

What does history teach us about humanity's ability to adapt to climate change?

Throughout history, the Earth's climate has changed multiple times, which have brought challenging times for our ancestors, during which they had to discover a new way of living, so that they were able to cope with the change. Some of these time periods include: The little Ice Age, The Medieval Warm Period and the Ice Age. However, as a society we often get too distracted by other issues such as wars, to notice that climate change has a greater effect on the population than one may expect. This is possibly because most of our descendants have been the ones to adapt to climate change in the past, causing us to selfishly assume that just like them, we won't be affected by climate change, leading us to not put in the effort to prevent it.

One instance in history where humankind experienced climate change was the Little Ice age, that occurred in the early 14th century up until the mid-19th Century. Throughout this period, temperatures declined by around 0.6 degrees Celsius annually causing mountain glaciers such as the Alps to expand, which lead to the destruction of farms, churches and villages in the surrounding areas, causing people to have to flee from their home villages. Furthermore, the change in weather conditions brought areas of the world such as Europe colder winters and wetter summers, which triggered crop failures across the globe which then progressed into famines. This hit the more isolated nations harder, as they couldn't grow many crops in their own country and distance (as well as the fact that the Northern Sea froze on multiple occasions) made trading with other countries particularly difficult. This was the case for Iceland, who due to these circumstances, lost approximately half of its population from starvation. The Norse colonies of Greenland also shared this fate, as they were cut off from the rest of the Norse civilization, which resulted in the western Norse colonies of Greenland to collapse from starvation. Therefore, from these events we can deduce that those who are lack connections with the rest of the world, are more likely to suffer from

the consequences of climate change, as they aren't able to turn to another country in times of need. This allows us to predict that when climate change become a gravely dangerous situation in the modern world, low-income countries such as Chad, Madagascar and Lesotho will be left stranded by the more developed countries. This is because the more developed nations, won't see a good reason as to why they should help the developing countries(other than it being morally the right thing to do,) as they are aware of the fact that it would only put their own country at an economical disadvantage. This is because if they were to suffer from a natural disaster, the low-income countries wouldn't be able to help them, due to the lack of funding that they have in the first place, making it a one-sided deal. In the modern world, this has already been seen in the Maldives, where the country is beginning to sink due to rising sea levels, which has led its government to take serious steps to prevent further sinkage. However, the Maldives alone can't solve this climate crisis as it's a global issue, making them suffer as the rest of the world do little to nothing to help prevent climate change, as it is yet to start to affect them directly. That being said, when Greece (a more developed country) was dealing with the wildfires in August 2021, many countries such as Poland, Germany and France sent fire trucks and other equipment that could help combat the fires, within a few days of the issue. Therefore, this proves that the nations of the world could come together and create a plan of how to tackle climate change, in a way that would minimise the amount of people that will suffer, but they simply would rather priorities other aspects.

However, what the governments fail to realise is that when climate change gets out of control, it will no longer be just an environmental issue, it will develop into an economic and political issue. This is because global warming is currently increasing by approximately 0.18 degrees Celsius a decade, and as this trend continues, 40 percent of all edible crops will become extinct, including: potatoes, chili peppers and bananas. This will result in food scarcity causing food prices to increase. Furthermore,

as sea levels rise, the amount of land available for housing will decrease, leading to houses costing a fortune. These two effects, as well as others, will cause issues even for developing countries, as many of their citizens will be living in poverty, due to the financial burden of having to pay a large amount of money for basic human needs. As many people won't have enough money to live purely off their income, they will look to the government for additional help such as support allowance. However, if too many people face this issue, the government won't be capable of assisting them all, causing many people to become desperate and turn to crime in order to provide for themselves and their family. It has been scientifically proven that for every degree the average global temperature rises, the crime rates increase by 2.4 percent. Therefore, the chaos caused by the increased criminal activity will lead to greater fear within society, with the main blame falling onto the government; especially since if they had reacted to the climate crisis earlier, they would have been able to prevent at least some of its effects. This mass discontent will most likely lead to riots against those who are in power. In 1789-1799, France experienced a shortage of grain as the change of weather conditions made it difficult for France to import from other countries as well as making their own harvest be bad. This resulted in high food prices causing starvation in the lower class, who became angry with the fact the royal family and other nobles had plenty of grain, so they decided to riot against them. This resulted in many nobles losing power, as well as the royal family being abolished. Therefore, this proves that while the rich may not be affected by climate change directly, those who are beneath them in the social hierarchy, will try to do anything they possibly can, so that they can survive the global change; making this a somewhat immoral but effective way to adapt to the climate changes in the world.

To conclude, it is historically proven that those who have money and power have a higher chance to adapt to changes, as they will afford to alter their current life without much financial stress. This also explains why many billionaires don't invest in scientific research that could slow down the process of

Kinga Mierzejewska

climate change, and own companies that produce large carbon emissions, such as fast fashion companies who are responsible for approximately 1.2 tonnes of carbon emission every year, making them the Earth's third largest polluter. In order to escape the blame of playing such a significant role in climate change, many influential people have pushed into the media the idea that it is the consumers responsibility to be aware of the fact that these companies are harmful for the environment and instead shop at more 'ethical' companies, which are typically overpriced and lie about how ethical they truly are. This allows the wealthy to continue to earn money that they will be able to potentially use when the current climate crumbles, without receiving much backlash from the lower classes, proving that they don't care about the majority of the population having the chance to survive as they have prioritised their profits and well-being over the lives of others. However, it is also possible for commoners to adapt to changes if they are able to convince the people in power to act, which can mainly be achieved by putting pressure onto them through things such as Climate change protests, like the one organised by 1500 Amazon workers, that forced the CEO of Amazon to pledge to reduce carbon emission by up to 50 percent. If we are able to open up the eyes of the wealthy then we may be able to reduce the speed at which climate change is occurring, allowing us to have more time to adapt.

Kinga Mierzejewska

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