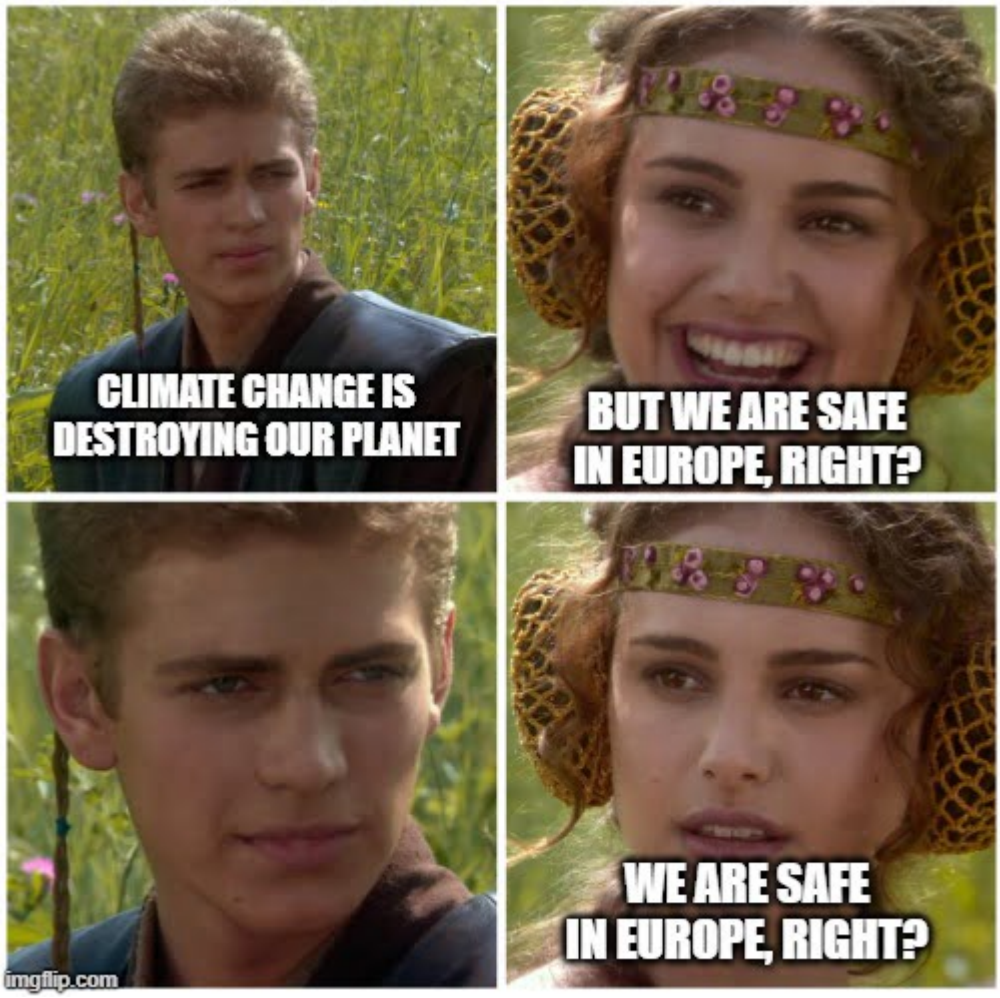
No, Germany Will Not Be Free From Climate Change Consequences

Maybe you still believe that rich, western countries will go free from the consequences of climate change. Brace yourself for a reality check.

Until now, we westerners have relied on an assumption. Western countries will not suffer too much from the effects of climate change. That assumption is wrong. I believed it as well. After all, we have so many possibilities, that other countries don't have. We have enormous wealth we stole from our former colonies. We have good education systems, that can produce great minds to come up with solutions. And, if you live in central or northern Europe like me, the climate is very temperate. How bad can it get?



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Well, let me give you a little glimpse of how climate change affects Germany. Germany is one of the wealthiest countries on the planet. We can continue, as usual, right?

Record Droughts and Forest Fires

As I write this, it is 38 degrees outside. This is a common occurrence now.

Image from [Statista.de]

Look at the chart. It shows the highest recorded temperatures in Germany. We began measuring in 1881. Do you notice something? None of them happened prior to 1980. Since then, we have been breaking record temperatures in the summer over and over.

The heat intensity is not the only thing that changes. We also get prolonged periods of drought. I thought that the drought in 2018 was a unique event. It wasn't. Since then, we even surpassed it. The soil is as dry as it was then. I can see it on my vegetables. They scream for water. Even mulching doesn't help much. It does rain from time to time. But the water just evaporates. It does not penetrate the soil.

The forests outside Berlin are extremely dry. And there are a lot of forests. Right now, 400 firefighters are busy fighting a huge forest fire just outside Berlin. Yesterday afternoon it was only a size of 40 hectares. The firefighters were confident they would be able to control it. By now, they lost control. The size is now over [200 hectares].

Forest fires are becoming extremely common. It does not help, that the majority of forests are monoculture, that has been planted for extracting profit. Most of them are pine trees. Pine trees burn well. Also, these forests are more water craving. Which exacerbates another issue.

Water Shortages

Do you know what happens when you get record droughts year after year? Water shortages. Germany is no exception. Germany loses about 2.5 Gigatonnes of water per year. It is in fact one of the regions with the highest water loss worldwide.

In the Berlin-Brandenburg region, water levels are dropping fast. A year ago, Elon Musk laughed about it. But Tesla's new Gigafactory in Grünheide consumes as much water as a city of 40.000 people. Another example of why producing more EVs will not turn this around. The current growth paradigm just won't work. The fight over the water supply is not finished.

The has serious effects on agricultural and industrial production. Degrowth will happen, whether we like it or not. That shiny new Gigafactory will only be able to run for so long without water. There is a side effect of dropping water levels. Pollutants from industry and agriculture become more concentrated in the groundwater. In other words, our remaining water gets poisoned faster. The aquifers are not getting filled up by rain either. If the soil is too dry, the water just evaporates or runs off instead of turning into groundwater. Which also is a major challenge elsewhere in Germany.

Last Year's Floods Were Driven by Climate Change

Everybody remembers the footage from last July. Cities in western Germany got washed away by record floods.

The region experienced the most intense rainfalls in decades. The soil could not absorb the water. Also, human construction seals the soil in many places. Once the water comes, there is only one way for it to go. This was the case in Ahrtal, a region which is in a valley. The water had no other way to go. More than 160 people died.

The authorities' response to the warnings was not exactly stellar. That tells you, that you can not trust our leaders to have the necessary competence to mitigate the worst.

Local Events Driven by Climate Change Have Global Impacts

Of course, you could argue that all this is just some local issues. Sure, some people will lose their houses. A few villages are gonna burn down. People will be forced to stop watering their lawns. Who cares? But all this has wider consequences.

- Insurance companies will refuse to issue policies to homeowners
- Agricultural production will diminish
- Our infrastructure will deteriorate
- Supply chains will get even more disrupted
- Frequent disasters will have huge economic consequences for taxpayers

- There will be disruptions in foreign trade

There is no getting back to normal. Our supermarket shelves will get more empty. Inflation will keep rising. Not to mention the fact that everything we produce depends on fossil fuels. That includes your bread. The era of cheap, mass-produced items will come to a forcible end. Currently, there is a paper shortage. That shortage is also driven by increased prices for fossil fuels.

I do not know, where this will end. But I am certain that the rich north will not go free. We will just be the dominoes that fall in the end.