

The future of climate change - a reflection paper

This paper will reflect over different ideas and arguments concerning climate change, by comparing the ideas of three different people. To bring a wider perspective to the discussion, each respondent is from a different background, with different day jobs. Having attended the lectures and read the course literature, I decided to ask the question “Where do you think focus should be placed to best meet the challenges of climate change, and do you believe the SDGs are adequate in solving such a challenge?”. Aiming to visualize that each respondent will believe different aspects are important, and to determine to what extent the respondents are aware of the SDGs. The paper will reflect over the answers throughout by first: shortly summarizing each person's answer, after which follows a discussion of the answers including my own opinions, ending with a conclusion.

The first person interviewed (#1) is a student of Political Science at Lund University. Upon being asked the question, answered that the most important factors were to reduce the number of industries emitting toxins into the air, and to increasingly convert current energy sources to renewable ones. Both being interconnected, the interviewed noted that Sweden and other wealthy countries are responsible to contribute with capital to less developed nations in order to facilitate the transition. Noting that, since Swedish society already has become relatively sustainable, it is best for Sweden to use its resources to help other countries. The SDGs had to be briefly explained in order to receive an answer. The respondent explained that the SDGs have historically not been adequate, and for these challenges to be resolved it would rather be the responsibility of each country's government.

The second person interviewed (#2), working at the local clothing store, mentioned the importance of government taxes and subsidies to be able to resolve climate change, through for example energy and carbon taxes. The person interviewed was not that concerned regarding the increasing gasoline prices lately, seeing it rather as an opportunity to make the new prices sticky and the possibility for people to start using sustainable means of transport. The respondent continued to explain that Sweden's entire population does not have to be affected by these taxes, rather only affecting the wealthy who emit the most CO₂. Giving examples such as extreme

taxes on private jets, expensive cars and boats etc. Seeing taxation of the rich as the most efficient way of reducing the effects of climate change. When asked about the SDGs the respondent was unclear about their scope and subsequently thought we needed more policies and rules by governments to fight climate change.

The third person interviewed (#3), a construction worker, argued that Sweden already had become largely sustainable and that focus should solely be placed in less developed countries in order to best combat climate change. When asked about the fact that Sweden still largely relies on unsustainable sources of energy, for example the transportation sector. The response was that Sweden's transportation fleet is already more sustainable than other countries thanks to a large percentage of newer diesel vehicles on the road. Adding the fact that the interviewee was tired of policies which aim to "immobilize" Swedish society for the better of the world, it should be the large emitters in the world that should take larger responsibility. When asked about the SDGs, the respondent answered that they sounded familiar, but was unable to give an answer for if they were sufficient in solving climate change challenges.

After having conducted the three interviews, I gathered my thoughts and sought to understand the sentiment regarding climate change through this small survey. Able to conclude that the general public in Lund Sweden seem to be aware of climate change, having formed their own opinion on the subject. However it became clear that, for all respondents, wider knowledge regarding the subject of climate change was lacking. There was for example no mention of concrete evidence to back up their arguments, and no mention of transformative and structural change. Which according to scholars and myself is a very important, if not the most important aspect if we want to achieve a sustainable future.

Furthermore it became clear that the average person's knowledge about the SDGs is very limited. My knowledge before attending this course for example, was at a similarly low level. I believe this highlights a large problem with the SDGs and general knowledge about climate change. The goals would benefit from larger attention in the media and from integration into everyday society, eg. in stores when choosing to buy a product that is contributing to climate change.

Conclusively, I thought it was an interesting exercise to receive an understanding of what other people think is important to combat climate change. It was interesting to see how respondents' answers depended on their level of education, age and what they do day-to-day. Personally I believe that we would benefit from trying to align everyone's mindset toward a common goal, in the same way that the SDGs aim to do. However the goals need to become more widespread into our everyday life, creating a constant mindset of "what impact will this decision have on climate change?".

Lastly, it was clear during the interviews, the lack of deep knowledge and arguments built by statistics for all respondents. Appearing as if everyone has been able to form an opinion about climate change, often one that best suits the individual, lacking consensus for which policies to implement to reach the best results. This problem of politicization has grown larger the last 15 years and may have obstructed progress, as policymakers can not agree which policy to best implement. Which is why it is so important to teach about the actual causes of climate change, and the proven ways we can prevent it.