

THE WORLD BEYOND COVID-19

Climate Change

Date:	July 18, 2020
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Facilitator:	CEED Concordia, The Refugee Center, Sustainable Concordia
Notetaker:	Duha Elmardi

Moderator (Intro/Knowledge Shared)

Emily Carson-Apstein:

Discussion: (Items/Knowledge Shared)

Question 1 - In her 2009 book *A Paradise Built in Hell*, Rebecca Solnit writes: "Just as many machines reset themselves to their original settings after a power outage, humans reset themselves to something altruistic, communitarian, resourceful, and imaginative after a disaster. We revert to something we already know how to do". In your experience with research and community organizing, what can Covid-19 teach us about building community resilience in times of crisis, and how can that help us take effective action against climate change?

Jen Goby - Covid has been teaching us a lot. **Covid has taught us that it is indeed possible to take swift actions in response to a huge crisis.** Economies can be shut down, mass production and consumption can be halted and re-directed, huge funds could be mobilized to do what needs to be done to protect peoples' lives and communities can quickly organize to take care of ourselves and each other. **Now we know that these things are possible.** Mutual aid groups have emerged, self-organizing to take care of each other, deliver groceries, provide all kinds of services. That's been inspiring. It's amazing to see how these communities have been organizing and staying organized as the pandemic is receding. **I think Covid has been bringing out these altruistic, communitarian, resourceful and imaginative human traits. but we have to acknowledge that crisis can bring out less beautiful things in people and in the powers that be. We're seeing increases in surveillance and policing in politics of austerity, Bill 61 in Quebec which would have given government exorbitant powers targeted at accelerating projects in ways that override legislation that normally applies to procurement and public contract and environmental protection...etc. We're also seeing more ugliness in the form of discourse that covid is not a problem because it only kills old people, that's ugly.** So we're seeing some ways that covid is being responded to through the same old shitty ideologies and systems that value some lives over others. Naomi Klien has talked a lot about shock doctrine and climate barbarism and how **crises are being seized by far right politicians and groups that are seizing the moment to reduce equality, justice, sustainability.** So we need to be really thinking about how these moments are being seized in ways that are really disastrous. I'm particularly interested in not just thinking about how we can prepare and adapt to crises in ways that maintain the current system, I want to figure out how we can avert future crises by transforming the economic and political systems that are driving the crises in the first place. **There is this distinction about adaptation, resilience and transformation** that different scholars, researchers and activists talk about and that **adaptation is responding to crisis in ways that allow us to continue with the systems in the same configuration and dynamics that were happening before, yet transformation is ways of**

THE WORLD BEYOND COVID-19

Climate Change

social change that actually alter the way system function and behave. Luckily, covid has been teaching us a lot about that. About how to not just survive and adapt, but how to seize the moments of crises and the opportunities created by these disruptions to push for social transformation towards justice, equity and sustainability. **To do this change, we need to be targeting the root causes of the social and ecological problems** that we're talking about and I think that covid and climate change do share some important root causes that we could be talking about how to address and there are amazing initiatives across the world, Canada and Montreal where people are talking about not going back to normal and building back better. In Canada there's been Share my cheque, an initiative to do wealth distribution long term, there is police abolition, prison abolition, and many examples across Montreal on anti-eviction, anti-racism, efforts to design what a just recovery looks like in Montreal. My hope coming from all this is that **through crises like these we can learn to become better and stronger in our ability to hold those in power accountable and get better and more organized in our neighbourhoods to provide food, shelter, healthcare and learn from each crisis on how to dismantle old systems that are not working and unjust and build new systems that can take care of people and planet a lot better.**

Amr Addas - There's a lot of scientific research coming out and anyone who studies climate understands that whatever we do today to mitigate climate change, we're not gonna see the results of that for at best two decades. Even if we stop emissions tomorrow, we would not see the results of that for at least another decade. **To me, one of the common things that we maybe learn from covid is that if i'm going out and wearing a mask, and all of us are, we're not necessarily seeing immediately the impact of our action but we're doing it collectively as a society because we know that that's what we need to do together to deal with this.** I think there is a lot of similarity in what we have to do for climate change. But the challenge is always politically, politicians are looking for the next election and if you're gonna impose serious change to society in the short term, it's tough to do. But **as a society we have to engage in this as an action** and hopefully it should make it more powerful.

