

Climate change stands as one of the largest, ever-looming issues facing our generations and several generations to come, yet according to many experts we as a global society have not done nearly enough to combat this threat. I have therefore decided to interview 3 other fellow university students in order to discuss the topic of climate change. Specifically the interview shall center around the discussion of how climate change will affect us in the next 100 years in order to first establish how each interviewee views the threat of climate change and their opinions and awareness on actions taken both by private and public actors against this problem. I will be referring to the three interviewees as “J”, “K” and “A” respectively in order to preserve their anonymity.

From my perspective, climate change stands as the largest threat facing humanity, larger in my opinion than several of the socio economic issues currently facing many societies today, not to say that I am not worried about these other issues such as rising income inequality. All of the interviewees generally share my sentiment on the matter. However, 2 of the 3 interviewees, J and A only possess a general, vague, idea of how climate change may impact Earth in the future. Notably, J and A’s answers are anthropocentric (human-centered) in the sense that they only talked about the impacts of climate change solely on humans and society. Impacts on the actual natural ecosystem or environmental systems are viewed only in terms of how it might in turn affect humans. Furthermore, from the people I have interviewed there seems to be little awareness of more indirect impacts of climate change (such as causing mass diaspora as an increasing part of the global South becomes uninhabitable)

Understandably, the interviewees were more aware about the effects that might impact their own lives, such as food becoming more expensive and their hometown being flooded than a species in the Amazon going extinct. Not to mention, as we have learned throughout this course, it was only until recently that mainstream discourses and understanding of climate change and the environment has shifted from seeing the environment as being separate from humans towards society as being a small part of the environment. Still, it is quite unfortunate that from the people I have interviewed it seems like there is little interest in saving the environment for its own sake.

Nevertheless, all 3 of the interviewees and myself agreed that climate change is a serious issue that must be tackled. Thus the interviews shifted towards discussing how we as a society have dealt with climate change. All 3 of the interviewees more or less see “big businesses”, “big oil”, etc. as both the primary culprit for climate change and obstacle against actions. All of them more or less argue that in addition to being the primary source of GHG emissions and pollution more generally, these big corporations have the financial capital and “too big to fail” status to influence and lobby government legislation against climate action. I generally agree but also note that our (as the consumer, especially those in the global North) consumption habits are also what’s funding many of these companies.

Interestingly, despite all of us generally agreeing that transnational corporations are the primary culprit, our idea of how and who should be in charge or would be most effective at implementing climate change mitigation vary completely. J does not have any faith in the capabilities of non-governmental, non-profit organizations to have a meaningful impact. In their opinion the lack of the profit motive simply makes them ineffectual. Therefore they believe that the only meaningful source of actions are from the government enacting a much higher carbon tax than what is currently implemented and subsidize firms innovating climate change mitigation technologies. They further argue that due to what they call a “prisoner dilemma-esque” situation, it will be impossible for countries to reach a multilateral agreement to raise carbon taxes and that there will be countries “free-loading” by not raising the carbon tax rate in their own country.

A, on the other hand, seems to mostly talk about individual actions, that is to say simple everyday acts such as eating less (consuming less more generally) and recycling more often. In fact, A seems to generally talk and view climate change on a very individual level, both in the effects it has and how we can solve it.

K, however, believes that only the governments possess both the will and means to carry out meaningful climate actions. Specifically, K believes that the government should hire more experts to analyze the issue. They similarly do not believe that non-profit organizations or grassroots movements are capable enough to carry out meaningful changes while also being completely distrustful of corporations, even those who are developing climate mitigation technologies.

I myself believe that a combination of both the public sector, private businesses, and grass-root NGOs are needed in order to tackle climate change wholesale. As I have mentioned, private businesses need to be directed in the right direction, which governmental policy can achieve. Simultaneously, consumer preferences need to be changed which, in my opinion, is an area where non-profit NGOs can excel in.

All in all, my interviews have found that out of the 3 interviewees, general knowledge regarding climate change is satisfactory, if only limited to direct effects to us humans. I have also found that generally there is a lot of antagonism against transnational corporations, especially fossil fuel unsurprisingly, among my interviewees. What I am most surprised by, however, was how divisive the topic of climate change mitigation was among the interviewees. I find it quite surprising that each of them believe that only one, at best two, groups of actors are capable of enacting meaningful changes, rather than a more holistic approach to climate change mitigation involving several actors (ie: governments, corporations and non-profit NGOs) simultaneously.