



CLIMATE
JUSTICE

Acknowledgements

Many people have helped in the making of this volume.

First and foremost are the authors, whose dedication, brilliance and insights have made this collection of articles possible. Some of you I have known for many years, while others are newer acquaintances. I look forward to continued collaboration for many years to come. Thanks to all of you for your great efforts and commitment.

I would also like to thank Henning Melber for his support and the opportunity to collaborate and produce this publication as a joint undertaking between the What Next Forum and the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation. It was an enormous pleasure to again work closely with my former colleagues at the Foundation – Robert Österbergh, who helped with the editing, and Mattias Lason, whose creative and beautiful layout will surely boost the impact of the publication. Your dedication and attention to detail are invaluable. Likewise, it's been a true pleasure to work closely again with Wendy Davies, the Foundation's language/copy editor, as well as Peter Colenbrander who added support at a crunch time. You are true professionals, ensuring texts of the highest standard. Thanks also to Teresa Anderson of the Gaia Foundation, who read the manuscript and provided many valuable suggestions in addition to contributing her own article.

Thanks also to Olle Nordberg for your support and more than a decade of past work together at the Foundation. Nobody has provided more insights into how to convene meetings, edit publications, improvise and trust the process. You have made a considerable impact on this volume without really knowing it. And of course thank you to my children, Tova and Vidar: their generation and those to come are the ultimate reason for this volume.

Niclas Hällström
Uppsala, September 2012



What Next? Convening – Exploring – Catalysing

The What Next Forum is an emerging initiative that builds on many years of prior work on ‘Another Development’ and the What Next Project at the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation. As a set of core activities the What Next Forum seeks to convene informal dialogues, roundtable discussions, exploratory seminars, strategy workshops, as well as public debates to facilitate a broad range of actors to meet each other in new constellations.

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The What Next Forum aims to explore new issues, challenges and alternative views on environment and development. The meetings strive to create opportunities for new thinking and exploration of unconventional ideas – and of possible trajectories ahead. Activities strive to catalyse promising ideas and initiatives into action. By convening meetings of actors and thinkers, the What Next Forum hopes to catalyse the formulation of strategies, help initiate networks and organisations, and provide active support to both policy-makers and activists.

More information about What Next Forum can be found at www.whatnext.org

Introduction

Niclas Hällström

Snapshot #1: Newspaper headings from a week in September 2012 as this manuscript was being concluded:

- ‘Vanishing Arctic ice is the planet’s white flag of surrender’
- ‘Global carbon trading system has “essentially collapsed”’
- ‘Caribbean coral reefs face collapse’
- ‘Research links extreme summer heat events to global warming’
- ‘Climate change growing threat to food and biodiversity’

Snapshot #2: A huge conference room and a world of its own: a fascinating, bewildering, and often deeply frustrating setting. Every living person in the world – and all future generations – supposedly represented here as the fate of the planet is being negotiated. All the power of the world crystallised in this one room, directly or indirectly represented by exhausted looking negotiators.

In many people’s views the UN climate negotiations are becoming less and less relevant. The lack of concrete results and concerted action stemming from the climate summits over the years feeds disillusion and cynicism. The complicated, mystifying, alienating policy language of incomprehensible abbreviations and acronyms – LULUCF, QELROS, REDD, GCF, MRV, AWG-LCA – distance the majority from the small group of technocrats, negotiators and lobbyists immersed in the details, tirelessly taking seemingly miniscule steps back and forth.

It is easy to argue that the real changes are happening anyway, outside of the Bella Centres, Moon Palaces or Durban Convention Centres where the yearly ‘COP’ climate summits take place. Transnational corporations, financial speculators, consumers, community organisers, progressive social movements and indigenous groups alike are shaping and reshaping the world – and ultimately our emissions and climate – regardless of the ideas, paragraphs and commas being fought over inside these UN halls.

Nonetheless, the UN negotiations do matter. The world is facing an emergency situation with a breathtakingly small and rapidly diminishing carbon budget. How should this atmospheric space be divided? It is hard to imagine a forum other than the UN that could provide space



for any kind of multilateral, fair and binding conversation about how this should be done. The alternative to a free-for-all, winner-takes-all scenario must sensibly include some kind of multilateral, ‘global governance’ approach. And the UN is what we have. Yet, within this framework there is now a lack of momentum, a shift towards weak voluntary commitments and a downgrading of equity principles. Meanwhile the planet continues to heat up and global inequities are growing. How did this happen? What are the trajectories ahead?

This What Next volume takes several points of departure.