Vanessa Nakate - There is too much to learn in regards to the pandemic because I can clearly see that **it has shown much of the weaknesses of our systems and governments and it has also shown so much of the political will** and if there is political will then that means action and change is possible. **It has also showed us that our leaders are actually able to listen to science** and we understand they've ignored the science of climate change so much and then covid-19 shows up and they realized that this pandemic knows no class, no money, no leadership so they are so quick to take action because they know that everyone is affected, economies are affected so **I think that it teaches us to think that the leaders can actually listen to science, they are able to take action if they have the political will** and also I see that **people many times fear new changes in life and fear to adapt to something new and this period has shown that humanity is able to change ways of living** in order to try and survive and this shows that if we want sustainability in our homes, in our families, in our schools, then it's actually possible to be able to have a community that is working towards having a better future and planet. It's all about the will of the people, it's all about them understanding that they are in a crisis and they face a very big challenge that could cost their lives so they are able to change. We understand that our leaders say that we cannot shift from fossil fuels and it will be very expensive and we cannot just easily adapt to something new, but then this period has shown that people and the leaders are able to adapt. Meaning that sustainability is possible, we

THE WORLD BEYOND COVID-19

Climate Change

just don't have the political will from our leaders through actions, demonstrations. We will have to push them till they get the will and understand how much people's lives can be in danger if we are facing a crisis. **It has also shown us that we need to treat every crisis like the crisis that it is. Because if you treat covid-19 as a crisis and not treat climate change as a crisis then it really questions your equality and how you define your equality because when you look at climate change, it affects the people who are least heard, the people whose voices are struggling so much and when it comes to covid-19, it's really not leaving out anyone.** So there is so much to learn from this. I really hope that it's a moment of reflection for the leaders and people to understand that we can work together for a future that ensures protection of people and the planet and everyone has access to the necessary basics of life.

Question 2: Much like climate change, Covid-19 is affecting communities around the world very differently, and exacerbating existing inequalities such as healthcare and food insecurity. Given your experience with youth movements in Africa and around the world, how do you think the current pandemic can teach us about creating global solutions, recognizing the different challenges faced around the world, and help us address future international crises? *What role will youth leadership play in this and what practical solutions you would encourage?*

Vanessa - This period has shown the weaknesses of our systems and it has shown that the leaders are able to make people have access to the basic needs. In this period, the leaders have been able to provide for the homeless, and give them homes and that wasn't the case before. I think that everyone has a right to have access to food, water, shelter and I come from a country where I have seen people struggle in this period to have access to food. Yes, the government has tried to intervene and give out food to people but not everyone was able to get it and this food was given out once. People are struggling, many have lost their jobs, so I think that this needs to change. Not just in my country but across the world, I understand that there are people in other countries who struggle so much to get access to food. **This doesn't mean that the food just got scarce in this period, it means that this has always been a challenge. This pandemic only made the situation worse. This is why we need to completely change the system to ensure that people can easily access food, clean water. Some peoples' toilet water is cleaner than some people's drinking water.** It is disturbing to know that it is a fact and this is something that needs to change. There is no reason for a child to sleep hungry. **Children below the age of 5 years are continuously dying because of water borne diseases like cholera. During this period, Lake Victoria's water levels were rising and many people's homes and farms were swept away, even their toilets were submerged.** You can imagine how the water that people had access to was very contaminated. People had to deal with surviving covid-19, surviving from contaminated water, having to sleep on the streets, having to struggle to get food because their farms were swept away. These are the kind of things our governments need to look into. **We cannot afford to just have a small group of billionaires while millions and millions of people are suffering across the globe. We have to make sure that everyone has access to food, healthcare facilities, shelter, these are essential basic needs that every person has the right to get.** Of course, **the youth have been speaking up**, they have been showing the leaders the way to take but it's unfortunate that our leaders choose not to go into that direction, they choose not to value the lives of the people, they choose not to value the climate, those small things that actually matter to people. The youth have done everything they can, we have the voices, we have the platforms, we are speaking up, we are demonstration but **unfortunately we do not have the**

