WE MAKE THE FUTURE!

Utopias of a Climate-Responsible World 2035 - Arctic Snapshots



Sanna Kopra, Liisa Kauppila, Karoliina Hurri, Tuuli Hypén

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Project: Climate Responsibility as a Normative Cornerstone of Multilateral Cooperation?

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Cover and comic art
Tuuli Hypén – tuulihypen.com

Sound art
Kalle Lehtinen

Voice acting
Karoliina Hurri, Tuuli Hypén, Liisa Kauppila, Sanna Kopra, Kalle Lehtinen, Johannes Leino, Ines Söderström

Layout

raccoonbox
Raccoonbox Production – raccoonbox.com
Designer: Konstantin Nikkari

ARCTIC CENTRE
University of Lapland

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Climate Responsibility 2035

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List of abbreviations

App	Application
CO	Corporation
CEO	Chief executive officer
EU	European Union
G20	Group of 20
INC	Incorporated
MP	Member of Parliament
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
UN	United Nations
US	United States
VIP	Very Important Person
QR	Quick response

“Logic will get you from A to Z;
imagination will get you everywhere.”

— Albert Einstein

Preface

Imagination is a powerful tool for radical change. Imagination was also the driving force of the "Climate Responsibility as a Normative Cornerstone of Multilateral Cooperation?" Project, which offers empowering imaginaries to inspire thoughts about alternative desirable futures in international politics. To encourage critical thinking about fundamental political and economic transformations required to tackle climate change, the project asked: What kinds of developments would elevate the norm of climate responsibility as a key norm of international society by 2035? We invited a group of established scholars and other experts to join a participatory scenario-building process to capture the richness of imagination and a wide range of sophisticated answers to this question. In this process, we created three alternative visions for climate-responsible futures and identified paths on how to reach these visions by 2035.

> WHAT KINDS OF DEVELOPMENTS WOULD ELEVATE THE NORM OF CLIMATE RESPONSIBILITY AS A KEY NORM OF INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY BY 2035?

We focus on the norm of climate responsibility because we assume that norms are important guidelines for states' conduct in international society. Norms are shared standards of acceptable behavior in any society. If climate responsibility were to emerge as a key norm of international society by 2035, it would significantly underpin states and other stakeholders' political and economic decision-making and shape everyday choices of many individuals. This does not mean abandoning human rights-based policies but elevating the norm of climate responsibility alongside democratic and human rights norms in international politics. To ensure that planetary boundaries are respected in international politics and governance, climate responsibility must be mainstreamed across the world.

This report introduces three scenarios portraying pathways to imagined worlds where the norm of climate responsibility shapes all sectors of society globally and regionally. The narratives are set in the Arctic region, where climate change proceeds much faster than in other parts of the globe. The scenarios offer snapshots of global dynamics, such as great power relations, resource politics, and social injustices. In each scenario, the ethos of the imagined world differs depending on the scope and drivers of climate responsibility. Clearly, they differ radically from the current reality and hence challenge forward-looking projections in which "business continues as usual". To arrive at these narratives, we crafted a research design that encouraged outside-the-box thinking and

> IF WE ARE TO ACHIEVE A CARBON-NEUTRAL WORLD BY 2050, SIGNIFICANT CHANGES IN OUR POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC SYSTEMS MUST BE MADE WITHIN THE NEXT TEN YEARS.

imagination of radical change. This interdisciplinary setting combined political science, Futures Studies and comic art.

By setting 2035 as the target year of our scenario exercise, we emphasise that there is no time to waste. If we are to achieve a carbon-neutral world by 2050, significant changes in our political and economic systems must be made within the next ten years. In other words, the norm of climate responsibility must emerge as a cornerstone of global life in the short to mid-term future. Yet, it is possible that for such a drastic change to take place, highly unpleasant developments may have to occur. Our scenarios also illustrate such potential undesirable events and crises.

WITHOUT UTOPIAN VISIONS, WE RISK GETTING LOST IN A SEA OF DYSTOPIAS – AND FORGET THAT THE FUTURE IS NOT PREDETERMINED BUT MADE BY US.

We are grateful to a group of established scholars and key stakeholders in the Arctic and beyond for kindly taking the time to share their ideas about a climate-responsible world and ways to reach it. Without their contribution, it would not have been possible to dream productively and imagine what the practices of world politics and the global economy could look like if climate responsibility emerged into a cornerstone of international collaboration by 2035.

When writing our project proposal in the summer of 2021, the Arctic region seemed to form a stage where climate responsibility would most likely develop into a guiding principle of global life. In December 2021, when receiving generous funding from the Kone Foundation, we did not anticipate that only a couple of months later Russia would attack Ukraine and the Arctic Council would pause its vital work for environmental protection and sustainable development in the Circumpolar North. From February 2022 onwards, it became radically more difficult to imagine a climate-responsible international society emerging in a little over a decade. Yet, it was clear to us that utopian thinking about alternative desirable futures was more needed than ever before. Without utopian visions, we risk getting lost in a sea of dystopias – and forget that the future is not predetermined but made by us.

Climate Responsibility in International Society

Responsibility is a slippery concept. Its many meanings have been extensively studied in philosophy, law and political science. In the context of international climate politics, a bulk of academic literature analyses the responsibilities of states and other agents, especially concerning which states should be assigned special responsibility for cutting emissions and helping remedy structural injustices caused by global heating. We contribute to this academic debate by focusing on the manifestations of the norm of climate responsibility in international society. Our basic premise was that as members of international society, states have rights and responsibilities. The scope and depth of these responsibilities depend on the nature of the international society in time and place. Since the early 1990s, climate responsibility has begun to develop into an international norm with which states have to comply if they want to be recognised as responsible members of global international society.

For the time being, global international society is undergoing a profound transformation due to climate change and ongoing power shift from the West to the East. In this project, we hypothesised that climate responsibility could provide a shared norm that unites the East and West and hence contributes to the maintenance of international peace and security at large. As such, climate responsibility is a norm that all the world's states and peoples can commit to on their own terms. Against this backdrop, we did not rely on any specific definition of climate responsibility but our participatory research process allowed research informants to interpret the "content" of climate responsibility based on their background and expertise. In this way, we wanted to give research participants more mental space to imagine how a stronger norm of climate responsibility would potentially shape world politics and global economy within the next decade. This choice also generated valuable data on key actors, practices, interests and values shaping notions of responsibility in the Arctic and beyond.

Despite the rapidly changing security landscape in the contemporary Arctic, the region offers a stimulating scene to consider how a fundamental normative change in international society could take place. Since the end of the Cold War, environmental protection has played a key role in regional cooperation in the Arctic, and it is still a shared interest among regional stakeholders. Yet we do not believe that the Arctic would be a somewhat exceptional zone of peace in international affairs. On the contrary, the region is once again increasingly militarised and geopolitical tensions are expected to increase, as the Arctic sea ice continues to melt. Clearly, the future of the Arctic is determined by climate change – a key reason that the region could be a significant catalyst for a great green transformation globally.

CLIMATE RESPONSIBILITY COULD PROVIDE A SHARED NORM THAT UNITES THE EAST AND WEST AND HENCE CONTRIBUTES TO THE MAINTENANCE OF INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND SECURITY AT LARGE.

Making of the Scenarios

Imagining radical normative change is a challenging task that puts any research design to test. The more radical the change, the more difficult it is to imagine. Some individuals are highly skilled at shaking established views and thinking outside the box, but for most people, it is harder. To overcome this challenge, we opted to apply Futures Studies methods. According to Wendell Bell, Futures Studies is a field focusing explicitly on systematic thinking about alternative futures. It takes change as a starting point of analysis, and offers a variety of tools to support a free flow of ideas in imagining societal, political and technological transformations.

Building on a Futures Studies' tradition, our research design relied on backcasting, an approach that emerged from frustration with dim energy forecasts of the 1970s. According to John B. Robinson, backcasting takes a certain transformation as its point of departure and "works backwards" to craft a plausible path from the future to the present. The logic of backcasting is favourable for research settings that entail a normative agenda, such as the emergence of climate responsibility as a key norm of international society by 2035. In building backward-looking scenarios, we relied on expert interviews and the Delphi method for gathering data. Interviews helped us imagine tangible manifestations of a climate-responsible world. The Delphi technique provided us with an established way to gather stakeholder views on the effective ways to reach the alternative visions. It is a method which Murray Turoff and Harold A. Linstone have defined as a way for "structuring group communication" through anonymity, feedback and iteration.

> BY UTILISING ART IN PRESENTING ABSTRACT IDEAS AS SCENES OF TOMORROW'S EVERYDAY LIFE, WE COULD MAKE CLIMATE-RESPONSIBLE FUTURES MORE TANGIBLE AND RELATABLE FOR THE PARTICIPANTS.

Mental time travel played an integral role in the research process. Comic art was the main medium, but sound art also contributed to an immersive experience of the future in the Delphi process. By utilising art in presenting abstract ideas as scenes of tomorrow's everyday life, we could make climate-responsible futures more tangible and relatable for the participants. In this way, we could tackle two key challenges typical of backcasting studies. First, the requirement to take a major leap towards the future – think years ahead in time – is a cognitive puzzle to any individual. Second, since the process of backcasting begins with a vision created by other people, it can be difficult for a panellist to "buy" this image and accept it as a starting point; the risk is that the expert begins to debate the content of the vision instead of envisioning means to reach it. Moreover, marrying research with comic art offered an additional benefit for scenario-building: the process of turning research findings into a dramatic plot revealed internal incoherences and allowed us to fix them. Hence, comic art contributed to enhancing the most important quality of any scenario: plausibility.

We conducted the research process in two phases: first, we built the visions and, second, we envisioned pathways for reaching them (Figure 1). In Phase One, we interviewed 12 global environmental politics researchers from all over the world (Appendix 1) to gain insights on how the norm of climate responsibility could materialise if it emerged as a guiding principle of global life (Step 1.1 in Figure 1). These expert views were then analysed and organised into internally coherent visions, which were made tangible and crafted into comic art. More specifically, we turned the abstract elements of each vision into concrete events and developments and wrote them into stories taking place in 2035 (Step 1.2). We arrived at three visions, each of which was characterised by different mental drivers and key means of manifestation in global politics and economy. Each vision was also depicted as taking place in a different Arctic location.

In Phase Two, we "worked backwards" from these visions. In total, 35 carefully selected stakeholders envisioned a path from the future to the present. These individuals included some of the researchers interviewed in the first phase as well as an extensive take of Arctic actors, ranging from businesspeople to Indigenous Knowledge Holders from across the region (Appendix 2). The experts first entered an online platform to submit their original answers (Step 2.1). Then, we summarised and narrated the initial responses and recorded the summary into a podcast "from the future": an imaginary program aired in 2035 (Step 2.2). The panellists then re-entered the platform to listen to the summary and to modify their initial views (Step 2.3). Finally, we organised the responses as logical sequences of events linking each vision for 2035 with the present moment and wrote the scenarios into comic art (Step 2.4).



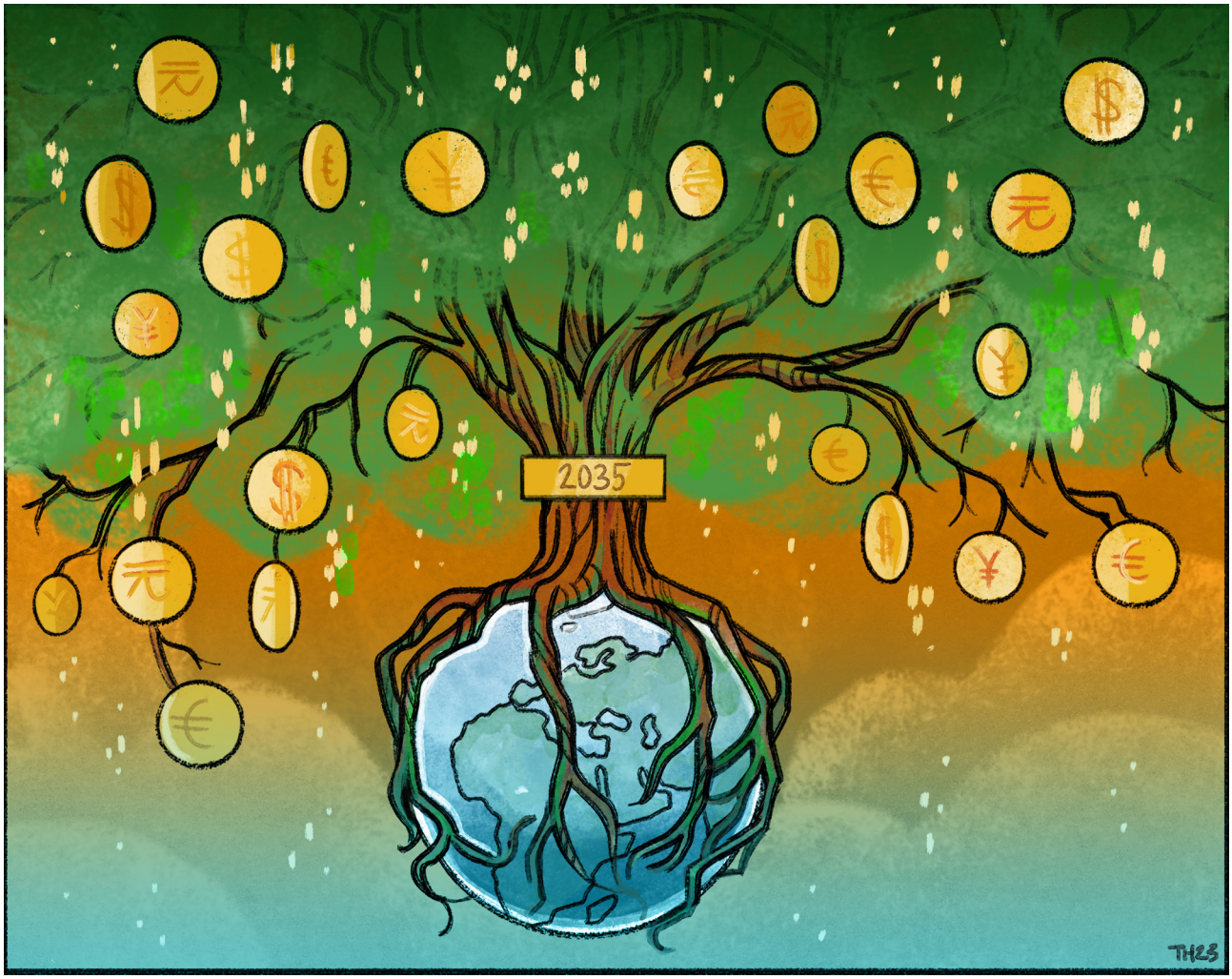
Figure 1. The research process of the ClimateResponsibility2035 Project.

This report introduces the created scenarios. It ties the visions co-created with global environmental politics researchers with the pathways constructed from the views of the Arctic stakeholders and presents them as coherent, inseparable narratives. Moreover, the comic art is accompanied by voice: we wish to take you on an audio-visual time journey to three parallel climate-responsible futures.

Now, sit back and make yourself comfortable. Remember to fasten your seat belt, as there will be turbulence ahead. We hope you will find the journey as intriguing as we do.

