



Final Conference, 6–8 September 2023
Climate Ethics and Future Generations
at Långholmen, Stockholm

The final conference of the Climate Ethics and Future Generations program marks the end of a six-year long research project. The project is hosted by the Institute for Futures Studies (IFFS) and is funded by Riksbankens Jubileumsfond.

Day 1 Wednesday 6 September

12:15–13:30 Lunch

13:30–14:30 **CONCLUDING A SIX-YEAR RESEARCH PROGRAM:
THOUGHTS AND REFLECTIONS FROM THE PIS**

Gustaf Arrhenius (IFFS),

Krister Bykvist (IFFS & Stockholm University) and

Göran Duus-Otterström (IFFS & Gothenburg University)

Our large research program has now reached its very final stage. The program has been running for almost six years and has involved more than 40 researchers from various academic fields and from many parts of the globe. This presentation makes some concluding remarks on the years that have passed, on the results that have been achieved, on the obstacles that have been encountered and surmounted, and on some unforeseen new insights that have been gained.

After the presentation we will have an open discussion in the whole core group. The aim is to collect lessons and raise new questions for future collaborative projects.

14:30–14:45 15 min break

14:45–15:30 **DISCRIMINATION AND FUTURE GENERATIONS**

Katharina Berndt (Stockholm University & IFFS)

The newly adopted *Maastricht Principles on The Human Rights of Future Generations* state, among other things: “[§6.e] Future generations must be free from intergenerational discrimination.” The idea of “Discrimination against Future Generations” has long roots in legal theory (Gardner 1978). And also within moral and political philosophy, climate inaction has been discussed under descriptions such as “discrimination by date of birth” (Stern 2014) and “discrimination against future generations” (Gardiner 2016). Still, recent climate lawsuits by young activists against states (such as the US, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden) have not been filed invoking discrimination law. And the lion share of the philosophical debate around intergenerational inequities concerning climate change does not refer to the concept of discrimination.

This paper seeks to shed some light on the conceptual and normative connections between discrimination and intergenerational inequities due to anthropogenic climate change. It sets forth a theory of discrimination – concept and wrong-making features – and explores whether (and why) it fails to apply to the wrongful treatment of future generations.

15:30–16:15 45 min fika

16:15–17:00 **ETHICS ON A COLLISION COURSE WITH ITSELF
– OR JUST ANOTHER PUZZLE FOR US TO SOLVE?**

Melinda Roberts (The College of New Jersey)

Climate ethics and population ethics seem clearly on a collision course—absent the completion of a certain philosophical task; a task that comes to us in the form of a puzzle we will want to solve. (1) The robust protection of the planet against climate change degradation may—may—make it entirely reasonable for us to deploy a collection of programs and policies designed to avoid bouts of extreme population growth (short term, long term and very long term, e.g., the perpetuation of the human species into the indefinite future). We will think, however, that the robust deployment of such programs and policies is morally permissible only if we accept (something like, though not precisely like) the Narvesonian intuition that we are “neutral about making happy people.” (2) Many population ethicists, in contrast, argue that the one Narvesonian intuition is ruled out by still another Narvesonian intuition: we are “in favour of making people happy,” an intuition that, if subtly, compels us to accept that, after all, moral law indeed favors, when other things are equal and often when they’re not, the making of happy people. If nothing else, what the population ethicists have demonstrated, via an astounding body of argument body, is that the challenge of reconciling the one intuition against the other is very steep.

But is it one that we can’t meet? I don’t think that it is. The purpose of this paper is to suggest—not to fully argue; arguably just to claim—that the task of reconciliation is perfectly within our grasp: that we can consistently understand the maximizing intuition not to rule out the existential intuition but rather to be informed by—tempered by—the existential intuition.

Role of intuition. Here, we probably need to take up a second goal as well: to define intuition’s proper role in articulating moral law. If, when we say “intuition,” we mean

something like common sense morality, we can probably safely ignore it (as Ingmar Persson suggests). (Polls may be a different matter. See Malcolm Fairbrother et al. on the mere addition paradox.) But suppose that by “intuition” we mean the deeply held, widely shared stuff that seems to ground moral law. Then—given that precious little else does that grounding work and that that’s about the only data available to us as we work to construct our moral theories—we can’t ignore it. We can’t just set it aside and simply work to avoid inconsistency within the confines of various conceptual principles we seem to have no choice to accept. If that’s all we do, we may well find ourselves on the garden path to a moral principle, or an entire moral theory, that we ourselves find utterly confounding.

