LONDON'S GLOBAL UNIVERSITY

UCL

U7+ Worldwide Student Forum 2021: Final Reports

U7+
Alliance of world universities

In collaboration with

Northwestern University

U7+Student Leaders Board
Alliance of world universities

FOREWORD

On behalf of the U7+ Alliance, UCL was privileged to jointly convene the U7+ Worldwide Student Forum 2021 with Northwestern University and the U7+ Student Leaders Board.

This year's Forum was titled *"Climate Change: Intergenerational Conflict or Intergenerational Alliance?"*. Over the course of five months, students engaged in a wide variety of activities, debating and learning from each other, through academic events and skills masterclasses hosted by UCL. The Forum has centred student voices in the debate, with student delegates proposing ways to incorporate the interests and rights of future generations into climate action, policy and planning. I would like to thank those UCL colleagues and our fellow U7+ convenors who gave so freely of their time to help make this year's Forum a success.

We are delighted that 94 student delegates from 24 U7+ partner universities, across 12 countries, were nominated to participate in this year's Forum. These students came from a broad range of academic backgrounds, including lawyers, climate scientists, geographers, anthropologists, psychologists, engineers and more. Such a variety of views, expertise and experiences can pose a challenge to generating consensus and the student delegates should be proud of how they turned their differences to their advantage when formulating the arguments presented here. It is evidence, if any more were needed, of the benefits of interdisciplinarity and diverse perspectives to support humanity in addressing pressing global issues.

2021 is a pivotal year in our collective efforts to create a more sustainable future, with the G7 Summit having taken place in June and the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) taking place in November. These important fora aimed at bringing real change in this space, take place against a backdrop of ongoing climate activism and litigation, both here in the UK and around the globe. Young people are playing a leading role in these actions, holding governments and companies to account through high profile legal cases, targeted campaigns and awareness raising.

Universities are not exempt from criticism. We are increasingly aware of the need to establish a virtuous circle between our own approach to sustainability as organisations, and our impactful research. As universities, we also have to ensure that we make it easier for the public, as well as our own student and staff communities, to engage with the huge breadth of research that we conduct on the climate emergency. Finally, we must create the culture and mechanisms to put this into practice with external organisations and governments, at local, national and international levels. At UCL, we were proud to have launched the UCL Climate Hub at the start of the year, helping to strengthen these connections and make what we do more accessible and transferable to the outside world.

Students are at the heart of the university – their voices and ideas will help us to create a more sustainable future together. To that end, on behalf of UCL, Northwestern University and the U7+ Student Leaders Board, I am pleased to present these reports to the U7+ Presidential Summit 2021.

Dr Michael Spence

UCL President & Provost
October 2021

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U7+ Worldwide Student Forum 2021:
"Climate Change: Intergenerational Conflict or Intergenerational Alliance?"

THEME 1

Discussion question:

How can the voices and opinions of student sustainability leaders be turned into/influence global government/intergovernmental strategies?

Team leader:
Sophie Hollis / University of Ottawa

Team members:
Siobhan Mehrotra / McGill University
Mohamed Belarabi / Mohammed VI Polytechnic University
Johara Meyer / UCL

Discussion outcomes / recommendations for U7+ Presidents:

One third of all countries in the world have a minimum age requirement of 25 years to be eligible for election to national parliament. *(UNDP (2012) Enhancing Youth Political Participation throughout the Electoral Cycle)*. The inclusion of youth has been repeatedly dismissed throughout history, however as the imminent threat of climate change affects us all, this creates a unique opportunity to work with youth sustainability leaders to change the normative debate. Global leaders should be reminded that younger generations will disproportionately bear the brunt of the climate crisis due to long-term environmental negligence and destructive activities that are continuing to this day. Therefore, the public perception of youth must shift, so that it comes to be viewed as an influential demographic that should be included in discussions about the future. It is pertinent to remain aware that the solutions provided in this report are only effective if the student-led bodies refrain from being performative and are taken seriously.

The most effective way of promoting climate action and fostering leadership is by creating positions on government boards and/or within governmental bodies for students, to enable them actively to lobby for their interests. Some initiatives have already been implemented, such as pledge campaigns that hold leaders accountable, however, this could be much more effective if they were to multiply exponentially. Furthermore, student sustainability leaders are the perfect ambassadors to relay innovative suggestions and unique ideas to the public. By creating a place within governmental bodies for student leadership, a path to relay these suggestions to people who hold power, influence and decision making responsibilities is made clear. As seen with the climate

> The most effective way of promoting climate action and fostering leadership is by creating positions on government boards and/or within governmental bodies for students, to enable them actively to lobby for their interests.

marches spearheaded by Greta Thunberg, the mobilisation of youth demonstrates the severity of the issue at hand and has, and continues to, productively push governmental and intergovernmental agendas. It is important for students to inform themselves properly

with well-researched facts and irrefutable data, to ensure their voices are heard and effective policies are implemented.