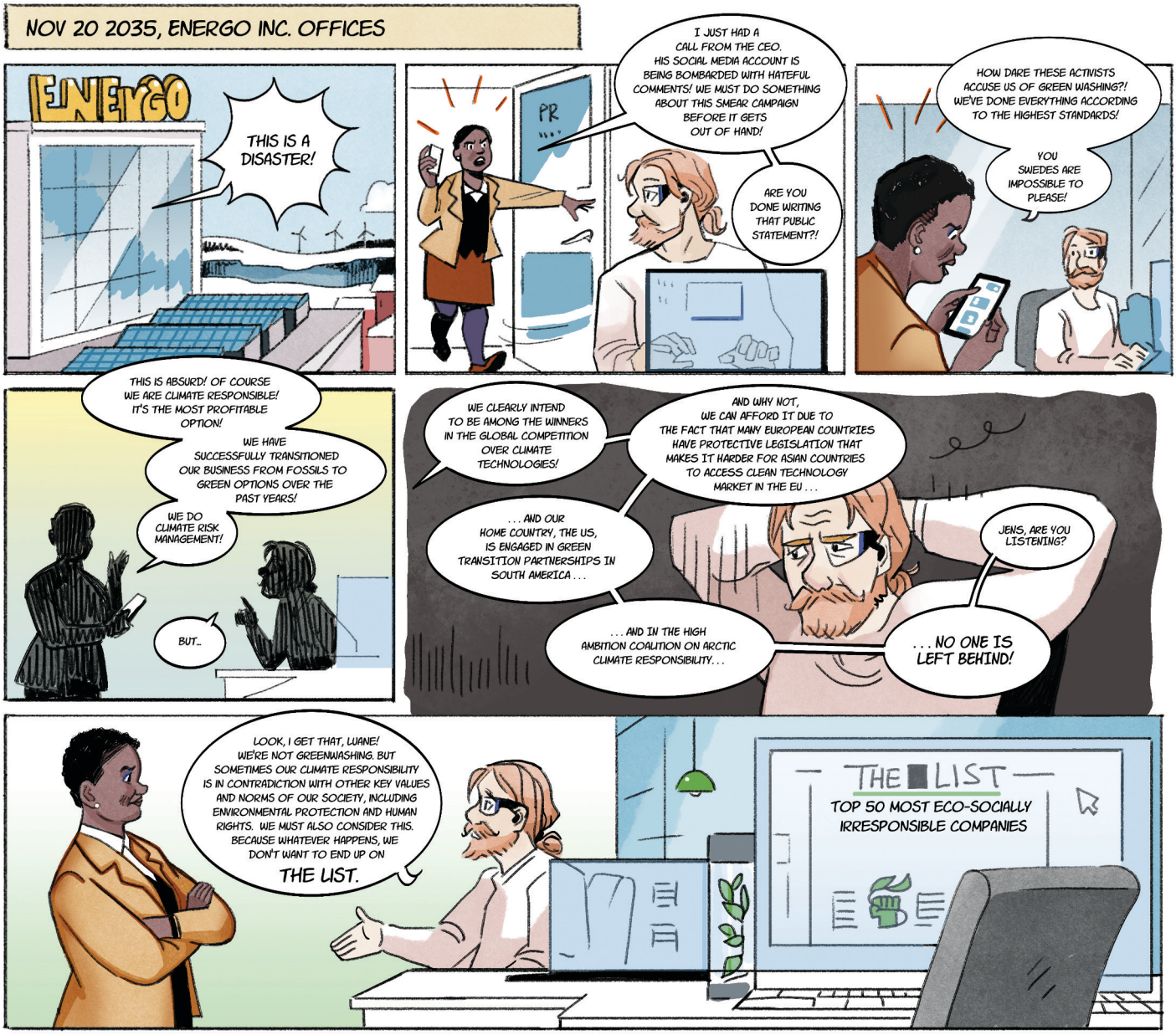
Welcome to the year 2035!

You arrive in Swedish Lapland where debates over climate responsibility are quite heated. The urge to make profit and enhance national security motivates people to make greener choices. Hence, greed and competition colour this alternative world of “no revolution but evolution”. As you will see, the path from 2025 to 2035 has entailed major changes in investment patterns and horse-trading with the populists...

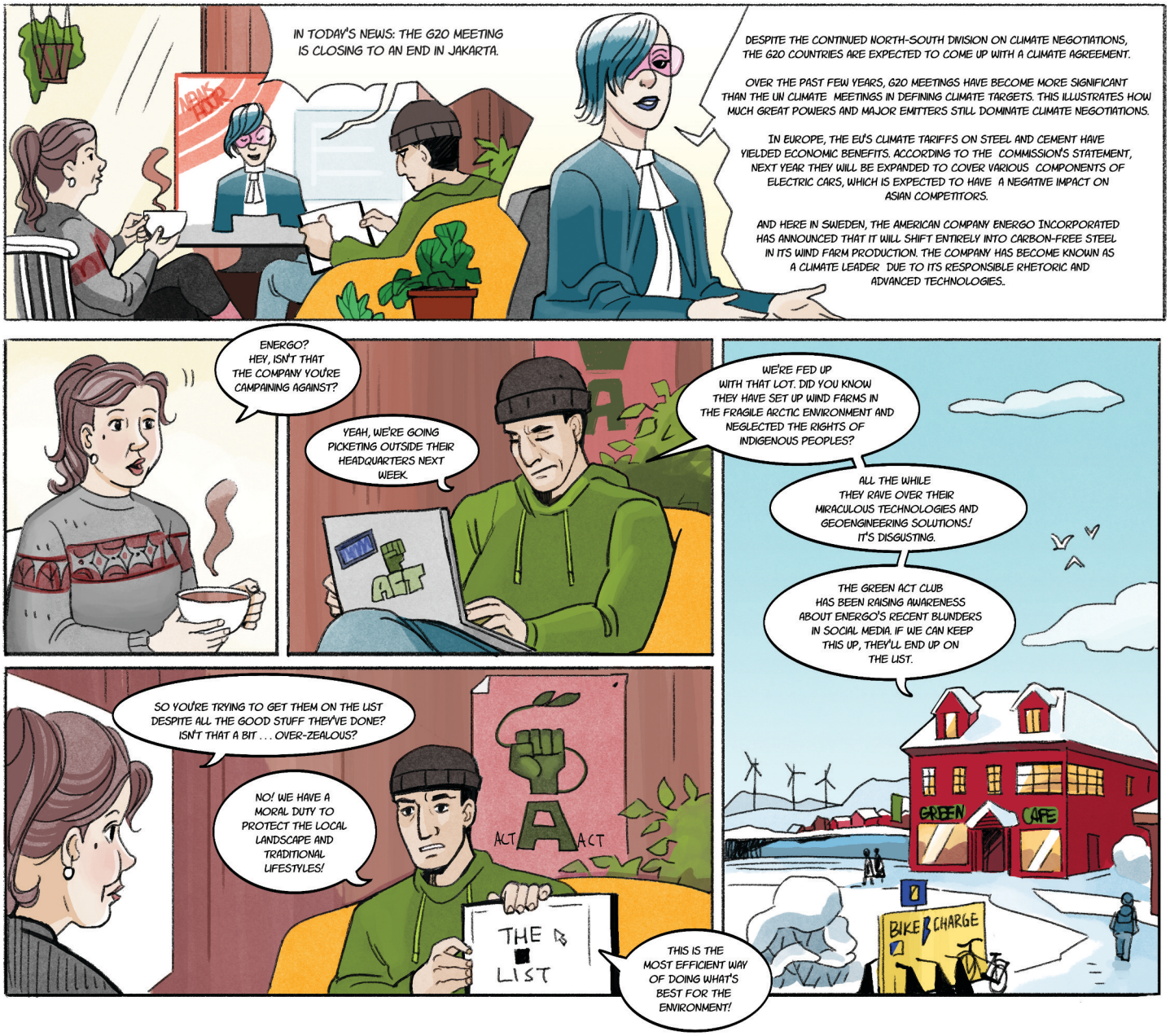


Scenario 1. Greed for climate business: A green transition with winners and losers

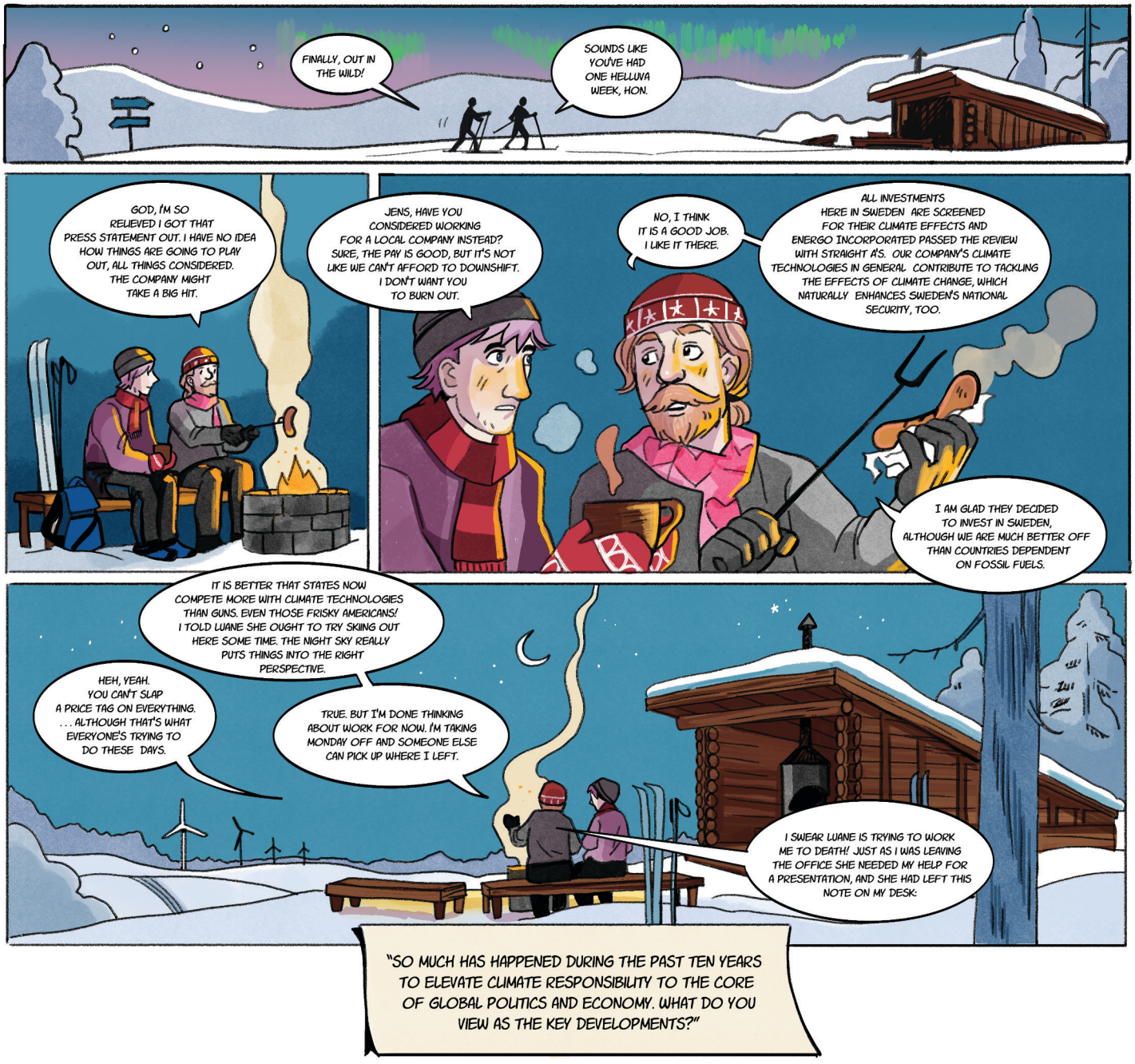
Greed for climate business: A green transition with winners and losers



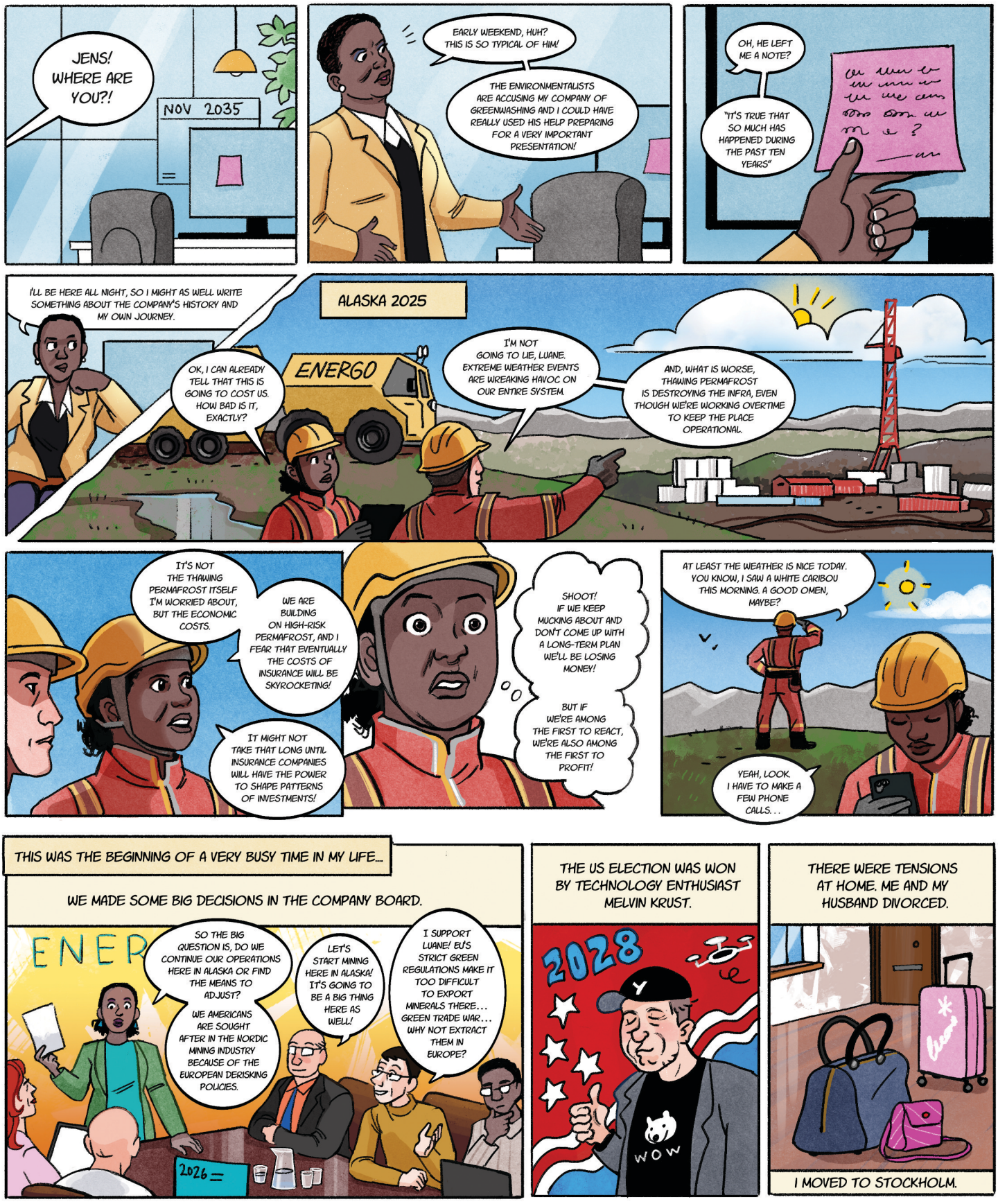
NOV 21 2035, GREEN ACT CAFE



NOV 22 2035, PIELJEKAISE NATIONAL PARK



NOV 20 2035, ENERGO'S OFFICE



THIS WAS THE BEGINNING OF A VERY BUSY TIME IN MY LIFE...