THE WORLD BEYOND COVID-19

Climate Change

authority to make decisions, that lies in the hand of the leaders and we can only continuously push them to make sure that they make decisions that protect lives. **Maybe something that can be done is organizing projects and reaching out to those communities that are struggling to eat and have water** and there are a number of ways that these projects can be implemented. Maybe helping out in building water harvesting mechanisms so that people can still have access to water even in the times of drought or their toilets have been submerged or the water from the lake has been contaminated.

Deborah McGregor: Vanessa, I think one of the things you're highlighting is **covid-19 isn't just a global health issue pandemic, it is also about meeting basic human rights**. So not letting those kinds of questions or issues fall aside. People's basic human rights to water, to shelter and food so just sort of expanding that narrative beyond just a global health issue.

Jen Gobby: **In Canada, lots of people think that climate change is something that's gonna hit us at some point in the future, which is clearly not the case. It's impacting a lot of people very hard and very much in the present.** Yet covid somehow has made people feel more vulnerable realizing that global crises can impact me and my life. I'm hoping that this allows people to see how urgent the climate crisis is as well and having more empathy and respect for what people are facing around the world and different parts of Canada as well.

*Key Takeaway:

Question 3: In Canada's colonial history, there is a dangerous and damaging pattern of undervaluing and suppressing indigenous knowledge. How did Indigenous legal orders, knowledge, and governance play a role in Indigenous responses? What do you think we can learn from the experience of indigenous peoples during Covid-19, and how can we apply that to environmental justice?

Deborah McGregor: One of the ways that I try to talk about, thinking about Indigenous peoples as helping to address the challenges that everyone is facing, what can our knowledge, legal orders, justice systems say about that. And that's built on the fact that for Indigenous peoples in Canada, (I can't speak for everybody in the world and probably not everybody in Canada) is that **we've already had to face our annihilation through these colonial policies, that was the explicit intention of them**. And we've had to face pandemics and diseases in the past but we've survived it and we're here. So there is something to learn from that. I think about that as what other people are finally facing is what we've lived with everyday in Indigenous communities, and also Vanessa points out from where she's from. There is something to learn from that, **there's something to learn about how you survive in those sorts of situations and the work that I do tries to look at those systems, not the colonial systems that seem to perpetuate the problems that others have talked about, but Indigenous systems of laws and justice and knowledge that point to a different way of being in the world**. Having said that, we've had this history, colonialism (it continues, it's not just in the past) interferes with our ability to be able to self determine our own future in the face of climate change. It's not just as Jen pointed out, **we have to change the narrative big time in terms of what climate change looks like**, we must adapt, we must mitigate. Actually no, **we actually want to govern, to self determine, we want to flourish**. We have to ask ourselves different kinds of questions. I