These ideas can be put into practice in a substantial way. Within nations, there are student-led boards, clubs and councils across all levels of education. Many of these students go on to become the new generation of change-makers in society. If youth were included within a theoretical "Youth Sustainability Board" advising governmental bodies, just as they do within their educational institutions, it could have a positive effect on policy. Not only does having young representatives within parliament give them leadership skills and foster political experience, but it also equitably represents the population. In turn, we shape a generation that is well informed to deal with the unpredictability of climate change. Lastly, we also emphasise that countries with unstable governments also have their youth included, to ensure that developed countries do not dominate the conversation and that there are opportunities to provide rich and diverse perspectives. With this, our global youth can create effective strategies that are economically, socially and environmentally sustainable.

Team leader:
Olivia St-Laurent / McGill University

Team members:
Udit Singhal / UCL
Hannah Bohrer / University of Mannheim
Jiyoon Jeong / Seoul National University
Sylla Kadiatou / University of Ottawa

Discussion outcomes / recommendations for U7+ Presidents:

Who are student sustainability leaders?
Student sustainability leaders share three defining traits. They are:

Active: lead sustainability initiatives and develop new ideas around timely issues

Knowledgeable & passionate: well-informed on sustainability issues and share this knowledge with the wider community through various communication channels

Engaged in their communities: play a role in shaping and transforming their communities to bring about the changes they wish to see

A student advisory board

We recommend that young leaders are elected to represent their university. They would form an advisory board connecting student voices to those holding decision-making power. With each semester would come a set of deliverables, for instance, how can the university enhance its sustainability initiatives and promote sustainable practices on campus? How can the university inspire the wider community to transition towards improved sustainability?

The inclusion of young people (15-35yrs) external to the university in student advisory boards would provide a wider spectrum of perspectives and ideas, preventing the bottleneck of university "elitism". The advisory board would organise events (round table discussions, workshops, etc.) to provide students from all faculties the opportunity to participate in their university's sustainability journey, share their ideas and learn about the institution's action plan for transitioning towards sustainability. The goal is for students to feel encouraged to contribute to their university's sustainability journey and be aware of concrete actions they can take to make their community more sustainable.

A sustainability ranking system

Students who hold on-the-ground knowledge of sustainability on campus should contribute impact stories to a body tasked with ranking universities based on efforts made and actions taken to achieve sustainability. A university's impact story may be the product of sustainability leaders' reports, or anonymous questionnaires randomly distributed to students. The organising body would adopt rigorous guidelines, regularly revised to ensure the ranking system is fair and free of bias. A cumulative sustainability score would represent a variety of areas (sub-scores) in which the university's sustainability efforts are weighed up. This would enable universities to pinpoint specific areas of strength and weakness in their sustainability efforts.

The inclusion of young people (15-35yrs) external to the university in student advisory boards would provide a wider spectrum of perspectives and ideas, preventing the bottleneck of university "elitism".

In conjunction with the university's student advisory board recommend above, this initiative can result in advice and "next steps" provided by the advisory board to improve future scores.

As a standalone initiative, this ranking system would pressure universities to place sustainability at the top of their list of priorities if they wish to retain the best reputation among current and prospective students and the global community. The ranking system could also be scaled up to become a government mandated project.

In tandem or as isolated initiatives, we believe these ideas pave the way to real change within and amongst universities and their wider communities globally.

Team leader:
Mohammed Sadik / University of Ottawa

Team members:
Moritz Büchler / Mannheim University
Manal Zarik / Mohammed VI Polytechnic University
Aaryan Gulia / University College London
Kohana Yanagisawa / Keio University

Discussion outcomes / recommendations for U7+ Presidents:

Integrating students and universities into policy-making events and programmes.

Students are the key component of any university and form the entirety of our future - it is important that they are included in the process of policy-making, as they must be involved in deciding what future they are willing to live in. Below are five steps that U7+ universities can undertake to ensure this.

Step 1:
Develop a parliament system in universities to implement democracy in sustainability related topics – this would be a hub for the exchange of ideas, learning and awareness development.

Step 2:
Empowering those councils requires frequent meetings where corporates and government representatives are invited to hear what the student body wishes to be achieved. This is essential to ensure that student voices become a part of government and corporate decision-making.

Step 3: Besides student parliaments, universities should incorporate workshops and student events in curricula, such as those offered during the U7+ Summit, where corporates and government representatives visit campuses to explain how their decision-making bodies work. This could lead to a better long-term relationship between leaders from different generations. Furthermore, round tables are a good way of encouraging interaction between the two groups.

Step 4:
Universities and students could take advantage of social media, by sharing our concerns about sustainability, even starting from our small circle is a great way to influence. We all know that the most influential people at the moment are from social media and social media is a great way to promote events, or to share students' ideas.

Step 5:
Universities and corporates should implement internships that guarantee a great discussion between the two sides and strengthen student councils by passing on knowledge. This would serve to further improve the work of student parliaments, making them more professional and raising their profile.

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THEME 2

Discussion question:

How can universities encourage and educate students to embrace sustainability in their actions and take the pledge to be net zero over the next decade?