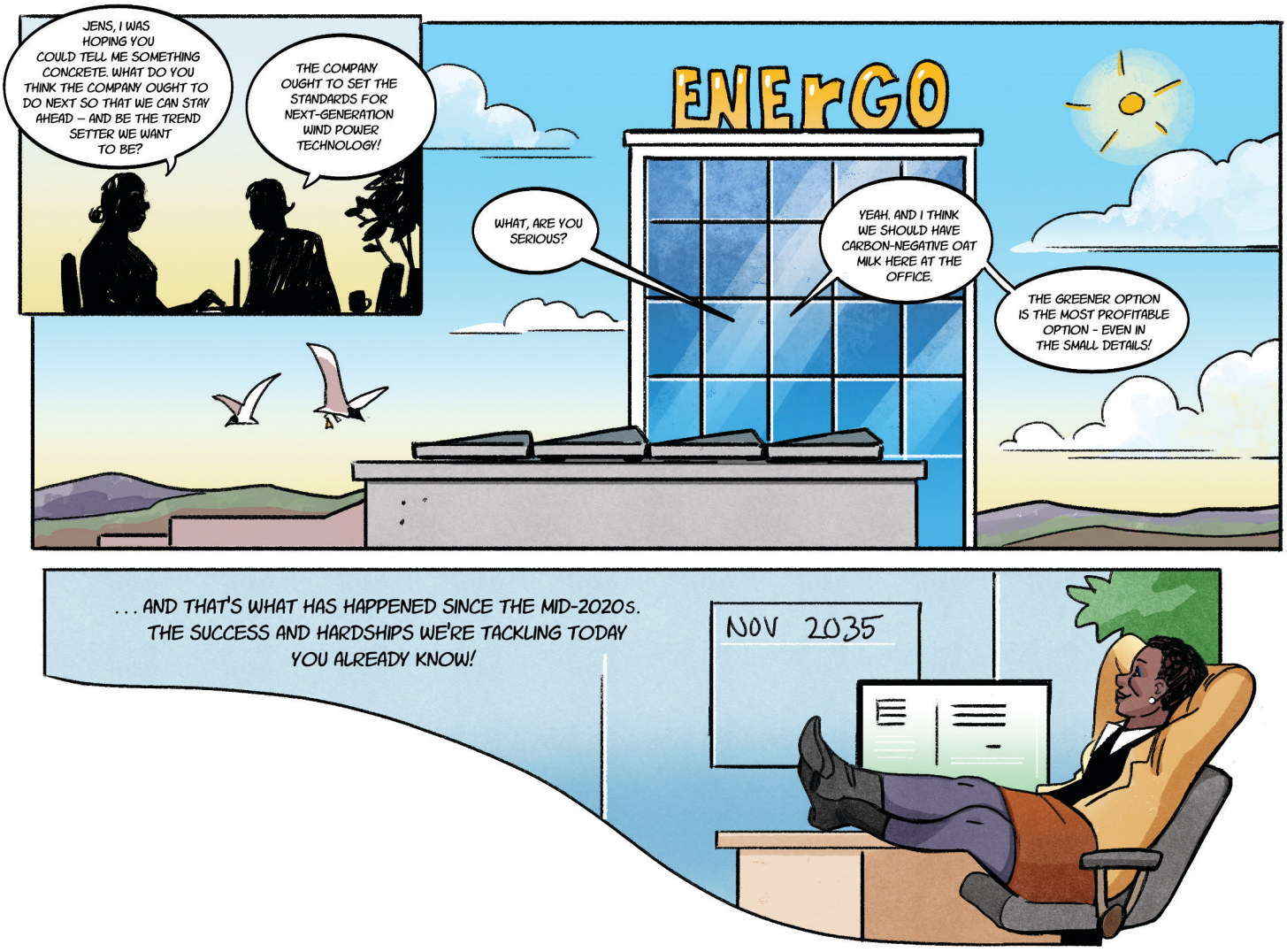
WE MADE SOME BIG DECISIONS IN THE COMPANY BOARD.

THE US ELECTION WAS WON BY TECHNOLOGY ENTHUSIAST MELVIN KRUST.

THERE WERE TENSIONS AT HOME. ME AND MY HUSBAND DIVORCED.

I MOVED TO STOCKHOLM.


GREEN ACT CAFE
VEGAN food
I FEARED THAT IT WOULD BE HARD TO FIND MY PLACE IN A FOREIGN CITY, BUT THINGS WEREN'T THAT MUCH DIFFERENT. LIKE MY HOME COUNTRY, SWEDEN WAS ALSO POLARIZED.
NONETHELESS, THE GREEN ENERGY TRANSITION ADVANCED QUICKLY AND EVEN THE POPULISTS WEREN'T AGAINST IT. GUESS WHY? BECAUSE OF HORSE-TRADING. OTHER PARTIES PROMISED NOT TO ACCEPT TOO MANY CLIMATE REFUGEES.
THIS BROAD POLITICAL SUPPORT ALSO ENABLED NORDIC COUNTRIES TO LEAD THE ENDING OF FOSSIL SUBSIDIES.
DON'T COME HERE!
GO HOME
SWEDEN FIRST
CLOSE THE BORDER
NO CLIMATE REFUGEES
ACT
THE LAND BELONGS TO US
HELP SAVE IT
THE LOCAL ACTIVIST SCENE WAS VERY VOCAL! ENVIRONMENTALISTS JOINED FORCES WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLES, DEMANDING ACTION AND RESPONSIBILITY. THIS WAS NECESSARY BECAUSE THE ARCTIC COUNCIL NEVER FULLY RECOVERED FROM THE HALTING OF COOPERATION IN 2022.
PROVOKING THESE PEOPLE COULD EASILY LEAD TO COMPANIES LOSING THEIR FACE, INVESTMENTS AND PROFITS!
THE COMPETITION WAS HARD, BUT I WASN'T AFRAID. I WAS THERE WHEN ENERGO MADE ITS FIRST GREAT RESULTS IN SWEDEN, HIRING NEW STAFF AND SETTING NEW STANDARDS.
IT HAS BEEN AN INTERESTING BLEND BETWEEN INTENSE BUSINESS AND RELAXED LOCAL WAY OF LIVING, WHICH I'M STILL GETTING USED TO.
SKA VI FIKA OCH DISKUTERA?
OH NO, NOT AGAIN..
WE SHOULD HAVE SOME COFFEE AND TALK ABOUT THIS!
I WAS ABLE TO HIRE EXTREMELY SKILLED PEOPLE INTO MY TEAM.
JENS, LET'S TALK ABOUT THE COMPANY VISION. BRIEFLY, PLEASE! WHAT'S THE BIG PICTURE?
MMH.
JENS NILSEN, CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY ADVISOR
WELL, LET'S START WITH THE RE-EMERGENCE OF CLIMATE ISSUES IN THE ARCTIC SECURITY DEBATE. WE ARE PRIORITIZING CLIMATE SECURITY NOW THAT PUTIN'S REGIME HAS COLLAPSED... OF COURSE, RUSSIA STILL REMAINS AN AUTHORITARIAN STATE!
ANYWAY, IT WAS THE THAWING PERMAFROST AND ITS IMPACTS ON FOSSIL INFRA THAT CONTRIBUTED TO PUTIN'S DISMAY.
AND WHEN IT COMES TO CLIMATE POLITICS, THE G20 HAS INCREASINGLY BEGUN TO SPELL OUT CONDITIONS THAT SUPPORT ITS ECONOMIC INTERESTS IN GREEN TRANSITION. EVEN IN THE ARCTIC CONTEXT, THE US HAS DEFINITELY BEGUN TO FAVOUR THE G20 OVER THE ARCTIC COUNCIL. THIS OVERALL SHIFT UNDERLINES THAT THE CLIMATE CRISIS IS, ABOVE ALL, AN ECONOMIC QUESTION.
LUANE, YOU KNOW THE RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES OF GLOBAL WARMING BETTER THAN I DO!
THE G20 HAS ALSO EXCHANGED LESSONS FROM NATIONAL AND REGIONAL EMISSION TRADING SCHEMES.
AND THEN, MY FAVOURITE TOPIC, THE G20 HAS ESTABLISHED AN INTERNATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR REGULATING GEO-ENGINEERING!
OKAY, BUT BEFORE YOU LECTURE ME ABOUT GEO-ENGINEERING...


JENS, I WAS HOPING YOU COULD TELL ME SOMETHING CONCRETE. WHAT DO YOU THINK THE COMPANY OUGHT TO DO NEXT SO THAT WE CAN STAY AHEAD – AND BE THE TREND SETTER WE WANT TO BE?
THE COMPANY OUGHT TO SET THE STANDARDS FOR NEXT-GENERATION WIND POWER TECHNOLOGY!
ENERGO
WHAT, ARE YOU SERIOUS?
YEAH. AND I THINK WE SHOULD HAVE CARBON-NEGATIVE OAT MILK HERE AT THE OFFICE.
THE GREENER OPTION IS THE MOST PROFITABLE OPTION - EVEN IN THE SMALL DETAILS!

. . . AND THAT'S WHAT HAS HAPPENED SINCE THE MID-2020s. THE SUCCESS AND HARDSHIPS WE'RE TACKLING TODAY YOU ALREADY KNOW!
NOV 2035

When studying the scenario's depiction of the year 2035 back in 2024, most of the Climate Responsibility 2035 Project's panellists demonstrated a clear understanding of its key elements by highlighting profit-seeking, biggest polluter pays –thinking and national security in their responses. The panellists also clearly focused on envisioning means to reach the vision – instead of debating the content of the image of the future itself. In other words, the panellists engaged in the task of backcasting in textbook fashion. The nature of the vision itself most likely played a role in this success, and very few, if any, responses questioned the plausibility of the image of the future itself. In other words, the panellists found the vision internally coherent and credible.

Some of the panellists also commented on the vision's likelihood, that is, the probability of its unfolding by 2035. These views, in turn, were rather divided. While certain panellists argued that some of the vision's elements were already unfolding in 2024, at least one panellist considered the scenario pessimistic in terms of depicting changes: since people are likely to have "much greater energy literacy" by 2035, more radical shifts are to be expected. Yet other experts found the vision overly optimistic within the proposed time frame for multiple reasons. One panellist, for example, argued that the number of actors whose interests are tied to the survival of the fossil industry speaks against the materialisation of the image of the future. Another expert underlined that nationalist and anti-green movements in an ageing Europe make its unfolding unlikely. Notably, however, those who considered the vision likely were not necessarily satisfied with it: a few panellists underlined that the clashes between economic actors and local traditions are what makes the image of the future probable.

As could be seen in the comic strip's depiction of the path from 2035 to the mid-2020s (the second part of the comic), the necessary means and developments proposed by the panellists centred around changes taking place in a world of competition, East-West tensions and polarisation of societies. Many panellists focused on proposing explanations for the private sector's new-found desire to act green. Out of these suggestions, the idea that insurance companies would begin to guide investment patterns in a more sustainable direction emerged as a crucial element. Without such a major change, it would have been difficult to build a logical sequence of events from the vision to the present. Many experts also focused on emphasising how the EU's derisking policies would increase extractivist production in the Arctic from the mid-2020s onwards – and how that alone could incentivise green business in the region.

THE PANELLISTS FOUND THE VISION INTERNALLY COHERENT AND CREDIBLE.

Intriguingly, one panellist underlined the importance of strong personalities in advancing the required major technology-oriented transformations and envisioned a development in which Elon Musk would become the President of the United States; with a bit of twist, and as drafting the scenarios before Trump's return to US presidency, this proposal was included in the path. Notably, some panellists strongly argued that a closure to the war in Ukraine would be a necessary precondition for the vision to materialise. Simply put, the climate crisis would not emerge as a major threat to national security in the Arctic countries if a hot war continued to ravage Europe. Although most panellists did not spell out how exactly this could happen, one panellist made a highly intriguing connection between thawing permafrost, deteriorating oil infrastructure and Russia's dwindling war chest. It seemed harder for the panellists to come up with suggestions on the developments leading to the emergence of the G20 meetings as a key arena of climate

DEVELOPMENTS PROPOSED BY THE PANELLISTS CENTRED AROUND CHANGES TAKING PLACE IN A WORLD OF COMPETITION, EAST-WEST TENSIONS AND POLARISATION OF SOCIETIES.

change negotiations; rather, the aspect was commented on as a natural reflection of a world dominated by the strongest states. Interestingly, although the vision was the least radical of the three, a few panellists still envisioned extreme weather events as a necessary wake-up call and element of the path from 2035 to the mid-2020s.

Five key takeaways

1. A strengthened norm of climate responsibility does not necessitate radical changes in thinking if the least polluting option is made the most profitable one.

2. Insurance companies may react to the increased likelihood of global heating-induced infrastructure damage with skyrocketing prices, which could direct global investment patterns in a more sustainable direction.

3. Despite continued great power rivalry, climate responsibility may emerge as a shared code of conduct if states begin to compete by using green technologies, and start viewing global heating as a question of national security.

4. The G20 may emerge as a key arena for climate negotiations if major emitters begin to view global heating first and foremost as an economic question.

5. If profit-making and selfish interests principally motivate states', companies' and individuals' low-carbon choices, a strengthened norm of climate responsibility may come at the cost of environmental damage and human rights violations.

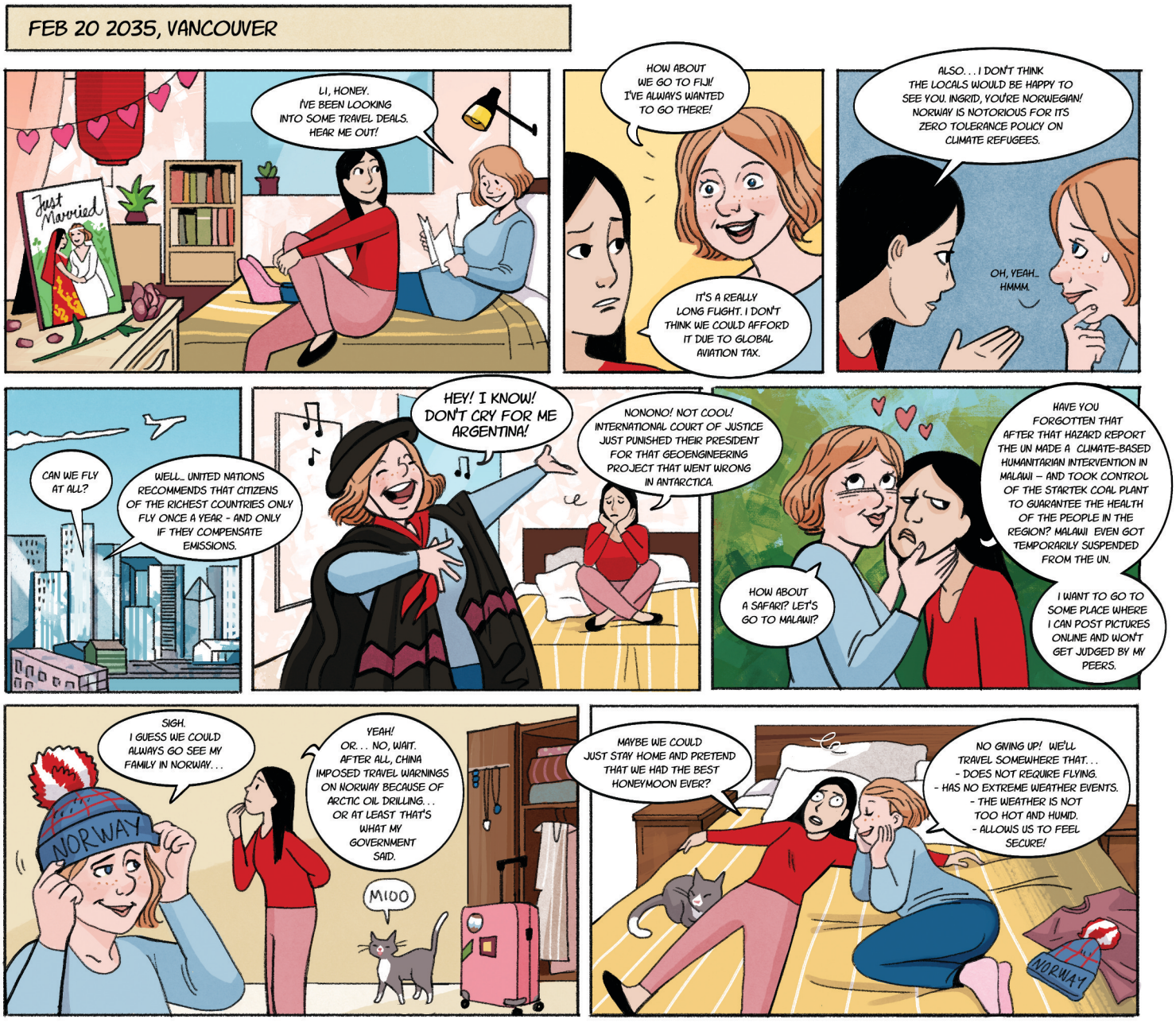
...and next you will travel to Vancouver where considerations over climate responsibility guide everyday decisions.

