

Dear Children in 2050.

You might find it rather odd to receive a letter from a random, strange person, written decades ago. You might ask yourselves what reasons I might have had for writing it. Before I come to that, I want you to look outside your window. Look at the sky. Is it a clear and blue sky? I suppose not. I personally picture the future sky like a thick, grey fog, almost unbreathable and as good as impossible to see through. Next, I would like you to think of what you drink. That would actually interest me very much, because in this particular case, I can't really decide which one of my dystopian scenarios will become true in the end. And now, tell me this: Do you actually *like* the world you're living in right now? I do hope you will now answer with a 'yes'. However, logic dictates that given the current demolition of our dear planet, you will tend to 'no'. Knowing all that, you should also know the reason for me writing this letter by now. I sincerely want to apologise for everything you don't like about this world, and I also want you to understand that all this was probably caused by me, because the way I live is anything but sustainable. The worst thing is that this is not exactly coming from me; if anything, the only reason I'm writing this letter is because we had a sustainability project in school, where we analysed our lives and later on were *instructed* to write an apology for future generations. So you see, if it had been just me, you never would read this letter. For that, I'm very sorry.

The worst thing about me not being sustainable at all is that I know very well that my way of living will someday destroy the earth. Ever since I entered school, I have always been taught how utterly important it is to lead a green life, save water and energy as much as you can, not buy your clothes from a rather suspiciously cheap chain and so on. The problem is that while I do know that, I don't care enough to actually change my way of life. I'm always thinking that whatever I do, it won't make much of a difference in the end, for I am simply one single person out of billions, even though I am well aware that that's the very opposite of the attitude I *should* have. And to be honest: Even after this project we did in school, which includes writing this letter, I probably won't change much. I am simply a creature of habit. *Future* climatic catastrophes won't make me use my computer less *right now*. And that's why I think it might be appropriate to apologise, even though it won't undo what I have done wrong so far and certainly will do in the future. Now, in the following paragraphs, I shall demonstrate you in detail what exactly I discovered during the analyzing stage of our project.

I tend to waste water. Frankly, that truly surprised me at first, for I always considered myself very careful when it came to water. From my earliest school years on, we had constant lessons for example on how to wash your hands without wasting water, how to brush your teeth without wasting water, that we shouldn't take baths but instead showers, that we should water our flowers with rain water instead of tap water or that we shouldn't spill the water we wanted to drink. We learned so much about it, we talked so often about it, and so I thought I was both informed and sustainable. However, it never even once crossed my mind that I could actually be wasting water by simply drinking it. Sure, everyone has to drink something, yet I never thought that preferring sparkling mineral water, bought in bottles from supermarkets, over plain tap water, of equal quality but far easier access, since it is literally floating right through my house, is actually one of the worst – and, admittedly, dumbest – ways to waste water. And also, as I continued that thought and remembered that I use the water I didn't drink in school to water some of my indoor plants, I realized that I basically buy the water for my plants, which is even more absurd than going through the trouble of buying water you have in your house the whole time. Well, I have to admit, it's hard to imagine how what kind of water I drink will eventually effect the future, and I honestly don't know myself what kind of effects it will take, but one thing's for sure: It is on closer inspection downright stupid and not exactly sustainable, and for that I am very sorry.

My biggest "sin", because I want to get this done, is my incredible waste of energy. I was fully aware of this dissipation all along, though it never quite came to me just *how* serious it is. When it comes down to it, everything I do, be it work, studies or hobbies, somehow includes the usage of energy at some point. I guess you could say, what I do wrong here is not so much *wasting* energy as

