

The Lacking Commitment to Tackle Climate Change Among Individuals, Society, and Policymakers: A Reflection

The problem of climate change and the need for policies favoring sustainable development has greatly increased in the past decades. Despite this, my perception is that climate change does not seem to get as much attention from governments, society, and individuals as it deserves. Climate change is an urgent crisis and yet it does not seem to be anyone's main priority. By interviewing three participants, this reflection paper aims to highlight the lacking knowledge among individuals in society about international and national policies aiming to reduce climate change, and individuals and societies lacking commitment and action to securing our future on this planet. I also discuss how policymakers seem to have little interest in developing policies targeting climate change.

Firstly, I asked my three participants how they define climate change. Participant 1, a 21-year-old female, defines climate change as "Human's negative impact on the environment which destroys the atmosphere and reduces the chance of a sustainable future". Participant 2, a 62-year-old female, defines it as a "Negative impact on our nature that makes the Earth warmer, ruining our ecosystem and health of animals and humans". Participant 3 is a 17-year-old male who says, "Climate change means the world is getting warmer which is bad for our environment". All three participants had an idea of what climate change is even though their explanations were a bit diffuse and not straight to the point. After receiving these responses, I could sense by the lack of confidence in all three individuals' answers that they did not have much knowledge or engagement in the subject.

To continue the discussion, I asked the participants if there are any national and or international policies targeting climate change that they are aware of and if there is any policy, they think is especially good. The 17-year-old male was not aware of any such policies nationally or internationally. The females however both acknowledged the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda by the United Nations although neither of them had any knowledge of what the agenda included, they rather just knew that it exists and believes it to target climate change effectively. Regarding national policies, the 21-year-old female could mention only one, the Swedish petrol tax, however, she explained that although she thinks the policy comes from a good place, she is not sure that it has a substantial impact on decreasing climate change. Though the 52-year-old could mention a global policy targeting climate change, she could not mention any national policy the Swedish government has implemented. In general, what I found striking when I asked them to mention policies targeting climate change was how little knowledge, they all had, even the oldest participant. In my opinion, this could possibly reflect a lack of knowledge around policies for climate change in society but also perhaps that more policies targeting this are needed or at least the ones in place deserve more attention and commitment. Additionally, the fact that the two females mentioned the SDGs as policies targeting climate change was also interesting and I think this shows how little knowledge there is about the SDGs since they do so much more than target climate change and are meant to target all three parts of sustainability: economic, social, and environmental.

I further wanted to investigate how the participant felt society is committed to combatting climate change to which all three participants answered that they feel there is a lacking commitment. They all experience that people are still living their lives as usual, themselves included and they only feel as if minorities in society, such as environmental activists are fully committed to saving our environment. I too feel as if society is not committed to solving this problem and more would be required to ensure a future where climate change is not a threat. I

think it is astounding how we are all continuing to live our lives as usual when our whole existence is at stake.

In connection with the previous question, I then asked what the participants were doing in their everyday life to try to decrease climate change. They all had the same answers, and their contributions were nothing out of the ordinary but rather tasks I believe most individuals do. All three participants recycle material, food waste, jars, and bottles, and travel as little by car as possible. The 62-year-old female is further strongly against travelling by flight domestically which seemed like the strongest morale any of the three participants had in this matter. The 21-year-old female seemed to have another attitude towards flying as she had been flying outside of Sweden and domestically countless times in the past five years. She said she likes to fly to foreign countries to explore new cultures and enjoy the warm weather and to fly domestically since it is usually cheaper than other means of transportation. The fact that people choose to fly due to it sometimes being the cheapest alternative is according to me an example of something policymakers should try to change. When we are living in a time of climate change, the transportation alternative that emits the most carbon dioxide cannot be the cheapest one.

In conclusion, my perception was that all three participants have a lacking engagement and knowledge about climate change, and it is not something they think about very often, nor are they doing anything more than the average person to try to combat climate change. With that said, I do not imply that fighting climate change lies in the hands of these three people, but I believe people's lacking knowledge and engagement is a societal and institutional problem which is well reflected in these interviews. Climate change receives too little attention in society, and I believe policymakers need to set the tone by implementing better and more policies targeting climate change and thus making society more committed to tackling this problem.

Word count: 991 words