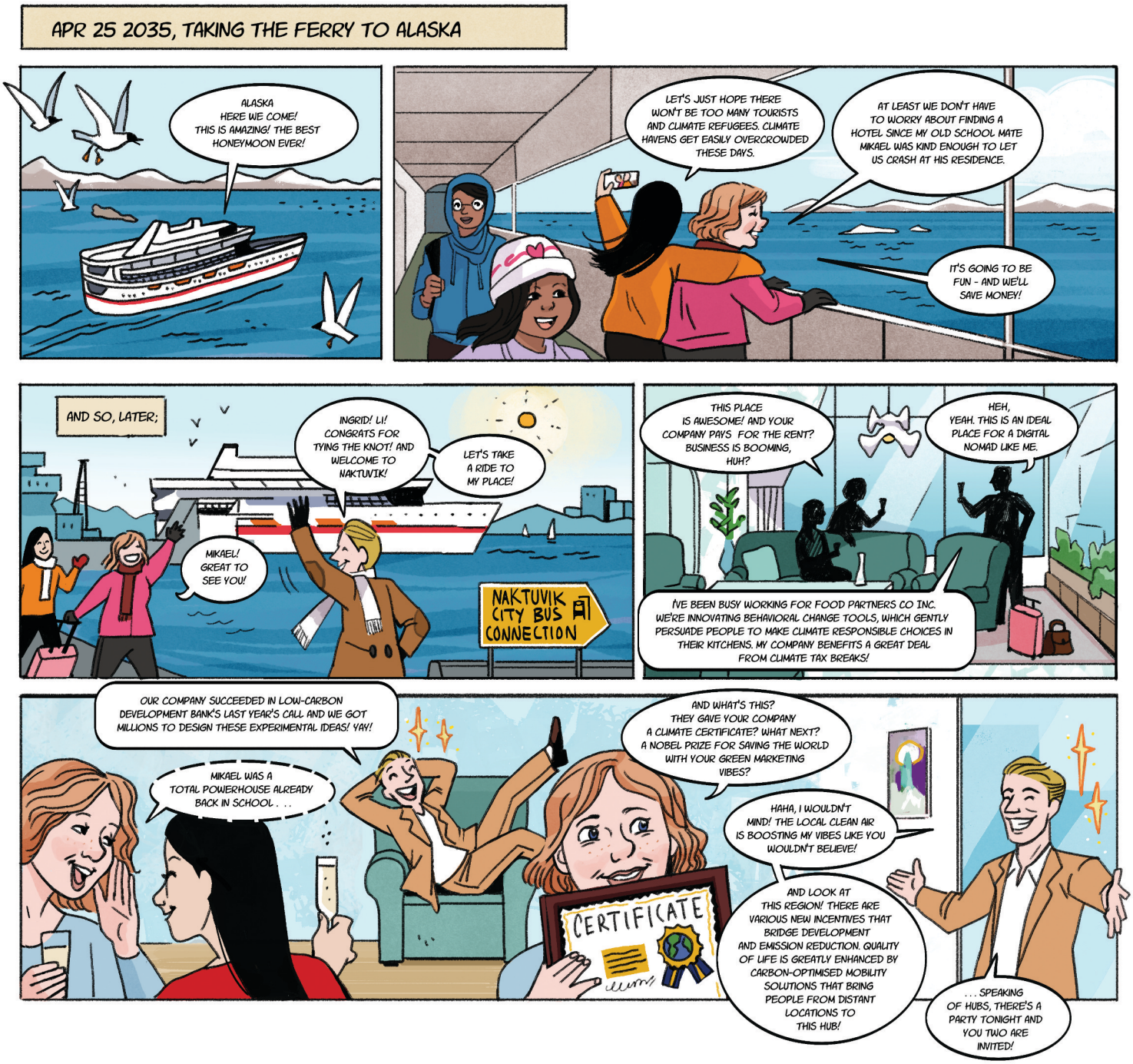
A feeling of insecurity drives forward more climate-friendly global life, and fear of human extinction is clearly colouring political conduct in this human-centric world with a green economic order. The route from 2025 to 2035 has had its share of major catastrophes, healthy competition over green transition and manifestations of people's power.



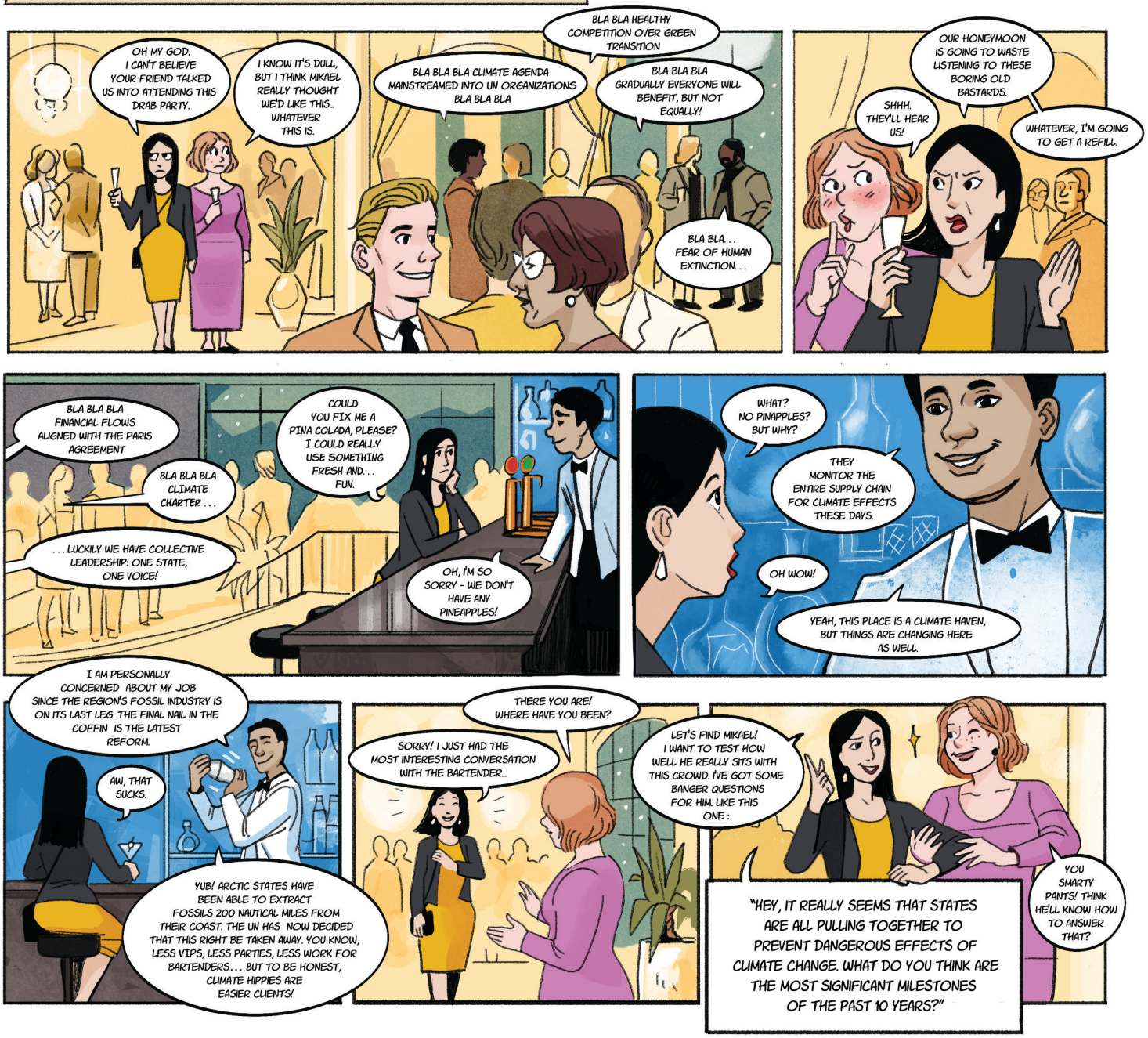
Scenario 2. Tackling climate insecurity: A green transition that enhances human well-being

Tackling climate insecurity: A green transition that enhances human wellbeing

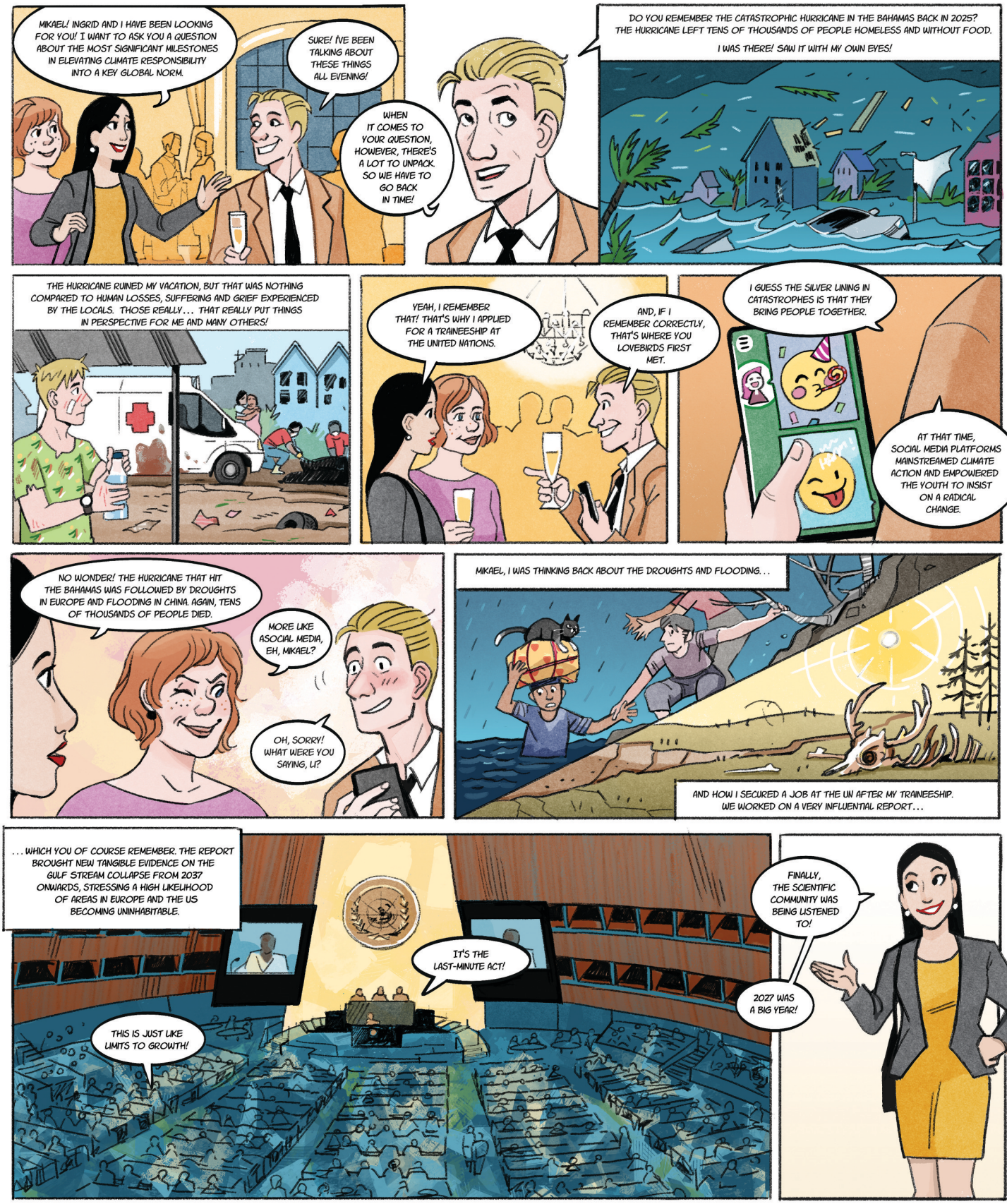


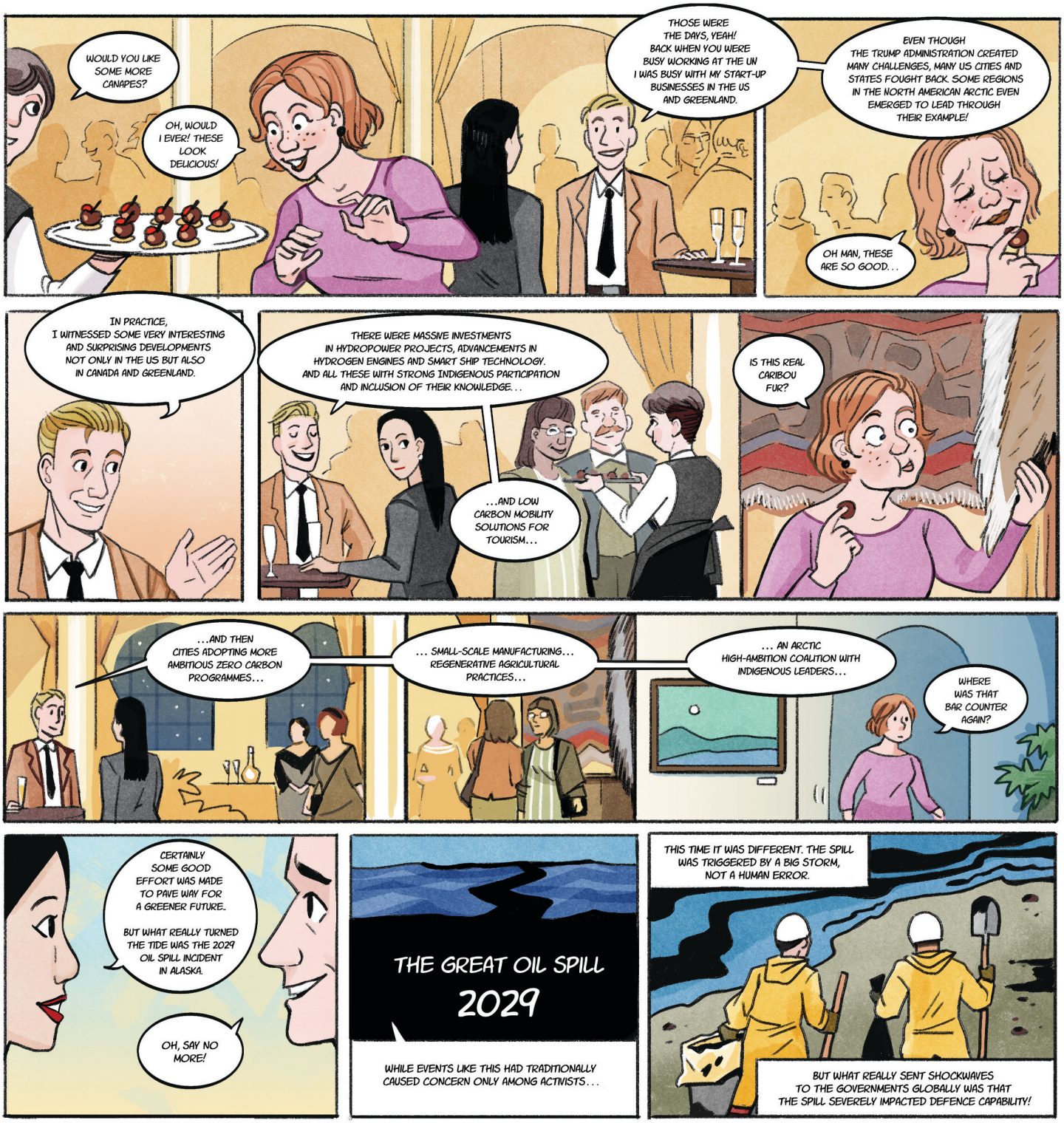

APR 25 2035, TAKING THE FERRY TO ALASKA
ALASKA HERE WE COME! THIS IS AMAZING! THE BEST HONEYMOON EVER!
LET'S JUST HOPE THERE WON'T BE TOO MANY TOURISTS AND CLIMATE REFUGEES. CLIMATE HAVENS GET EASILY OVERCROWDED THESE DAYS.
AT LEAST WE DON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT FINDING A HOTEL SINCE MY OLD SCHOOL MATE MIKAEL WAS KIND ENOUGH TO LET US CRASH AT HIS RESIDENCE.
IT'S GOING TO BE FUN - AND WE'LL SAVE MONEY!
AND SO, LATER;
INGRID! LI! CONGRATS FOR TYING THE KNOT! AND WELCOME TO NAKTUVIK!
LET'S TAKE A RIDE TO MY PLACE!
MIKAEL! GREAT TO SEE YOU!
NAKTUVIK CITY BUS CONNECTION
THIS PLACE IS AWESOME! AND YOUR COMPANY PAYS FOR THE RENT? BUSINESS IS BOOMING, HUH?
HEH, YEAH. THIS IS AN IDEAL PLACE FOR A DIGITAL NOMAD LIKE ME.
I'VE BEEN BUSY WORKING FOR FOOD PARTNERS CO INC. WE'RE INNOVATING BEHAVIORAL CHANGE TOOLS, WHICH GENTLY PERSUADE PEOPLE TO MAKE CLIMATE RESPONSIBLE CHOICES IN THEIR KITCHENS. MY COMPANY BENEFITS A GREAT DEAL FROM CLIMATE TAX BREAKS!
OUR COMPANY SUCCEEDED IN LOW-CARBON DEVELOPMENT BANK'S LAST YEAR'S CALL AND WE GOT MILLIONS TO DESIGN THESE EXPERIMENTAL IDEAS! YAY!
MIKAEL WAS A TOTAL POWERHOUSE ALREADY BACK IN SCHOOL . . .
AND WHAT'S THIS? THEY GAVE YOUR COMPANY A CLIMATE CERTIFICATE? WHAT NEXT? A NOBEL PRIZE FOR SAVING THE WORLD WITH YOUR GREEN MARKETING VIBES?
CERTIFICATE
HAHA, I WOULDN'T MIND! THE LOCAL CLEAN AIR IS BOOSTING MY VIBES LIKE YOU WOULDN'T BELIEVE!
AND LOOK AT THIS REGION! THERE ARE VARIOUS NEW INCENTIVES THAT BRIDGE DEVELOPMENT AND EMISSION REDUCTION. QUALITY OF LIFE IS GREATLY ENHANCED BY CARBON-OPTIMISED MOBILITY SOLUTIONS THAT BRING PEOPLE FROM DISTANT LOCATIONS TO THIS HUB!
. . . SPEAKING OF HUBS, THERE'S A PARTY TONIGHT AND YOU TWO ARE INVITED!

