has come to speak openly about climate change, to explain to ordinary people – free from technical language – the values, reasons, impacts and deep connections existing between all these problems, which appear to be almost invisible and occurring in completely different and distant regions of the planet.



*Climate activists in Avanca*

The complex commitments the international community needs to achieve before the Paris Conference to assure a global and real common government programme, with a clear agenda and schedule which is orientated to save the planet and assure sustainable living conditions, depends mostly on our capacity to influence the policymakers.

A small number of big corporations and some states, the biggest polluters, will certainly be major obstacles which only be overcome by the pressure of the public opinion worldwide.

The planet is in danger. Some are – unfortunately the European institutions too, as we have just seen – playing with our future, our survival and dreams. The wake-up call has rung. Time is a scarce resource.

Let us take the floor to express our claims and proposals. Our strength is enormous, as in a certain way we are the 99% of the people really engaged in this challenge, fighting for the survival of humankind no matter how difficult it might be. This is our commitment, as long as we stay active and creative. Together we can do it. Together we shall overcome, I would like to believe. ■

*Isabel Castro is a former member of the Portuguese Parliament and is an activist for the Initiative For A Citizen Audit the Debt. She is a member of the editorial board of the Green European Journal.*

# War in Ukraine and Europe's energy conservation and climate policies



Juraj Mesik

A big risk for Europe stems from its dependency on Russian natural gas and oil. However, even more important is the fact that it is EU money being paid for the gas and oil, which enables Russia's militarisation and its belligerent behaviour. In this context, the current conflict constitutes an historic opportunity and an urgent motivation for a reduction of energy consumption and Greenhouse gas emissions in both the EU and Ukraine.

### Europe at the crossroads

In November 2013, the former president of Ukraine Viktor Yanukovich, under pressure from the Kremlin, refused to sign the EU Association agreement at the Vilnius summit. The people of Ukraine responded by filling the streets and squares of Ukrainian cities, the "euromaidans", demanding a European future for their country. The regime responded with police brutality, but no pressure was able to break the citizens of Ukraine. When more than 100 Ukrainians were killed under Ukrainian and European flags, full scale revolution erupted: the corrupt and oppressive regime was overthrown and Yanukovich and his clan escaped to Russia.



Moscow's response to revolution in Ukraine was to attempt to stir up counterrevolution – or anti-euromaidan – in the eastern and southern regions of Ukraine, where the Russian speaking minority lives. When these efforts completely failed due to lack of popular support, Ukraine became the target of initially hidden and then later open military aggression. After the occupation of Ukrainian Crimea

by "little green men" – proven without a slightest doubt to be Russian troops without military insignia – Russian secret police and later the carefully masked Russian army initiated war in the industrial region of Donbas in eastern Ukraine.

Today Ukraine is at war. The true meaning of this war is an attempt, by foreign tanks, to stop the spread of the common market, the rule of law and respect for human rights promoted by the European Union and desired by large sections of the populations in Eastern European and Caucasus countries.

The fate of Ukraine may thus predetermine the fate of the European Union and the European dream just as events of 1937-1938 predetermined what followed after the failure of European democracies in Munich 1938.

### Europe – the main financier of militaristic power

One of the paradoxes of Europe's excessive use of fossil fuels and large contribution to global CO<sub>2</sub> and methane emissions CH<sub>4</sub> emissions relates to the origin of a large proportion of oil and natural gas burned in the EU. In 2013, 35% of all crude oil and 30% of all natural gas burned in EU countries came from Russia. In many EU member states the share of Russian oil and natural gas is 100%.

