

Climate change and energy transition

Wester, T.I.

Autumn 2023

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Chapter 1

A central component to climate change is carbon dioxide, which is highly related to our energy use. Transitioning to a climate friendly global lifestyle, we must keep in mind the wish to keep our energy budget stable. Energy availability is tightly correlated with both economic growth and Human Development Index, neither of which are generally desired to reduce.

When discussing climate problems, there is an intrinsic need for an interdisciplinary approach. There are for instance questions raised by science concerning whether we have entered a new geological epoch, how we might get to a stable and sustainable system regarding climate, and how we might bring justice to those who greatly damage the climate. However, each of these questions have normative-, psychological-, and sociological- dimensions.

1.1 The Anthropocene

The concept of the Anthropocene, the age of man, wherein humans have the greatest control over the earth, is highly present in the climate change debate. While the question: “Have we entered the Anthropocene?” is a matter of natural science, the attitude towards it is a philosophical matter.

There are those who fully embrace the Anthropocene, and wish therefore to take responsibility for the maintenance of the earth.

This approach stands in great contrast one wherein the Anthropocene is despised, but seen nevertheless as inevitable. This approach typically does not lead to taking responsibility.

Belatedly, but more responsible, are those who wish to limit the Anthropocene, mitigating and reducing the negative impact humans have.

There are also other terms proposed against the term “Anthropocene”, for

instance Homogenocene or Eromocene. Respectively, the age of homogenisation and the age of loneliness (both referring to biodiversity loss).

1.2 Sustainability

Sustainable development is defined by the WCED as development that meets the needs of the present without comprising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. This definition limits itself greatly to human ability, and does not properly define the needs current-, and future- generations have.

The assumption is that this “sustainability” is indeed possible, partly because the ethical and political implications of not meeting the needs to the present are too-repugnant to consider. This belief is not based in empirical evidence, but rather a matter of necessary hope.