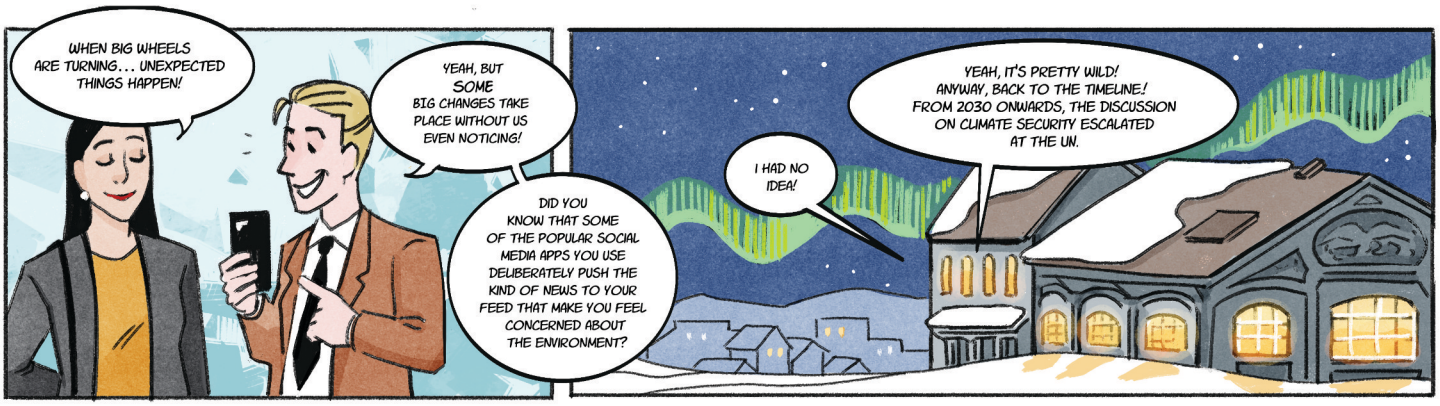
APR 25 2035, 8 PM, MAYOR'S BANQUET, NAKTUVIK

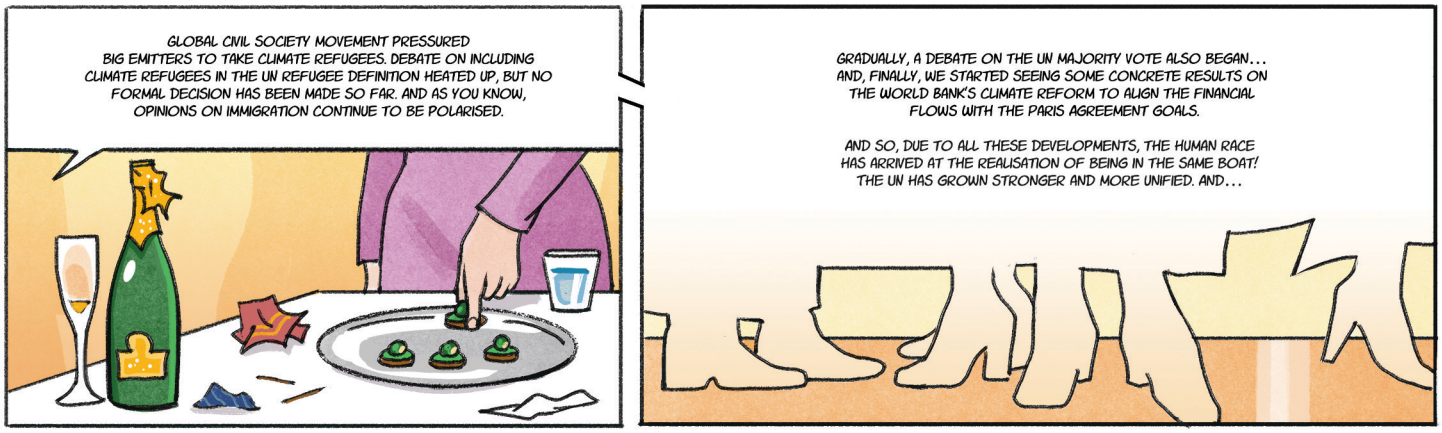


APR 25 2035, 9 PM, MAYOR'S BANQUET, NAKTUVIK




WOULD YOU LIKE SOME MORE CANAPES?
OH, WOULD I EVER! THESE LOOK DELICIOUS!
THOSE WERE THE DAYS, YEAH! BACK WHEN YOU WERE BUSY WORKING AT THE UN I WAS BUSY WITH MY START-UP BUSINESSES IN THE US AND GREENLAND.
EVEN THOUGH THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION CREATED MANY CHALLENGES, MANY US CITIES AND STATES FOUGHT BACK. SOME REGIONS IN THE NORTH AMERICAN ARCTIC EVEN EMERGED TO LEAD THROUGH THEIR EXAMPLE!
OH MAN, THESE ARE SO GOOD...
IN PRACTICE, I WITNESSED SOME VERY INTERESTING AND SURPRISING DEVELOPMENTS NOT ONLY IN THE US BUT ALSO IN CANADA AND GREENLAND.
THERE WERE MASSIVE INVESTMENTS IN HYDROPOWER PROJECTS, ADVANCEMENTS IN HYDROGEN ENGINES AND SMART SHIP TECHNOLOGY. AND ALL THESE WITH STRONG INDIGENOUS PARTICIPATION AND INCLUSION OF THEIR KNOWLEDGE...
...AND LOW CARBON MOBILITY SOLUTIONS FOR TOURISM...
IS THIS REAL CARIBOU FUR?
...AND THEN CITIES ADOPTING MORE AMBITIOUS ZERO CARBON PROGRAMMES...
... SMALL-SCALE MANUFACTURING... REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES...
... AN ARCTIC HIGH-AMBITION COALITION WITH INDIGENOUS LEADERS...
WHERE WAS THAT BAR COUNTER AGAIN?
CERTAINLY SOME GOOD EFFORT WAS MADE TO PAVE WAY FOR A GREENER FUTURE.
BUT WHAT REALLY TURNED THE TIDE WAS THE 2029 OIL SPILL INCIDENT IN ALASKA.
OH, SAY NO MORE!
THE GREAT OIL SPILL
2029
WHILE EVENTS LIKE THIS HAD TRADITIONALLY CAUSED CONCERN ONLY AMONG ACTIVISTS...
THIS TIME IT WAS DIFFERENT. THE SPILL WAS TRIGGERED BY A BIG STORM, NOT A HUMAN ERROR.
BUT WHAT REALLY SENT SHOCKWAVES TO THE GOVERNMENTS GLOBALLY WAS THAT THE SPILL SEVERELY IMPACTED DEFENCE CAPABILITY!


WHEN BIG WHEELS ARE TURNING... UNEXPECTED THINGS HAPPEN!
YEAH, BUT SOME BIG CHANGES TAKE PLACE WITHOUT US EVEN NOTICING!
DID YOU KNOW THAT SOME OF THE POPULAR SOCIAL MEDIA APPS YOU USE DELIBERATELY PUSH THE KIND OF NEWS TO YOUR FEED THAT MAKE YOU FEEL CONCERNED ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENT?
I HAD NO IDEA!
YEAH, IT'S PRETTY WILD! ANYWAY, BACK TO THE TIMELINE! FROM 2030 ONWARDS, THE DISCUSSION ON CLIMATE SECURITY ESCALATED AT THE UN.


GLOBAL CIVIL SOCIETY MOVEMENT PRESSURED BIG EMITTERS TO TAKE CLIMATE REFUGEES. DEBATE ON INCLUDING CLIMATE REFUGEES IN THE UN REFUGEE DEFINITION HEATED UP, BUT NO FORMAL DECISION HAS BEEN MADE SO FAR. AND AS YOU KNOW, OPINIONS ON IMMIGRATION CONTINUE TO BE POLARISED.
GRADUALLY, A DEBATE ON THE UN MAJORITY VOTE ALSO BEGAN... AND, FINALLY, WE STARTED SEEING SOME CONCRETE RESULTS ON THE WORLD BANK'S CLIMATE REFORM TO ALIGN THE FINANCIAL FLOWS WITH THE PARIS AGREEMENT GOALS.
AND SO, DUE TO ALL THESE DEVELOPMENTS, THE HUMAN RACE HAS ARRIVED AT THE REALISATION OF BEING IN THE SAME BOAT! THE UN HAS GROWN STRONGER AND MORE UNIFIED. AND...


...GRANDE FINALE, THERE SEEMS TO BE SUPPORT FOR MAKING DRASTIC CHANGES WITHIN AND WITH THE UN. I'LL DRINK TO THAT!
CLICK
HUH?
HEY, YOU TWO, FINISH UP!
NAKTUVIK
THAT WAS THE LAST CALL! WHAT A GREAT PARTY! MIKAEL, WHERE ARE WE HEADING NEXT?!

When exploring this vision back in 2024, the panellists of the Climate Responsibility 2035 Project were able to depict its key complexities well. Most experts recognized the vision's significant changes in mainstreaming the norm of climate responsibility into international organizations and treaties, together with changes in cultural norms and social values. Simultaneously, they noticed that the "basic framework of global politics and economics remains largely the same [as in 2024], driven by private capital and inter-state organizations anchored around a system of sovereign states", as one panellist put it. While most experts did not comment on the plausibility of the vision, some panellists explicitly underlined its particularly plausible elements. For a few others, the vision's credibility was simply low. The desirability of the vision also divided opinions, and especially the perceived degree of restricting citizens' rights was a key variable in these arguments. One panellist, for instance, viewed the policies related to consumption as surprisingly weak, while another considered the vision to be as daunting as a totalitarian dystopia.

THE DESIRABILITY OF THE VISION DIVIDED OPINIONS, AND ESPECIALLY THE PERCEIVED DEGREE OF RESTRICTING CITIZENS' RIGHTS WAS A KEY VARIABLE IN THESE ARGUMENTS.

Perhaps surprisingly, while depicting the vision, more attention was paid to the individual-level changes than to the reforms of international organizations and treaties. Many argued that the vision might unfold along with increasing global inequality, resource conflicts and collaboration among the more willing states. Given the radical changes described in the vision, it was unsurprising that a majority of panellists explicitly commenting on the issue considered the overall likelihood of the vision unfolding by 2035 to be low or very low. Yet some elements were considered likely, such as strengthening climate litigation and travel shaming, which some panellists recognized as a trend already in 2024. However, a few experts questioned how willing the richer nations and people would be to limit flying or burning of fossil fuels. Many panellists favoured strengthening decision-making at the UN, bans on fossil fuels, and meaningful supply chain control; however, they considered these developments as unlikely or very unlikely to manifest, especially within the given timeframe.

BUILDING STRONGER GLOBAL INSTITUTIONS WITH A CLIMATE FOCUS WAS SEEN TO REQUIRE THE CLIMATE CRISIS TO EMERGE AS A KEY SECURITY THREAT TO STATES.

As visible in the comic strip's depiction of the path from 2035 to the mid-2020s, building stronger global institutions with a climate focus was seen to require the climate crisis to emerge as a key security threat to states, that is, prioritized over the current trade wars and geopolitical rivalries. The panellists anticipated that a strong momentum for such a drastic change could be caused by passing tipping points and simultaneous climate-related catastrophes worldwide, leading to deaths, humanitarian suffering, food insecurity and continuous economic losses from rebuilding societies. These events were seen to motivate policymakers to "make better use of science" and bring states closer together at the UN level, with greater willingness to agree on global regulations on fossil fuels and discuss security implications of climate change. Notably, a few panellists imagined historically biggest emitters finding it more difficult to escape their responsibility in mitigation, adaptation and climate finance. The same panellists also suggested that redefining what constitutes a 'climate refugee' could force major emitters to take on climate-displaced people and invest in adaptation.

The vision was also seen to require other major changes in the role of the UN and international finance mechanisms, including a reform of the UN voting procedures. However, most panellists did not elaborate in detail how these changes in global governance could happen; it seemed difficult to imagine how these developments

could be agreed upon in consensus-based decision-making. Many panellists also anticipated a wide adoption of sustainable practices in sectors like agriculture, tourism, and transportation. Green investments in the Arctic were also seen as necessary in making the region a leader of the energy transition and a more attractive place for the labour force. The change in cultural norms and social values was imagined to be driven simultaneously in many contexts, including technological innovations and investments, policy-making and consumer behavior. Intriguingly, one panellist also argued for making climate irresponsibility socially unacceptable through the modification of algorithms.

Five key takeaways

1. Fear of human extinction caused by passing climate tipping points, great levels of suffering and severe climate-induced national security threats may initiate shared global responses and regulation. It may also spur acceptance of a stronger UN with reformed rules – or the development of alternative global modes of governance.

2. A strengthened norm of climate responsibility could facilitate mainstreaming climate change mitigation and adaptation into all international organizations and financial institutions – a process that could include rewriting international and regional treaties.

3. Major emitters' leadership is essential for setting global restrictions on the production and use of fossil fuels, agreeing and implementing legally-binding obligations for climate change mitigation and finance, and for providing protection for people displaced by climate change.

4. Agreeing on the definition of climate refugees at the UN will most likely be very demanding. Increases in human mobilisation and large regions becoming uninhabitable may cause heated debates on immigration in many societies.

5. For climate irresponsibility to become socially unacceptable, it may be necessary to make simultaneous changes in consumer policies and restrictions, advance technological innovations, manipulate algorithms and exercise naming and shaming practices in everyday life.

And all of a sudden, you are in Finnish Lapland!

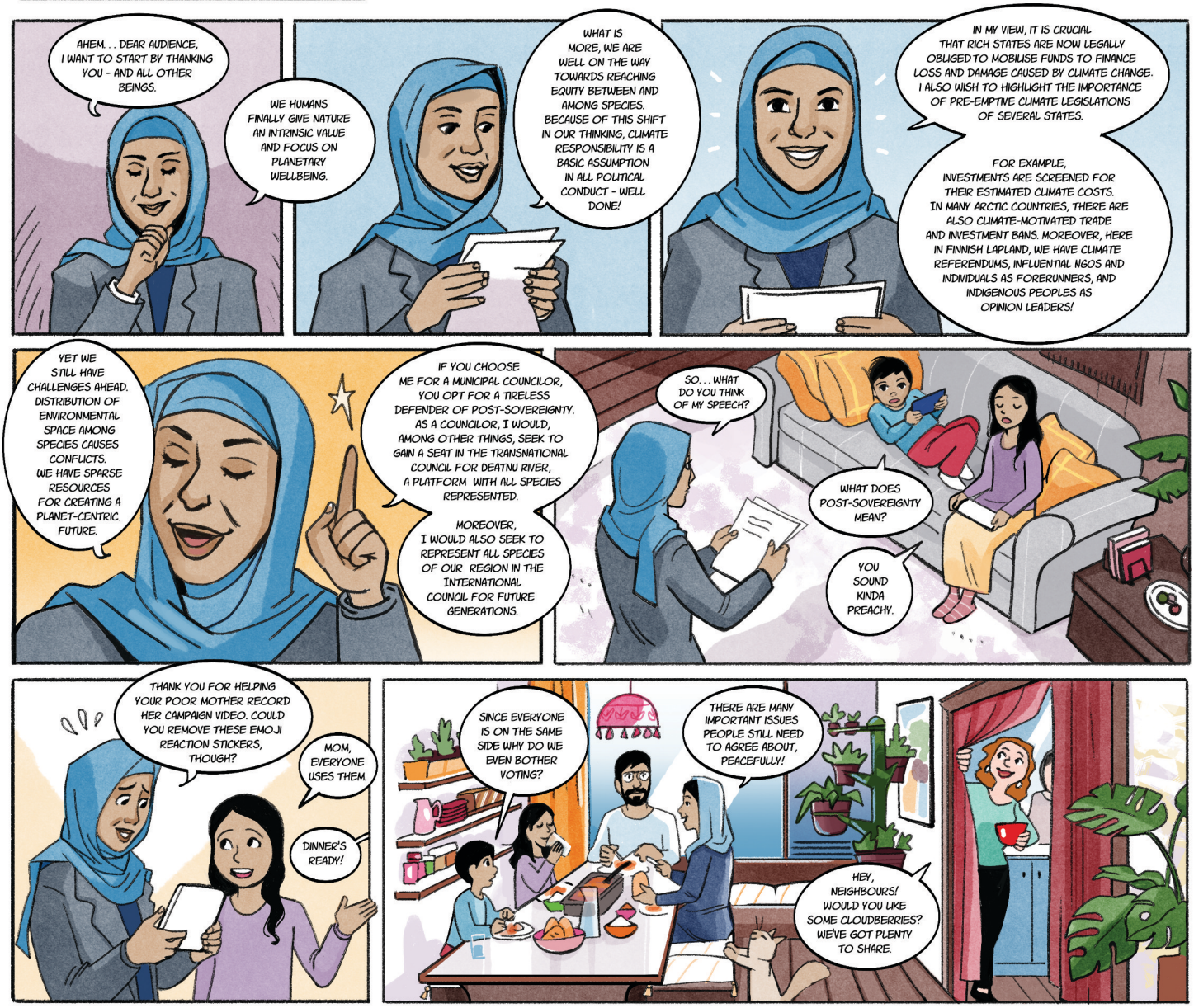
In this alternative world, things have radically changed. Climate responsibility is truly at the core of politics, as you will soon see. The feeling of being on the same boat is what drives forward green changes, and hope and harmony characterise people's thinking in this planet-centric world. Yet the path from 2025 to 2035 has been extremely difficult and plagued with death and despair...

