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“Fate”

The data and prospect of environmental change is always frightening – it is so frightening that they have almost convinced me that environmental change is the consequence that we have to suffer and live with.

However, Dr. Epstein’s articles indicate that “fate” is not shared equally among people in the world. The vulnerables are the ones prone to infectious diseases and climate changes. Those who are poor nourished, lack access to reliable public health, and depend on agricultural production would be the ones who would be affected most seriously.

Although I do agree that how much we “underestimated” the rate of change in climate and its effect, it does not lead me to anywhere better than I was before I read the article. I do realize the climate change is a serious issue, it is an almost impossible task, which yet we need to tackle. However, my questions, which I hope to be answered in the class, are *how* we are going to proceed from here.

First of all, the cost of climate change seems to be hard to process for many non-specialist, whether environmentally conscious or not. It is not cost I feel day by day, it does not appear on my bank statement, does not appear on my grade reports, I just don’t feel it. (I still recycle and drive an electric Zip car, though.) Unless you lose your land, like people of Tuvalu had to abandon their islands, it is hard to see it for us. Naturally, as a consequence, environmental issue can be pushed down on the list of priority policy list.

Secondly, just as in many issues, “we” should not be single entity. For example, how hard it is for people in Afghanistan to conceptualize the idea of global warming when the idea of “global” is totally foreign to them. People who have not seen ocean in TVs or books can’t conceptualize the idea of increase of sea level. If the risk is not translated into their language and they are not aware of the issues, how can “we” push them to implement environmentally friendly policy? It is not to say that advocacy is useless, it seems like to me that we need to develop variety of language to talk about the risk. (In case, there are such attempts, I would love to learn the example.) How do we explain why environmental policy is critical in a country like Afghanistan, where agriculture is the only hope and public health system is not accessible to considerable amount of population? And what do we, those who are from developed (with the cost of destruction of environment) country do to decrease vulnerabilities of people who are likely to be more effected?

I do sincerely believe that environmental issues are serious. The articles were informative in terms of learning other effects of environmental changes. Based on what we learn, I would like to think how we go from here. Recycling and Kyoto protocol is not enough, because we are missing many other actors and many other potential victims from the picture.