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## Visual report of COP26

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# Visual report of COP26

by Stéphanie Heckman

as part of #ClimateVisualStories







As a visual practitioner my job is to draw people's thoughts, and in so doing, help people make sense of them. The visual summaries I create live during conferences aim to capture more than just the dry content, but also the dynamic, the mood and the unspoken. It is a tool more aligned with how our associative, sensory-fed brains work, for coping with the deluge of information that faces us these days. And it's a tool that can help overcome language, learning and other barriers to access.

When I discovered in January 2020 that the next Conference of the Parties, the annual UN climate conference, was to be held in Glasgow, just across the Irish Sea from where I live, I saw in it an incredible opportunity to offer our skills as visual practitioners in service of the most critical global challenge we collectively face.

I committed to "bringing a crew of visual practitioners to COP26 in Glasgow" as an ambitious 'stretch goal' that January, and spent the following 22 months incrementally moving towards making it a reality. There was so much to learn as an outsider, starting with the question, 'Who actually organises a COP?' There were adventures along the way, most notably being commissioned to provide the 'visual storytelling' for the UN Climate Dialogues in November 2020, the online summit replacing the postponed COP26, with a crew of eight visual practitioners. This crew stayed together in loose formation under the name #climatevisualstories, with a shared mission of using our visual skills for the benefit of climate action.

After that, I spent many months reaching out to over a hundred people and organisations, looking for official 'observer organisations' to partner with at COP, and trying to get accredited myself, as there's no entering the 'Blue Zone' without a 'badge'. I learned the badges are much coveted and a source of controversy among those who wish the COP be more accessible to the global citizens whose future depends on these conferences. This year badges were particularly hard to come by with smaller delegations and travel restrictions due to the ongoing covid pandemic.

It looked highly unlikely a badge was still forthcoming, but two weeks before the conference was to commence, I was offered one. Luckily, I was in the privileged position of being resourced and free to go, and had stubbornly been preparing as if all would go ahead, so I was ready. With a car loaded full with all the visual materials I possessed, I boarded the ferry to Scotland, to draw all I would see and hear during two weeks in Glasgow, accompanied for some of the time both in person and virtually by colleagues from the #climatevisualstories network.

Committing what you hear and see to paper is an act of power, since distilling the 'essence' and chronicling it for posterity is inevitably a subjective process. Therefore, my role as a visual practitioner is to be an impartial witness and a sponge to what goes on around and inside me, let it all pass through, in order to reflect the whole situation fairly and truthfully. It's demanding but very fulfilling work. What you'll see on the following pages is an honest account of what it was like for me to be there. Not just the dry outcomes, but also the tense dynamics of the world's nations gathered, the aggravated mood with the pace of proceedings in the face of climate emergency, and the unspoken layers of truth, power, and intent, as well as the very human, important questions this raised about my role in all of this.

My mission, as I set it for myself, was to be the eyes and ears on the ground, translating a fraction of the deluge into more digestible visual form, to all those worried about our world, but with no access to the multilateral process that will influence her fate.

To you.

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink. The signature consists of a large, fluid, looped initial 'S' followed by the name 'Stephanie Heckman' in a cursive script.

@stephaniesaloli  
#climatevisualstories

[www.stephanieheckman.com](http://www.stephanieheckman.com)  
[www.climatevisualstories.com](http://www.climatevisualstories.com)



# COP26 Visual Summary 1: COP101

A BRIEF HISTORY  
Earth Summit  
est. 1992  
in Rio

Kyoto Protocol  
1997  
at COP3

1st legally  
binding  
treaty

largely ineffectual  
cos Bill Clinton  
couldn't get it thru  
Congress back home

Finally,  
18 years later

Paris  
Agreement

legally binding BUT  
voluntary  
**NDCs**  
nationally  
determined  
contributions

31/10/2021

update every  
5 years

2015  
at COP21  
"seriously" at  
COP21

to add up to

1.5°C  
2°C MAX  
global  
heating

New  
NDCs?

COP26

Net  
zero  
by  
2050?

Keep  
1.5°C  
alive?

"Gobbledigook"

COP PRESIDENT

#COP26

#ClimateVisualStories  
stephaniecheckman.com

CONFERENCE of the PARTIES

COP

hosted this  
year by

UK  
+ ITALY

organises annual

UNFCCC

Climate Change  
Secretariat  
of the  
UN

Gets its science  
from the  
IPCC

latest:  
Avg  
2021

197 countries  
party to the

Welcome to  
Glasgow

THIS FIRST DAY WAS ABOUT  
REGISTRATION, MILLING ABOUT THE LABYRINTHINE HALLS, TUNNELS, WORKSPACES & VAST EXHIBITION SPACES, and TUNING INTO THE  
PROCEPURAL OPENING



SOURCES: UNFCCC.INT / THE GUARDIAN



# COP26 Visual Summary 1: COP101

Visual summary of the first day at COP26! Getting through registration, the lovely registration desk guy Ian taking away my final disbelief that this was actually happening, and roaming around the VAST Blue Zone for a solid three hours trying to get my bearings, and still not having seen it all and still getting lost in the immensity of the venue and the masses of delegates.

Spotted:

- Today is only for the procedural openings (in a gobbledidook language I could not follow), but all workspaces scattered throughout the large halls were already choc-a-bloc, with very industrious looking folk working away on their laptops, on the floor if need be.
- Police and coastguard and anything guard-esque stationed everywhere you turn around the Scottish Events Campus, including on my lovely bike commute across the Squiggly Bridge and along the river Clyde.
- Halls and stairs and exhibition spaces and walkways and temporary buildings and theatres and lounges and work desks and catering halls and screens with stark climate warnings and flashy tech or nature-based solutions and endlessly more of all of the above.





# COP26 Visual Summary 2: Goals of COP26

1/11/2021

Today and tomorrow, during the World Leaders Summit, heads of state will set the tone and ambition, for the negotiators to work to on their behalf.