By analogy, we all know that solving a puzzle isn’t just a matter of throwing out some of the puzzle pieces. Ditto the problems, the puzzles, of population ethics. We don’t solve a philosophical puzzle by rejecting one of the puzzle pieces. If something remains, after all our work, a piece of the puzzle—if it hasn’t lost its strong hold on us—then we solve the puzzle only by solving the puzzle: by fitting the one piece of the puzzle in with all the rest.

17:00–17:15 15 min break

17:15–18:00 **THE CURATORIAL VIEW OF SCIENCE ADVISING**

Joe Roussos (IFFS)

In Ahmad Elabbar’s recent essay, “The curatorial view of assessment and the ethics of scientific advice”, he describes the work of the IPCC as involving “epistemic curation”, a concept he develops by drawing on museology. Elabbar analyses assessments as involving six processes: scoping the evidence base, synthesising and inferring, selecting for presentation, placing and ordering, framing and contextualising, amplifying and dramatising. The curation framework provides both a compelling picture of the actual work of advisors and an accessible lens on the challenges of objectivity in advising. However, it was developed in the particular context of the IPCC assessments, and so reflects the large scale and slow progress of that process. In this talk, I apply the concept of epistemic curation to the case of science advising during times of crisis, where decisions are urgent and evidence is limited. I reflect on cases from extreme weather catastrophes and the COVID-19 pandemic, to adapt the concept to suit the case of crises. Once adjusted it provides us with valuable insight into the role and restrictions of high-speed science advising.

18:00–19:00 **PRE-DRINKS**

19:00 “GALA DINNER” to commemorate the end of our six-year research project



Day 2 Thursday 7 September

09:00–09:30 Coffee and fika

09:30–10:15 **MORALLY EVALUATING COUNTRIES' GHG EMISSION**

Orri Stefánsson (Stockholm University & IFFS)

Some philosophers argue that we should use different moral frameworks and principles when morally evaluating a country's greenhouse gas emission than when we morally evaluate an individual's greenhouse gas emission. In response, I argue that reasons that have been given for this asymmetry between countries' actions and individuals' actions either don't apply to greenhouse gas emission or don't apply to small and medium-sized countries (such as any of the Nordic countries). So, I conclude that we should morally evaluate the greenhouse gas emission of small and medium sized countries just as we evaluate the emission of individuals. In particular, we should, I argue, be concerned with the expected harm they do.

10:15–10:30 15 min break

10:30–11:15 **CLIMATE INITIATIVES AFTER THE PARIS AGREEMENT:
THE ROLE OF NON-STATE INITIATIVES IN THE TRANSFORMATION
OF SWEDEN INTO A FOSSIL-FREE WELFARE STATE**

Matilda Miljand (IFFS)

The Paris Agreement opened a new chapter in the political efforts to deal with climate change, where targets and implementation were left to the states. Furthermore, the agreement officially recognizes the importance of non-state (e.g. business and civil society) and sub-state (e.g. regions and cities) climate initiatives. In the Action for Climate Transformation in Sweden (ACTS) project, we have tried to understand how the interaction between the state and non-state climate initiatives plays out in the political landscape after the Paris Agreement. We have used Sweden's as a case study. In order to achieve its vision of a fossil-free country, Sweden adopts a collaborative model to develop solutions that involve a range of social actors. The hope is that this model will lead to more effective climate measures and thus reduced carbon dioxide emissions. Furthermore, the model is expected to mobilize voluntary measures and thus strengthen both the involvement and the commitment in the whole society.

