

EOSE10 Assignment 2 - Reflection Paper

Climate change is one of, if not the biggest threat to our planet right now. I discussed the issue with three people, respondent 1, 2, and 3 to try and understand why international funding to mitigate climate change is so severely lacking if it is such a pressing threat. During the discussions, the respondents all touched on the same three issues when it comes to the lack of international funding: the “Now vs Then”, the “Them vs Us”, and “Opinions vs Facts”.

Firstly, it seems as though one issue is that most people don't see climate change as a present problem, but rather a future risk. Respondent 1 mentioned how climate change is an important part of the Swedish school curriculum, but how it is presented makes it seem as if it is a distant, future problem; a problem from which we won't see any consequences for at least a couple of generations. Respondent 2 mentioned similar things and added how it is hard to change your standards to mitigate a possible future threat. They said, “people are simply not willing to give up their way of life, me included unfortunately”. Despite knowing the basic consequences such as rising temperatures, rising water-levels and loss of biodiversity, the real impact of these things the respondents all argued are too hard to grasp for just a normal person. Respondent 3 mentioned how they believe that even if scientists came out and said that we will all die within a week if we don't all stop driving fossil fuel driven cars immediately, they do not think that we would stop doing it. There seems to be an inherent psychological issue for us as a society. We like to be comfortable, and we have a hard time seeing the consequences that are right in front of us. Reports and papers about how the climate is changing is not enough for the normal person. Respondent 2 gave a nice analogy for the issue “Being careless with the environment is kind of like smoking, it hurts you and it hurts the people around you, but it is often not obvious until it is too late”.

Secondly, they all agree that the tragedy of the commons is one of the main problems as to why the financing is lacking. The “*why should we do something if they don't have to mentality*” is very strong. Respondent 2 maintains that at the end of the day, people want to be the person with the most cash in their pocket, saying “...that is just the way the world works, for better and for worse”. They argue that this is the main reason why there is a lack of funding to finance the transformative change towards a sustainable future - there are not enough economic incentives. Respondent 1 mentioned how many individuals, like themselves, feel discouraged when it comes to making environmentally conscious decisions. One example that came up in the discussion was train and airline ticket prices. Taking the train from Stockholm to Malmö sometimes costs more than twice the price of a plane ticket. Respondent 2 reasoned that it is hard being the first one to make the change, i.e., pay more for the same, albeit longer and arguably more uncomfortable, journey via train. They argue that to do that to mitigate climate change, knowing that there is a plane full of people not willing to pay that price, can be a hard pill to

swallow. Respondent 3 touched on this as well, adding that similar to the issue of economic incentives on a national and international level, they have to exist on an individual level as well. It *has* to be cheaper to buy locally produced than long-distance transported goods, it *has* to be cheaper to take the train than it is to fly between Malmö and Stockholm.

Thirdly, there is the aspect of information and how it is presented to the world, mainly the lack of clear distinction between opinion and fact. Some spaces on the internet function as a breeding ground for climate deniers and the spread of misinformation. The more pressing issue that respondent 3 mentions, is when these climate deniers make their way into public office. Oftentimes, they argue, political incentives and what is best for the environment don't line up. Transformative change has high short-term costs and high long-term benefits, but for a politician who is only there for the short-term, the high costs can be an undesirable challenge to take on. In these instances, it can be hard for the public to make informed decisions, or rather factually correct informed decisions. Respondent 2 mentioned how when there is so much information circulating, presenting itself as facts when it might not be based in science at all, it makes it harder and riskier to invest in green assets. When there is no consensus as to whether they are green or not, and if they will be profitable in the long run, the share of potential investors becomes too small to fund the challenge of climate change we all collectively face.

In conclusion, the "Now vs Then" mentality that the climate crisis is not happening as we speak is stopping people from acting now. Without tangible consequences, people are simply not motivated enough to drive change. Then there is the tragedy of the commons and the lack of financial incentives on all levels: international, national and individual. Lastly, unfit political representation and the diffusion of misinformation can not only cause public support for climate action to decline, but also stops the market from being efficient in terms of funding solutions to mitigate climate change.