

Grandparents for Future. Voluntary Work and Social Media

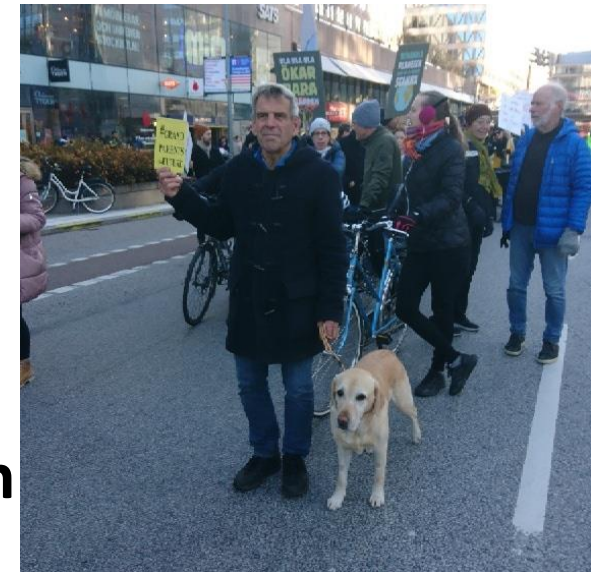
Lena Hammarbäck & Bengt Sundbaum

Island 27-28 September 2023



Lena and Bengt - Grandparents

- Lena:
 - Retired psychologist
 - Worked in school, in occupational health care and as an organisational psychologist.
- Bengt:
 - Former teacher, Public Health Officer and, before my retirement, the Government Offices
- Both of us:
 - Volunteered answering mail sent to Fridays For Future's (FFF) international mailbox
 - Members of the Nature Conservation Association of Sweden and in End Ecoside Sweden.
 - **Main incentive: three children and six grandchildren**



Climate Work in Sweden Today

- The new Government is dependent on the climate denying party *Sweden Democrats*
- Severe cuts in climate budget, Sweden's climate goals won't be achieved
- Swedish Forest Lobby is powerful and is focused on shortterm profit interest
- Still many Swedes – especially elderly, women and students – are aware of the climate change and about 50 % are positive to change their lifestyle habits and think that politics should focus more on climate measures..





...But there is a gap between peoples concerns about the climate change and how they vote in general elections



Voluntary work

(Figures from Sweden 2014 but rather similar in the Nordic countries)

- Swedes work voluntary for 131 billion Sv kr (3,32% of BNP). 3,75 milj. volunteers worked 676 milj. hours.
- Elderly (65+) contributed with 17%
- Contrary to general opinion voluntary work has increased
- After retirement, you often need a substitution for former working life and social fellowship. Voluntary work can offer that.
- Access to network and an individual social capital increases the probability for voluntary work

(Source: SCB Sweden, Ersta/Sköndal inst)



Some examples of voluntary work.

Mostly by seniors but being a grandparent is not mandatory...

- In cities all over Sweden local climate groups are active.
"Our" local climate group demonstrates every Saturday in Norrtälje.
Then we have coffee together and we have started a "study group" around Greta's latest climate book.
- In other cities: Public climate days in squares, malls ... with exhibitions, presentations, debates with invited local politicians, bicycle demonstrations, ...
- Co-operation and exchange of experiences between neighbouring local climate groups



Seniors and Internet/Social Media

65-74 years old (2022):

- 43 % active on social media (90 % of 69-79 years old in Stockholm used Internet but only 50 % of 80+)
- 5 % active in discussions about political/societal issues
- 7% (60-74 years old) do voluntary work on Internet (moderating, administrating, self help sites...)



Many “for Future groups” on Fb

Saturdays for Future
Grandparents for Future
People for Future
Psychologists and psychotherapists
Fridays for Future-Sweden
Birdwatchers for Future
Pilgrims walk for Future
Parents for Future
Scientists for Future
Social workers for Future
Vegans for Future
Musicians for Future
Politicians and bureaucrats for Future
Teachers for Future
Artists for Future

Lots of towns and regions have local/regional
climate groups



Grandparents for future is one

- Lot's of job related Fridays for Future groups but retired people (mostly with plenty of time) didn't belong to any group.
- Established as a Fb-group in December 2018 (Grandchildren not necessary)
- The word "Grandparents" has a special value stressing older generations responsibility
- No board, no formal membership, no finances but an inner circle of administrators



Grandparents for future – 1000 Fb-members

- We support Greta Thunberg and FFF
- Posts on the site is exclusively devoted to climate and the fight against global warming. 40 posts last month.
- Every Friday members demonstrate outside the residence of the prime minister At the same time FFF demonstrates at Mynttorget
- Members of the Fb group can also invite to other activities like writing articles, joint demonstrations with other climate groups, being volunteers at FFF demonstrations, grief marches, "slow demonstrations"
...