A first departure point is the recognition of the severity of the situation we face, which demands that radical and far-reaching changes be made. The title of the first article, ‘Climate change going beyond dangerous – Brutal numbers and tenuous hope’, by one of Britain’s leading climate scientists, Kevin Anderson, captures this clearly. We must dare to ask difficult questions and draw some very unpleasant conclusions. It is a nightmarish predicament that we are in, and there is no way we can effectively deal with the challenges to the extent needed without fundamental changes in the way our societies work; including challenging power structures, the way we run our economies, and the very meaning of ‘development’ and ‘progress’.

Yet, in this grim situation lies hope, too. With the stakes so high – essentially the future of humankind (and ‘Mother Earth’) as we know it – and with ultimately everyone at peril, there is also an imperative for far-reaching change. As the contributions to this volume show, solutions do exist, and it is possible to envisage a much more equitable world that has collectively managed to drastically reduce its emissions, avoid truly catastrophic global warming and increase the level of happiness and genuine well-being. But, it is also clear that such a transformation of our societies will require an unprecedented set of changes. To conveniently trust that ‘business as usual’ in the hands of the most powerful vested and commercial interests will simply ‘fix’ the problems through new technologies and ‘cost-effective’ market solutions, is, in light of these articles, a recipe for disaster.

A second departure point is the recognition that equity must be at the centre of the debate. For many environment and climate policy makers and activists, equity concerns have been secondary to the overriding concerns about global warming. Many articles in this volume respond to this point directly, and make the case that ‘equity is the gateway to ambition’. This volume thus takes a normative approach in the broad notion of climate justice. However, within this approach it



UN Photo/Logan Abassi

A first departure point is the recognition of the severity of the situation we face, and that it demands that radical and far-reaching changes be made.

tries to nuance and map out different points of contention, contradiction and debate. For example, it shows the ethical, practical and pragmatic bases for India's strong stance on equity in the climate negotiations, but also problematises the notions of equity, elites and development models within India as well as the South more generally – thereby adding a layer to the equity battles raging at the intergovernmental level. While regarding equity as fundamentally and morally important in itself, the volume also holds that equity is a prerequisite for the drastic global emissions cuts that will need to take place over the next few decades. It is strikingly clear from these contributions that in particular the countries of the 'North' will have to face up to their responsibilities in order to break the current deadlock. Decades of failed promises, delaying tactics and shifting of goalposts have eroded the level of trust between the North and the South to an all time low. This needs to be rectified immediately, and can only be done through bold action and sincere commitments to equity.

Thirdly, the publication assumes that civil society has an important role to play. Cutting across the diverse set of articles are different approaches to, and understandings of, the way in which societies change. How will the substantial changes that are needed come about? While the volume does not seek to glorify or romanticise the role of social movements and civil society organisations, it recognises that many achievements and much 'progress' in human history have come about when people have organised and taken action from below. The end of slavery, women's equal rights, the civil rights movement, the welfare state, nuclear disarmament, the end of apartheid and many actions against environmental injustices would not have been possible without strong action by different constellations of civil society and social movements. Parliaments, government, business, academia and media are all crucially important, but are by themselves not likely to create enough momentum for the far-reaching change that is needed. A vibrant civil society – of concerned and engaged citizens – is needed to speak the truth, and to stake out and normalise what may seem 'radical' by today's political 'realism'. Civil society can and must create the momentum and pressure to move those in political power out of their comfort zones, in order to challenge what's blocking fair and equitable solutions.

Fourthly, this volume reflects a firm – and hopeful – conviction in the importance and power of dialogue. Although there are many substantive and fundamental points of disagreement in the climate debate that will not be overcome by talk alone, the power of dialogue is often underestimated. There is considerable scope for a more informed and balanced understanding of other parties' perspectives in the debates around climate change, and a strong case for presenting perspectives that are less heard. This volume

aims to stimulate critical dialogue and the emergence of more and new spaces for collaborative action, meetings and interaction.¹

My hope is that this volume will provide insights into the links between climate, development and equity to a diverse audience. It will hopefully help demystify the climate negotiations for those who are not following them closely, provide a richness of detail on a number of distinct issues for those engaged in negotiations, advocacy and policy work, and engage with challenging perspectives and inspiration around solutions and problems that are largely outside of the negotiations: from struggles against oil companies to ‘Transition Towns’. Hopefully the mix of contributions and approaches can stimulate important conversations – and tough debate – on many of these matters, and in all kinds of quarters.

The structure of the book

The volume is divided into four distinct parts: *Setting the Context: Climate Development and Equity Challenges*, *The Climate Negotiations*, *Real and False Solutions*, and *Movement for Change*

Part I, Setting the Context: Climate, Development and Equity Challenges, provides several departure points. Kevin Anderson, one of Britain’s most prominent climate change scientists, provides hard-hitting science, argues that policy-makers and fellow scientists alike tend to paint too rosy a picture and presents the brutal reality of the remaining carbon budget. The article that follows presents the notion of ‘climate debt’, a key concept emphasised by numerous countries and by civil society in recent years. In the concluding article, ‘The North-South divide, equity and development – The need for trust-building for emergency mobilisation’, Sivan Kartha, Tom Athanasiou and Paul Baer deepen the discussion of ‘equity’ and the ‘right to development’, and outline a principle-based framework for effort-sharing at the international level.