Team leader:
Christy Lorentz / University of Toronto

Team members:
Amalia Restrepo / McGill University
Chenxi Ma / Osaka University
Marco Rupp / University of Manheim
Mohamed Boullouz / Mohammed VI Polytechnic University
Sophie Weber / UCL

Discussion outcomes / recommendations for U7+ Presidents:

Universities have a unique position to give students the tools to drive change in and beyond their academic fields and become reflective and critically thinking global citizens. Yet students in non-environment-related programmes typically lack exposure to the necessary information to work towards a more sustainable world and contribute to net-zero emissions in an interdisciplinary fashion. Thus, curriculum development should take into account climate-related topics and the importance of intersectionality across disciplines, faculties and subjects. Examples of such academic programming include courses on the relationship between climate change and pandemics in Health Sciences and the environmental impacts of cryptocurrency and bitcoin mining in Economics.

Furthermore, prioritising intergenerational discussion between students and professors is essential. Intergenerational conversation ensures a reciprocal approach in which both students and teachers can learn from one another. This discourse will help develop an

Universities have a unique position to give students the tools to drive change in and beyond their academic fields and become reflective and critically thinking global citizens.

environment on campus that embraces sustainability, inspiring all parties involved to take steps in their respective paths towards net zero over the next decade. This applies in a broader community context as well. Universities can extend these intergenerational discussions by working with community leaders to mitigate climate change locally, giving students the opportunity to put their ideas into action and help the communities that they live and study in.

Moreover, universities can encourage undergraduate research on, and engagement with, sustainability through scholarship programmes. We recommend that universities develop initiatives that provide tangible means of putting environmental concepts and theories into practice, such as the YUFE Civic Star Program[1] implemented at some universities to encourage students to engage in global citizenship. These programmes can also provide professional development resources for students on how to translate the work they are doing in university into “green careers” as well as connect students to professionals, companies and organisations working in sustainability.

1 See the YUFE Civic Star Program here: https://yufe.eu/students/

> We recommend that the U7+ Alliance be extended to include more institutions globally.

In addition to engraining environmentalism in universities' academic and career programming, we recommend that the U7+ Alliance be extended to include more institutions globally. As students experience climate change differently depending on where they are located, we appreciate how platforms like the U7+ Worldwide Student Forum allow for the international exchange of pertinent ideas and best practices. While 12 nations were represented at this year's forum, we believe that the discourse would be more effective if more countries and institutions were involved. We suggest that proactive outreach efforts be improved to make this summit accessible for students in more countries, especially where sustainability efforts are less pronounced. In a similar vein, we recommend that the U7+ Alliance's networks and resources be maximised to create regular and accessible environmental learning opportunities, such as free virtual seminars and workshops by relevant professors and industry professionals. We believe such opportunities will encourage more students worldwide to embrace sustainability.

> Platforms like the U7+ Worldwide Student Forum allow for the international exchange of pertinent ideas and best practices.

Above all, we conclude that the most powerful factor driving students towards sustainability is for their universities to lead by example. Therefore, in line with Principle 3 of the founding U7+ Summit[2], we strongly encourage universities actively to implement green initiatives and to be transparent about their sustainability performance through frameworks like the Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System (STARS)[3]. In doing so, universities will create a culture in which students are naturally driven to embrace sustainability and take the pledge to be net zero.

2 See Principle 3 of the U7+ Commitments here: https://www.u7alliance.org/commitments/

3 See the Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System (STARS) here: https://stars.aashe.org/about-stars/

Team leader:
Matrika Ghimiray / IIT Bombay

Team members:
Ahmed Mahmoudi / Mohamed VI Polytechnics University
Rio Inui / Osaka University

Discussion outcomes / recommendations for U7+ Presidents:

Universities welcome a large number of students each year.
To encourage and embrace sustainability, universities should focus on 'systems' more than 'individual behaviours'. However, rather than simply issuing directives, universities - especially prestigious top universities across the world - should try to lead by example.

We recommend:

1. Universities should include a non-graded but compulsory introductory course on SDGs and sustainability within every academic programme. This can instil the concept of sustainability in the minds of students and also demonstrates how seriously universities take the topic of sustainability.
2. Universities should form a dedicated student-led body focussing on sustainability which is recognised by the home institution. For example, at IIT Bombay, there is a Sustainability Cell and Osaka University has established an Environmental Circle (GECS).
3. Universities should involve students in solving sustainability-related issues. Universities can conduct competitions, hold networking and other events related to sustainability.
4. Whenever and wherever possible, universities should encourage

> Rather than simply issuing directives, universities - especially prestigious top universities across the world - should try to **lead by example.**

students to approach problems from a 'real world / systems-based perspective'. For instance, students can be directed to comment on the sustainability aspect of the assignment or class work they are currently researching.

5. In the planning and execution of any new construction activity on campus, retro-fitting can be made 'green' with 'passive' heating and cooling, energy efficient appliances, etc. IIT Bombay and M6PU have solar power plants in their campus which make significant contributions to the energy supply of their respective locations.
6. Creating plastic-free zones, having drinking water facilities everywhere to discourage the purchase of bottled water.
7. Treating food waste on campus by investing in decentralised plants, such as bio-gasifiers and compost units. Osaka University also has a programme of redistributing leftover food, which would otherwise be wasted.
8. Universities can take the lead in organising sustainability-related events in their area. For instance, students can be encouraged to volunteer in local high schools and other nearby institutions.
9. Universities should encourage more research in sustainability.

