ENGAGE - Climate crisis and geopolitical uncertainties - the engagement of young people

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Carlos Smaniotto Costa[1,2]
Investigador(a) Responsável

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Duração do Projeto

Membros de equipa e UI&D de acolhimento:

Carlos Smaniotto Costa[1,2], Nagayamma Aragão[1,2], Diogo Mateus[1,2]

1 - Terr.A.ID, ECATI, Lusófona University

2 - CIAUD, Research Centre for Architecture, Urbanism and Design, Lisbon School of Architecture, Universidade de Lisboa

Abstract:

Climate crisis and geopolitical shifts challenge society more than ever. Both threaten security, development and sustainability efforts, affecting vulnerable populations in particular. In actual times, with the increasingly polarised society, the debates on climate change, its consequences and who the culprits and who the victims are, are being constantly questioned and often denied. The increasing combination of factors, like deliberate disinformation campaigns, political and economic interests, ideological positions, to name a few, are particularly worrying, as they risk not only undermining efforts to safeguard the planet, but also how we all live together and share the resources. Geopolitical shifts and uncertainties are indeed jeopardising environmental and climate actions and leading to a decline in international cooperation on climate action, hindering efforts to transition to a low-carbon economy. Navigating through such

challenges requires both individual and collective action, this in turn, calls for new forms of collective agency to drive necessary transformations. ENGAGE will advance knowledge in how young people, from a range of ethnic and cultural backgrounds living in Lisbon (Portugal) and Bristol (United Kingdom), face climate change, geopolitical uncertainties and willingness to participate in actions towards their mitigation.

The objective is not only to clarify young people's understanding of how socio-economic and geopolitical issues relate to climate change but also to better understand how their different perspectives encourage various types of 'climate action' and attitudes towards changing our economic practices. To achieve this, ENGAGE will establish an open research path to involve young researchers from Urbanismo (Lisbon) and the master's programme in Sustainable Development in Practice (UWE Bristol), to co-create the research design, perform the survey, reflect findings and report insights.

Partners:

Alignment with SDG's:

Understanding young people's opinions and perceptions about climate change and today's geopolitical uncertainties is a practical contribution to achieving the UN' 17 SDGs. Youth are not only future decision-makers; they are already shaping public debate, consumption patterns, voting behaviour, and community action.

ENGAGE's contribution is especially clear for SDG 13 (Climate Action). Perceptions influence whether young people adopt low-carbon lifestyles, support mitigation measures, or engage in adaptation at the local level. Mapping youth attitudes helps identify barriers such as eco-anxiety,

misinformation, or a feeling of powerlessness, and it also highlights motivators like community identity, innovation, and solidarity. With that knowledge, climate communication can move from generic messaging to targeted approaches that increase participation and resilience.

Youth perceptions also connect strongly to SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions). Geopolitical uncertainty (such as conflicts, energy insecurity, cyber threats, disinformation, and migration pressures) affects trust in government and media, social cohesion, and willingness to cooperate across differences. By studying how young people make sense of these dynamics, institutions can design more transparent decision-making, strengthen civic education, and improve public communication. This reduces polarisation and helps protect democratic participation, which is essential for long-term sustainable development.