Our article in Scottish Geographical Journal distributed at COP26 in Glasgow:
We, grandparents, object to passing a wrecked climate to coming generations!



Demands on our Politicians

- Listen to the climate research
- Obey the Swedish climate law
- Take decisions that secure the future of our grandchildren



Lessons Learned

- Seniors can be a complement to young people but shall not take initiatives from them. Just support "from behind" if necessary. For example we have volunteered at FFF:s demonstrations.
- Being a social media group; pros and cons:
 - In the hands of Facebook
 - Internet trolls
 - No formal democracy which means that the administrators have a great responsibility
 - We can't apply for economic support
- + It is easy to inform the group what's going on in different parts of Sweden and to keep contact
- + Being a member gives a feeling of being a part of a movement. Not struggling alone
- + It's a forum "for all" to discuss important climate related issues
- + We can focus on climate issues without spending time on formalities and bureaucracy
- + You can use pictures for communication and documentation and that is often very powerful!

Why being an old climate activist?

- 28 % of Swedish voters are 65+ but only 4 % of the MP:s
- The climate crises is mainly caused by us
- Young people´s protests are often neglected by decisionmakers
- Consern for future generations are gradually growing with age
- Many of us have a large network
- Plenty of time, experience of life,
- Hand in hand with young generations we can still contribute to secure a good future life
- We know from before that activism can be worthwhile

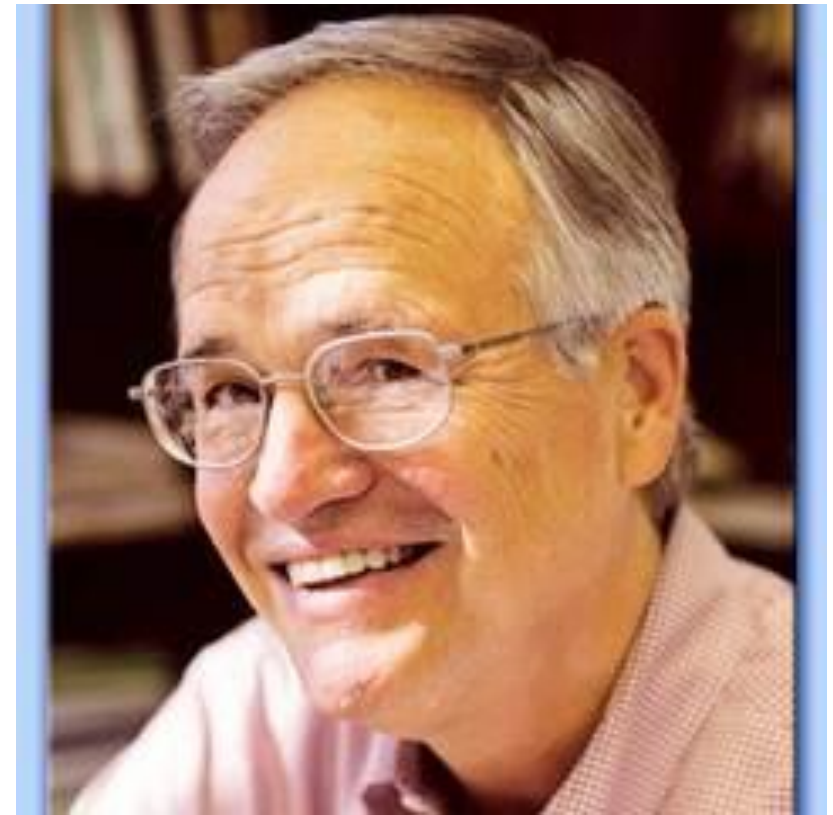


Gus Speth:

(Founder of the World Resources Institute and former director of the UNDP)

“I used to think the top environmental problems were biodiversity loss, ecosystem collapse and climate change. But I was wrong. The top environmental problems are selfishness, greed, and apathy..... To combat those you don’t need more facts but nothing less than a cultural and spiritual revolution. And we, researchers, don’t know how to do that”

Maybe grandparents can contribute ...





Thank You for Listening!