THE WORLD BEYOND COVID-19

Climate Change

don't necessarily have the answers to them, the advantage of being a researcher is to be able to ask some people who I think know the answer better. So to us, where I think this might be helpful and I'm not gonna have time to really get into this but more recently **I was reading the report that came out of the United Nations Environment Program where they talked about the root cause of Covid-19**, one of the drivers being climate change and basically humans and the way we are really unsustainable and doing all kinds of things, resource extraction, that have contributed to this pandemic, of which there is going to be more. **And so as I was reading the report, they're calling it scientifically based evidence so my lens on the world is, what about Indigenous peoples, knowledge, systems, It's not there. I'm pretty sure we could have predicted this.** On Earth day I was speaking on a panel and I was asked what do you think is the cause of Covid-19? I go, probably human unsustainable actions and climate change, and this was before the report came out. So this is something that I think a lot of people intuitively know but no one is gonna believe it and their job is gonna be to convince nation states at this point. **The other thing that they're promoting is the one health approach which is animal health, human health and environmental health.** They're trying to promote that as an approach to deal with future pandemics, basically you have to consider all of this. The only thing I could think to myself, (there were a lot of things I thought to myself because I have this lens which I view things) is **Indigenous people already have these concepts of where they think holistically about these things. So, in the Anishinaabe concept we have this idea of Mino-Bimaadiziwin, living a good life and this doesn't just apply to people and it's not possible for us to live well if other entities and beings are not well and we have to think about them in our everyday and our knowledge laws and governance system supported that.** We recognized that it wasn't possible. So the One health approach now coming to the forefront because of the covid-19 recognizing climate change and unsustainable human consumption and resource extraction, all these being issues that created this problem which they already knew. they predicted it and it's gonna be predicted again if we don't transform the path we're on. There is a lot more that I can say about that but that was recently what came to light and **I was looking at my lens going, we already had that, why don't you ask us? we can contribute and not just be the poor people who need to be helped, but people who can actually contribute to try to address some of these challenges that we're all facing.**

Jen Goby: This made me think about some concrete solutions to climate change and covid-19 and **I was reminded of the report "Land Back" by the Yellowhead institute** which is an amazing research institute in Canada and **they were arguing that land back, returning stolen land to Indigenous people whose land it is, is a really important solution to climate change because then Indigenous people could enact their relations to the land and steward these lands in ways settlers have failed to do and also i've been hearing a lot about going back to the land as a strategy Indigenous people are doing to protect themselves from the pandemic and create spaces where they can stay healthy and take care of themselves and each other and i was thinking about land back, the return of stolen land to Indigenous people as a really important concrete to both covid and climate change.**

*Key Takeaway:

Question 4 - Both Covid-19 and climate change create situations where human safety and wellbeing are being balanced against economic risk and reward. Given your experience in the

THE WORLD BEYOND COVID-19

Climate Change

economic world, specifically in environmentally sustainable investment and business models, what do you think this pandemic can teach us about navigating that balance? Is there a way that the economic recovery from Covid-19 can lead to a better inclusion of environmental sustainability and other ESG factors? Or on the contrary, the pandemic crisis might make these factors less of a priority?

Amr Addas: **The short answer is yes, absolutely.** It can and it already is leading to a better way to deal with some of the major challenges that we face and to highlight the already growing wave and momentum that we've had with **ESG which stands for Environmental, Social and Governance investing philosophy.** I've been in this field for 10 years in various forms and I've been giving a class in business school and of course listening to the other speakers I kind of feel like I'm representing the Darth Vader of this, being from the business and investment universe. To some extent, of course there has been a lot of damage done through business practices over the years but I see change happening right now and as I said, **I've been talking about this for 10 years and the evidence that we have seen over the last 2 years is truly transformative** and when I started talking about sustainable investment it was more aspirational and hopeful that there would be movement towards sustainable investing on a broader scale within the industry and mainstreaming of sustainable philosophy within investment. I think we are seeing it now, whatever the motivations are, **I think investors are increasingly recognizing two things, one is that if you do not take into account sustainability/ESG factors, you're actually taking one more risk than you otherwise would.** These are not some tree hugging abstract concepts, these are true factors you have to deal with and if you don't, you're gonna be underperforming which is ultimately what counts in the world of investing. **The other thing is that you are increasingly as a corporate entity, expected to take those things into account. Your employees expect it, your clients expect it, the community within which you operate expects it. We have their fiduciary duty in fact, which in the world of investing means you have an obligation to look at anything that is material and could potentially affect the performance of your investment universe. So, the way I see the response to Covid so far is that obviously the S in ESG has risen to prominence a lot more than before.** Businesses are forced to look more at the social aspect, not just the environment which has been really receiving a lot of attention thanks to Vanessa and Greta Thunberg and others that have been so eloquently talking about it from the youth movement. It raised the topic of climate change to boardrooms and investment committees in a way that it had never been before. Now, the social aspect of how do you treat your employees, how companies have responded to covid in terms of layoffs or not, delaying or not, entering into those types of conversations which in the past they might not have easily entered into. What I'm seeing also is actual empirical evidence, performance of ESG funds far superior to non-ESG funds so far, in the first 6 months of covid, and that doesn't surprise me because ESG funds are by definition designed to be more resilient. **The word sustainable simply alludes to the work being around for a long time and in order to sustain your business, you have to think ahead, and think long term and if you do that, then it becomes a no brainer that you have to deal with the challenges of the time which is climate change, inequality, diversity, inclusion,** all of these things are now words that are being discussed within investment committees and board rooms in a way they have never been. **From a business standpoint I see a tremendous opportunity, we've been talking about how the next decade is absolutely critical in how to deal with climate change,** covid in a way presented us with an opportunity that otherwise would not have been there, which is the willingness of governments,

