

Hardly any other topic has dominated our medial, political and public discourse end of 2019 as much as environmental and climate protection. In the past, there was already a noticeable confrontation with our climate, e.g. the oil crisis or the nuclear phase-out, but the recent spread via global demonstrations or political debates has reached an unprecedented extent. Despite the apparent public approval of a necessary radical change in climate protection, the associated measures often encounter resistance at the individual level: With regards to personal restrictions we seem less willing to compromise e.g. about mobility or our own budget than we want to admit. So we asked ourselves why, despite the obvious need for a radical change, we find it so difficult to make a personal contribution?

Situation and question

Countless scientific studies show a significant negative impact of human behaviour on our environment, which causes climate change through global warming. The recently published special report by the IPCC, for example, certifies that our actions have profound effects on us humans and the entire ecosystem. In addition to the clarity of our influence, on the one hand there seems to be general agreement among the population that we - and this means our society, politics, companies and every individual - have to radically change our way of dealing with nature to counter climate change. Surveys on this topic provide a clear picture: in a representative study by the University of Hamburg in 2018, almost half of the respondents stated that they would be more environmentally friendly when buying food or personal mobility in the future.

On the other hand, despite those study statements, there is a very large contradiction to this general agreement, which, however, is rarely addressed and is still to be verified to a greater extent: personally, it is often difficult for us to make cuts in our lives, such as to restrict mobile flexibility or accept additional expenses that serve the climate. Based on this conflict, we therefore approached the question of why our personal contribution to environmental protection is often challenging.

Causal relationship

Our basic methodology of possible interdependencies is structured according to expression, vehicle, target and overarching mission.

Expression

The situation analysis already indicates our personal contradiction when it comes to environmental and climate protection. Global climate demonstrations are widely accepted and studies confirm the fundamental intention to change our behaviour. However, actual climate-friendly measures rarely find a broad majority, which is also reflected in the slow decision-making process in politics: Examples include car bans, i.e. a restriction of individual mobility, the purchase of more expensive, regional organic food, i.e. an additional burden on your own budget or the waiver of air travel, i.e. for example a restricted vacation choice. An additional variable can be the level of development of a society since the fewer resources are available the more difficult it appears to be to spend or waive.

Vehicle

Our reckless behaviour towards the environment is very different in individual cases and mostly affects either our personal behaviour or a business environment. The different forms in everyday life allow to

summarize broadly: the exploitation of the environment in relation to food (both animal and plant-based background), the destruction of all potential enemies (plants, animals or even other people) and the general adaptation of the environment for our favour (e.g. road construction or civil protection).

Target

In contrast to other types of behaviour, the definition of an overarching objective of our environmental degradation does not appear clearly. There are certainly countless subordinate corporate or social goals related to people that have no pure biological origin. In our opinion, however, the personal, ruthless treatment of our environment can be traced back to one goal: maximizing the supply of resources for the individual or his ancestral environment such as his family.

Mission

As already described in the target, non-genetic missions can also be identified in the behaviour of people or companies towards our environment. In concrete terms, the dramatic deforestation of the rainforest may well represent business interests such as the sale of tropical wood. However, in our opinion, the focus of our analysis on our own inner conflict can be traced back relatively simply to the genetically anchored urge of survival. In detail, a maximum exploitation of resources for our own good is genetically superior to the protection of our environment. A counter argument against this thesis is the fundamental hostility to life of our planet for future generations. However, our genetics are not geared towards a massive human impact on the global climate, i.e. the assessment of a global influence of our behaviour is not biologically since this negative influence has only been possible for a very short time in the evolutionary period.

Conclusion

The knowledge of a genetically predisposed negative influence on the environment helps the social understanding for the ruthlessness of many individuals, states or companies. In our opinion, this knowledge can be primarily used for regulatory measures to protect the climate. Specifically state regulation in the sense of environmental protection should not result in a significant restriction for individual people if these measures are to be successfully implemented by everyone.