Sustainability is not an end point but a process to follow. In that context, we understand that changes will not happen overnight but any step, however small, is important. Universities should begin with creating awareness, but at the same time plan for and make announcements regarding their roadmap to a net-zero campus. Sharing their visions on the university websites will impose greater accountability.

Team leader:
Jorge Enrique Ascencio Damian / Osaka University

Team members:
Katsuki Ishihara / McGill University
Eyram Bleboo / Ashesi University

Discussion outcomes / recommendations for U7+ Presidents:

Engaging university students can be a hard task, especially when they are very busy with regular classes and research in preparation for their graduation. Taking this into account, we propose a compulsory but accessible course that can teach students about the importance of SDGs and how each one of them can make a personal contribution by completing even small tasks.

Audience

Since some previous knowledge of the subject is required and given that not all students continue to the postgraduate level, the proposed course would be set for 3rd and 4th year undergraduate students.

> We propose a compulsory but accessible course that can teach students about the importance of SDGs and how each one of them can make a personal contribution by completing even small tasks.

Class details

The class would be asynchronous with pre-recorded short videos showing mainly the importance of achieving the SDGs. Each module would cover the SDGs with important information provided by organisations such as the United Nations, World Health Organisation and others. Moreover, it would provide clear perspectives on how to implement some practical actions in students' daily lives to contribute to the SDGs (e.g. use less plastic). As this would be a compulsory course, it is proposed to have a multiple-choice form of examination in order to determine the grade. Finally, at the end of the course, students would sign a pledge to contribute to and work towards becoming a net-zero society for the next decade.

Project contest

Additionally, we believe students have great ideas for contributing towards the development of measures for universities to become carbon net-zero. For this reason, we propose developing an optional project contest for students that covers different fields and perspectives, not only to contribute to the achievements of SDGs but also, mainly, for universities to become carbon neutral. This project contest would have the following characteristics:

1. The project presentation would be conducted online and preferably in English. Students for whom English is not their first language would be able to present their ideas in their mother tongue, however, the final report would be written and submitted in English.
2. The projects would be developed in teams whose members are studying different disciplines, as this would increase the range of views represented.
3. Winning teams would receive an award from their home university.
4. Judges could be appointed from several universities, all of which are members of the U7+ Alliance.
5. The implementation of the selected projects would be funded and, if possible, replicated in other U7+ Alliance universities.

With these ideas, as a group from different disciplines, we are confident that universities could provide the tools that students need to consider and learn about SDGs, as well as to contribute to the net-zero carbon goal for each university around the globe.

THEME 3

Discussion question:

How can universities contribute to a transition towards degrowth and environmental justice?

Team leader:
Petek Gorduysus / University of Toronto

Team members:
Shrabani Sailaja Tripathy / IIT Bombay
Sibusiso Mazomba / University of Cape Town

Discussion outcomes / recommendations for U7+ Presidents:

Degrowth is the concept of reducing consumption, production and energy to bring the economy back into balance with the living world, while reducing inequality and improving human well-being. Environmental justice focuses on the distribution of environmental benefits and burden evenly on every individual irrespective of gender, race, ethnicity, creed, religion or other similar characteristics.

Universities, as centres for education, investment and stakeholders, should provide a one-semester course requirement or social work component that educates students on projects related to degrowth and environmental justice. Students could then devise their own projects for reducing environmental damage which must be applied practically to the lives of their local communities. Furthermore, the support of deans, presidents, vice-chancellors and university councils for these student-led initiatives aiming to foster degrowth and environmental justice - and thereby to tackle environmental harm - would bring a stronger voice. In turn, this would effect more powerful social change, as well as create momentum for greater responsiveness and action against climate change.

> It must be made mandatory for a policy framework on divestment and degrowth to be developed in all universities.

Universities should host fairs or festivals that instil awareness of the current climatic and environmental situation in the world and help promote the ideas of degrowth and environmental justice. Environmental justice as a concept hinges not only on harmony between individuals and the environment but also on social and climate justice. Therefore, raising awareness should link to how impacts on the environment influence and even exacerbate socio-economic issues, especially in developing countries, where young people become withdrawn due to the greater urgency presented by issues of poverty, crime, unemployment and so on. Campus initiatives such as plenary sessions on the importance of intersectionality in climate discourse, campus societies coming together to understand links between climate change and their constituents and to raise awareness through university divestment campaigns, can help bring about change. Moreover, universities can urge students to practice environmental justice and degrowth within the campus by making university cafeterias zero-waste and zero-plastic environments.

Universities are centres for research and understanding. Therefore, research and case studies on environmental justice and degrowth can help foster greater understanding and awareness of the need to contribute positively to environmental change. Additionally, universities can encourage students to educate their local communities about degrowth and environmental justice. Universities are major places of cultural exchange alongside education, as students from various cultural backgrounds unite in study. Universities should encourage students to exchange views and motivate each other to put their environmentally-conscious lessons learnt and behaviours acquired into practical use once they return to their home towns.

As a tool for raising social awareness and a catalyst for change, media should also be used to promote environmental justice, which is inextricably linked to social and climate justice. University campuses tend to have their own media platforms, therefore, a segment dedicated to education and awareness on climate change and how it links to our everyday lives is important. Brochures, pamphlets and posters should be readily available across campuses to educate students in clear and accessible language on the concepts of degrowth and environmental justice. It must be made mandatory for a policy framework on divestment and degrowth to be developed in all universities.

