



## Talanoa Dialogue: Pulse of Portland

A summary of the Talanoa dialogues between participants at the Virtual Bridge to COP25 hosted at Oregon Museum of Science and Industry (OMSI) and Lewis and Clark College offers a pulse from Portland for climate change and COP25.

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By Frank Rudloff

## Engaging for Impact with Talanoa Dialogue

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## Voices for Climate

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Neeraja Havaligi (GPSEN) is responsible for the Talanoa dialogues and the content in this report.

# Talanoa Dialogue

Record breaking temperatures, greenhouse gas emissions, floods, droughts, forest fires and melting glaciers have become a staple in news and reports. This information emanating from scientific research and reports from the ground whiz past us as we drive to work, get about our daily chores, and try to make sense of the world as we experience it. The global climate change has defined and definite local effects across regions, countries and cities. These changes brought together concerned citizens, decision makers, academics, students and others as a community in Portland through the Virtual Bridge to COP25 event to share concerns and explore ways to engage for climate solution(s).

The PDX Virtual Bridge to COP25 hosted the Talanoa Dialogue to get a sense of Portland's pulse for climate change. This report is a brief summary reflecting the voices of participants, their concerns, potential solutions and questions for leaders at the COP as we collectively walk on paths responding to changes in the climate.

Our Talanoa dialogue was led by three questions:

1. What are two things that concern you the most about climate change?
2. Where do you want to be in 20 years?
3. What questions or suggestions do you have for the COP25 participants (to get to the 20-year goal?)



By Aashritha, Tubati.

The following sections present a summary of pulsating dialogues from the city of bridges, Portland.

## What are two things that concern you most about climate change?

The core concerns pulsating in our community are linked with an awareness of the complex issues leading to climate change, and multifaceted responses ensuing from climate change.

The dialogues show people's awareness of gradual and sweeping environmental changes affecting the economic, social and cultural fabric of our communities, shaking us from the reverie of business as usual approach to life.

## Environmental Concerns and Climate Anxiety:

Warming oceans and ensuing disruptions in the ecosystems, and potential repercussions of runaway climate feedback loops were the often-mentioned concerns. Concerns about increased frequency of natural disasters, unabated reliance on fossil fuels and diminishing capacity life supporting systems to support life as we know were palpable in the dialogues.

Runaway climate with lack of 'rights of nature' and lack of 'optics' and PR for climate change.

A shared concern flowed in the dialogues regarding effects of climate change on biodiversity, including pollinators (and its relevance to food security), species extinction and population shift, threats to human health with concerns on changing microbiomes, and strengthened virulence of contagious diseases. Public health crisis seemed to weigh heavily on the mind, with an underlying awareness on increasing difficulties to access safe drinking water and safe nutritious food.

Top 1% controls global wealth and leadership, leading to inequitable social, political and economic systems, polarization of participation and potential collapse of democratic society.

Human inability to grapple with rapid rate of climate change and ensuring intergenerational struggle with climate anxiety were highlighted. Many elders shared concern about their children and grandchildren being squarely placed to cope with the massive repercussions due to climate change without a socio-economic safely network to relay on.

Lack of education which can connect the dots for climate change causes and solutions.

## Concerns on unidentified and unacknowledged linkages:

The conversations knitted the reasons for climate *status quo* from lack of 'rights to nature' and recognition of the commons, to lack of education that connects the dots from the past to the future and across subject matters (history, geography, physics, biology, social and political sciences etc.) and the inequitable power of a few over decision-making

Unabated consumerism and shifting production emissions offshore, and a disconnect between communities rife with class division.

Climate denialism fed by reliance on fossil fuels and lack of political will and leadership for change; Disconnect between climate migration and US policies on trade and climate change.

processes determining the use of natural resources, and in determining the shift to sustainable alternatives. Participants also expressed alarm on climate denial, a lack of awareness and complacency among the public (it is governments problem to fix!) and unabated, uninformed consumerism.

In the context of local, regional and global work, participants expressed a disconnect and lack of recognition between the different local efforts to address climate change and a lack of context to global work and collective impact being made.