## 1 MITIGATE

Global Net Zero by 2050

+ aligned reductions by 2030

45% of 2010 levels

switch to renewables

Phase out coal

& electric vehicles

"this is where the Domsday device begins to tick. defuse it. We must - Boris Johnson"

## 2 ADAPT to PROTECT

protect & restore NATURE

resilient infrastructure for COMMUNITIES

"Either we stop it, or it stops us." Antonio Guterres

NDCs that add up to the global 2.7°C rise currently

# KEEP 1.5 ALIVE

## 3 MOBILISE FINANCE

the \$100 BN / YEAR rich countries promised at Copenhagen in 2009



PUBLIC



PRIVATE

"the private sector is ready to do its part." Prince Charles

We're at 1.2°C rise already

We know what must be done, the finance is there, can the political will be mobilised? What of this will be achieved?

## 4 WORK TOGETHER to DELIVER

Operationalise the Paris Agreement

businesses

governments

civil society

"Is this how it is doomed to end?" David Attenborough

"PLEASE, OPEN YOUR HEARTS"

Elizabeth Wathuti



#ClimateVisualStories Stephanie henkman.com



## COP26 Visual Summary 2: Goals of COP26

Today marked the public opening of the COP26, with speeches from global leaders as well as climate activists. It marked the start of the two-day World Leaders Summit, the moment where heads of state set the tone and ambition for the negotiations, which are left to their delegations to get stuck into during the rest of the two weeks.

I wasn't in the Blue Zone today, which was due to be crowded and chaotic with all the world leaders and their entourage present. Instead, I roamed civil society spaces, watched the live broadcast of the opening speeches, and in the evening I joined the first movement assembly of the COP26 Coalition. It was there that I was jolted awake from my daytime reverie.

The contrast to the lofty halls of the Blue Zone was immense. Here in the cosy community space of the Adelaide Place Baptist Church the speakers – veterans of many frustrated years in COPs and on the frontlines of climate justice struggles – spoke with candor, anger, and venom about the hypocrisy and hot air of the COP process, the lack of substantive action throughout decades of formal climate negotiations, the countless lives lost because of wasted time, and the power plays of the Global North and corporates at the expense of the Global South, local and indigenous communities, workers, and poor people.

As much as I feel at a loss in the Blue Zone, so was I aware of also being an outsider in the climate justice circles. I do not have the lived experience of injustice to feel their anger in the same way. I am sympathetic to their views, though hardly, as they say, a 'comrade'. So who am I? I'm not sure today, as I feel myself diminish amidst such outspoken standpoints. Today I am what my badge says I am, an observer.

So I observe, I listen and learn, in both extreme opposites of the climate action spaces gathered here in Glasgow. That I can do, and draw what I see and hear. Because underneath both the polish of the COP delegates, and the frustration of the climate justice activists, there is the same thing I too share with them – our great potential as humanity to care. And "that desperate hope," as Sir David Attenborough put it in his impassioned speech today, "is why we're here."

Asad Rehman  
addressing the  
COP26 Coalition  
movement  
assembly



Still from UNFCCC footage of  
Elizabeth Wathuti addressing the  
World Leaders Summit during COP26





# COP26 Visual Summary 3: Getting around

2/11/2021

A bird's view tour of the COP26 related spaces I've been exploring.

## Blue Zone

at the Scottish Events Campus  
ACCESS for ACCREDITED DELEGATES,  
OBSERVERS & PRESS