The EU's dependency on Russian oil and natural gas thus has, in addition to the consequences of climate change, another important effect. Oil and gas account for 75% of Europe's imports from Russia. Europeans pay 150 billion Euros for them annually



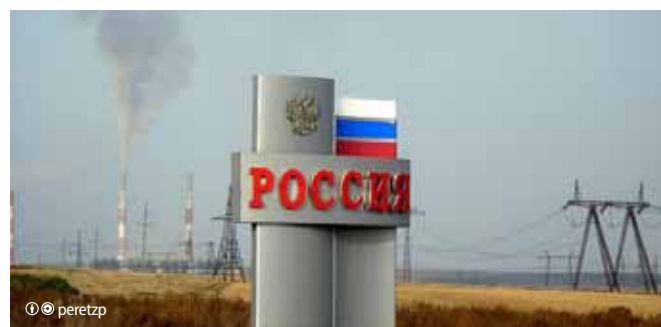
We may see Russia's war in Ukraine as an exceptional opportunity and motivation for a reduction of energy consumption and Greenhouse gas emissions in both the EU and Ukraine.

out of a total import of 213 billion. At the same time the EU's total exports to Russia are only 123 billion, resulting in an almost 100 billion annual trade deficit.

The ability to strangle the flow of natural gas and set up its prices enables the Kremlin to exercise its power over a number of European countries, as was clearly demonstrated in the "gas crisis" of 2009 and repeatedly in case of Ukraine. More than 50% – some authors put the figure between 60 to 80% – of Russia's state budget comes from the export of oil, gas and a few other mineral resources. The vast majority of this money comes from the EU. This massive flow of Euros to Russia enables extreme militarisation, which has proved to be a direct military threat to EU members (Baltic states in particular) and EU neighbours (Ukraine with occupied Crimea and Donbas region, Moldova with occupied Transdnistria, Georgia with occupied Abkhazia and Southern Ossetia).

The seriousness of the militarisation of Russia – financed largely by money paid by the EU for oil and natural gas – is shown by a number of indicators. The Global Peace Index published annually by the Institute for Economics and Peace ranked Russia 152 out of 162 analysed countries, next to North Korea, in 2014.<sup>1</sup> Random occurrence? Not at all. Russia ranked 154 in 2013 and 152 in 2012. The Global Militarisation Index published annually by the Bonn International Centre for Conversion ranked Russia as the 3rd most militarised country in the world in 2012, 4th in 2011 and 2010. Never since the year 2000, has Russia dropped out of the top five most militarised countries of the world.<sup>2</sup>

Since the occupation of Crimea and the war in Ukraine, Europe needs to approach the Russian situation in the terms of risk management. A big risk for Europe stems from our dependency on Russian natural gas and oil. However, even more important is the fact that it is our money paid for the gas and oil, which enables Russia's militarisation and its bully behaviour. With trade of 267.5 billion Euros in 2012, the EU is by a big margin Russia's main trade partner, followed by China with 64.1 billion, Ukraine with 24.3 and the United States, Japan, Turkey and South Korea each with less than 20 billion Euros.



### Ukraine as Europe's climate policy opportunity

We may see Russia's war in Ukraine as an exceptional opportunity and motivation for a reduction of energy consumption and Greenhouse gas emissions in both the EU and Ukraine. Ukraine's CO<sub>2</sub> emissions per PPP dollar of GDP are very high – 0.9 (kg/1 USD) compared to 0.2 in Germany, France, the UK, Spain or Italy. High energy intensity and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions per unit of GDP can be partly attributed to the structure of Ukrainian economy with a strong heavy industries sector (43% of total energy consumption) as well as

<sup>1</sup> See <http://www.visionofhumanity.org/#/page/indexes/global-peace-index/2014>

<sup>2</sup> See [http://gmi.bicc.de/index.php?page=ranking-table&year=2012&sort=index\\_desc](http://gmi.bicc.de/index.php?page=ranking-table&year=2012&sort=index_desc)

Contrary to the complicated situation in housing, the education sector may provide a much more straight-forward option for extensive energy conservation, with school facilities owned and managed by public bodies.

a harsher continental climate. However the major factor is extremely low energy efficiency and waste of energy. Communal use, and the tertiary and agriculture sectors consume 40% of total energy consumption, while only 11% is used by transport.