At first glance, Sweden's climate work appears to be a great success, given the country's strong track-record in terms of domestic climate policy and its active engagement on the international stage. But upon closer examination, Sweden's collaborative model also faces serious challenges and limitations. Above all, Sweden is struggling to overcome so-called carbon lock-ins – especially in carbon-intensive sectors, to reduce its relatively high per capita consumption-based emissions and to fundamentally transform its energy-intensive industries. By empirically examining climate work in Sweden, we have identified limitations in relying on this approach. At the same time as it has succeeded in involving various social actors in drawing up roadmaps and strategies and shaping the climate policy discussion, the result has not meant a profound transformation of society and the model

does not seem suitable for overcoming the status-quo. We therefore critically reflect on how and under what conditions the collaborative model is sufficient to achieve broad social transformations and what other approaches could complement the collaborative model.

11:15–11:30 15 min break

11:30–12:15 **THE NEED FOR MERELY POSSIBLE PEOPLE**
Johan Gustafsson (University of Texas at Austin & IFFS)

W. V. Quine wished to restrict the interests that matter to those of actual people. Actual-Population Utilitarianism is a version of utilitarianism where, following Quine, only the interests of actual people matter. It is well known that ethical theories of this kind, which depend on what is actual, typically leads to normative variance. In this paper, I put forward a new objection to Actual-Population Utilitarianism. I present a case where Actual-Population Utilitarianism prescribes choices that are worse than the opposite choices for everyone whose interests matter. Moreover, I put forward a case where total and average versions of Actual-Population Utilitarianism prescribe choices that are worse than the opposite choice for everyone (full stop). This objection also applies if the Actual-Population Restriction is combined with non-utilitarian views, given some minimal assumptions.

12:15–13:30 Lunch

13:30–14:15 **HOW TO FEEL ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE?**
AN ANALYSIS OF THE NORMATIVITY OF CLIMATE EMOTIONS
Julia Mosquera (IFFS) and
Kirsti Jylhä (IFFS)

Climate change evokes different emotions in people. Recently, climate emotions have become a matter of normative scrutiny in the public debate. This phenomenon, which we refer to as the normativization of climate emotions, manifests at two levels. At the individual level, people are faced with affective dilemmas, situations where they are genuinely uncertain about what is the right way to feel in the face of climate change (e.g., is it appropriate to feel hope despite the potentially catastrophic scenarios, or should we feel anxious instead?). At the collective level, the public debate reflects the existence of disagreement about which emotions are appropriate to feel in the climate context (e.g., perceptions that people feel ‘too scared’ or ‘too little scared’), sometimes accompanied by displays of blame. In this talk, we examine the normative reasons in favour of different climate emotions by combining normative criteria (e.g., rationality-based and consequentialist) from philosophy and psychology. We conclude that these criteria provide partial reasons for or against different climate emotions. Hence, the suitability of each criterion depends on various considerations, including the specific object that the emotion is directed to and the context. We suggest that emotional disagreement in climate contexts may generate distrust, potentially hindering cooperation for climate action. We also discuss the type of affective injustices that arise from the silencing of certain climate

emotions, such as anger. We propose that we can ease challenges like these if we come to terms with the complex nature of climate emotions and their normative justification.

14:15–14:30 15 min break

14:30–15:15 **LAYPEOPLE AND THE MERE ADDITION PARADOX:
AN EXPERIMENT IN POPULATION ETHICS**

Malcolm Fairbrother (Umeå University & IFFS)

We conducted an experiment in population ethics, in which we asked laypeople to judge hypothetical future worlds differing in terms of the number, quality, and identities of human lives. We asked study participants to make a series of choices between three pairs of futures, representing a version of Derek Parfit's famous Mere Addition Paradox. Most participants preferred a future with a small number of very high-quality lives (A) compared to a future with those same lives plus a large number of additional lives barely worth living (A+). They also preferred A to a future with a large population, complete equality, and greater total but lower average well-being (B), though they preferred B over A+. These preferences are consistent with the arguments of philosophers who argue that, contrary to the mere addition paradox, A+ is no better than A, given, for example, the negative value of inequality. Laypeople may also dislike inequality, and they clearly value quality over quantity of life. Person-affecting considerations made no difference to the results. We discuss potential implications for the philosophical literature. (Based on research done together with Tim Campbell, Krister Bykvist, and Gustaf Arrhenius)

15:15–16:00 45 min fika

16:00–16:45 **IS HUMANITY 4/5 OVER?
WHY DEMOGRAPHERS PROJECT THAT HUMANITY'S SPIKE IS ABOUT TO PEAK**
Dean Spears (University of Texas at Austin)

(This talk replaces a talk that had to be cancelled at short notice, which is why Dean has not had a chance to provide abstract yet.)