Team leader:
Rashi Agarwal / University of Edinburgh

Team members:
Livia Jonnatan / The University of British Columbia
Nadia Odendaal / University of Cape Town
Filippo Menozzi / Bocconi University
Wynne Katherine / University of Tokyo
Rind Alhage / École Polytechnique

Discussion outcomes / recommendations for U7+ Presidents:

Universities are inherently a place for growth and innovation that bring together a huge amount of diversity, and thus ideas, as well as connecting them to a network of scholars, professionals and resources that allow those ideas potentially to be developed. However, universities have often failed to exploit this advantage in driving towards degrowth and environmental justice: our recommendations rest on this missed opportunity.

Innovation should begin within the fundamental mission of universities: education. Establishing a more sustainable world calls for a paradigm shift in our lifestyles, societal structures and overall priorities. The underlying requirement is having sufficient knowledge of the alternative models to challenge current norms, misconceptions, and to form sound judgment. This is achieved when university curricula and resources from its scholars and networks offer a plethora of equally valid, yet contrasting approaches, such as degrowth alongside productivism in economics, or pairing technical studies on climate change with social concepts such as environmental justice.

Universities possess unique potential as a tool for facilitating innovation and change. Often people from vastly different walks of life come together on a college campus and this diversity can

offer tremendous and invaluable insights. Although people tend to be shaped by their own circumstances and lived experiences, universities often serve to make students and faculties more aware of both the struggles and strengths of those around them. Recognising the capacity of universities as spaces for collaboration and conscientisation, it is necessary to support and develop mechanisms that address issues on climate change by considering the diverse perspectives of the university populace. Providing a space for everyone to engage in and contribute to the issues that impact them will surely lead to more sustainable and appropriate solutions in the future.

it is necessary to support and develop mechanisms that address issues on climate change by considering the diverse perspectives of the university populace.

Contrasting opinions on the potential ways to transition towards degrowth and environmental justice are bound to emerge when people from diverse academic, social and cultural backgrounds meet together in a safe space to engage in discussions stemming from a more comprehensive curriculum. Recognising the value of the voices that are critical of the models presented is a crucial step towards taking these alternative approaches into the real world. This not only helps an individual to feel more included and check their personal biases and preferences at each stage of learning but also helps the academic community to produce theories and alternative approaches that are more grounded in reality.

Educational improvement will not happen unless educators advocate and implement it. All the recommendations mentioned above could act as a point of reference for universities and educational institutions to recognise divergent views and interests and to communicate the rationale for reform in the design and real-life application of policies. Additionally, there are plenty of instances where ideas are fantastic but fall through during execution, therefore it is crucial to start small in order to ensure sufficient capacity and resources and increase partnerships with education unions to realise these policies.

Team leader:
Koaile Monaheng / University of Cape Town

Team members:
Alexandra Sfez / McGill University
Sara Kallas / University of Toronto
Taveen Singh Kapoor / IIT Bombay
Rin Takahashi / Osaka University
Henry Ibitolu / University of Edinburgh

Discussion outcomes / recommendations for U7+ Presidents:

We defined degrowth as the concept of planned and thought-through reduction of energy consumption and natural resources use in countries with heavy and large-scale emissions, gradually slowing down the growth of these economies in order to reduce inequality and improve human wellbeing. It was evident to us that climate change was at the core of degrowth with relation to environmental justice. The proponents of degrowth argue that to save the earth, humans need to shrink global economic activity, because at our current levels of consumption, the world will fail to meet the IPCC target of stabilising the global temperatures at no more than 1.5 degrees of temperature rise. The degrowth movement

In order for universities to transition towards degrowth and environmental justice, they should form Research and Degrowth Academic Associations.

argues that climate change should prompt a radical rethinking of economic growth and that policy-makers serious about climate change should build an inhabitable world without economic growth fuelling it. Therefore, we decided to focus our initiative on research and degrowth and the establishment of 'Research and Degrowth Academic Associations'.

In order for universities to transition towards degrowth and environmental justice, they should form Research and Degrowth Academic Associations that work towards clear goals. The first step would be to urge and pressure the senior university council and leadership trustees, as they determine the direction and scheme of change in their capacity as income generators for the university, to take responsibility for fossil fuel investment. Research and Degrowth Academic Associations would then be formed and dedicated to research, training, awareness raising and the organisation of events around degrowth. The university would be made aware of the association, its members and their commitments. Leading members of the association would also play a dominant role with the university itself, as they would be included in board meetings. This would give them the power to influence university-level decisions where necessary, working towards degrowth initiatives and halting environmentally harmful activities.

The commitments of the associations should be published and accessible to the public and other universities. This will help keep them accountable, as well as motivate other institutions to play their part, whilst encouraging collaboration, both current and potential.

Some characteristics of those commitments would be:

- As with countries' NDCs, the commitments of universities should reflect actual issues in relation to the institution's environmental impact and suggest a realistic action plan to solve them.
- Commitments should focus on a plan to divest from fossil fuels and, instead, promote responsible investments, taking into consideration the experience and knowledge of local, indigenous and marginalised communities.
- The association would have direct contact with the higher-level decision-makers at the institution.
- Universities could run a class on degrowth which focuses on educating students on this topic. The University of Amsterdam has already executed this and there has been positive feedback about the course and its success.
- Promoting alternative energy sources, preferably renewable, on university grounds.
- Decreasing energy consumption through 'green tech'.