Lack of political leadership to effect change:

There is a keen awareness of lack of political will to drive and deliver change and denial of science furthered by digital propaganda. Connections between the divided stance on climate across party lines is clear, as is the collective interest in communicating better with all including climate deniers, moving past climate debate and working toward dismantling the system that fuels inequality, pits competition between causes and hinders collective climate action. Participants are aware that polarized society stalled climate action as did a lack of understanding between different economic and social policies that abet polarization resulting political and social unrest (nationalism).

A generation of changed consumer attitude, decreased *per capita* consumption; Socially responsible capitalism; Education for climate change-ESD 2030.

Other areas of top concerns include lack of inclusive and well-informed decision-making process to pursue climate change with intent of problem solving. Lack of sweeping economic reforms based on carbon emissions and lack of models for collective social and economic transformation threaded in with concerns about exponential consumerism and its linkage to climate change. Participants were concerned that there is not enough effort to identify rules of

Just transition from business as usual to green economy.

transition ensuring equitable carbon pricing, not enough knowledge or access to climate finance and to innovations with nature-based solutions. The dialogues reflected on basic needs to address climate change. These include access to safe and nutritious food, Medicare, housing and education, all of which enable everyone in the community to be informed participants in addressing climate change.

## Where do you want to be in 20 years?

Flowing with the tone set by shared concerns, the collective response to this question lead to a few key themes that embolden hope.

Zero Emission Economies:

For a start, participants envisioned thriving fossil fuel free economies, living in a zero emissions country or being part of economies based on rational use of fossil fuel until complete shift is made to zero emission economies. Elementary school participants mentioned they prefer solar power to electrical power, since they are aware of the damages caused to salmon by dams in the PNW region. Participants shared vision of independence from fossil fuel,

Shift to Zero reliance on fossil fuel-based economy with reduced GHG emissions; Tax incentives to shift to renewables; Zero emissions production chains; Carbon neutral utilities.

thriving green economies with net zero buildings, carbon neutral utilities, free and robust electric mass transit and more.

Participants envisioned Oregon as a leader in innovation for equitable mitigation and adaptation interventions with a well-defined plan for carbon capture and sequestration and a implementation path to zero carbon by 2050. They envisioned communities having significant ownership of energy resources they depend on, being engaged in interventions such as planting 4 million trees in urban areas to create urban forests for biodiversity and climate resilience and leading the change with effective communication across the divides, to transition to greener and equitable economies.

How do we resolve the standard of living and reduce consumption? How to achieve socially responsible capitalism? How to have better access unified knowledge on climate change.

#### Effective communication across divides:

Improvements in communication to reach across the divides took a center piece in the dialogues. The awareness of ‘we are in this together’ and the need for effective leadership and collective engagement and across political and economic interests at local, regional and global levels were a highlight in these dialogues.

Communication to effect change, to move beyond debate of economics vs. climate change.

#### Informed leadership (individual and collective) for climate change:

There is shared hope for climate leadership that will enable transition to equitable economies and support a healthy cultural shift from overconsumption. The Talanoa dialogues were held a few days into the largest shopping sprees in the United States which typically occurs around Thanksgiving celebrations. The National Retailers Foundation reported an increase of 14 percent (189.6 million U.S. consumers) compared to last year. Clearly participants were aware of the connection between overconsumption and accelerated climate change, and they hoped more people could see the linkages between the two.

Engagement of youth through education – identify linkages between civics, history, science and sustainable development.

This called for attention on systemic change in economic, production and consumption systems, and sought to amplify the role of education for sustainable development. Essentially the dialogues reflected

How to get international agreement that better balance the economy and have teeth?  
How to we begin to talk across the divides?  
How to propel change through education?

the need for education to be the foundation to connect the different moving parts in the economic systems. Feedback from the dialogues called envisioned changes in the education where it would engage its students to reflect and understand climate change from the context of history, geography, science, economics and politics. The dialogues brought attention to ESD 2030, its

potential to reorient education. Education is a path for understanding climate change in its totality, across specializations, disciplines, and silos in the decision-making processes. Participants hoped education would lay the path to see countries and consumers take responsibility for emissions they

generate by manufacture and consumption of products from their own countries and those brought from others.