First-hand observations point to the extremely dilapidated energy situation in the existing buildings of Ukraine, comparable to the situation in Poland or Czechoslovakia back in 1970s, if not earlier. Energy conservation and CO<sub>2</sub> reduction potential in buildings is huge and can be achieved very fast and with much lower relative levels of investment than would be needed for Germany or Scandinavian countries. As the winter is approaching, the true challenge is how to mobilise this potential in an extremely short time.

### **Schools and refuges – two of many possibilities**

Experience from countries with extensive central heating systems such as Slovakia or Czech Republic suggest that to implement energy conservation programs in the housing sector typically requires a very long time due to the complicated ownership situation in communal housing and complex legal and bureaucratic requirements for the reconstruction of existing buildings. Developing a large scale energy conservation program in Ukraine's housing sector is absolutely necessary, but to implement it on a large scale will take many years. Rapid progress can be achieved in proper thermal insulation and refurbishing boilers, heating stations and central heat distribution, but decreasing loss of heat from existing buildings is much more challenging.

Contrary to the complicated situation in housing, the education sector may provide a much more straight-forward option for extensive energy conservation, with school facilities owned and managed by public bodies. Clear ownership, defined management responsibilities, as well as a high level of technical standardisation, make the school system suitable for rapid and mass-scale intervention which is needed in order to assist Ukraine to quickly decrease its gas consumption.



To focus on a massive assistance program – let us call it the Liberty Schools Initiative - on schools would also have an important symbolic value. It would send a simple message to Ukrainian people: “Your children and your country have a future”. To concentrate on schools is also politically non-controversial and the public will appreciate it: by bringing fast, highly visible benefits for millions of children, teachers and parents, a school energy efficiency program has strong potential to frame the new political leadership of Ukraine as true “doers” and thus strengthen

Europe must subordinate key EU funded investments and programs to a single strategic goal which is reducing the total amount of natural gas and oil imported to the continent, not only from Russia but from all sources.

popular support behind country's leaders. This is fundamentally important to reduce the risk of the country slipping back to political quarrelling as happened after the 2004 "Orange revolution".

Scaling up potential for such program is tremendous. There are around 15,500 preschool institutions in Ukraine with 1.2 million children and around 20,600 primary, middle and high schools with total enrolment of 4.5 million students and 522,000 teachers. The omnipresence of schools in all rural and urban areas, and the very close contacts that exist between schools and the local population, create exceptionally good conditions for the spread of key ideas embodied in the design and purpose of the LSI: conservation of energy by using low energy and passive design, and affordable technology, in particular thick thermal insulation and quality windows.

This rapid and massive energy conservation program for Ukrainian schools can be implemented only by using large scale industrial production methods of modular school units assembled by specialised assembly teams on pre-existing school grounds (with electricity and other infrastructure already present) within extremely short time. An appropriate technology already used in Europe, albeit on a smaller scale, are container buildings. Industrially produced containers can be transported by trucks or trains and connected together into buildings of different sizes and shapes. Data from containers schools in Slovakia suggest their cost is approximately 25% of would be costs of standard brick-and-mortar schools of similar quality. There are of course many other ways in which

properly insulated container buildings could be used to support at speed and scale a struggling Ukraine. Emergency housing for around 300,000 refugees from Crimea and Donbas facing the fast-approaching winter is another field where such a program could make big difference.

### **Energy conservation in Europe is by far the best response to militarism and aggression**

There is only one intelligent response by Europe to the new situation. Contrary to popular rhetoric, it is not to increase imports of natural gas from the United States or discard European environmental legislation and start hectic shale gas exploration in the EU. Europe must subordinate key EU funded investments and programs to a single strategic goal which is reducing the total amount of natural gas and oil imported to the continent, not only from Russia but from all sources.

It is absurd to build in Europe any other type of buildings than energy passive ones – i.e. almost without the need to be heated in winter or cooled in the summer. There is no justification for the claim that appropriate legislation should not be adopted immediately. We cannot wait until 2018 or 2020 – even yesterday was late.

