



University of
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STACEES

St Andrews Network for Climate, Energy,
Environment and Sustainability

The Sustainability Series



The St Andrews think tank
pioneering climate education

Third Generation Project
School of International Relations

September 2021

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Third Generation Project – School of International Relations

(Article written by Garry MacKenzie)

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Talk of climate change is often framed in scientific terms, focusing on the targets that need to be reached or the technology that is being developed to mitigate against it. These are important tasks. But what sometimes gets lost is how climate change is already impacting marginalised communities across the globe – and how prioritising and educating about such climate injustices can potentially lead to climate action. The Third Generation Project (TGP) does just this.

As the University of St Andrews' first think tank (and one of the only think tanks in the world to focus on education for climate justice), the TGP mission is to put those on the frontlines of climate change at the heart of a progressive education agenda. Established in 2016 by Professor Ali Watson and postgraduate researcher Bennett Collins, both of the School of International Relations, the project aims to 'do academia differently' by adopting a collaborative approach to education and research. With funding from bodies such as National Geographic, the Global Challenges Research Fund, the Russell Trust and EDI Fund St Andrews, TGP is educating a new generation of climate justice researchers in working with communities both in Scotland and across the globe to facilitate climate action.

Education for climate justice

In keeping with the collaborative approach of the project, the TGP management team is a partnership between established and emerging researchers comprised of the following: one faculty member (Professor Ali Watson); one postgraduate (Bennett Collins); one undergraduate (Laoise Rogers); two St Andrews graduates (Jamie Hinch and Annabelle von Moltke) and one former postdoctoral researcher (Dr Meghan Laws). Coupled with a wider team of affiliated staff, project partners and a distinguished Strategic Advisory Board, this creates a dynamic range of expertise from which TGP can draw. In turn, this has led to activities ranging from developing learning materials for schools and educating a new generation of scholars, to engaging with practitioners and policymakers in order to prioritise climate justice. TGP's emphasis is always on bringing marginalised voices and perspectives into climate justice education, collaborating with communities in Scotland, East Africa and North America to highlight the importance of prioritising climate justice in both policy and practice.

One of TGP's key programming strands is **Climate Realities**. This began with a project, 'Breaking the 4th Wall of

Climate Migration’, involving a series of workshops that brought community organisers, journalists, human rights advocates and academics together with teachers and pupils from three local Fife schools: Bell Baxter High School, Madras College and St Leonards School. Pupils were given access to a unique set of resources, such as transcripts from interviews conducted by the team in Kenya and Somaliland with those already experiencing the impact of climate change first hand. They were also taught by members of the project team, which included journalists and community organisers, to understand the wider historical context for each situation as well as how digital storytelling can be done in a way that is both ethical and accountable. Following the success of this approach, the team developed a wider strand of programming under the banner of Climate Realities. This strand aims to improve the quantity and quality of climate justice education in the Scottish school curriculum, and to do so in a way that prioritises anti-racist and anti-colonial narratives.

Another key programming strand is the **Emerging Researchers Programme**. The intensive year-long training programme for social science undergraduates intends to teach the next generation of academic researchers about working collaboratively and being accountable to the communities involved in their research and outreach. One aspect of this involves Western biases. Projects from the emerging researchers are driven by the need to address such bias – not just in

educational practice, but by amplifying the voices of marginalised communities in order to create opportunities for collaborative conversations within Scotland and across the globe. This is likewise a priority for TGP’s blog – [The Frontline](#) – which works with frontline communities to tell their own stories. So far, the blog has provided unique first-hand accounts from activists and community organisers regarding the impact that climate change (and those who drive it) is having on marginalised communities. It is also the reasoning behind the upcoming February 2022 launch of the TGP Human Rights Clinic, an adjunct to TGP’s core programming that will operate as a mutual aid clinic working with marginalised communities.

Scotland’s oldest university and the challenges of the future

The core values of the Third Generation Project include putting people first, valuing community, recognising the privileged position of researchers in a Scottish university, and bringing people from all backgrounds together. Its methodology focuses on building equal partnerships that result in research informed (or preferably led) by communities themselves. Still, the project is not just about communicating with communities, policymakers, practitioners and students. It is also about reflecting on how academic disciplines are taught and how research is conducted. Through efforts such as the Whitewashed project, TGP’s aim is to work with student groups at

St Andrews to explore their experiences of the classroom. By focusing on how certain knowledge is prioritised, TGP aims to take a step towards addressing the cultural, political and economic biases long taken for granted in both International Relations and in academia more widely.

a crucial role in shaping what higher education in Scotland can be. By hosting the Third Generation Project, with its clear progressive education agenda focused on climate justice and an internationally collaborative approach, the University is also demonstrating what education in Scotland can become.

As Scotland's oldest university, the University of St Andrews has occupied

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Publisher: St Andrews Network for Climate, Energy, Environment and Sustainability, University of St Andrews.

Editors: Sarah Bennison and Laura Pels Ferrá.

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The Sustainability Series comprises 15 professionally written, accessible articles commissioned by STACEES to showcase the breadth of the world-leading sustainability-focused research at the University.

Designed and produced by University of St Andrews Print & Design Unit, September 2021. The University of St Andrews is a charity registered in Scotland. No: SC013532.