Part II focuses on the **UN Climate Negotiations**. Martin Khor shares an insider’s perspective of what took place during the climate summits of Copenhagen in 2009, Cancun in 2010, and Durban in 2011, highlighting the current ‘clash of paradigms’ and frustrations over both process and content that have effectively brought the process to a standstill. Other contributions shed light on the outcomes from Durban, ‘paltry’ pledges

¹ For example, carefully crafted dialogue seminars with diverse sets of people over several days, where trust and personal connections are allowed to develop, can indeed result in unexpected openings and creative understanding on how to move forward. Some recent dialogues with What Next involvement include policy discussions on biodiversity financing within the CBD context (www.dialogueseminars.net) and antibiotic resistance. Similar examples from prior work at the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation include openings on progressive primary health care, indigenous publishing, carbon trading, politics of plant genetic resources, nanotechnology and equitable pharmaceutical drugs policies.



Scott Liddell



for emissions reductions currently on the table, rich country ‘loopholes’ as well as the need for climate finance. Contributions specifically reflecting on China and India conclude this part. Both of these countries have come under the spotlight and strong pressure, motivating Dale Wen and Praful Bidwai (from China and India respectively) to reflect on their countries both in terms of the UN negotiations and in relation to climate change more broadly. While exposing the problems with elite-driven, consumerist and growth-oriented development strategies that mimic the West, they also expose the problems and injustice of treating India and China as if they were similar to the US or Annex 1 countries – thereby connecting to the equity frameworks presented in Part I.

Part III, On Real and False Solutions, suggests that many of the most challenging debates and battles around climate change are, and will increasingly be centred around, what constitute ‘real’ and ‘false’ solutions. The section begins with an article by Larry Lohmann that metaphorically frames different approaches as ‘dead’ and ‘living’ solutions. Lohmann makes the crucial point that the inherent need for structural change in order to tackle climate change requires ‘creatively building long-term, coherent historical pathways away from dependence on fossil fuels’. Oscar Reyes shows why carbon trading causes societies to delay the bold investments required to move onto such new pathways and also highlights structural failures of current carbon trading schemes as well as new risks posed by a range of new ‘financialisation’ mechanisms. The ETC Group present the case against ‘geoengineering’ and argue why these mega-scale technological ‘fixes’ for climate change are inherently risky and ‘false’ solutions.

As a contrasting and bold, visionary solution, Doreen Stabinsky and Lim Li Ching discuss the huge potential for agroecological approaches to simultaneously decrease emissions and enable resilient, ecologically sound and socially appropriate agriculture. Finally, Tariq Banuri, Niclas Hällström and Pascoe Sabido reflect on the crucial importance of energy access and show how a globally funded programme for national feed-in tariffs for renewable energy could, if properly designed, be critical for a bottom-up energy revolution. Through such a bold public investment programme, the world could be transformed to one with universal energy access and 100 per cent renewable energy – precisely what is needed to tackle the global challenges of climate change, inequality and poverty.

Lastly, **Part IV** looks at **Movement Towards Change**. The introductory article, ‘Beyond patzers and clients’, issues a challenge to everyone, whether civil society activists, government representatives or academics, to (re-) consider our strategies and rationales and realise the risks of

becoming a ‘patzer’ – losing the overall game for the sake of short-term gains. Three short cases – ‘glimmers of hope’ – conclude the volume and provide inspirational accounts. First, a reflection on civil society and the UN, with examples of successful experiences of governments and social movements working together in unusual ways within the UN context; second, an account of local grassroots resistance struggles working with internationally connected movements to ‘keep the oil in the soil’; and third, the story of local development approaches through the rapidly growing phenomenon of ‘Transition Towns’.

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It has been an incredibly rewarding – and challenging – task to bring together these diverse contributions. Needless to say, there are many more dimensions, authors and angles that could have been included. Nonetheless, I hope that this collection of articles does convey several strong and important messages: That humanity is facing its biggest challenges yet. That these challenges are fundamentally about equity, justice and different views about what ‘development’ should really be about. And that there can be no way out of our predicament without daring to question the status quo – and making the impossible possible.

What Next?

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What Next Forum
Uppsala, September 2012





Gulf of Mexico, June 16 2010

Fort Chipewyan, Alberta Tar Sands region, February 11 2012