using huge amounts of it, but in the end, it all comes down to the same consequences. I spend a lot of time on my computer, be it watching videos, writing essays for school or playing games, so it's fairly obvious that this takes energy. I also like to play the piano, and since we only have an electronic one at home, I use up some energy when I do that. What came surprising to me is that even when I'm playing other instruments or making sketches, something you wouldn't think requires electricity, I still somehow manage to do, for example by having to turn on the lights. Also, when I read a book, study, or do my homework, I still need my computer when I look up some unknown words or just listen to music. However, the real problem is that, even though I know at least now that I waste energy, it is utterly complicated to figure out a way to *not* do that. I just *have* to turn on the lights when it's too dark in my room, and my room just *is* always dark because of its layout. And there just *are* some things for which I really need my laptop. Though, I suppose, I could go without the music. But still, I am merely a creature of habit, and changing my habits because of something that is definitely going to happen *in the future* is, well- definitely *not* going to happen. In my defense, I pay attention to things like switching off the lights as soon as I leave a room or only charging my phone when it needs to be charged, so as I said: I basically don't waste energy, but I just as well might be, considering the amount of time I spend with any sort of electronic device. Come to think of it, it does sound amusing if I say that what hobbies I have will influence our planet's future. However, it isn't amusing at all, seeing as how they don't influence it for good, but rather for the worse, and for that I am very sorry.

It is slightly depressing that the mere fact that I don't like to get to school by bike has a heavy impact on the air pollution. Normally, I would have thought that I don't require that much transport since I always take the bus to get home from school and because my parents have to get to work in the morning anyways, so it's only reasonable if they give me a ride to my school, which is directly on the way. That was when I looked at the notes I took on Tuesday regarding the transport. On that particular day, I do take the bus to get to school, but later on, shortly after the break, my father drives to the school by car to get me and some of my classmates to another school for French classes. Of course, it's just rational that we take the car for that in order to not miss too much of it, and it's an environmentally-friendly carpool. Also, I have school orchestra practice every two weeks, and my father uses this occasion to drop my harp off. Later on, after classes are finished, he picks me and my harp up, because I just can't ride the bus with it, and even later in the evening, I have harp classes, so he has to drive me there and pick me up again when they're finished. Now, all this adds up to many kilometres his car has to travel just for me. Well, so much for 'I don't require much transport'. The real problem with that is that I while I could use my bike or the bus more for all the other days, I can't do that on the Tuesdays when I have orchestra practice. It is impossible to transport a harp by bike, and it is incredibly inconvenient to get in inside a bus. Still, a little bit could be changed about my transport habits, but I reluctantly continue to ignore that. For that, I am very sorry.

The most shocking reveal I had during the week of documentation was the fact that I didn't know anything about the sustainability of my household. I tried to calculate my carbon footprint, and I couldn't answer most of the questions. I couldn't tell what kind of energy we use. I couldn't tell the average kilometres my family travels by car every year. I couldn't tell their vehicles' combined fuel economy. I couldn't even tell how big my house is. In the end, I had to guess, and somehow managed to get an extremely huge carbon footprint, so that even I could figure that something was off. The only thing regarding my family's sustainability I can say for sure is that as far as it concerns social sustainability and food, we're really considerate. We pay attention to the origin of clothes or food. We don't buy food when it's off seasons. We grow some things like herbs, vegetables or strawberries in our own garden. Most products we buy are from ecologic cultivations, and that's about everything I know. The fact that I don't have any other clue about what we do, or rather what we do to this planet is downright pathetic, and if this project has been good for anything, then it's the fact that from now on, I will definitely pay more attention to it.

As a closure, I feel the need to state that despite everything I said about me being opposed to changing my habits, I will still try my best to do exactly that. Right now, I am busy trying to

convince my parents to buy a SodaStream, because if I'm going to drink tap water on a more regular basis, it should at least be sparkling. I also try my hardest to spend less time goofing around on my laptop, although it probably won't make much of a difference because I have mainly been using it for academic things lately. I am fully aware that no child will ever care about how someone who has been a child decades ago spends their time, and I am also fully aware that no apology can ever make past things undone. I merely want to inform you that however the world you live in looks like, there were people – not me, by the way – in the past expecting or at least picturing it like that, people, who tried to delay the inevitable. I want you to know that without those people, your world could be much, *much* worse.

Yours sincerely,
Elisabeth Konrad