UN + delegations  
offices

Plenary halls  
& press conference  
rooms

Pavilions

Meeting rooms

Side events

Media centre

Entry, security  
& registration

My cycle  
commute



Squinty  
bridge

Squiggly  
bridge

Sponsor  
pavilions

Science  
exhibits

Art installations

Music performances

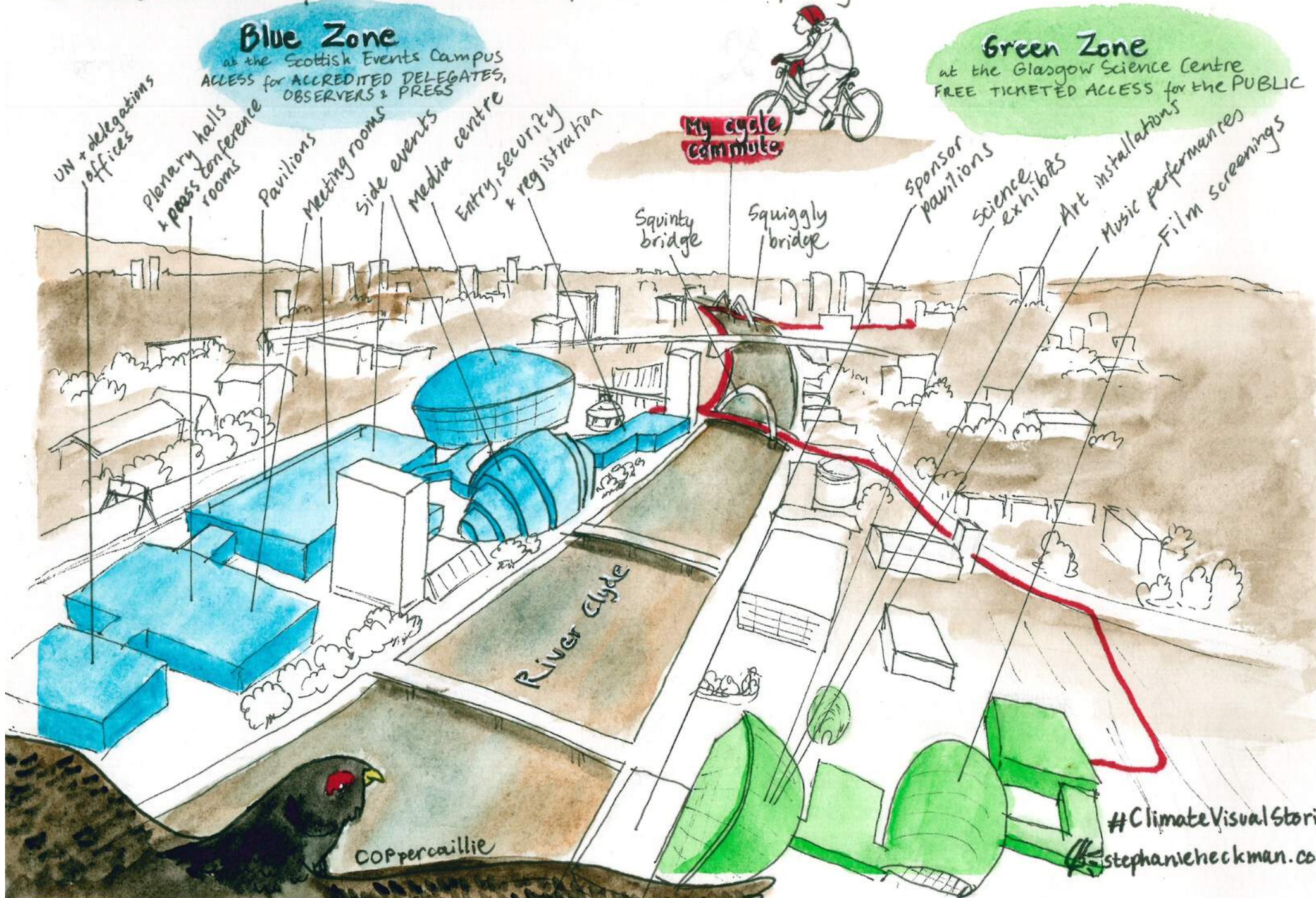
Film screenings

River Clyde

COPpercaillie

#ClimateVisualStories

stephanieheckman.com





# COP26 Visual Summary 3: Getting around

Day 3 of my COP26 adventures and already I'm running into the limits of my energy.

- Standing in queues for almost 2 hours to get into the Blue Zone under circumstances of questionable COVID control (luckily for me I was able to get in after that no problem, as opposed to the wheelchair using Israeli environment minister who scandalously got turned away yesterday when she got to the end of the queue for lack of wheelchair accessibility into the venue)
- Getting a first peek at the immense and overpowering pavilion hall that opened yesterday (where I saw some supposed climate celebrity get almost trampled in a pavilion corner in a media and audience scrum)
- Trekking between the Blue Zone and Green Zone for different events (the contrast between the intense work vibe of diplomats sitting in every corner and on any surface behind their laptops and school kids running around science exhibits is remarkable, but the hubbub levels are the same in the two venues)



Green Zone venue

All that took me to about 1pm and at that point I was so run down I had to cancel the rest of my plan for the day, go home and conk out for a solid 1.5 hours. I had prepared myself for overwhelm and running out of energy to be my main risks, but in these first days I had barely programmed anything and spoke to almost no one. And I don't even have to do any of the work of these countless delegates that are in and out of meetings and committees and whatever else they're doing. Even still, just being in those spaces drains the life force right out of you. Gradually, I'm figuring out what does and doesn't work for me, and how much I can realistically accomplish in a day.

But at least, after three days of roaming free, I'm beginning to know my way around and can share my mental map of the official COP spaces with you.



Blue Zone venue by night



# COP26 Visual Summary 4: Climate Finance

#ClimateVisualStories @stephanieheckman.com 3/11/2021

This is the big topic on the COP26 agenda, and the theme of yesterday's programme. Many big announcements were made, but how to interpret them? I spent the day curating a crash course on climate finance, reading news & articles, watching YouTube explainers, listening to podcasts and following Twitter hashtags. But the real education came at that evening's COP26 coalition movement assembly, lifting a tip of the veil of the finance issues at the heart of the climate justice struggle.

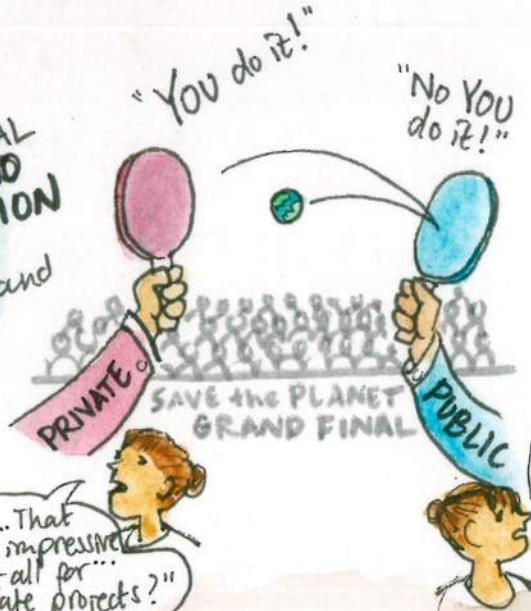
SOURCES: the Guardian, UK Govt, Jubilee Debt Campaign, COP26 Coalition



Rishi Sunak - UK Chancellor

"We're **REWIRING** the **ENTIRE** global financial system!"

The **GLASGOW FINANCIAL ALLIANCE** for **NET ZERO** brings **\$130 TRILLION** of private capital into alignment with Paris and the **1.5°C target**.  
**A \$130TN waiting to be deployed...**



And what about one of the main COP26 targets, the

**\$100 BN / yr**

Where does that figure come from? How is it broken down?

"It was a number pulled out of a hat by Hillary Clinton in Copenhagen, 2009, to break the impasse in negotiations. It wasn't based on any science or assessed need."

In fact...