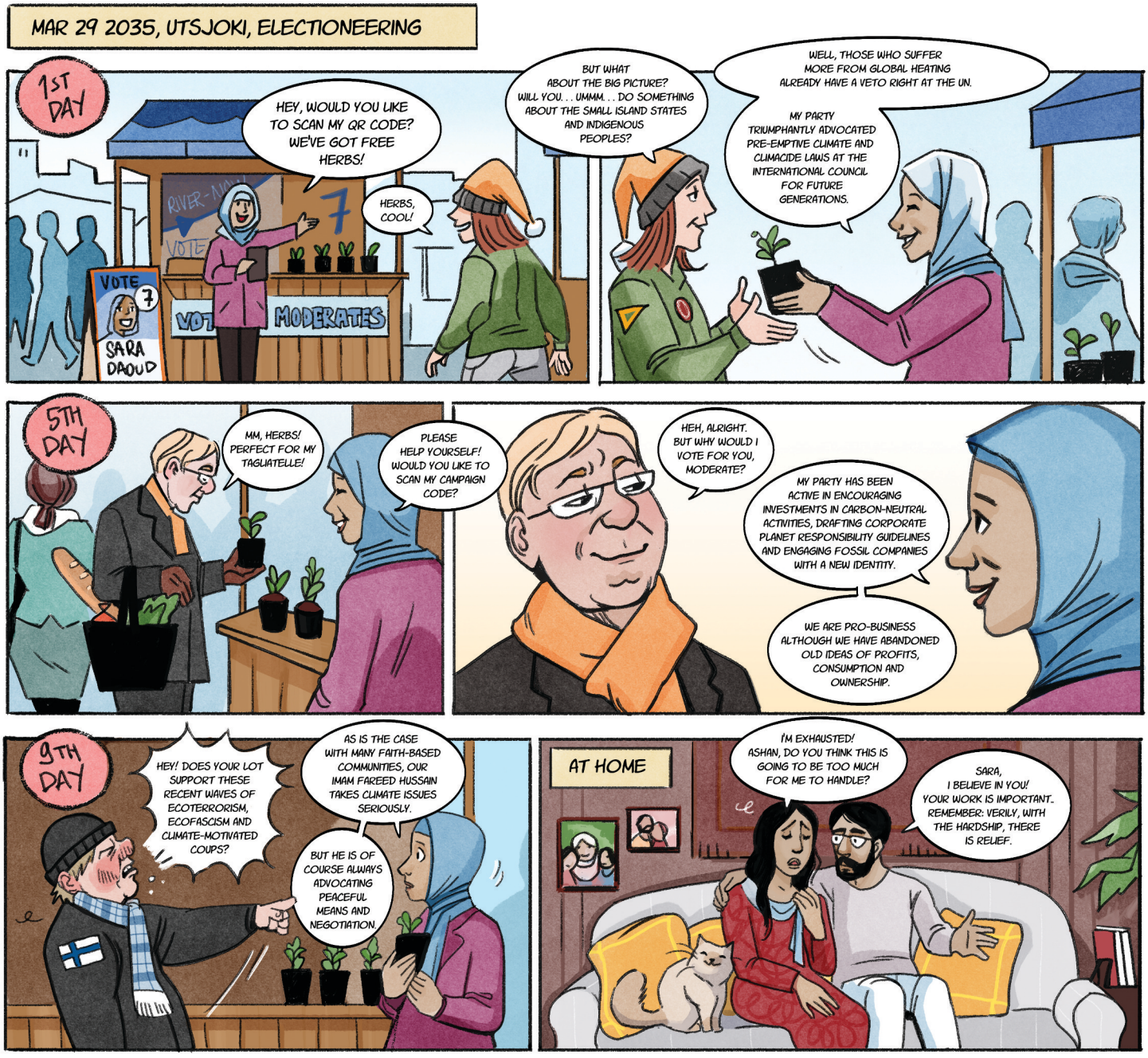


Scenario 3. Hope for planetary well-being: A green transition of multispecies harmony

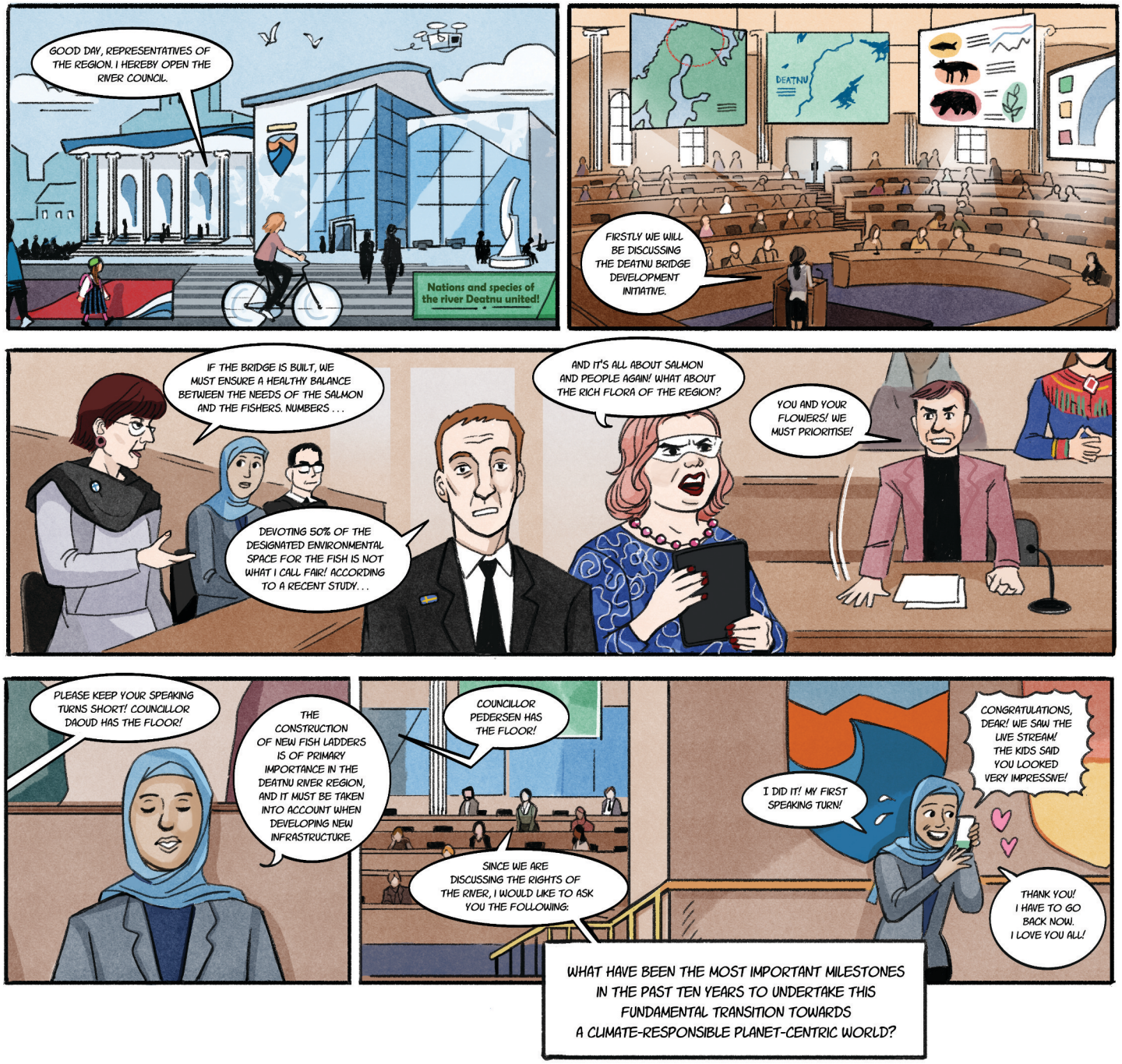
Hope for planetary wellbeing: A green transition of multispecies harmony

MAR 27 2035, UTSJOKI.