Innovation and radical transformation:

Participants hoped for a radical transformation in addressing climate change through cap and trade, carbon pricing, reforestation, Green New Deal, reduction in big agriculture, Education for Action and advances made in science and communication to meet the needs of changing climate. Participants hoped that the playing field for climate solutions would be equitable, with informed incentives to shift to green economies and decarbonization.

Having an informed immigration policy to ensure the process is fair to all, especially to climate migrants

How to effect cultural change with capitalism that collides on the path of change? What nature-based solutions are working? Are these solutions redefining capitalism?

was another significant area of consideration for the next two decades. They hoped the two decades will see international relations mature with intentional engagement with countries that are bearing the brunt of climate change.

In the next two decades, people hoped to live with respect and understanding of the natural world, with a biosphere that is healthy. They hope for a

culture shift where the commons are recognized and values, where communities and countries are empowered to change for climate, where clean air, water and energy is accessible to all, and communities develop supported by regenerative economic models.

## What suggestions or questions do you have for COP25 participants?

In continuation with the flow of conversation, the virtual COP participants in Portland had interesting suggestions and questions to the COP in line with the highlights in the earlier sections.

Investment:

What are the plans to invest in renewables? In what ways can you effectively stop subsidies to fossil fuel industry, including halting infrastructure for fossil fuel industry.

Leadership:

Where are examples of leadership that have concrete plan to turn the climate trend around?

Where can we find examples from around the world of positive, adaptive systemic change in food systems, immigration reforms and economic systems?

Shifting to Zero Emission Economy:

Where are resources and training material to explore options for creating green jobs in our community with community engagement? How can companies such as Google Alphabet (which spun off Dandelion

What do COP leaders want to know from us? And what do COP leaders want us to know?

Energy) engage communities to innovate and transform in scale. What can we do to assist in the mitigation and adaptation to climate change? What is the unifying plan to bound us to abatement? What are your plans for underdeveloped contries in a high cost climate change world ?

Me vs. us and us vs. others:

This section includes a reflection that could well speak to participants anywhere in the world, who grapple with the scope of climate change, its effect to them as individuals and its effect in a larger picture. Participants asked, ‘how can preventing climate change help me?’, ‘how do we as individuals effect global efforts to reduce climate change?’, ‘how to ensure equity driven decision making with fair representation?’. And there were questions for the COP in how it addresses and ensures equity in decision making process across diverse countries? How do we take the advantage of international and diplomatic relationships to engage big polluters create global efforts to reduce climate change? How can we sustain climate refugees in Green New Deal? How are you- the leaders in Madrid motivating people to change? What is the most effective strategy -politically and technically to drive change? How do we negotiate with countries that are not on board? What options will the US have if the current president gets reelected?

There were reflections on hope, a fragile and powerful quality useful when dealing with and in addressing climate change. People asked COP participants in Madrid, ‘What brings you hope or how do you continue your work knowing it might be futile?’. Some Portland participants wondered how the COP participants in Madrid held on to hope? Was hope something derived from projects that worked to address climate change or data on new green jobs that provide alternative training and economic pathways for those who are in extractive industries or in the mindset of overconsumption or other?

There were suggestions to adopt and implement the ‘half earth approach’, where we dedicate 50% of planet’s surface toward regeneration of wildlife, nature and healthy wild soils and question to understand what reparations are available through the Warsaw International Mechanism.

What are the ways to invite people to engage in climate change and promote value system of long term common good for all?

Talanoa Dialogues in Portland remind us the urgency of work ahead to address climate change, with people who are more than willing to be part of the process and are willing to reach across the aisle to make a collective impact. The dialogues reflect thirst for knowledge of policies, projects, research and collaborations that have worked. While we hope for uplifting and responsible leadership to lead the change, the people in Portland seem to understand the power of individual change to energize larger ambitious change to ensure a supportive climate for life on earth for all species, including ours.