THE WORLD BEYOND COVID-19

Climate Change

the need to spend tens and hundreds of billions, even trillions of dollars. The EU is allocating a massive amount of funds to green investing in its recovery plan. Joe Biden just the other day laid out his plan for his administration when he wins the election, 2 trillion dollars on the green infrastructure plan. In Canada, we've had a number of reports coming out, one from Corporate Knights called "Building back better" about how the government should go ahead and stimulate the economy through green investments. **So we have a truly unprecedented opportunity to allocate massive amounts of capital which are needed because that's how money will be invested in green infrastructure and the signs are good, hopefully I am proven right.**

Deborah McGregor: Do you have an example of a company or industry that's doing well and what are the kinds of things they're doing?

Amr Addas: There are many examples of what companies have done. Unilever has been for many years positioning itself as a sustainable company in all aspects of sustainability and integrated it into its philosophy. From a simple metric of performance, it has far outperformed Kraft Heinz which is almost its polar opposite in how it does not do all these things. There are numerous, ironically, energy companies like Shell and BP and Repsol and Total in Europe, none of them in the US, that have laid out very ambitious plans to go carbon neutral and you can imagine for a business that relies on fossil fuels to go carbon neutral, that's a completely transformative strategic decision. We're seeing signs of things like that, companies looking at their supply chains. **One of the things, when you start paying attention to those ESG factors as a company, is that it forces you to look at your supply chain, to see how resilient your supply chain is,** because you have to report those things, you also pressure your suppliers to improve their ESG performance as well.

Deborah McGregor: Do governments help or hinder this process? in the US and Canada?

Amr Addas: In the US, they are now actively trying to hinder the process. In fact, the labor department in the Trump Administration is trying to roll back the progress that has happened within asset owners of pension funds that have been trying to adopt ESG factors. They are making it more difficult for pension funds to do that. In Canada, it's certainly much better. **There has been an expert panel report on sustainable finance submitted to the ministry of environment and ministry of finance last year, we're still waiting for them to implement it, but they have expressed intention to do so.** The EU is far ahead of North America.

General question- What would your dream world look like after the pandemic?

Amr Addas: It would be a world where **governments would actively support the growth of sustainable investing,** cut back on fossil fuel subsidies, actively encourage and invest in the growth of green energy and renewable energy and the 15 recommendations of the expert panel implemented in Canada. And Joe Biden gets elected.

Vanessa Nakate: **The future I imagine is one that has happy people and a happy planet.** That means resilience, sustainability, basic needs for everyone, shutting down the fossil fuel industry and moving towards renewables. Ensuring that the people and planet are protected and the wildlife.

THE WORLD BEYOND COVID-19

Climate Change

Jen Goby: I imagine a world that is woken up to the fact that the current capitalist colonial extractivist system is not working and not conducive to life on earth and human well being. **Decarbonized, decentralized, democratized, decolonized.** I hope that it's a moment of waking up to see how deeply dysfunctional the systems are and opening up way more transformative visions of what's possible for human social organization on the planet.