To summarise, because of their students, universities are beacons of hope and innovation with regards to degrowth. Their role in paving the way for an intergenerational, just future is non-negotiable.

Because of their students, universities are beacons of hope and innovation with regards to degrowth. Their role in paving the way for an intergenerational, just future is non-negotiable.

THEME 4

Discussion question:

How can we commit our societies to goals that could take many generations?

Team leader:
Shirin Ermis / Imperial College London

Team members:
Rennique Thomas / Hitotsubashi University
Yow Ru Chen / University of Tokyo
Rose Akcan / Northwestern University
Ronak Shah / University of British Columbia
Valentin Lignereux / Université PSL (Paris Sciences et Lettres)

Discussion outcomes / recommendations for U7+ Presidents:

Climate change presents a serious existential crisis for generations today and in the future. So far, societies have failed to act. As hubs of scientific innovation and research, universities represent an indispensable part of addressing the global environmental crisis. All higher education institutions must commit to making progress towards meaningful and early action. This should come in the form of long-term sustainability targets and a roadmap with additional yearly objectives to hold involved players accountable. We recommend the implementation of ambitious, early goals in emission reductions as opposed to holding off until later years. When thinking about the future there seems to be a disconnect between the incentive to act right away, because so often, people think of the climate crisis as a problem for another time. If the future as an idea is so broad, we need to accept that the future for climate change is currently in desperate need of attention.

Implementing lessons and coursework on sustainability can reframe young people's understanding of the climate crisis as an urgent problem to be faced, as opposed to one in the distant future. Continual exposure to meaningful information about how to care for the planet will allow society to make progressive strides towards goals that could span across generations. Having children grow up in a world that prioritises climate change discourse holds the potential to motivate more individuals to take action in small but influential ways such as participating in community efforts or other forms of organisational involvement. Educational approaches should be active in nature and follow a clear agenda which benefits everyone involved. Not only is there an opportunity to begin a productive dialogue surrounding sustainability in the classroom, but it will foster a healthier relationship with the planet for future generations.

Continual exposure to meaningful information about how to care for the planet will allow society to make progressive strides towards goals that could span across generations.

Roadmaps for achieving sustainability targets are a necessary starting point, yet concrete actions to follow this roadmap are often missing in large institutions. We encourage universities to create competition between their departments as one way to achieve their sustainability goals. Such competition could take the form of departmental sustainability rankings, similar to the 'People and Planet' ranking for universities. This approach could be coupled with extra funding for non-essential events for high-ranking departments. Likewise, universities should be aware of departments that contribute disproportionately to the institution's carbon footprint, be it through travel or construction. In this way, we are able to make sure that all departments feel obliged to raise concerns within themselves and continuously maintain a more sustainable environment.

Actively committing our societies to sustainability goals that will span across generations combats the downsides of maintaining a short-term mindset regarding climate change. Holding leaders liable, developing a relevant university curriculum and instituting roadmaps provokes productive sustainability conversations, while stating aims for a far-off point in the future is insufficient, considering the urgency of the ecological crisis. Proposing three proactive and enduring methods to fight the current climate issues devotes populations to sustainability targets that embrace a multi-generational approach.

Team leader:
Lilit Gevorkyan / École Polytechnique

Team members:
Kento Kawamura / Hitotsubashi University
Nudrat Mubarik / Imperial College London
Scotia Hille / Georgetown University

Discussion outcomes / recommendations for U7+ Presidents:

A fundamental multilateral alliance must occur to create and enforce global environmental changes. An example of such a significant multilateral agreement was the Montreal Protocol in 1987 when the world came together in its pledge to rebuild the ozone layer. The importance of this historic event is to demonstrate that social alliance is possible, although the threats of climate change are much more complex than the threats observed in the case of ozone depletion.

The greatest challenge limiting our quick response to the threat of climate change is the short timeline of political expediency. In a global system where long-term decisions are made by politicians who are concerned with their re-election in few years, leaders have long preferred to offset the costs on future generations. The difficulty of long-term planning has led to our current crisis, with impending climate disaster. We must operate by the precautionary principle

> The greatest challenge limiting our quick response to the threat of climate change is the short timeline of political expediency.

to ensure that more environmental harm is not done to future generations. We identify a few steps for overcoming the difficulty of making long-term policies.

Firstly, we must identify stakeholders and then form strategies to ensure their involvement. Stakeholder recognition in the commitment of generational goals is challenging, since policymaking prioritises the short-term. Intergenerational dialogue is therefore important, since the younger generations will experience the impacts of climate change first-hand in the decades to come. However, an example taken from Japan's majority of voters shows that young people can be politically indifferent and inactive, so the government prioritises the older population's interests instead. Policymakers' motives are derived from their own interests, but if young people become the main stakeholders instead, then we can shift these goals.