The UNFCCC itself estimates the real need sits at **\$6 TN / yr.**

And those should be unconditional **GRANTS** not **LOANS** that perpetuate the debt crisis

currently 2/3 of all climate finance



34 countries worst-hit by climate disaster currently pay **5x** more in debt repayments than they can pay in climate resilience

Financial institutions & listed companies collectively **WORTH \$130TN** must now publish **NET ZERO** by 2050 **PLANS** but they're not required to divest from fossil fuels or anything...

Meanwhile...

Secretive corporate courts persist where corporates can sue governments for anything hurting their profits



Like when RWE sued the Dutch state for planning to phase out coal, after civil society had successfully sued NL for not doing enough.

No climate justice without **TRADE JUSTICE**

No climate justice without **DEBT JUSTICE**

**NORTH MUST PAY ITS CLIMATE DEBT!**

**CANCEL THE DEBT!**



# COP26 Visual Summary 4: Climate Finance

Today was all about climate finance at COP26. One of the big goals for this conference is to get developed countries to deliver \$100 BN a year in mitigation and adaptation support to developing nations. Something that was promised to them 12 years ago at Copenhagen COP15 but still fell short in 2020.

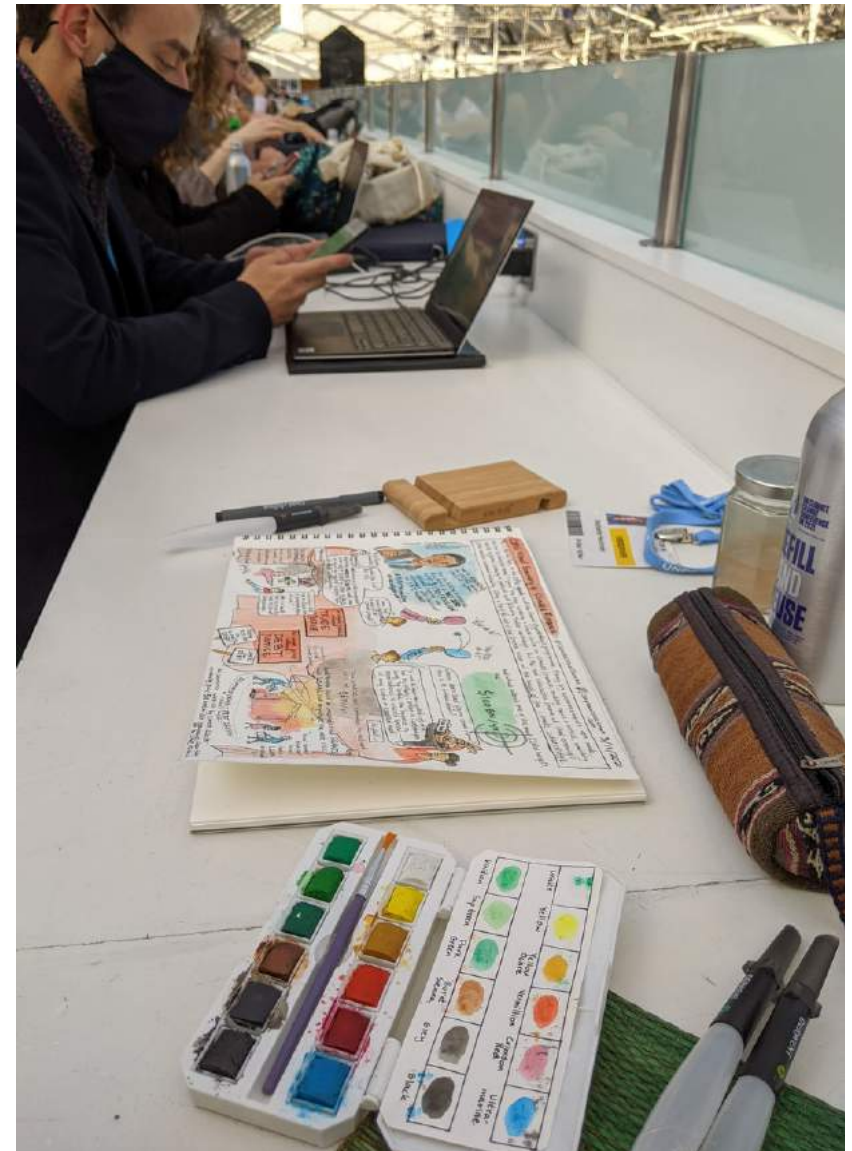
Some impressive statements were announced in the first couple days, such as Rishi Sunak's project (the UK Chancellor, or finance minister); the new Glasgow Financial Alliance for Net Zero, which encompasses 450 of the world's biggest firms, collectively managing \$130 TN in assets, or 40% of the world's financial assets. The way he announced these 130 trillion to become 'aligned with 1.5°C' and 'ready to be deployed', sounded very impressive and like we could pretty much all go home now.

There is so much going on here every day it's hard to make sense of statements such as these, especially when lacking background and context. So I spend yesterday curating a crash course in climate finance for myself, with newspaper articles, podcasts, YouTube explainers, Twitter feeds, and, most informatively, that evening's movement assembly organised by the COP26 Coalition.

Here I was finally handed some context to make sense of ridiculously big figures like 100 **billion** and 130 **trillion**. I learned that \$100 BN is a fraction of the actual climate finance need of developing nations, especially when considering that over 50 countries are in a vicious loop of debt crises, being forced to take on more loans to rebuild after climate disasters like floods and cyclones, increasing their interest repayments and reducing their capacity to build their own climate resilience.

Or the sobering context of trade rules and secretive corporate courts where big corporations can sue governments for anything hurting their profits, such as the much-needed phase out of coal.

My brain is reeling, but I'm feeling somewhat better equipped than yesterday to assess the impressive announcements coming out every day.



