

# Hypocrisy on climate change campaign

**G**RETA Thunberg has done something “unthinkable” yet again for someone of her age. This time she declined the prestigious 2019 Environmental Award offered to her by the Nordic Council upon nomination from Sweden and Norway. The prize is aimed at a company, organisation or person for noteworthy efforts to “integrate respect for nature and the environment into their business or work or for some other form of extraordinary initiative on behalf of nature and the environment”. She reckoned that it is more important to stay focussed in getting her mission accomplished. “What we need is for our politicians and the people in power (to start to listen to the current, best available science,” she wrote.

By taking the bold decision, she has now shifted the attention back to where it should be after so many parties, especially those opposed to the issues of climate change, tried to turn her (the messenger) as their target instead. And among them were some world leaders as well as influential lobbyists who somehow felt intimidated by the raw power emanating from determined young people.

The other remarkable thing she did was to articulate what the fight against climate change is all about, simply by highlighting a stark hypocrisy that has escaped many. “In Sweden we live as if we had about four planets according to

WWF and Global Footprint Network. And roughly the same goes for the entire Nordic region” (and Europe too!), according to her post on the social media on the same day. In short, it boils down essentially to the case of inequitable and unfair distribution of resources worldwide. Some are so blatant that it needs to be rectified in the name of ensuring justice and a just and sustainable future.

I have heard something similar before directly from a Swedish minister during a high level Unesco meeting in Paris some 10 years ago. Only that she said three instead of four planets. Is it possible that between the two periods, consumption has increased by one planet. If so, it is indeed shocking, more so if that applies to the entire region which is generally noted for its prudent and social consciousness in matters of lifestyles and wellbeing. This could be gleaned from the various indigenous concepts like “lagom” and “hygge” that convey a rich meaning resembling that of sustainability. “Lagom” essentially is Swedish to mean: “just the right amount”. No more, no less that some define it as “enough, sufficient, adequate”, while others widely translate it as “in moderation” and “in balance”.

Likewise, “hygge” is a Danish and Norwegian word reportedly describing “a mood of cosiness and comfortable conviviality with feelings of wellness and contentment”. Otherwise, it is “an art of



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creating intimacy”, with some form of “feeling” – relating to happiness, comfort, and simplicity.

In other cultures, similar words such as “ikigai” in Japanese, “ubuntu” in Nguni Bantu, “nunchi” Korean, and “sejahtera” for Malaysia and the larger Nusantara exist – seeming to indicate that every culture has long had its version of shared and balanced way of life that closely resembles the notion of “sustainability”.

Following this to its logical conclusion, one is anxious to understand how some (richer) countries are allowed to exceed the quota of resources many times over at the expense of “poorer” countries. The case in point: how do the Nordic countries justify their “use” of resources in excess of the only planet that all humanity is dependent on. What happened to “lagom” or “hygge” – what else within the notion of “sustainability”?

It is here that Thunberg showed courage and maturity to call a spade a spade by declining the award. Accepting it would weaken her moral authority to fight the big and powerful lobby that is determined to resort to bullying tactics.

Instead, she has now turned the tables on them, including her country and the region that saw it fit to nominate her for the 2019 prize. She must walk the talk by demonstrating that she is keen to start with her country and region before

insisting the same on the rest of the world. As they say: Charity starts at home. So too in resolving the issues of climate change.

For those countries that have been deprived of their rightful share of resources of less than one planet (think exploitation, decolonisation, etc), they must be doubly sure when engaging so-called “experts” – local or foreign – with clear record of being effective and impactful in their home countries.

Otherwise, their claims to offer “solutions” to other countries or regions are questionable, especially on issues of cultural competency that can be highly sensitive. As is often the case, only by “consulting” the local population and tapping its indigenous wisdom that the “expert” advice emerged usually by regurgitating what they have just learned (and compensated handsomely) for the sleight of hand.

This is essentially what Thunberg has laid bare for us to ponder and act upon if the “real” solution to disparities among humanity is to be seriously considered. Namely, the double speak and hypocrisy must stop immediately stop.

For this we have Greta Thunberg to thank for.

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