Furthermore, younger generations play an important role in raising awareness of intergenerational issues within influential stakeholders. This may be done through multiple channels – for example students participating in education programs dedicated to tackling these issues and making their voices heard, or groups of young grassroots activists expressing the need for urgent action. These youth-motivated social trends may alter the attitude of influential stakeholders, including investors and government officials who play a central role in encouraging the industry to shift towards actions aligned with international agendas. For example, some investors now consider the environmental and societal factors of organisations (ESG investments). These trends will pressure the private sector not only to pursue short-term benefits but also to recognise their responsibility in tackling intergenerational issues. Government officials may also recognise these trends. There is strong demand for technology development in the private sector that contributes to tackling intergenerational issues. It is up to government officials to allocate public resources and investment effectively towards these developments.

In conclusion, the younger population across the world has the capacity to influence and cause direct, immediate changes to short-term policy-making that could define the outcome of long-term climate change. The next steps are crucial and each generation must unite in using their voices and actions to combat climate change together.

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Discussion outcomes / recommendations for U7+ Presidents:

Economic Goals

The collective sustainability of humanity is dependent on well-articulated economic goals that show a steady progression from generation to generation. One of the critical indices that can be optimised to ensure an endured economic growth is the product index. This means that certain products' regulations and estimated distribution provide a confident financial future projection based on cash flow models and supply and demand factors. Some of these products would implement predicted levels of modifications and innovative inputs to meet and exceed changes in population density.

Another important factor relates to the ease of transition to a world dominated by regulated cryptocurrencies. Governments should begin to commit to tangible discussions that would see cryptocurrencies being utilised in mainstream spaces, however, in combination with existing currencies.

Policy Initiatives

The younger generation has a great potential to become the driving force of change, considering that they tend to be active in movements and could soon be involved in the decision making process. Our suggestion is to utilise interactive social media platforms more actively to inform them and include them in the discussion. In the era of digitalisation and globalisation, social

media offers a great opportunity to create communities. OECD published a paper which suggests that teenagers are more optimistic than their parents about the future of the environment. To obtain accurate information and take action to make progress, it must be effective in offering lectures where people from different generations can learn together.

As for the older generation, the Stockholm Environment Institute outlines the issue that there is uncertainty over what they can personally do for the environment. For them, the key to the effective action would be the right incentive and information.

> The younger generation has a great potential to become the driving force of change.

Technology and Innovation

Digitalisation is a key to sustainability.

For younger generations, the shift to sustainable actions through their daily lives are required. By becoming paperless, we can reduce CO_2 emissions and the exploitation of forests. Society can encourage these changes and offer initiatives to facilitate such endeavours by providing financial benefits.

For older generations, we should make the most of technology to mitigate those risks which most greatly impact upon them. For example, older generations are vulnerable to extreme heat and rising temperatures. However, the use of air conditioning is one of the greatest causes of global warming. A breakthrough for this issue is the use of sustainable alternatives. To adopt this expensive technology successfully, communities need to set and promote the incentives involved.

Leadership Goals

Leadership systems are pivotal for intergenerational excellence. Hence, committing societies to leadership systems that work effectively would mean first creating a leadership system that works for many countries and then model an active learning system among generations of good leaders. For example, initiatives like the Mandela Washington Fellowship are much needed across the globe to ensure that best practices are being passed down to the next generation of mantle bearers.

Also, national and international leadership systems and governments should be based on the body which provides leadership rather than the individual. This would help to create a trend that ensures that leading people is more about a collective progress roadmap rather than an individual's ambitions.

THEME 5

Discussion question:

How can university research around climate change and sustainability be brought to the forefront in political and corporate decision making?

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Discussion outcomes / recommendations for U7+ Presidents:

Significant funds are put towards research into climate change and sustainable development at countless universities; the implementation of the results of this research is crucial to the development of political changes that reflect up-to-date scientific knowledge. The research conducted provides evidence from scientific experts to inform decision making at the political and corporate level. At more research-oriented universities, it is important to continue to maintain a high degree of quality in research, whereas for less research-oriented institutions, it is important to increase the output of higher quality research, which can be beneficial through increased collaboration with other universities. However, in order to maximise the conclusions of these efforts, such research should be synthesised across multiple fields, such as environmental science, economics and psychology, in order to provide a more comprehensive recommendation regarding environmental issues that impact everyone. Furthermore, since these recommendations will be made toward politicians and corporate leaders, it can be

Significant funds are put towards research into climate change and sustainable development at countless universities; the implementation of the results of this research is crucial to the development of political change.

beneficial for universities to introduce a brief course that provides information about the fundamentals about policy processes, policy making and more for academics who are involved in providing these recommendations; this would allow for fundamental knowledge about development of policies to be shared. In addition, more focus should be placed on the communication of these scientific recommendations to ensure that the content is relevant, clear in explaining that relevance, as well as that technical language is not a potential barrier to collective understanding. A potential solution would be to produce a simple English version of all publications used in these recommendations and provide additional information on the relevance of that work for the intended audience.

These recommendations, based on various universities' research, should be more focused on the long-term, to gain a better picture of what will occur as a result of specific actions. In addition to this, universities themselves have remarkable influence at both the political and corporate level; instead of solely practising passive advising, universities should demand active change from governments and corporations. Such actions to ensure that change occurs, rather than providing recommendations, can bring about more valuable change to their respective countries.