Blending in in Blue Zone

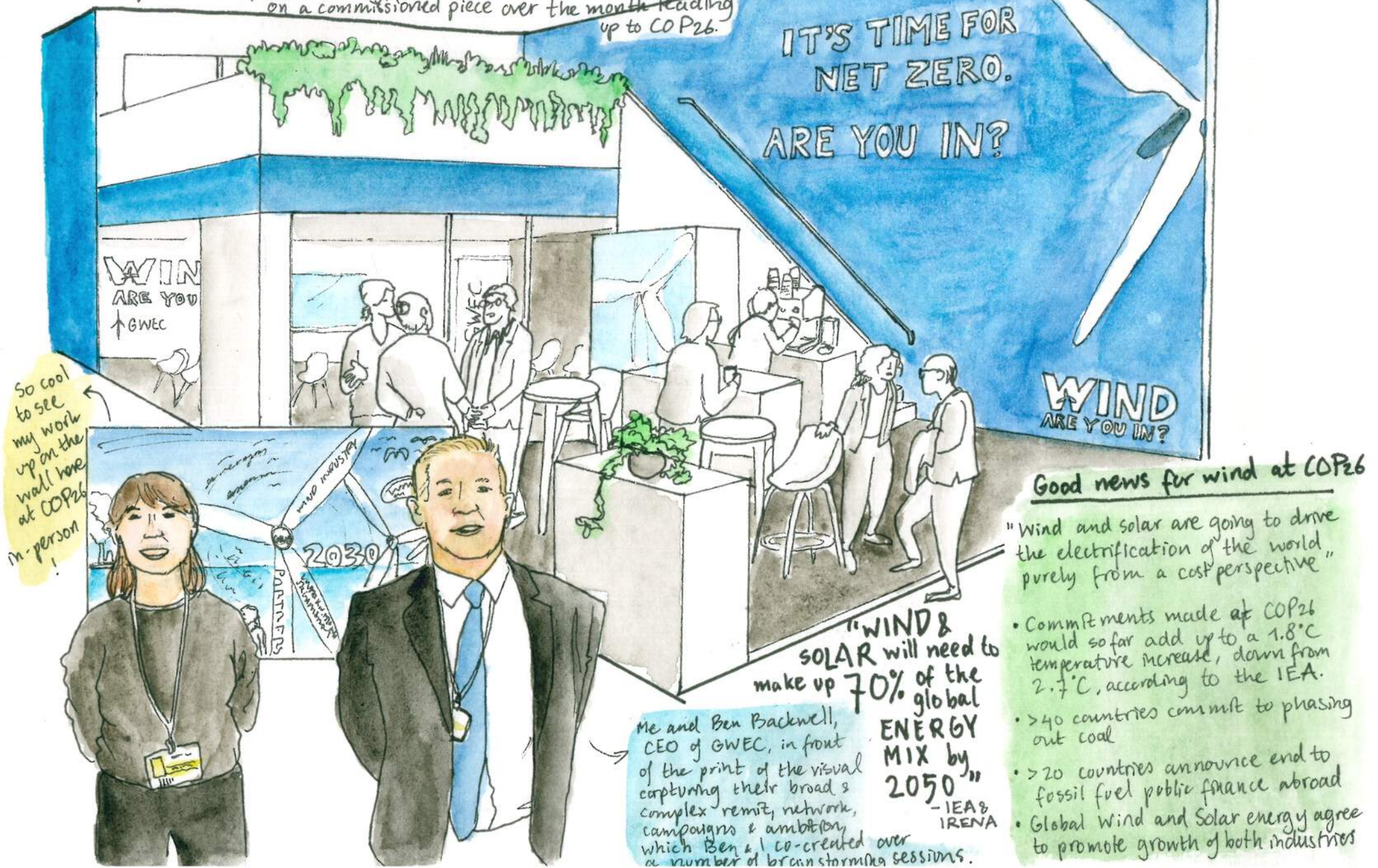


# Visual Summary 5: Pavilion highlight

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4/11/2021

Today was Energy Day, and I paid a visit to the Wind Pavilion, run by GWEC - the Global Wind Energy Council - who are the international trade association for the wind power industry, and with whom I'd collaborated on a commissioned piece over the month leading up to COP26.





## COP26 Visual Summary 5: Pavilion highlight - the Wind Pavilion

Catching up on visual summaries (and sleep, and mental space), and this is one I made for last Thursday, 4th Nov, which was Energy Day at COP26.

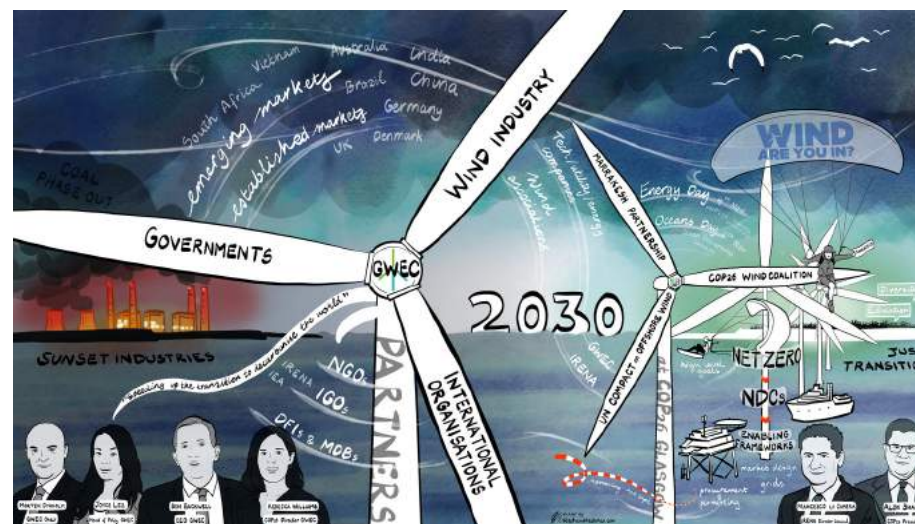
The Global Wind Energy Council (GWEC), which is the 'apex organisation' for the global wind power industry, was part responsible for the programming that day, and I paid them a visit to see something very special.