Deborah McGregor: **In a lot of these circles, we talk about decarbonization but not decolonization, that has to happen.** Justice. As Vanessa, Jen and others have said, covid-19 has exposed how unjust and inequitable the world is so I want to see justice and equity and all the things that need to happen in order to achieve that so people can not just survive but actually flourish and contribute to the world. But not just for humanity, if I'm influenced by my own legal traditions, it's more how we're gonna behave appropriately and ethically to animals and plants, to nature.. **We can't be healthy as people in any way unless the planet is healthy.** It's a big ask but there are a lot of young people with great imaginations to realize that reality. And we've had great examples in the past, how can that inform a vision for the future?

Q&A Section

q: Recently in our struggle to deal with covid-19, we're being encouraged to wear masks. Yet, there is a disturbingly large number among our population who is resisting the wearing of masks. Do you see parallels between people resisting what seems to be a seemingly obvious tactic to fight the pandemic and the resistance of people to accept the realities of climate change. And if this parallel exists, how do we deal with this resistance among those deniers?

Amr Addas: Ya absolutely. Unfortunately just like with climate change, more so **in North America because it's a politicized issue.** Because of the lobbying from fossil fuel companies like Exxon mobil Since the 70s when they suppressed the findings of their own scientists, they have successfully managed to politicized climate change. Your views of climate change are informed by your political standing, which is ridiculous. Refusing to wear masks has to do with the same type of mentality. How to deal with it is difficult, I don't see a way other than government legislating, regulating and requiring because I don't see education being an effective tool here. It's too late for people who are already holding these views, to be susceptible to being convinced otherwise.

Vannessa Nakate: I agree with Mr. Addas, education is not needed because **if someone chooses to be a denier, then it's a choice,** it's not a choice out of ignorance because they know the risks of doing this, but they just refuse to do it. And it's really sad to know that there are people who continuously refuse to wear masks or accept the science of climate change, even with very visible impacts in different parts of the world. What can we do about those people? Nothing. I feel like they choose to be this way, a way that is resonant with people, wildlife and nature.

Deborah McGregor: Wearing masks is just mitigation, but is not the solution. I think part of the government and others's response should get to the root cause of the problem. They may not be able to create public awareness across the population, but maybe partly through the public school system when kids are younger. **The mask is the bandaid to the deeper problem, and that's where we need to understand and focus on.**

THE WORLD BEYOND COVID-19

Climate Change

q: I think we can all agree on what the problems may be, But I would like to hear your opinion on strategies that answer the question of how we can make the world a better place.

Amr Addas: Listening to speakers here today and the eloquence of young people like Vanessa and Greta is impressive. For me, it's **continuing to hear those voices loudly and hopefully that shames politicians into better behavior and awakens voters to vote for politicians that will bring about change.**

Vanessa Nakate: We've already envisioned the kind of world we hope to see and how we can make the world a better place. I think it's basically **putting an end to the injustices** that we see and there are quite a number of injustices we see (climate, social, racial...etc) so I think that addressing those injustices and getting what I would call global justice for everyone would make the world a better place.

Deborah McGreggor: **Sadly, we don't all agree with what the root problems are and that's part of the problem.** We have to expand the dialogue of what we mean by climate change. **Who are the climate change storytellers?** and we tend to rely on IPCC, and i'm not saying that the scientific view isn't important, but **there is a whole bunch of other views and knowledge that also matter and others are not taken into consideration because they are not a part of that process or not phd holders, for example youth and indigenous people.** So other people dominate that narrative and the concepts that Jen talked about like adaptation and mitigation and resilience that have come out of this narrative and we just accept them and don't really challenge or transform them or tell other stories about climate change or justice and what the possibilities might be. If we think it's a scientific problem, all we need to do is this and this, which the IPCC has put all kinds of reports that have said that, same with the IPBS, they both say we need to transform the society but **they don't really challenge the status quo.** **How you define the problem, sets out what the solutions are and we need to listen to other voices that don't get to have a say** as they are very restrictive on who gets a say in those places. We need to listen to Vanessa and all the other Vanessas in the world about how they understand the problem and what they think the solution is. What people think the answer is, doesn't seem to be working so we need to be a lot more creative.

q: How can investors and Indigenous communities engage to promote a sustainable process for decarbonization and decolonization.