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Discussion outcomes / recommendations for U7+ Presidents:

"Many ideas grow better when transplanted into another mind than the one where they sprang up." - Oliver Wendell Holmes

Research is at the backbone of policy and corporate decisions. Without research, ideas and results would never exist. So why is there a disconnect between research universities produce and actions taken at the political and corporate level?[1] Why does research seem to be brushed aside for mainstream talking points and why are more and more students unaware of the research their institution produces?[2] The answer may lie in how research is conducted in universities today.

> To translate their research into action, universities need to become critical connectors between the academic, corporate and political spheres on the topic of climate change.

University research must inform decision makers in political and business spheres, yet these communities are poorly connected. The reason is that businesses tend to pursue profits[3] while political stakeholders go after votes and are particularly attentive to public opinion[4]: two different motives that require contrasting strategies.[5] For example, risks related to decision making are more difficult to assess within a political environment with higher stakes.[6] To translate their research into action, universities need to: 1) acknowledge the distinct challenges between corporate and political environments; 2) adapt and develop strategies to communicate efficiently with stakeholders in each environment; and 3) become critical connectors between the academic, corporate and political spheres on the topic of climate change.

To achieve this, universities can tailor climate-specific actions to their local communities[7]; thus, strengthening the ties between students and young researchers to local businesses and governments.[8]

In the political field, universities should support open access platforms, since academic knowledge is incorporated in policy research and policy making. Swinburne University of Technology in Melbourne, Australia, partnered with nonprofit Australian Policy & Analysis to offer open access to academic literature from students to researchers, pertinent to policy debates.[9] Hitotsubashi University, Japan, participated in the nudge unit of the Behavioral Sciences Team, collaborating with industry, academics, and local and central governments to envision a paradigm shift into a low carbon society.[10] Additionally, Science Po in Paris, France, supported a student-led think tank, Déclic, that proposes policy solutions to national decision makers which now has a membership of over 60 students.[11] Examples of students and young researchers contributing to political debates are rising worldwide, as seen in the new collaboration between the H-POD and Science Policy Exchange in Montreal (Canada).[12]

In the corporate field, universities acknowledge that companies do not necessarily want to lead but prefer to take up solutions that have proved to work.[13] For example, Northwestern University has partnered with Clearway Energy Group (renewable energy company) to provide solar energy around Illinois.[14] Universities can also work with corporations to conduct company-specific research. Seoul National University partnered with Korea's five main power generation companies to conduct research on carbon neutrality and clean energy transformation.[15]

Partnerships with local governments and businesses have already made an impact on the climate. By engaging local communities, universities can transform their research into actions and results; ultimately, leading to a more sustainable future.

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Discussion outcomes / recommendations for U7+ Presidents:

The research that needs ultimately to be on the memos and agendas of political and corporate entities first needs to be *embodied* by people in the form of a green consciousness. In this report, we suggest how this green consciousness can be developed in two ways: internally, within the university setting, and externally, within political and corporate spaces.

Within the university setting, administrators, faculties and students need to be grounded in an in-depth understanding of climate change. This involves intentionally integrating climate change into syllabi and de-departmentalising environmental studies. This will promote comprehensive and multidisciplinary training related to environmental issues. Additionally, throughout the duration of their education, undergraduate and graduate students should engage in climate symposia each semester, during which recent findings are shared, researchers and faculty leads present guided teach-ins, and student research is disseminated. This will ensure that a personal connection to climate change is developed across the university which has the potential to be transformed into practical action. It is also important that these efforts are extended to community members outside the university. This is a matter of equity and also ensures that the university embraces its social responsibility, moving away from an “ivory tower” existence. Thus, practical ideas include the development of lifelong education centres and the development of free civic lectures.

The research that needs ultimately to be on the memos and agendas of political and corporate entities first needs to be embodied by people in the form of a green consciousness.

In order to have this green consciousness translate into the political and corporate space, universities need to establish global climate research hubs that address the four main sectors responsible for carbon emissions: electricity production, agriculture, industry and transportation. Although we can recognise the necessity of these sectors and what they offer us, their unsustainable mishandling by political and corporate entities is costing us our planet. Climate research has been instrumental in demonstrating these implications, but it has had a slow and minimal impact in changing the practices of these entities. Relevance aside, the abundance of climate research coming out of universities all around the world is too dispersed to be mobilised in addressing political and corporate decision making on the four critical aforementioned sectors. Furthermore, this research is not being made translatable to political and corporate entities in language that is understandable. Therefore, we have (1) academic publications of climate solutions that need to be implemented in the political/corporate space but are not, and (2) valid questions from policy makers and corporate entities about these very solutions that are not being addressed. This impedes the design and development of better solutions. Global climate research hubs have the potential to address this disjuncture. Climate research can be organised according to these sectors so that sector-specific solutions are continuously researched, communicated and eventually implemented. If political and corporate entities can look to these hubs to generate sector-specific solutions that apply directly to their agendas, they will also be incentivised to fund this research as they transition into greener practices. These hubs will be interdisciplinary spaces with a multilingual platform where researchers can post concise abstracts of their work and engage with members of other hubs without there being a language barrier.

LISTING

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