Equally absurd is to drop billions of euros from Brussels' coffers towards construction of more and more roads and motorways instead of investing heavily into energy efficient housing, modernisation of public transport and electrification of railways. Money paid for Russian oil to move our automobiles

Russian aggression in Ukraine, alongside well-documented Russian support for extreme right anti-EU political parties in many EU member states, gives European politicians an excellent opportunity and reason to end the careless "business as usual" approach to energy policy.

also move the Russian military. On top of that, a program to massively insulate and rebuild existing buildings in Europe to passive or close to passive standards would for the same amount of money create significantly more jobs, more diverse jobs and more sustainable jobs than road construction ever can.

Russian aggression in Ukraine, alongside well-documented Russian support for extreme right anti-EU political parties in many EU member states, gives European politicians an excellent opportunity and reason to end the careless "business as usual" approach to energy policy. If Brussels and EU member states fail to respond to this loud wake up call, it will not only be a failure of current political elites, but will also risk the failure of the whole European project of peace, security and prosperity for all.

The Danish foreign minister Martin Lidegaard got it right when he stated that reduction of fuel consumption and significant increase in the use of renewable energy is the most important and systemic response to Moscow aggression and militarism. History will judge whether other politicians in Brussels and EU capitals were able to use current events as a historical opportunity to change current short-sighted policies, or whether a generation of current European leaders will stand side by side with Milo Minderbinder of Catch XXII on the list of those who, in the name of holy profits, financed the military build-up of their own adversaries and their own destruction. ■

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# Bringing light: social aspects of the energy agenda Hungary



Benedek Javor

Energy poverty is a growing problem across Europe, particularly in Central-Eastern Europe and affects citizens unevenly. Greens call for a transition to a sustainable, renewable-based energy system to reduce emissions and avert catastrophic climate change. Yet in order for these ideas to resonate in the mainstream of society, questions need to be answered about how the transition will be financed, and how it will benefit those who are already marginalised and struggling economically. A positive initiative targeting the Roma minority in Hungary shows one way in which this can be achieved.

### **Energy poverty: a pervasive problem**

Europe's energy policy has seen profound changes in the last decades, but it is currently facing a new situation with multiple challenges. Although choices around energy in different Member States may vary, we have three common and distinct policy objectives: limiting the climatic and environmental impact of energy production, transport and use; ensuring a reliable and uninterrupted supply of energy; and making energy affordable for every citizen while fighting against energy poverty.

The first two aspects have been widely discussed, thus in this article I put emphasis on energy affordability and in general the social aspects of the energy agenda, which has clear linkages with climate and energy security issues. Before examining the social aspects in detail, I would like us to remind ourselves that:

- We need substantial and sustained reductions of greenhouse gas emissions to avoid climate or ecological tipping points. Moving towards a low carbon economy would also result in substantial savings in terms of fuel costs in the EU, namely € 175-320 billion annually over the next 40 years according to the European Commission estimates.
- We need to reverse the current trends and reduce energy dependency in the EU. EU dependency increased from less than 40% of gross energy consumption in the 1980s to reach 53.4 % by 2012. To reverse the trend, an ambitious and coherent energy framework with interlinked targets is crucial.

These two challenges are accompanied by the pervasive problem of energy poverty in many regions of the EU (mainly in Eastern-Central Europe and the Mediterranean member states). Hence, making energy affordable for each and every member of European society and making sustainable technologies available for all are of utmost importance. This is also valid at global scale – according to the International Energy Agency estimates provided in the World Energy Outlook, 1.8 billion people lack access to electricity and in some regions, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa and developing Asia, energy poverty either stagnated or worsened as population growth outpaced energy access efforts.

In Europe itself, it is estimated that 50-125 million EU citizens are affected by energy (or fuel) poverty meaning that these households are unable to heat their home, afford to use energy services at an adequate level, and are forced to spend an extremely high proportion of their incomes for maintenance. Many households are unable to escape energy poverty and are basically excluded from existing energy modernisation programmes (e.g. insulation and improving heating efficiency of homes) due to their unfavourable financial situation.

At the European level, efforts should be concentrated on providing programs for low-income households to make energy savings and to help them gain access to renewable energy investments.