Over the course of the month leading up to COP26, I had had a number of brainstorming calls with Ben Backwell, CEO of GWEC, where he told me at length about the scope and complexity of GWEC's work, remit and ambition, and together we co-created a visual aimed at capturing all of this.

I had to send the design off to a printer in London whilst olive picking in Italy, so the print could be packed with the consignment headed for Glasgow in time for the build of the pavilion. And now I got to see the print for the first time with my own eyes, hanging proudly in the Wind Pavilion at COP26 in Glasgow, representing that great symbol of hope and promise for a clean future. What a sight!

The collaboration with Ben and GWEC had been a great experience; I had felt so appreciated and valued throughout for what I could bring to their work as an artist and visual facilitator. It was wonderful, after walking around rather aimlessly for days, to be welcomed and recognised by the whole team as "Oh you're Stéphanie, the artist!"

Thankful to GWEC for this collaboration, and welcoming my contribution so warmly.





# Visual Summary 6: the people in Glasgow

6/11/2021

The many different voices, as seen and heard in Glasgow

THE EYES OF THE WORLD ARE ON US COP26

National pledges have collectively already brought down temperature rise to 1.8°C

But they're not reflected in NDCs. How will those promises be verified & assessed?



25,000 COP26 delegates

We have to stand in 2hr queues to get in, we can't get into meetings, we're negotiating via submissions...

Roads are blocked, public transport is a mess, demonstrations everywhere... it's more trouble than it's worth

635,000 population of Glasgow City



I have no idea where anything is, I'm here from Essex

There's an instant camaraderie amongst people in high viz: "Hey mate, mental innit?" "Yeah, chaos."

"The high viz army propping up the whole thing"

10,000 police officers + many more contracted security personnel

THIS IS NOT a CLIMATE CONFERENCE, THIS IS a GLOBAL NORTH GREENWASHING FESTIVAL

- Greta Thunberg

No carbon markets! No false solutions!



SYSTEM CHANGE NOT CLIMATE CHANGE!

NET ZERO NOT IS ZERO

WHEN COP FAILS!

SAVE OUR PLANET

100,000 climate justice protesters on Saturday 6 NOV

As soon as they see a high viz, they're distrustful. I'm not the enemy!

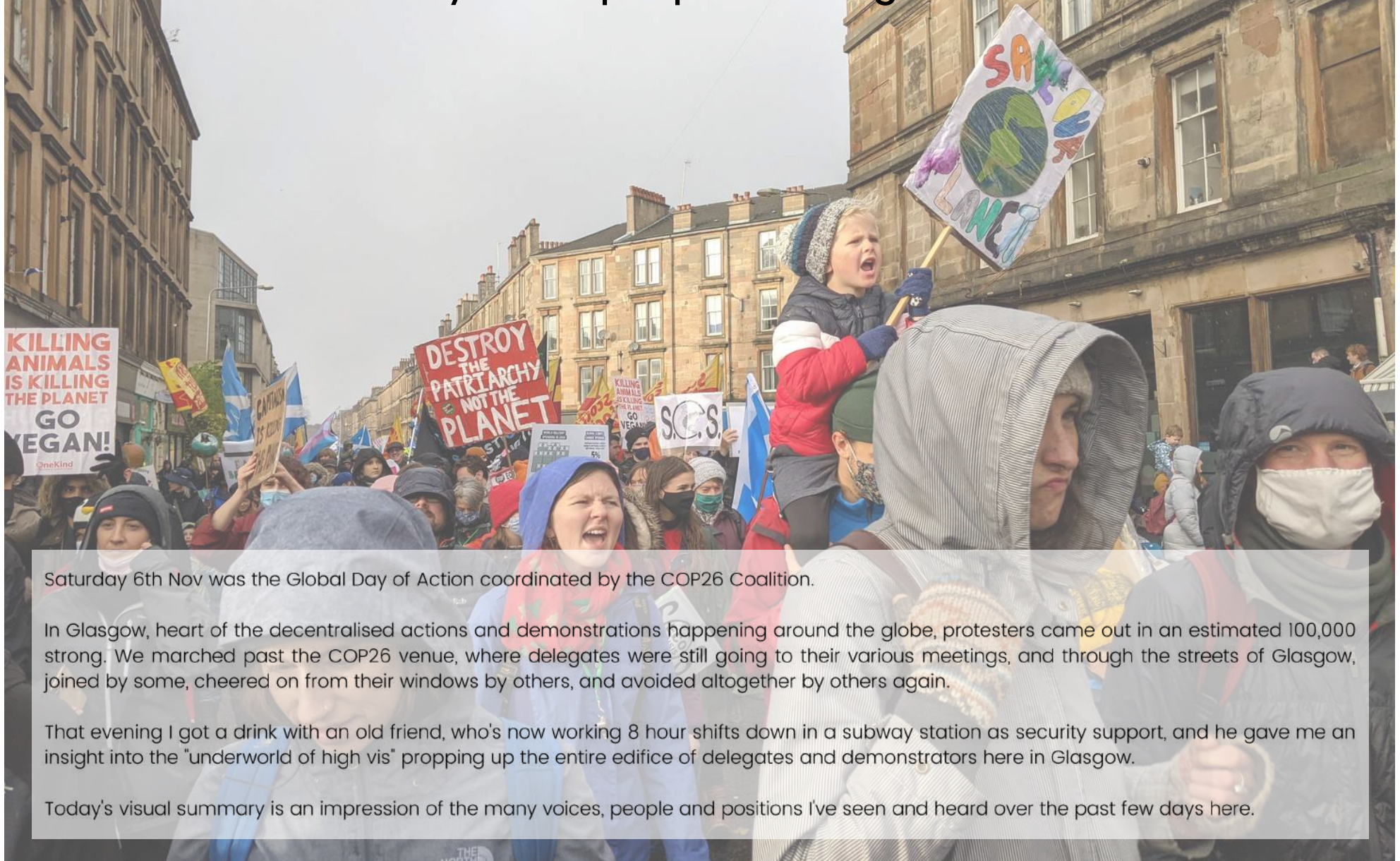
"We are proud to be hosting the COP26 in Glasgow"



#ClimateVisualStories @stephanieheckman.com



## COP26 Visual Summary 6: the people in Glasgow



Saturday 6th Nov was the Global Day of Action coordinated by the COP26 Coalition.