16:45–17:30 Break

17:30–18:15 Guided tour in the prison (voluntary)

19:00 Dinner



Day 3 Friday 8 September

09:30–10:00 Coffee and fika

10:00–10:45 **PERSON-AFFECTING RESTRICTION AND INCOMMENSURABLE LIVES**

Włodek Rabinowicz (Lund University)

Nebel (2018) argues that, in the presence of incommensurabilities between lives, welfarists should give up the Person-Affecting Restriction (PAR): they should give up the claim that an outcome cannot be better than another outcome unless it is better for someone. Indeed, if lives can be incommensurable, PAR may be violated even if the compared outcomes have the same population. That PAR is problematic if the population may vary is well-known. But that it is problematic even if the population is held fixed is a novel and striking observation.

Nebel's argument takes its departure from a problem posed by Hare (2010). I call it a problem of crosswise sweetening. Hare originally posed it as a quandary for rational choice, for agents with incomplete preferences. Nebel finds another application for crosswise sweetening – in population axiology.

Nebel's argument against PAR is, I think, basically correct, but it is not fully compelling as it stands: It requires further support. This is what I will attempt to do in my talk, relying on the fitting-attitudes account of value relations and making use of the ideas similar to the ones I have already presented in my contribution to Andersson & Herlitz (Routledge 2021). In that paper ("Incommensurability meets Risk"), I have considered a yet another axiological application of the crosswise sweetening, one that is closer to Hare's original problem.

10:45–11:00 15 min break

11:00–11:45 **WHAT WE OWE TO FUTURE PEOPLE**

Elizabeth Finneron-Burns (Western University)

This talk gives a summary of the key findings of my forthcoming book of the same name, with a particular emphasis on its implications for climate change justice.

11:45–13:15 Lunch

13:15–14:00 **PROJECTING ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS WITH VARYING POPULATION, AFFLUENCE, AND TECHNOLOGY USING IPAT – CLIMATE CHANGE AND LAND USE SCENARIOS**

Martin Kolk (Stockholm University & IFFS) and

Emma Engström (IFFS & KTH Royal Institute of Technology)

We theoretically explore the interrelations between population (P), affluence (A), and technology (T) for various environmental impacts (I), using IPAT-type modelling. To illustrate differences across environmental dimensions, climate and land use impacts were modelled using middle-of-the-road projections for population and per capita income.

Different forecasting methods were implemented, including historical extrapolations, models based on stochastic IPAT (STIRPAT), and technological forecasting trajectories in the literature. The different approaches were compared within the IPAT framework. We also explored consequences of alternative trajectories for P, A and T, and we discussed implications for reaching global goals, with a basis in our modelling. Further, our findings were analysed in light of three theories in environmental sociology that give different emphasis on the different components of IPAT. We argue that the large technological mitigation assumed in many forecasts makes affluence and population relatively irrelevant for climate change. However, both factors will likely be influential determinants of land use impact in the twenty-first century.

14:00–14:15 15 min break

14:15–15:00 **NO CONTINUUM ARGUMENT FOR THE REPUGNANT CONCLUSION**
John Broome (University of Oxford)

Derek Parfit claims that a simple and attractive premise implies the repugnant conclusion through something he calls ‘the continuum argument’. He takes this to set the challenge of finding a way to avoid the repugnant conclusions. His own solution to the challenge involves imprecision in the relation of betterness. Other philosophers have taken up the same challenge, and found similar solutions. I shall show that the continuum argument is invalid. The simple and attractive premise does not imply the repugnant conclusion, so there is no challenge. Moreover, the reason the argument is invalid has nothing to do with imprecision or incommensurateness in the betterness relation. I shall consider particularly the solution to the challenge offered by Alan Hajek and Wlodek Rabinowicz.

15:00 End of Conference