Jen Goby: In my PhD research I interviewed over 60 people across Canada who are activists and land defenders who are working actively towards decolonizing, decarbonizing Canada and one of the things I asked was what do you think it's gonna take to transform Canada? What's your theory to what's gonna take us from here to a decarbonized decolonized so-called Canada and the results of that research are about to come out in a **book version of the thesis called "More Powerful Together"** coming out from Fernwood, as well as a short report back to the movements that i'm part of. That was a whole chapter about actual concrete strategies for moving from here to there. Relating to the investment thing, I heard in my research over and over again is that **one of the barriers we're facing is that the people who are actually tackling the root causes and aiming for systemic change in Canada are the ones who are**

THE WORLD BEYOND COVID-19

Climate Change

not well funded. These are grassroots community organizations and not big NGOs who get the funding. So **it would be hugely impactful if investors actually started providing funding for frontline grassroots activism on the community level so that communities can actually defend their land, stop pipelines and build beautiful solutions.** This is the stuff that is systematically underfunded right now even though that is the stuff that is most promising in terms of systemic change and decolonizing decarbonizing.

Amr Addas: I'll speak more to decarbonization as I know more about it. It requires a sophisticated approach and sustainable investing is not just about selecting companies like Unilever and selling companies like Kraft Heinz or selecting the best. It's also about engaging with companies as an investor since you have some influence over the boards of companies you invest in through your right to vote on strategic issues that come up at the annual shareholder meeting and you have the access. **I think it's important that investors exercise their right and influence as much as possible on companies that are currently part of the problem** through their emissions. And to recognize that those companies should not just be viewed as evil in the sense that yes they are causing damage but they should be convinced and pressured and controlled to change and to decarbonize their business by looking at other potential investments on renewable energy for example, and technologies to reduce the emissions out of their operations. We have to encourage the government to provide transition financing so if a company like Suncor wants to lower its carbon emissions, we should find ways to put policies in place to encourage investors to provide funding so that they would actually do that and move toward lower carbon footprint and green investments. Of course they employ tens of thousands of people so we can't turn our backs on them either because there is the social aspect of people potentially losing their jobs. We're seeing that happening but it's not enough and needs to be ramped up more.

q. You talked about similarities between covid and climate change. Do you think there are differences that we should be aware of to attain the future that we want?

Amr Addas: The obvious difference is that **climate change is a multi decade problem whereas covid is a multi year problem** that we will deal with hopefully.

Deborah McGregor: There has been a response and we'll see what the WHO says with the report that came from the UNEP, I think there is a UN joint report about where they see pandemics coming and what they identify as the root causes of which climate change is one of. When I hear a question like that, my immediate reaction is, we already know what needs to be done, we just have to do it. The SDG goals are laid out trying to deal with all kinds of issues and I remember I always paid attention to the indigenous response. So they have declarations that came out around all these big international meetings as well, that lay out what they see as being the problems because how you define what the problem is and the parameters of that, the aspects and dimensions of it will lay out what you think the solution is, or possibilities for the solution. There is never one thing, there is a number of things on different scales. So they already laid out what they believe the future holds and what you don't want the future to hold. **Covid has exposed what we don't want and revealed the dysfunction and ugliness of society and how people are behaving, including those who don't want to wear masks and put others at risk on the spot. We know what we don't want, but what we do want requires imagination and creativity.** There are similarities because they are both human

THE WORLD BEYOND COVID-19

Climate Change

made problems. We have to start working and not talking and turning out more reports. We know what we need to do.