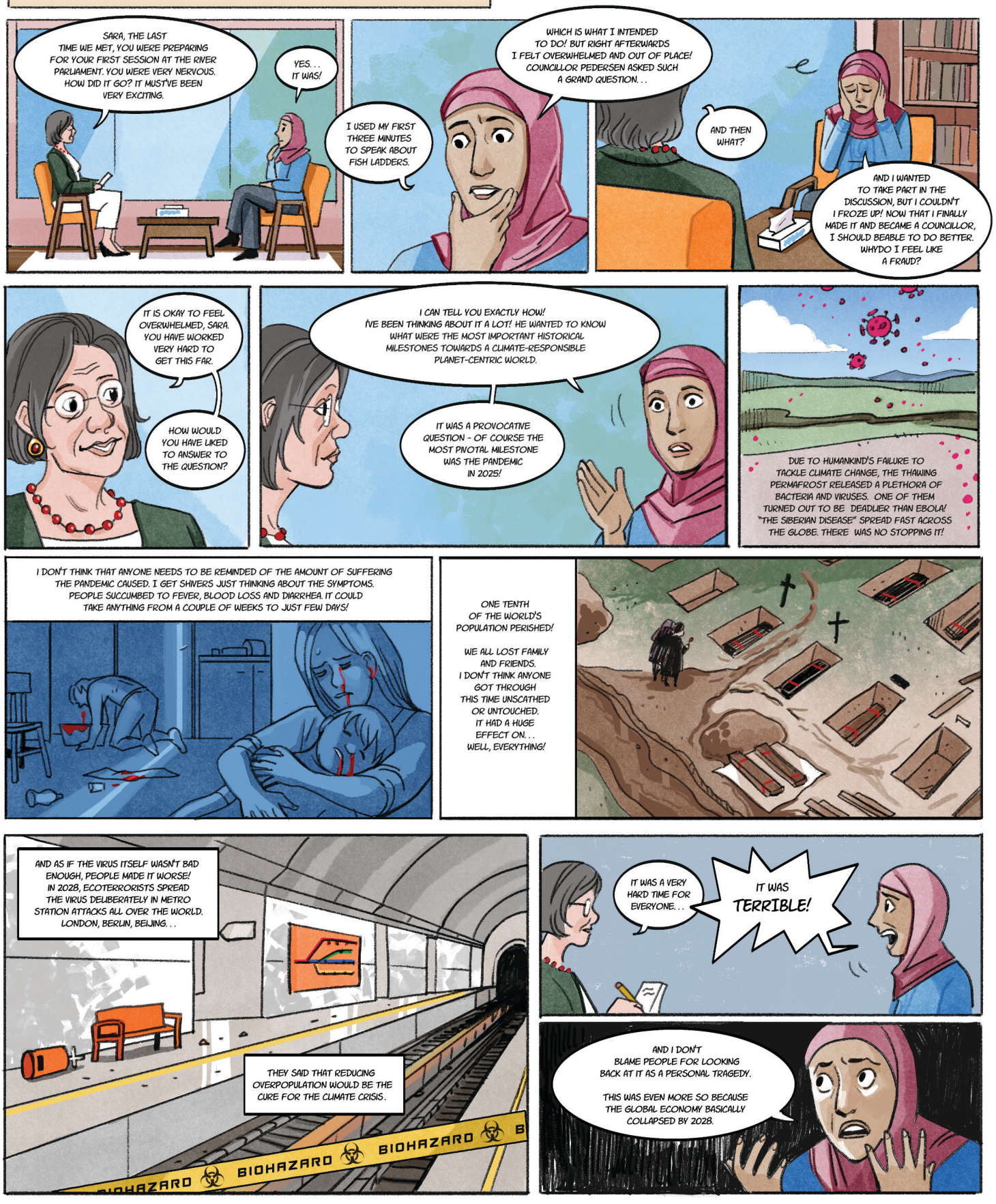


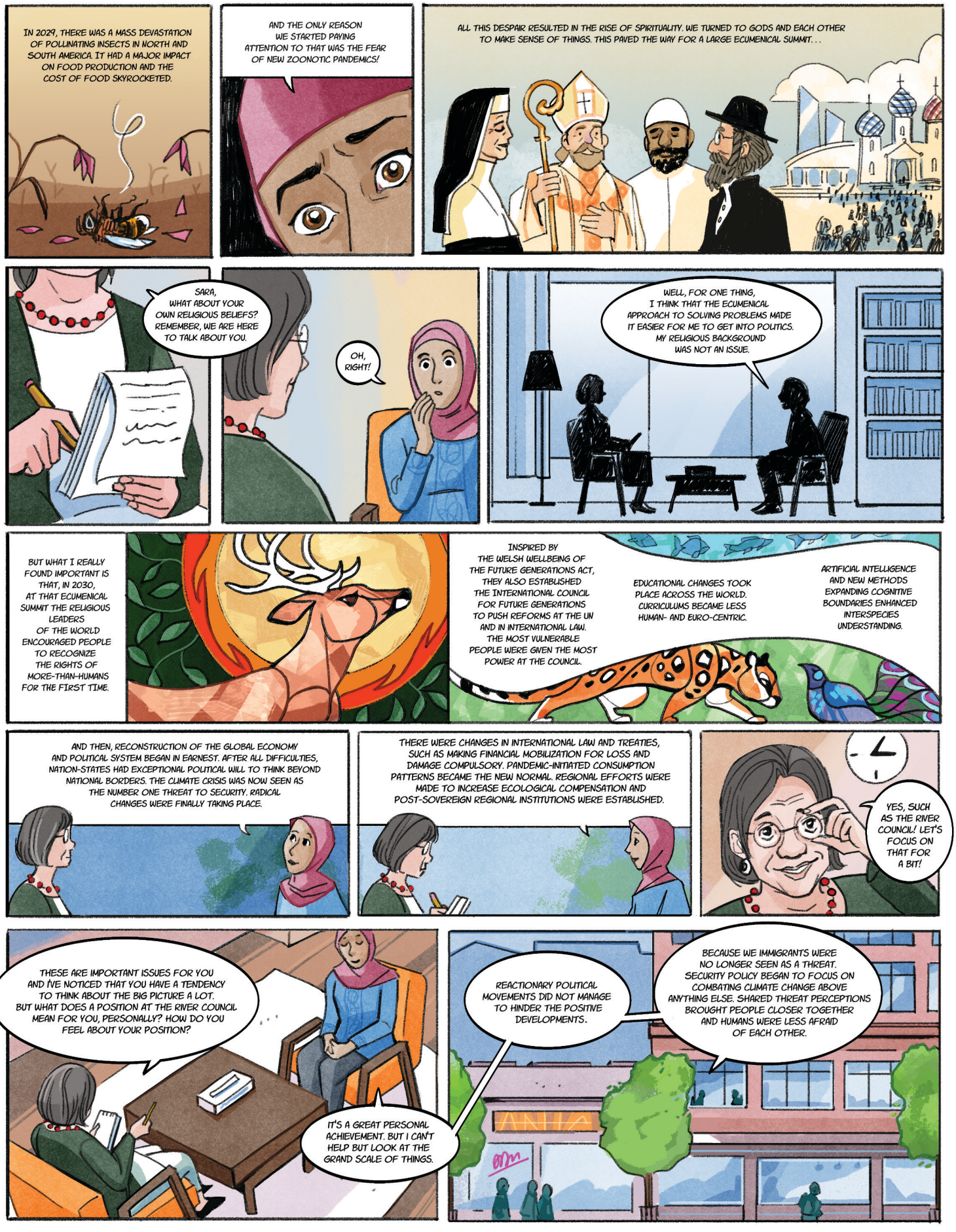

MAR 29 2035, UTSJOKI, ELECTIONEERING
1ST DAY
HEY, WOULD YOU LIKE TO SCAN MY QR CODE? WE'VE GOT FREE HERBS!
HERBS, COOL!
BUT WHAT ABOUT THE BIG PICTURE? WILL YOU. . . UMMM. . . DO SOMETHING ABOUT THE SMALL ISLAND STATES AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLES?
WELL, THOSE WHO SUFFER MORE FROM GLOBAL HEATING ALREADY HAVE A VETO RIGHT AT THE UN.
MY PARTY TRIUMPHANTLY ADVOCATED PRE-EMPTIVE CLIMATE AND CLIMACIDE LAWS AT THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS.
VOTE 7
SARA DAOUD
MODERATES
5TH DAY
MM, HERBS! PERFECT FOR MY TAGLIATELLE!
PLEASE HELP YOURSELF! WOULD YOU LIKE TO SCAN MY CAMPAIGN CODE?
HEH, ALRIGHT. BUT WHY WOULD I VOTE FOR YOU, MODERATE?
MY PARTY HAS BEEN ACTIVE IN ENCOURAGING INVESTMENTS IN CARBON-NEUTRAL ACTIVITIES, DRAFTING CORPORATE PLANET RESPONSIBILITY GUIDELINES AND ENGAGING FOSSIL COMPANIES WITH A NEW IDENTITY.
WE ARE PRO-BUSINESS ALTHOUGH WE HAVE ABANDONED OLD IDEAS OF PROFITS, CONSUMPTION AND OWNERSHIP.
9TH DAY
HEY! DOES YOUR LOT SUPPORT THESE RECENT WAVES OF ECOTERRORISM, ECOFASCISM AND CLIMATE-MOTIVATED COUPS?
AS IS THE CASE WITH MANY FAITH-BASED COMMUNITIES, OUR IMAM FAREED HUSSAIN TAKES CLIMATE ISSUES SERIOUSLY.
BUT HE IS OF COURSE ALWAYS ADVOCATING PEACEFUL MEANS AND NEGOTIATION.
AT HOME
I'M EXHAUSTED! ASHAN, DO YOU THINK THIS IS GOING TO BE TOO MUCH FOR ME TO HANDLE?
SARA, I BELIEVE IN YOU! YOUR WORK IS IMPORTANT. REMEMBER: VERILY, WITH THE HARDSHIP, THERE IS RELIEF.

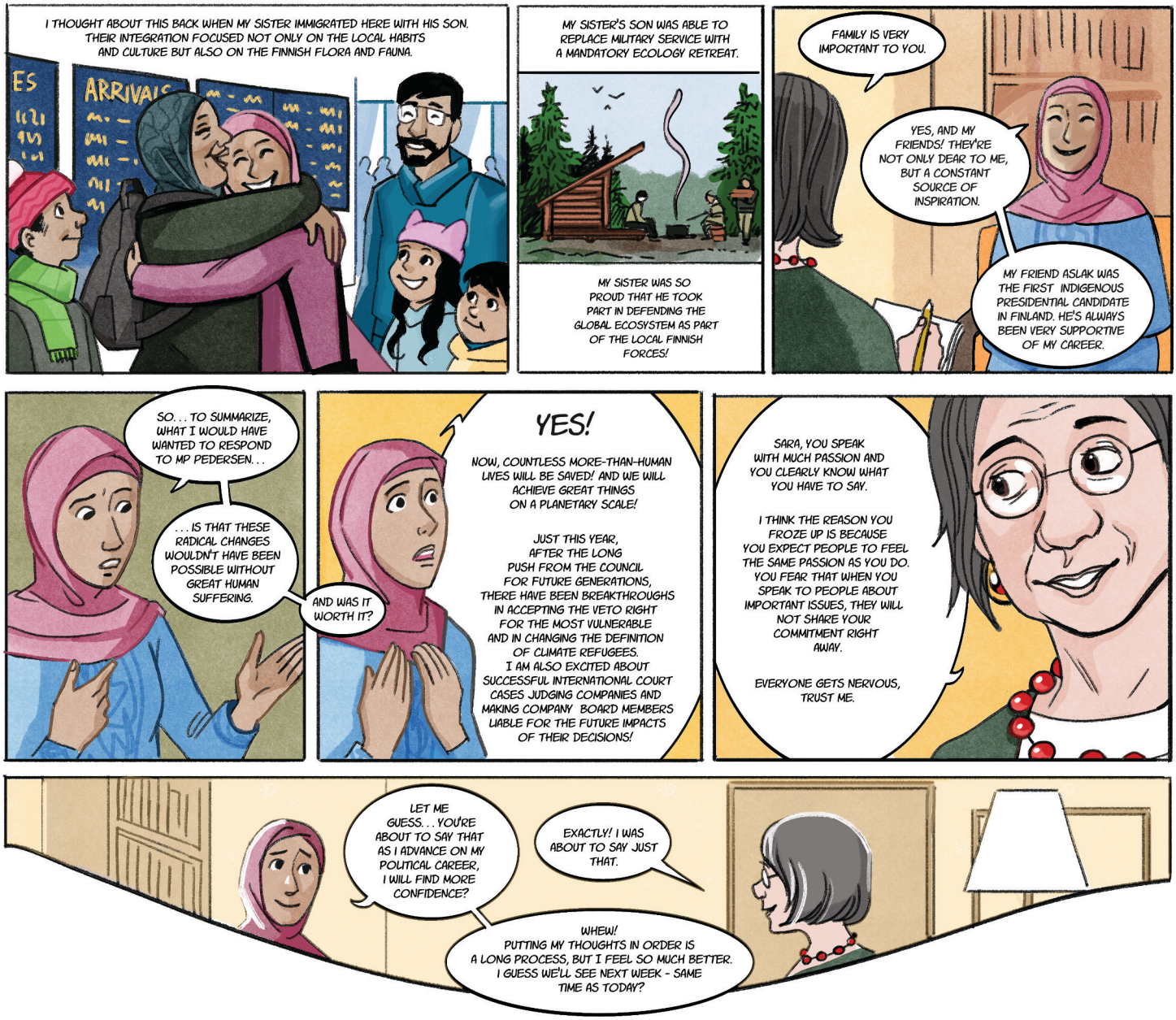
AUG 27 2035, DEATNU RIVER COUNCIL HALL



AUG 30 2035, THERAPIST'S APPOINTMENT




IN 2029, THERE WAS A MASS DEVASTATION OF POLLINATING INSECTS IN NORTH AND SOUTH AMERICA. IT HAD A MAJOR IMPACT ON FOOD PRODUCTION AND THE COST OF FOOD SKYROCKETED.
AND THE ONLY REASON WE STARTED PAYING ATTENTION TO THAT WAS THE FEAR OF NEW ZOONOTIC PANDEMICS!
ALL THIS DESPAIR RESULTED IN THE RISE OF SPIRITUALITY. WE TURNED TO GODS AND EACH OTHER TO MAKE SENSE OF THINGS. THIS PAVED THE WAY FOR A LARGE ECUMENICAL SUMMIT. . .
SARA, WHAT ABOUT YOUR OWN RELIGIOUS BELIEFS? REMEMBER, WE ARE HERE TO TALK ABOUT YOU.
OH, RIGHT!
WELL, FOR ONE THING, I THINK THAT THE ECUMENICAL APPROACH TO SOLVING PROBLEMS MADE IT EASIER FOR ME TO GET INTO POLITICS. MY RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND WAS NOT AN ISSUE.
BUT WHAT I REALLY FOUND IMPORTANT IS THAT, IN 2030, AT THAT ECUMENICAL SUMMIT THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS OF THE WORLD ENCOURAGED PEOPLE TO RECOGNIZE THE RIGHTS OF MORE-THAN-HUMANS FOR THE FIRST TIME.
INSPIRED BY THE WELSH WELLBEING OF THE FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT, THEY ALSO ESTABLISHED THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS TO PUSH REFORMS AT THE UN AND IN INTERNATIONAL LAW. THE MOST VULNERABLE PEOPLE WERE GIVEN THE MOST POWER AT THE COUNCIL.
EDUCATIONAL CHANGES TOOK PLACE ACROSS THE WORLD. CURRICULUMS BECAME LESS HUMAN- AND EURO-CENTRIC.
ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND NEW METHODS EXPANDING COGNITIVE BOUNDARIES ENHANCED INTERSPECIES UNDERSTANDING.
AND THEN, RECONSTRUCTION OF THE GLOBAL ECONOMY AND POLITICAL SYSTEM BEGAN IN EARNEST. AFTER ALL DIFFICULTIES, NATION-STATES HAD EXCEPTIONAL POLITICAL WILL TO THINK BEYOND NATIONAL BORDERS. THE CLIMATE CRISIS WAS NOW SEEN AS THE NUMBER ONE THREAT TO SECURITY. RADICAL CHANGES WERE FINALLY TAKING PLACE.
THERE WERE CHANGES IN INTERNATIONAL LAW AND TREATIES, SUCH AS MAKING FINANCIAL MOBILIZATION FOR LOSS AND DAMAGE COMPULSORY. PANDEMIC-INITIATED CONSUMPTION PATTERNS BECAME THE NEW NORMAL. REGIONAL EFFORTS WERE MADE TO INCREASE ECOLOGICAL COMPENSATION AND POST-SOVEREIGN REGIONAL INSTITUTIONS WERE ESTABLISHED.
YES, SUCH AS THE RIVER COUNCIL! LET'S FOCUS ON THAT FOR A BIT!
THESE ARE IMPORTANT ISSUES FOR YOU AND I'VE NOTICED THAT YOU HAVE A TENDENCY TO THINK ABOUT THE BIG PICTURE A LOT. BUT WHAT DOES A POSITION AT THE RIVER COUNCIL MEAN FOR YOU, PERSONALLY? HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT YOUR POSITION?
IT'S A GREAT PERSONAL ACHIEVEMENT. BUT I CAN'T HELP BUT LOOK AT THE GRAND SCALE OF THINGS.
REACTIONARY POLITICAL MOVEMENTS DID NOT MANAGE TO HINDER THE POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTS.
BECAUSE WE IMMIGRANTS WERE NO LONGER SEEN AS A THREAT. SECURITY POLICY BEGAN TO FOCUS ON COMBATING CLIMATE CHANGE ABOVE ANYTHING ELSE. SHARED THREAT PERCEPTIONS BROUGHT PEOPLE CLOSER TOGETHER AND HUMANS WERE LESS AFRAID OF EACH OTHER.


I THOUGHT ABOUT THIS BACK WHEN MY SISTER IMMIGRATED HERE WITH HIS SON. THEIR INTEGRATION FOCUSED NOT ONLY ON THE LOCAL HABITS AND CULTURE BUT ALSO ON THE FINNISH FLORA AND FAUNA.
ARRIVALS
MY SISTER'S SON WAS ABLE TO REPLACE MILITARY SERVICE WITH A MANDATORY ECOLOGY RETREAT.
MY SISTER WAS SO PROUD THAT HE TOOK PART IN DEFENDING THE GLOBAL ECOSYSTEM AS PART OF THE LOCAL FINNISH FORCES!
FAMILY IS VERY IMPORTANT TO YOU.
YES, AND MY FRIENDS! THEY'RE NOT ONLY DEAR TO ME, BUT A CONSTANT SOURCE OF INSPIRATION.
MY FRIEND ASLAK WAS THE FIRST INDIGENOUS PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE IN FINLAND. HE'S ALWAYS BEEN VERY SUPPORTIVE OF MY CAREER.
SO... TO SUMMARIZE, WHAT I WOULD HAVE WANTED TO RESPOND TO MP PEDERSEN...
...IS THAT THESE RADICAL CHANGES WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE WITHOUT GREAT HUMAN SUFFERING.
AND WAS IT WORTH IT?
YES!
NOW, COUNTLESS MORE-THAN-HUMAN LIVES WILL BE SAVED! AND WE WILL ACHIEVE GREAT THINGS ON A PLANETARY SCALE!
JUST THIS YEAR, AFTER THE LONG PUSH FROM THE COUNCIL FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS, THERE HAVE BEEN BREAKTHROUGHS IN ACCEPTING THE VETO RIGHT FOR THE MOST VULNERABLE AND IN CHANGING THE DEFINITION OF CLIMATE REFUGEES. I AM ALSO EXCITED ABOUT SUCCESSFUL INTERNATIONAL COURT CASES JUDGING COMPANIES AND MAKING COMPANY BOARD MEMBERS LIABLE FOR THE FUTURE IMPACTS OF THEIR DECISIONS!
SARA, YOU SPEAK WITH MUCH PASSION AND YOU CLEARLY KNOW WHAT YOU HAVE TO SAY.
I THINK THE REASON YOU FROZE UP IS BECAUSE YOU EXPECT PEOPLE TO FEEL THE SAME PASSION AS YOU DO. YOU FEAR THAT WHEN YOU SPEAK TO PEOPLE ABOUT IMPORTANT ISSUES, THEY WILL NOT SHARE YOUR COMMITMENT RIGHT AWAY.
EVERYONE GETS NERVOUS, TRUST ME.
LET ME GUESS... YOU'RE ABOUT TO SAY THAT AS I ADVANCE ON MY POLITICAL CAREER, I WILL FIND MORE CONFIDENCE?
EXACTLY! I WAS ABOUT TO SAY JUST THAT.
WHEW! PUTTING MY THOUGHTS IN ORDER IS A LONG PROCESS, BUT I FEEL SO MUCH BETTER. I GUESS WE'LL SEE NEXT WEEK - SAME TIME AS TODAY?

Back in 2024, the Delphi panellists partaking in the Climate Responsibility 2035 Project perceived this vision as the most utopian of the three future endpoints. Unsurprisingly, many of them found the projected fundamental green transition unlikely to occur within the next ten years. Still, some of them highlighted that this vision was the most important of all three, as radical changes are of utmost importance to tackle the climate crisis. Clearly, many panellists had difficulty imagining plausible real-life developments that could potentially lead international society to share planet-centric norms and practices by 2035 – probably a principal cause for this vision gathering the smallest number of responses from the experts.

> MANY PANELLISTS FOUND THE PROJECTED FUNDAMENTAL GREEN TRANSITION UNLIKELY TO OCCUR WITHIN THE NEXT TEN YEARS.

As the panellists argued, a longer timespan could have allowed for imagining potential steps towards the vision. Still, many panellists were open to utopian thinking and engaged in outside-the-box thinking about alternative futures. For them, the most critical change should take place in people's minds: people should become aware that it is, to use the words of one panellist, "impossible to continue an extractive fossil-capitalist, consumerist way of life on the planet". Another highly immersed panellist echoed: "What was perceived in 2024 to be a rich life is something totally different today [in 2035]".

> THE MOST CRITICAL CHANGE SHOULD TAKE PLACE IN PEOPLE'S MINDS.

As evident in the comic strip narrating the path from 2035 to the mid-2020s, a radical planet-centric shift in international society was extremely difficult for the panellists to imagine without some sort of crisis occurring – a key reason for a tragic global health crisis becoming a decisive element in the scenario-building process. Obviously, a planet-centric shift would require fundamental changes in the organisation of political and economic practices in many societies by 2035. Several panellists underlined the role of religions and education systems in fuelling these changes: less Eurocentric and multi-species pedagogy should be introduced in schools worldwide, and various religious leaders should begin to underline planetary justice in their talks.

One panellist assumed that the emergence of multispecies harmony would probably make people more empathetic towards each other, which could result in more welcoming immigration policies in many states. What is more, another panellist suggested that expanding people's imagination and cognition with radical and innovative means would spur the planet-centric shift in international society. For instance, technological innovations could make it possible to take steps towards interspecies communication, which would advance the recognition of multispecies justice in political decision-making. In the Arctic context, many panellists viewed Indigenous leadership as an important driver of land-based policies and responsible earth-based cultures. At the same time, some panellists noted that not everybody would regard the great green socio-economic transformation as desirable, which would undoubtedly raise social backlash and generate reactionary political movements in many societies. Even in a planetary utopia, as one panellist put it, "not all species can thrive at the same time" and "some animals are more equal than others."