In Glasgow, heart of the decentralised actions and demonstrations happening around the globe, protesters came out in an estimated 100,000 strong. We marched past the COP26 venue, where delegates were still going to their various meetings, and through the streets of Glasgow, joined by some, cheered on from their windows by others, and avoided altogether by others again.

That evening I got a drink with an old friend, who's now working 8 hour shifts down in a subway station as security support, and he gave me an insight into the "underworld of high vis" propping up the entire edifice of delegates and demonstrators here in Glasgow.

Today's visual summary is an impression of the many voices, people and positions I've seen and heard over the past few days here.



COP26 Visual Summary 7: Check in

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5/11/2021  
7



I HAVE RUN AGROUND in MORAL CRISIS.

I DIDN'T REALISE this CLIMATE SPACE is SUCH an OLD ENTRENCHED  
BATTLEGROUND.

I CAME HERE OUT OF a DEEP GRIEF for OUR DESTRUCTION and  
LOST CONNECTION to the NATURAL WORLD.  
BUT THAT SEEMS IGNORANT, SHELTERED and PRIVILEGED NOW.

THERE ARE TWO CAMPS that are CLAMOURING for MY ALLE-  
ALL IN or OUTCAST GIANCE.

I'M BEING TOLD ABOUT "GOOD COPS" and "BAD COPS" - I DON'T KNOW  
WHO'S WHO. I DON'T WANT to PICK a SIDE. I AM NOT A WARRIOR.  
SO I'LL JUST LEAVE the FIGHT to THOSE WHO HAVE NO CHOICE?

MAYBE WHAT I AM is a COWARD. A COPOUT.



## COP26 Visual Summary 7: Crisis of Conscience

The first week in Glasgow has been hard. I felt exhausted, isolated and run aground in a moral crisis that has begun to disturb my night rest. But I had promised to share what it's like to be here for those who can't, so I will, in all my plagued and unresolved state.

The Blue Zone is an intensely uncomfortable place. A clamorous hive of noise and activity; screens, banners, pavilions vie for your attention, whilst you're hit around the head with a whirlwind of announcements coming out of the ether about new pledges, taskforces and strategic alliances to achieve this that or the other by then and then. This frantic exterior, though, is only a veil to the real source of edginess: all the world's political tensions, our collective emotional baggage of centuries, in one space.

Yet despite this Blue Zone discomfort, I feel even less at ease in the hub of climate justice activism where I've spent almost as much time. It's terrifying for me to post this, because what I feel is the intense moral scrutiny and pressure to conform endemic to activist spaces as I've experienced them – always as an outsider.

It's not that I don't agree with them. I agree with everything I've heard. I have learned the most here from their speakers, whom I admire for their eloquence, knowledge and resolve. I see their frustration, broken trust and anger, and agree with it wholeheartedly.

But I shut down when they break out the militant, weaponised language; the backhanded comments and polemic statements like 'we're the good cops, they're the bad cops'. It feels like an aggressive recruitment drive to pick a side, where I saw none before. To me, it only seems to play into the polarisation rife in today's politics and public discourse.

And yet – and this is where the moral conflict begins – when I think these thoughts, I inwardly cringe in discomfort. To distance myself from these spaces feels like wilfully swallowing the blue pill, electing oblivion to the dystopia we live in.

This language is also the rallying cry for mobilising the people power that's achieved social victories throughout history – abolition, voting rights, civil rights, marriage equality. I have read up on the origins of the climate justice movement over the past few days, and one quote I came across comes from abolitionist Frederick Douglass, "Power concedes nothing without a demand". Is to feel alienated from this language the inexcusable privilege to leave the fight to others who don't have that choice?

This is cognitive dissonance, the quaking of a 'colonised mind' having its eyes pried open to its own conditioned blind spots. My conflict-averse impulse is to turn away from the anger and resentment, even when it's wholly justified, and flee back to my 'green silo': the benign indulgent subjects of my climate grief – trees, birds, anima loci, because they don't talk back, their eyes don't reflect back to me my own hypocrisy.

Is my insistence to assume goodwill in the COP process pragmatic, self-serving or incredibly naïve? Whoever the good cops or bad cops, am I a cop out, a coward, to keep standing on the fault line in between?