Vanessa Nakate: The difference that I see is the people who are at risk. **Everyone is at risk from covid-19, but when it comes to climate change, we see that there are specific groups of people that stand a higher risk of being affected by the climate disasters. This is something that we really need to think about because to me, it portrays a certain kind of environmental racism and it delays climate action.** Those who are responsible do not see these impacts in their daily lives, maybe they just see the increasing heat, but **there are communities facing terrible impacts of climate change.** If we don't address it, these communities will continue to suffer.

q. Given that small businesses are important contributors to economic progress, how could they be encouraged to self-regulate their practices and become accountable for their environmental, social and economical impact?

Jen Goby: This applies to any size of business, I think there's been lots of research and great books coming out **naming capitalism and it's insistence on profit over human wellbeing.** This is the heart of why we have been failing to address climate change, so **I would love to see businesses that would want to take environmental sustainability and social justice seriously, really think about how they're structured.** There is a lot of great work coming out of the solidarity economy and cooperatives, nonprofit models, ways where many people can make a living through ways that are not so driven by economic growth and profit.

Amr Addas: As much as I would love for what Jen said to be the case, I don't see it happening. At the end of the day, most people that go into business are primarily driven by profit, unless they're able to see a narrative by which taking those social and environmental factors present a consideration can increase their profits, I think it can be a challenge to convince the majority of small businesses to go that way. **A way for it to happen would be for them to see that this is what society is expecting, this is what customers are expecting and would pay for and if they don't provide it they will lose out.**

q. I'm wondering about how the panelists address scholars who talk about overpopulation as the root source for ills, both climate and covid related. Clearly this is rooted in racism and leaves out the important feature of capitalism which is inequitable access to resources. This solution keeps coming up and I'm wondering how to move the conversation over.

Jen Goby: I studied environmental studies in my undergrad and my phd and there is this model called **IPAT, environmental impact (I) is made of population (P), affluence (A) and technology (T). They all combine and interact in ways that then creates impact. but what we see is that the countries that are having the most environmental impact and contribution to climate change are the rich countries, not the high population countries. That's the argument that I use against those types of conversations.** We need to look at affluence and consumption.

Amr Addas: Agree with Jen, **it is not preordained that people can attain a certain level of income or comfort in life while causing pollution or heavy environmental footprint.** We in

THE WORLD BEYOND COVID-19

Climate Change

Canada and the US have a carbon footprint between 16-18 tons per annum, yet we look at the EU and that is just as affluent and its around 30% of that emissions. We can achieve wealth or level of comfort without emitting that much carbon emissions. It's bogus to claim that it's a population problem.

Vanessa Nakate: **Saying that overpopulation is the reason for all the ills in the world is running away from responsibility** and makes people feel guilty about something that they are not responsible for.

q. The climate justice narrative often represents Africans as passive victims instead of active agents. Your work and the work of many other African youth is helping in not just raising awareness but also changing that narrative. As a member of the African diaspora, how can the diaspora help amplify voices of youth from the continent? Another question is about climate awareness in the continent. In my home country of Sudan, the awareness regarding climate change is still lacking in many ways, and is often not part of the conversation. Given the political turmoil and the difficulties of everyday life, people don't have the time or energy to think about anything beyond the scope of survival since that is hard, and covid made it harder. How can we include climate change in the conversation.

Vanessa Nakate: In regards to amplifying the voices of the youth activists in Africa, **the best would be sharing their work**. There quite a number of conferences on climate change, **these voices need to be brought to these stages, they need to be brought into these conversations. Enough of having only the older people in those discussions**. It is wrong to leave the voices of young people. As for the second question, your story is the same as in Uganda, people are more focused on trying to survive daily. **We can only create this awareness by educating the people**. I got to know about the challenges of climate change only in 2018 and I didn't know much about it in School, it was taught as something that happened in the past or coming in the far future. Our education systems have to change to teach the children about the realities of what is happening in the world. If I learned these things earlier, I would have started my activism earlier on. Education system needs to include less of the history and more of what is really happening so that students can understand the issues at hand and what they need to address.

Additional Items:

Next Week: Technology & Privacy