In my view, at the European level, efforts should be concentrated on providing programs for low-income households to make energy savings and to help them gain access to renewable energy investments. The latter would allow them to diversify their own energy sources and to build energy autonomy at a household level.

We need programmes that do not require an own contribution from disadvantaged households, as savings that they will be able to achieve via energy modernisation will cover their loan instalments. We also need low-cost micro projects targeted at the most vulnerable groups.

### **Hungary: a positive initiative against a difficult background**

To give you examples from my home country, according to a recent study, 75-85% of households in Hungary do not have any savings; 80% of those households planning energy related investments would not receive a bank loan to cover the investment costs. As recent Eurostat reports show, in 2013 33.5% of the residents in Hungary were living at risk of poverty or social exclusion and the number of those living under the poverty line is 1.363 million. More importantly in Hungary – in many cases as a result of misusing EU funds - the gap between the richest and the poorest is bigger than ever: as the Bertelsmann Foundation states in its report “Social Justice in the EU – A Cross-national Comparison” Hungary is the 25th out of 28 EU countries in the field of social cohesion and non-discrimination.

Nevertheless, I can also showcase a best practice example based on a participatory approach. The “Fényhozók” (“Light bringers”) project aims to provide simple, DIY energy solutions using solar energy for vulnerable Roma households in Hungary.

Within this programme, the students and alumni of the Romaversitas Foundation provide help to the most vulnerable families living in ghettos in establishing Self-Financing Communities. The goals are tangible: to equip the poorest houses with solar panels, LED lightning and accumulators; to find the most efficient and sustainable techniques for heating as well as to disseminate the necessary knowledge among the people with lowest education. Besides these very concrete goals the program focuses on the empowerment of communities’ through decreasing the families’ dependency from service providers.

Energy savings, efficiency and sustainable sources have to be fundamental elements of a renewed, common European energy policy.



Having some insight into the use of EU funds in Hungary and the current priorities of the Hungarian Environmental and Energy Efficiency Operational Programme in particular, I can remark that alleviating fuel poverty is not an integral part of the Programme, and there is a high risk of EU-co-funded developments actually resulting in growing disparities. As many good European examples show us, EU funds could and also should be diverted towards energy efficiency programs planned, implemented and run by (poor) local communities. It is essential to pay special attention to the question by EU bodies, decision makers and even experts working in any of the related fields.

### **Widening access to energy**

There is a threefold challenge that Europe's energy policy needs to tackle, and here I argued for a need to intelligently reframe the energy agenda by combining green energy efforts with the alleviation of energy poverty.

We should build on the momentum of the energy security efforts, and we definitely need an ambitious policy framework that provides proper incentives, brings

about behaviour change and at the same time, provides benefits for the wider public. While mainstreaming sustainable technologies, new solutions should follow with a view to reducing disparities in the EU.

Energy savings, efficiency and sustainable sources have to be fundamental elements of a renewed, common European energy policy. I also argue for a decentralised energy system which is based on the 'prosumer' (consumer and provider at the same time) concept which requires clearly distinctive developments, investments and infrastructural priorities in comparison to a traditional energy network.

In addition to this, we should look far beyond progress in terms of infrastructure, systems, and technologies, and also aim for providing better services and above all, improving accessibility to these in the widest sense.

The "Fényhozók" ("Light bringers") project of the Romaversitas Foundation provides a good example for all the above aspects. ■

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# A climate for change



Benoit Lechat

The ecological challenge should no longer be addressed solely as an environmental issue. Rather, it should be considered a social one. A riveting French report makes the relationship between the environment and 21st century lifestyles amazingly concrete.

The Institute for Sustainable Development and International Relations (IDDRI – Sciences Politiques Paris) has published under the rather docile title of “Lifestyles and Carbon Footprints, a Scenario Analysis of Lifestyles in France in 2050 and Carbon Footprints,”<sup>1</sup> a report that makes a significant contribution to the fight against climate change.

