

This is the biggest story in the world

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There are currently about 7.9 billion of us living on this beautiful blue planet, peacefully circling round its sun in our tiny little corner of the great cosmos. We are all connected. Just like all other living things and beings, we can trace our origins back through deep time to the sources of life, and therefore, no matter how far from nature we distance ourselves, we are inseparable from it.

All the facts and stories in this book are unnerving enough individually. But they, too, are closely joined together - just like all of us. And once you start to connect them, understanding them as part of a web of interlinked events, they quickly gain another, far more alarming meaning. Who is responsible for piecing together that greater, holistic tale? Who do we call upon when it comes to addressing the whole picture? Some superior university of universities? Our governments? World leaders? The business world? The United Nations? The answer is no one - or rather, everyone.

We are at the beginning of a rapidly escalating climate and ecological crisis. A sustainability crisis. Technology alone will not be enough to save us, and there are unfortunately no laws or binding resolutions that put us on a path towards a safe future for life on Earth as we know it.

The transition we need in order to guarantee this safe future will not appear out of nowhere. It will come from a change in public opinion, and that change has to be created by us, using whatever effective means we can come up with. It will be driven by how we choose to communicate this story. There won't be a one-size-fits-all message that will work for everyone. Thousands - or even millions - of different approaches will be needed, but right now our resources are quite limited, to say the least. We have to *koka soppa pa en spik*, as we say in Swedish. To make do with what we have. And what we do have is morality, empathy, science, media and - in some fortunate parts of the world - democracy. These are some of the best tools we have right now and we all need to start using them.

Some say that we shouldn't involve morality because it can induce feelings of guilt and guilt is not an ideal way to create change. But what else can we do? How do we address this uncomfortable subject without upsetting anyone? How can we talk about an existential human crisis created by inequality, the exploitation of workers and nature, land theft, genocide and overconsumption without any mention of morality? Should we just pretend that the greatest threat we've ever faced is mainly an opportunity to create 'new green jobs' and a better future for all without any major changes for anyone?

There are others - a very small number of people - who think that some kind of dictatorship would be better suited to handle this huge global crisis. But there are no good dictatorships, just look at China or Putin's Russia. The idea of a non-democratic rule that would somehow seek the best for its citizens is nothing less than absurd. Justice and equal rights are essential for solving this crisis - this automatically rules out any form of dictatorship.

Democracy is the most precious thing we have, but as we have been reminded far too many times it is a fragile system, and unless the citizens are well informed and well educated in the matters that fundamentally shape their lives, democracy is easily manipulated.

That is why the contents of this book - science, knowledge and stories - are literally a matter of life and death. Not just to us, but to all future generations and to all living things and beings. There are countless issues that deserve our full attention and have to be focussed on, but the climate and ecological crisis differs from many others as it cannot be undone in the future. And the answers to all the other crises depend on us resolving this one. The climate and ecological crisis cannot be fixed later on. It cannot be left to anyone else to sort out. It has to be us, and it has to be now.

We have to start learning. We have to understand the basic facts. We have to learn to read between the lines. We need to teach each other to tell it like it is. There is no need for exaggeration; the story is bad enough already. There is no need for sugarcoating; we have to be adult enough to handle the truth. And there is no time for despair; it is never too late to saving as much as we can possibly save. This is the biggest story in the world and it must be spoken as far and as wide as our voices can carry, and much further still. It must be told in books and articles, in movies and songs, at breakfast tables, lunch meetings and family gatherings, in lifts, at bus stops and in rural shops. In schools, boardrooms and market places. At airports, in gyms and in bars. In the fields, in the warehouses and on the factory floors. At union meetings, political workshops and football games. In kindergartens and old people's homes. In hospitals and car-repair shops. On Instagram, TikTok and the evening news. On dusty country roads and in the streets and alleys of out towns and cities. Everywhere, all the time.

It has been estimated that we humans who are alive today make up 7 per cent of all homo sapiens that have ever lived. We are all related, in time and space. Together, we stretch back through time and forward into our common future. Thanks to our ability to observe, study, remember, evolve, adapt, learn, change and tell stories, we have gained enough information and knowledge to begin safeguarding our living conditions and our well-being. This has given us an unprecedented possibility to create a fair and affluent world. But that enormous collective achievement - perhaps unique in the entire cosmos - is slipping through our fingers. Up until now, we have been failing. We have allowed greed and selfishness - the opportunity for a very small number of people to make unimaginable amounts of money - to stand in the way of our common well-being.

But now you and I have been given the historic responsibility to set things right. We have the unfathomably great opportunity to be alive at the most decisive time in the history of humanity. The time has come for us to tell this story, and perhaps even change the ending. Together, we can still avoid the worst consequences. We can still avoid catastrophe and start to heal the wounds that we have inflicted. Together, we can do the seemingly impossible. But make no mistake - no one else is going to do it for us. This is up to us, here and now. You and me.