Five key takeaways

1. Placing planetary equity and multispecies justice at the heart of climate responsibility could facilitate the recognition of the rights of the most vulnerable and future generations in world politics and the global economy.

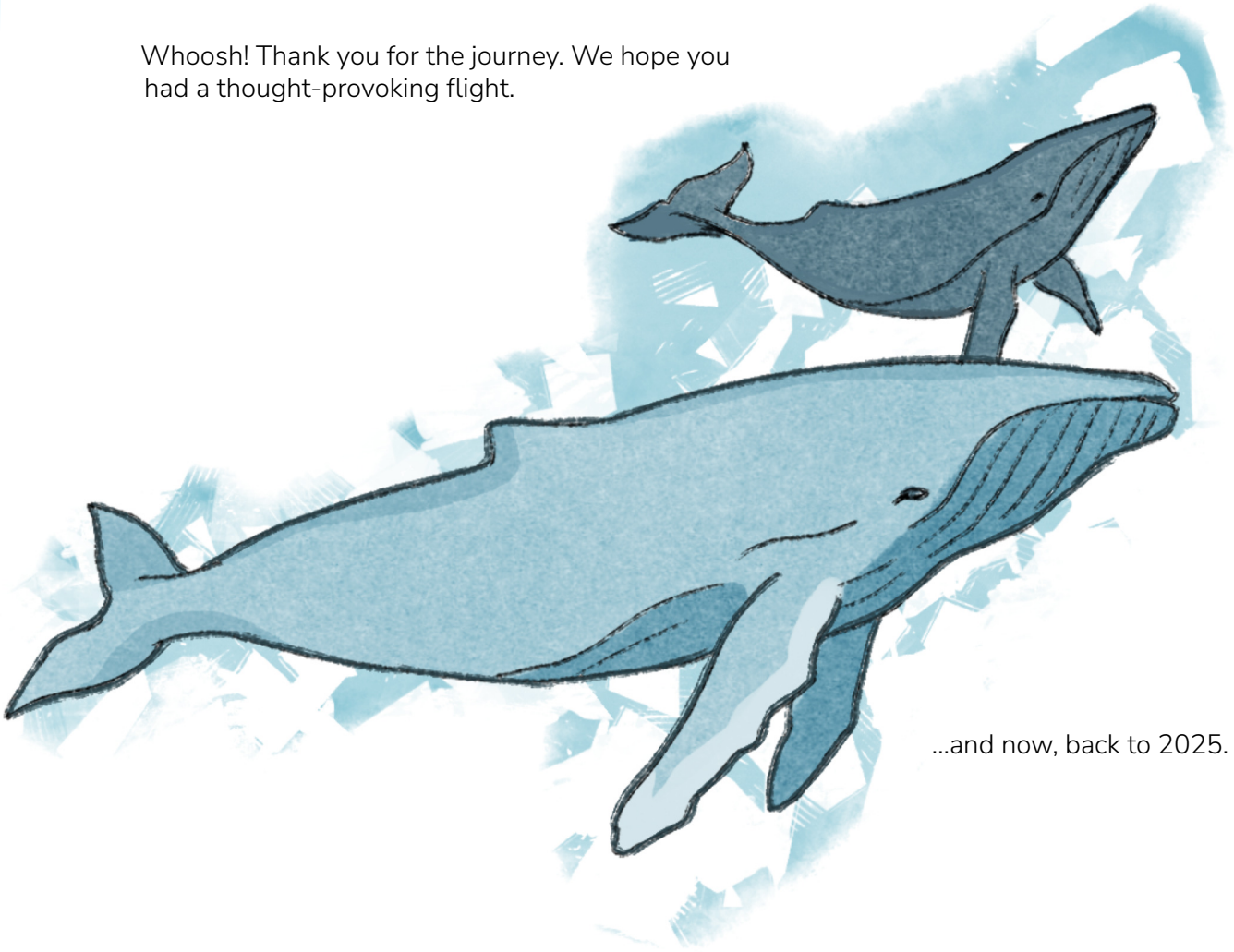
2. Education systems and religions play a key role in processes where norms are diffused and internalised, including those related to decolonisation and multispecies justice.

3. Technologies facilitating interspecies communication could help advance more-than-humans' rights in political decision-making processes.

4. Indigenous leadership may spur the emergence of alternative land-based policies and earth-based cultures.

5. A global ecological, health, economic, or social crisis may have to occur for a planetary mindset and fundamental green transition to emerge worldwide.

Whoosh! Thank you for the journey. We hope you had a thought-provoking flight.



...and now, back to 2025.

Final words

As we conclude our three-year "Climate Responsibility as a Normative Cornerstone of Multilateral Cooperation?" Project in spring 2025, the future of the Arctic and international society looks particularly grim. In contrast to the growing number of scenario exercises anticipating predominantly alarming future developments, this scenario report sought to immerse the readers in a future world of possibilities.

We presented three scenarios depicting how a strengthened norm of climate responsibility could plausibly manifest in world politics and the global economy in 2035. The first scenario portrayed an international society in which market-based approaches and instruments would make low-carbon choices the most profitable options. In contrast, the second one pictured a world in which shared feelings of climate insecurity would unite states and people to strive for changes in international governance. The third scenario, in turn, sketched a radical alternative future characterised by a fundamental normative transition towards multispecies harmony. Together, these three scenarios offered an intriguing set of the various ways the 'content' of the norm of climate responsibility can manifest and be acted out in international politics and the global economy. While not all of our panellists saw the point of thinking in utopias, many others found the exercise rewarding and useful. Some of them, for example, found the exercise to be "really good for spurring deeper and more reflective thinking" and an "excellent and engaging way to invite creative thinking".

> THE FUTURE IS SOMETHING THAT WE CAN SHAPE BY OUR CHOICES – NO MATTER HOW THE WORLD SPINS AROUND RIGHT NOW.

Our study illustrated that imagining a climate-responsible world is an extremely difficult task. Setting the target year of such imagination to 2035 particularly seemed to limit the ability of our interviewees and Delphi panellists to share meaningful insights on alternative climate utopias. Indeed, some experts argued that we are not likely to witness a climate-responsible world by 2035; the change is so radical that it needs more time to unfold. We do not contest the views of these panellists. However, we argue that setting the target year any further might have created an illusion of having more time to tackle the climate crisis.

Notably, some panellists also underlined that academic studies exploring the imagination of climate-responsible futures tend to be processes dominated by Western-centric ideas of the norm – and this process was no exception. Although significant effort was made to include experts worldwide, our research team and most of our research participants were Western-educated. While justified given our Arctic focus, this may have impacted the nature of the visions and the means to reach them. We encourage prospective studies to dive deeper into unequal power relations of climate politics and to pay particular attention to the viewpoints of the most vulnerable groups. Moreover, we recommend including more non-Western-educated stakeholders in similar expert exercises.

In addition to the magnitude of required change by 2035, the constantly changing nature of global politics made it harder to imagine and build plausible climate-responsible futures. Since our data was gathered by April 2024 and scenarios were built by the end of 2024, our research process had concluded by the time President Trump's second term began. Yet, given the drastic changes implemented during the new administration's first months, most people are now more pessimistic about any suggestion according to which the United States would enhance the level of ambition in its climate policy. Fortunately, the ten-year timespan of our exercise made it possible to include disruptions and yet build a path towards a more desirable outcome. It is also likely that President Trump's attempt to negotiate with Russia on Ukraine in early 2025 would have factored into some of the narratives – had they taken place before the data was gathered. On the contrary, it is possible that the panellist envisioning Elon Musk's rise into the US President – most likely due to his advances in green technologies – might have considered the proposal differently under the current circumstances. Against this backdrop, we wish to underline that the scenarios are best studied in their entirety, by perhaps rethinking some of their details, if need be. Moreover, we emphasise that this report is a call for further rounds of iteration on what it takes for the world to become climate-responsible in the coming years.

THIS REPORT IS A CALL FOR FURTHER ROUNDS OF ITERATION ON WHAT IT TAKES FOR THE WORLD TO BECOME CLIMATE-RESPONSIBLE IN THE COMING YEARS.

Finally, we want to stress that this report does not seek to offer naive hope but to underline that the future is something that we can shape by our choices – no matter how the world spins around right now. The three scenarios presented in the report are not built by expecting or hoping that the future world will become an accurate reflection of them. Instead, our visions are valuable if they provoke thoughts and trigger emotions, which at best can initiate a change – first in people's thinking, and perhaps later, in their behaviour. We sincerely hope that this report will have this kind of impact now and in the future.

Key findings

1

One of the key aims of the Climate Responsibility 2035 Project was to explore whether a strengthened norm of climate responsibility could support the maintenance of international peace and security by bringing the East and West together. Out of the three scenarios presented in this report, only the last one, picturing a planet-centric global ethos, demonstrated strong potential for such a universal normative basis. In light of the current political reality characterised by Realpolitik and capitalism, however, the emergence of a planet-centric global mindset seems quite unlikely. How can we facilitate genuinely global dialogue on desirable alternative futures?

2

Engaging experts from the Global East, and including voices of non-Western educated stakeholders in particular, appeared to be a difficult task in the current geopolitical environment. Clearly, this biases the constructed scenarios in this project. What could be such methods and forums of co-creating climate visions that enable, for example, Chinese stakeholders to take part actively?

3

Research participants often considered that a strengthened norm of climate responsibility would require major changes in international law, authority of states and the rules of the UN. Yet, they found it particularly challenging to identify concrete ways to advance these changes within the next ten years. What could motivate states to transfer authority to international and regional organisations advancing ambitious climate-responsible practices in transport, land use and trade, for instance? Where could the first steps towards a UN reform be taken, and who could lead such a process?

4

While acknowledging the importance of the emergence of planet-centric values and practices into the core of climate responsibility, the concrete drivers and manifestations of post-sovereignty were especially difficult to imagine for both the research participants and the research team. Therefore, prospective studies should ponder: Who are legitimate mediators to represent more-than-humans in political decision-making processes? What are the key platforms where planet-centric interpretations of climate responsibility can be discussed and put forward?

5

In addition to the establishment of an international body representing the rights of future generations, concrete means to enhance intergenerational justice were difficult to imagine in practice. How to make sure that today's policies and actions do not undermine the rights of future generations for a healthy planet? Who can represent the future generations in political and economic decision-making at different levels and sectors of society?

6

The timespan of the project revealed some surprising discontinuities in how the medium-term future is perceived among climate policy researchers and Arctic experts. They seldom framed the year 2035 as a midpoint to the long-term climate targets set for 2050 based on the Paris Agreement. Yet, reaching these long-term targets, such as the achievement of carbon neutrality, requires ambitious progress by 2035. If the implementation begins with low-hanging fruits, such as climate policies with low economic and social costs, achieving the long-term targets can turn out to be very challenging by 2050. What kinds of implications do these time perceptions have for the setting of climate targets? Do they contribute to the pushing of targets and more difficult climate policies further into the future?

7

In terms of international climate negotiations, many experts considered it unlikely that the Paris Agreement's goal of limiting global temperature rise would be met and that fairer burden-sharing, stronger compliance mechanisms, and more ambitious climate finance obligations would be established by 2035. They justified these stances with the historical experience of the slowness of climate negotiations, lack of concrete obligations for fossil fuel phaseout, and the question of burden sharing being too difficult a challenge to be solved. How do the slowness and disappointments of past negotiations limit the imagination of a more desirable future? How can the UN climate negotiations maintain their credibility in an era of populist and authoritarian efforts to weaken climate multilateralism? What are the alternatives?

8

For the research participants, it was challenging to imagine how to reduce consumption, restrict individual rights (e.g., for flying and private ownership), and establish more responsible immigration policies in the future. To what extent do these topics constitute blind spots in policymaking on a broader scale? What can be done to bring these issues more into the public debate?

9

Evaluating the visions' probability can be challenging due to great uncertainties related to climate change. The Delphi panellists perceived the likelihood of a climate-responsible future to depend on developments challenging to anticipate, such as the potentially dramatic change in major emitters' climate policies. In addition, the future number of the most vulnerable people depends on the success of climate policies. It also seemed challenging to imagine dependencies between scales: acting out of climate responsibility on local and global levels can also be in contradiction. How can these uncertainties and risk evaluations of climate change be better taken into account in drafting responsible policies?

10

The Climate Responsibility 2035 Project developed a unique cross-disciplinary research design combining International Relations, Futures Studies and comic art. The design will be equally applicable to studying other types of radical changes in different issue areas. However, we propose making the vision-building phase more inclusive by engaging a broader set of stakeholders in the interviews to spur more diversity in the alternative visions.

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Sköld Peter
Stensdal Iselin
Stith Michaela
Valkonen Jarno
Varho Vilja
Vauraste Tero
Wilson Rowe Elana

Project team



Sanna Kopra

International Relations scholar & Research Professor in Arctic geopolitics and security

Dedicated to advancing a multidisciplinary research agenda on interspecies justice

Gardener, knitter and a chicken lady

"Having extensively studied notions of responsibility in international climate politics in my doctoral dissertation a decade ago, it was a very interesting experience for me to learn how a group of established researchers and other experts frame key aspects of climate responsibility now and for the future. Applying the methods of Futures Studies is quite rare in my field, so this interdisciplinary research process was thought-provoking both empirically and theoretically.

I particularly enjoyed the making of the third scenario where the rights of nature have gradually started to be addressed in political decision-making. My next project will, in fact, delve deeper into these dynamics and develop fresh insights into planetary approaches to international politics."



Liisa Kauppila

Futurist & International Relations -oriented China scholar

Passion for political economy and the Arctic

Twin Peaks and Tolkien enthusiast

"As a futurist, I was responsible for the methodology of this project. In executing the study, one of the most rewarding dimensions was the science-art fusion. For anyone doing the same, I recommend engaging the artist in the process from its early stages. To me, the key to a smooth outcome is that the artist genuinely understands the plot basing on expert views, while the researcher must learn how to "speak" comic art, too.

From the perspective of a China researcher, being able to imagine a world in which the East and the West share certain norms was important. I am afraid we will lose the ability to think beyond conflicts, if we stop dreaming productively about cooperation."

Photo credits: Anne Raja-Hanhela, Riina Kotilainen.



Karoliina Hurri

Development geographer & postdoctoral fellow in climate governance

Curious about UN climate negotiations and questions of power asymmetries

Eternal seeker of road trip adventures and new swimming spots

"As a scholar focused on global climate politics, I found the mid-term perspective particularly fascinating. The analysis showed us that it is challenging to imagine radical changes by 2035 but if we look at history, we did not have the Paris Agreement 15 years ago. To me, the project was an eye-opening experience of how different timescales are perceived and how these perceptions can have serious implications for our climate policies.

During the project, global political turbulence caused the future of climate politics to seem grimmer than it seemed in 2021 when preparing for the project. For me, it has been a concrete example of how perceptions of what is considered radical can change rather quickly – for better or for worse. Given the urgency and radical transformations required to solve the climate crisis, it is easy to argue that radical imagination is ever more important today."



Tuuli Hypén

Illustrator and comic artist

Imagining possible futures and illustrating snippets of life

Cat enthusiast, die-hard gamer and history geek

"As a comic artist, it was my task to come up with ideas and storyboards. In this way, we could transform significant world events and abstract concepts into tangible scenarios depicting people in various everyday situations. It was quite the challenge to condense a lot of information into comic format, but thankfully we were able to combine our creative forces smoothly as a team.

It is a privilege to be able to apply comics as a medium for academic purposes. I'm also excited about the way comics make social science more accessible for a general audience."

Photo credits: Veikko Somerpuro, Tuuli Hypén.

Appendix 1. Interview matrix

	Western background	Non-Western background
International Relations	3	2
Sustainability Studies	4	1
Economics	1	2
International law	1	1

Appendix 2. Expertise matrix

	Arctic geopolitics	Arctic business and economy	Arctic governance	Arctic beings and society	Climate responsibil-ity and global politics	Climate responsibil-ity and international law	Climate responsibil-ity and practices of beings
Businesspeople	1	4	1	1	1	1	1
Research	7	3	6	7	8	5	2
Representatives of NGOs	1	2	1	5	3	2	3
State/EU officials	1	1	1		1		
Politicians	1	1	3	2	2	1	1
Indigenous Knowledge Holders	1	1	2	2		1	

LAPIN YLIOPISTO
UNIVERSITY OF LAPLAND



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University of Lapland, Arctic Centre

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