The report attempts to project what lifestyles will look like in France in 2050. It shows that the way that lifestyles impact the climate varies greatly. The variation can come from policy choices, but also and most importantly, from the various social dynamics that might be developed over the course of the next few decades based on trends that are already starting to emerge today. The report is a work of storytelling of the future, which feeds in nicely to several of the Greens’ most crucial debates. What’s more, it has the potential to hold the tools that the Greens will need to build and widen the majorities that they will need.

### **Beyond environmental bubbles**

Since the Club of Rome’s *The Limits to Growth* was published in 1972, there has been a litany of reports on the very worrisome state of the planet’s ecosystem. These moments of collective lucidity have produced results: citizen demonstrations, the first moves towards national and international environment legislation, the founding of the Greens. . . . Sadly however, all too often these efforts have appeared as “bubbles”, which burst as quickly as they took shape. A good example of this was the quick shift in tone of mainstream decision-makers on the climate following the onset of the subprime

crisis around 2008 and which continued through to the prolonging of the crisis to today, and includes the failure of the Copenhagen Summit. Generally speaking, this environmental rollback is justified as follows: the economic crisis meant that the (supposedly expensive) solutions to the environmental crisis and to ecological problems had to wait. Those solutions were never considered a way to recovery. Having said that, we cannot ignore the possibility that the way in which the climate question is framed by the Greens and environmentalists is precisely the reason why the subject has fallen to the bottom of the list of priorities of political leaders, and of the public opinion (of the constituents) that elect them.

### **Deficits of the “deficit model”**

To solve the climate challenge, we do not need to keep emphasising the need to avert catastrophe. We’ve been doing that for more than 40 years. What we need most is an understanding of why – and how – we meet so much resistance in implementing large-scale solutions. Recently, a growing number of sociologists<sup>2</sup> have looked into the way in which the question of the climate, and ecology in general, were couched. Their biggest criticism was that the environmental and ecological discourse continued to stubbornly apply what is known as the “deficit model.” In fact, in this model the discourse is still far too based on a somewhat naïve belief that by giving truthful, precise, information to the public on the consequences of their acts this would lead to a change in their behaviour. In other words, “if you know (how serious the situation is), you’ll have to change (your behaviour).”

<sup>1</sup> Lifestyles and Carbon Footprints – *A Scenario Analysis of Lifestyles in France in 2050 and Carbon Footprints*, Les Cahiers du Club d’Ingénierie Prospective Energie et Environnement, Numéro 21, December 2012. (Online [http://www.iddri.org/Publications/Les-cahiers-du-CLIP/Clip21\\_lifestyles%20and%20carbon%20footprints.pdf](http://www.iddri.org/Publications/Les-cahiers-du-CLIP/Clip21_lifestyles%20and%20carbon%20footprints.pdf)).

<sup>2</sup> BECK U. *Climate for change, or how to create a Green Modernity?*, Theory Culture & Society, 2010. <http://tcs.sagepub.com/>

Yet, a large part of political ecology history basically reads like one big repeated failure in applying this very model: it is consistently found in the many “plans to save the planet while there is still time” (e.g. Club of Rome, Lester Brown’s Plan B and Nicolas Hulot’s plan). The fact that none of these were implemented can be explained by a profound misunderstanding of the mechanisms of social and political change. Luckily, an increasing number of authors, research bodies and associations are starting to delve into this crucial issue. They are approaching it in a much broader way than as if it were simply a question of marketing or communication on sustainable development.

### **“It’s the sociology stupid!”**

The time has come to put much more sociology into ecological thinking and to place it on equal footing with research into green technology; ecological economics; environmental ethics; and political institutions. We must ask ourselves the question: how are the social dynamics in place in our societies not actually conducive to the political dynamics that the Greens would like to create to meet their objectives? The question might seem theoretical, but it could have some very important practical and political implications!

On this point, the IDDRI report draws inspiration from, among others the German sociologist Hartmut Rosa’s work on the impact of the acceleration of time on the daily reality of individuals, the economy and politics. The report suggests that new social movements such as transition movement, relocation, defending local communities, and solidarity purchasing groups, are

more a response to a need to resist the time pressure that has stripped our daily life of any structure, than to a quest to protect ecosystems. Another example of where the social logically precedes *the economic* and *the political* comes in the form of deregulation policies. In fact, these are more in reaction to the need to adapt the economic and social organisation to this acceleration (stemming from, inter alia, the impact of new information and communications technology (NICT) on the way that work is organised) than they are in reaction to a neo-liberal political desire to serve capitalist interests, where we can see that the ecological question continues to open up old debates between materialist sociologists (specifically Marxists) and post-materialists!

### **The stories of the ecological transition**

The IDDRI report can also feed into the debate that pits proponents of degrowth against those of green growth, and that questions the respective shares of social innovation and technology in reducing Green House Gas (GHG) emissions. The rebound effect caused by gains in energy efficiency forces us to invest more widely in social innovation and therefore in lifestyle changes that would mean an individual and comprehensive decrease in the carbon footprint.

Unless we were to be politically resolved to boosting eco-taxation, which is no easy undertaking (it has actually decreased in Europe over the course of the last 10 years!)<sup>3</sup> Pushing technical and social innovation leads to very different types of societies, both in terms of values or the organisation of our

<sup>3</sup> See “Green industry in a post-industrial society”

daily lives. One of the strongest contributions of the study is that it brings this to light, through its “scenario analysis.” The following is a far too succinct summary of the main points of the scenarios. The study shows that by 2050 our society could take many different forms and these differences can have a highly variable impact on our GHG emissions levels.

### **Preparing the future, not forecasting it...**

One of the most interesting things about the report is that it takes the past, present and future lifestyle of the French and cross-checks them in an attempt to give an outlook, which in the words of Bertrand de Jouvenel is not so much “forecasting the future as it is preparing for it.” It does so by bringing to light and evaluating various potential junctures with or without the influence of political decisions.

- The past: the report presents a stunning summary of the changes that the lifestyle in France has undergone from 1960 to 2010 (housing, mobility, employment, consumption, values) and changes in GHG emissions levels.
- The present: a collection of “weak signals” and all of the various small social movements (movement for a transition, frugal living, slow food, relocation...) to search for alternatives to consumerism, and the aforementioned acceleration of time, in all areas including housing, consumption, mobility, values...

- The future: the report has a summary of the major observable trends in the success of info-nano-bio-technologies (“towards the advent of a post-humanity”) and also a review of the major storylines in contemporary science fiction: cyborg, post-human and NICT, ecological collapse...

### **Five visions of lifestyles in 2050**

The crux of the report lies in presenting five scenarios for 2050. Each is characterised by a central vision which postulates that social change has its own dynamic, which does not stem only from political, technical and economic choices or from the major environmental crises. The report is the result of two years of work by a group of multi-disciplinary researches (sociologists, geographers, engineers, economists, etc.).

In each of the five scenarios, the report anticipates possible changes to political organisation, production systems, technological innovation, socio-spatial organisation, mobility, sociability, to values and last but not least to consumption patterns.

This table breaks down the dominant vision in each of the five scenarios.

<b>Green Consumer Society</b>	<b>Enhanced Human Society</b>	<b>The Dual Society and Multiple-Frugal Lifestyles</b>	<b>The Ecological Citizenship Society</b>	<b>Knowledge Age Society</b>
<p>Business as usual. Greening of the economy happens in response both to economic restrictions (due to the impact of climate change on the increase in the price on non-renewable resources) and in response to a desire to increase comfort.</p>	<p>Cyborg in the anthropocene era; massive use of all techniques to overcome the failings of the human race (illness, ageing, war). Prostheses become commonplace. But, longer life spans are limited to a few. Strong social and economic polarisation.</p>	<p>An identity crisis has brought a turning away of a large part of the population. Community blocks form on the outskirts of the State and of the dominant economy. These blocks are formed because of affinity as much as they are out of necessity (by those who are excluded from the dominant system for survival).</p>	<p>Multiple crises have led to a major change in the organisation of society. Around 2030 the realisation is shared around the world. Issues of social and environmental justice are interconnected. An alternative vision of life is taking form and is based on concern for the other and acknowledgement of our interdependence.</p>	<p>As environmental justice issues increasingly resonate with the people; anti-consumer movements have developed. NICT have disrupted the producer/consumer distinction. Overcoming knowledge inequalities – the basis to all power relationships is key. There is strong institutional and private resistance. Nonetheless, the economy of contribution is taking shape. Most of the web is still free, but there are some areas where knowledge is still an expensive commodity. Decentralisation of knowledge brings about political decentralisation.</p>

**Political issues:**

The authors acknowledge that a lot of questions remain open as to the methodological approach and in particular as to computation of the impact of GHG emissions. 2050, is so far off! But, lest we forget, a scenario analysis is not a prediction. The exercise is more akin to producing utopias. Some are frightening (dystopias): they turn into a nightmare for the overwhelming majority of humanity. Others offer happy outlooks: they give reason to hope for saving the climate and improving collective wellbeing.

The goal is not to say how to achieve it. But to show that, with the exception of “business as usual”, (that, with the exception of “business as usual”) large-scale change is possible. The main point of criticism that can be levied against the report is that it seems that the only trigger to all of this is some sort of crisis...

Indeed, at least three of the five scenarios are highly influenced by major crises (around 2030) to which society must adapt with the support of the social dynamics that are different in every case (the quest for autonomy and improved conviviality, to escape pressure on time and in the Environmental Citizenship scenario), the desire to live longer (Enhanced Human or “Cyborg”), acquiring and exchanging knowledge (Knowledge Age Society scenario).

**Utopia without the collapse?**

In my opinion, the first question that the Greens must ask themselves, which in reality is always the same, is how to become the majority? This is less for avoiding catastrophe and more for building a sustainable society, one that is respectful of human beings and nature and where it is quite simply nice to live.

Unless we would prefer to camp in catastrophism, – the quasi infantile disorder of political ecology – that limits us to a role as soothsayers, that are at times useful, but forever in the minority. Unless we would prefer to, consciously or unconsciously, be a part of the intimate circle of “survivors” who were able to anticipate and adapt to the “ecological collapse” or “ecological time bombs”.

As Ulrich Beck stated, the risk is that by insisting on the respect of limits, these “resilient few” only contribute to building cloistered and, undoubtedly, violent societies, that are far from the cosmopolitan ideal of a free open and fair world.

**Income, lifestyles and carbon footprints**

The second question is also traditional, but no less political. What should the relationship between income, lifestyles and carbon footprints be? In this respect, the study shows that higher income does not automatically mean a higher carbon footprint. Depending on the scenario, the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from housing (surface area), mobility (location and movements linked to work or leisure), food can vary significantly. In the Ecological Citizenship scenario where “living together is a major component of quality of life, average income hits factor 4 because

they enjoy teleworking and sharing a maximum amount of space for community services, all the while reducing air travel significantly. On the other hand, in the “cyborg” society, electricity consumption for the same categories increases massively, due to the use of robots...

### **Can we avoid being cordoned off?**

The third question is whether or not the groups that adopt one lifestyle or another will remain cordoned off from one another. For example, will a hermetic division exist between those that would like to reject technological advances and those that seek them out? Of course this is a question that applies only to the “wealthy,” who have access to this technology, but perhaps it is worthwhile to go back to the intuition of scientists, who in the beginning of the 1970s invented political ecology, criticising technocracy in the name of their quest for knowledge and humanism.

Some of them spoke out against the chimera that was the belief that politics could reign in technical change. Some of them insisted on the new responsibility of mankind towards the ecosystem that it transformed into a “second nature.”

The bizarre climate events of this fall leave us perplexed. Climate change is a perceptible reality, one that is increasingly frightening and serious.

Paradoxically, this fear should not be our motivating factor. Rather, it should be our hope for a cosmopolitan, open, tolerant society, where people are free, cooperative, and where they take care of the environment, which drives our activism. More than a political undertaking, this will require an effort for a cultural shift. ■

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