# Interlude! - graphic recording at COP26 by #climatevisualstories

## In-person graphic recordings

Made for COP26 Coalition movement assemblies

Below

Made by Stéphanie Heckman

@stephaniesaloli

stephanieheckman.com

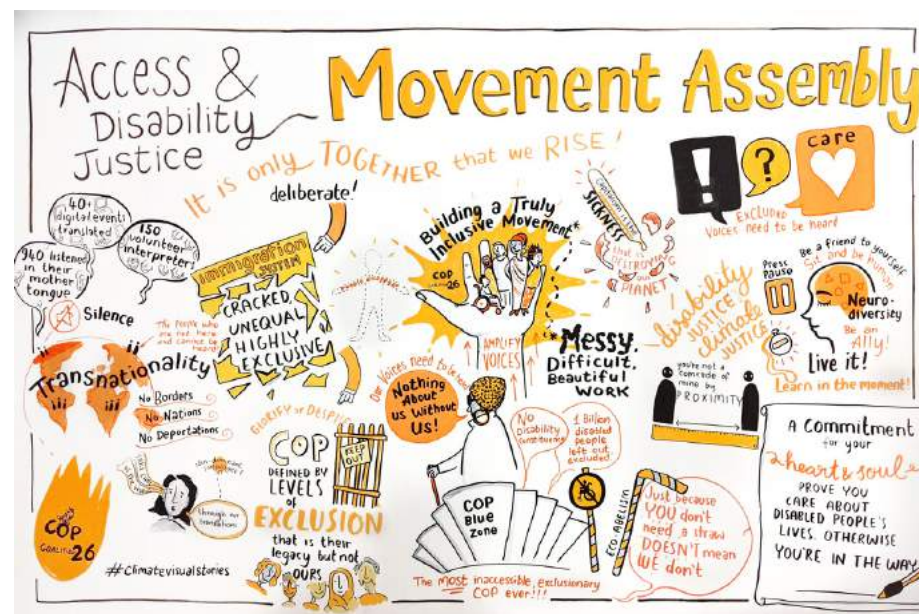
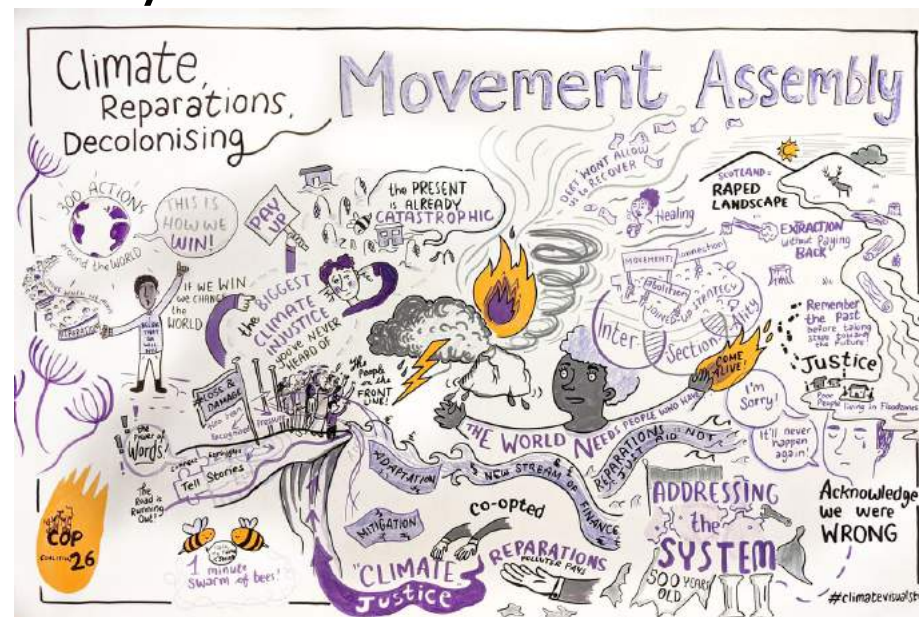


Upper & lower right  
Jointly made by Hazel Hurley

@hazel\_hurley\_  
hazelhurley.com

&

Maia Thomas  
@treesandpaintbrushesi  
maiaathomas.wordpress.com



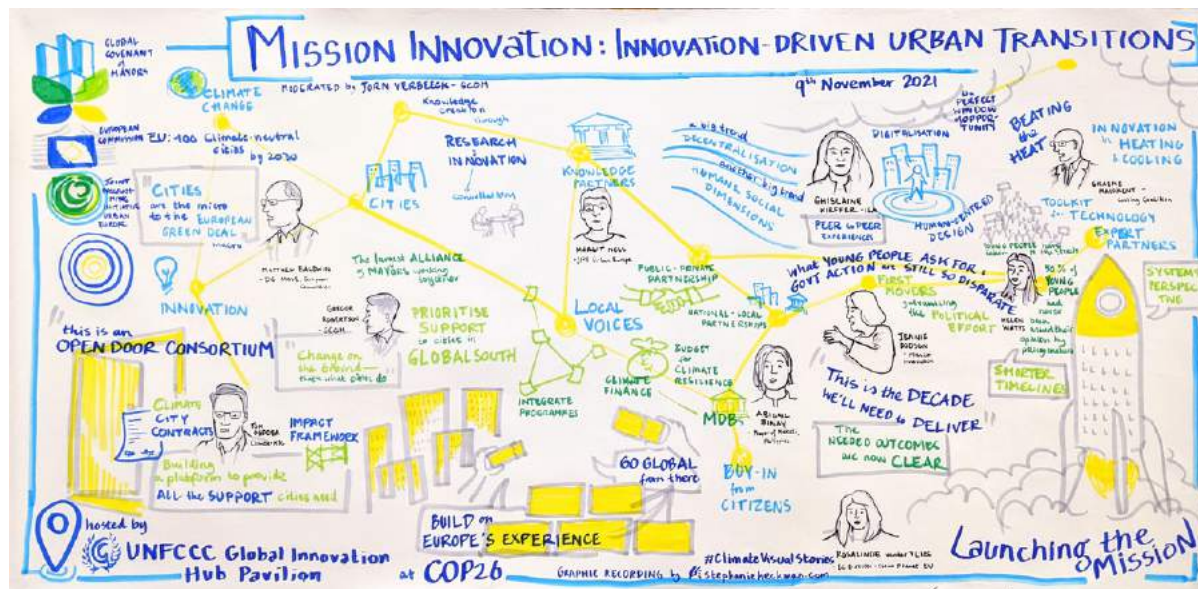


# Other in-person graphic recordings

For an indigenous panel discussion on climate justice hosted by Climate Generation and the COP26 Coalition



For the launch of a net zero cities mission hosted by the Global Covenant of Mayors at the UNFCCC Blue Zone Pavilion





# Virtual graphic recordings

Made for sessions of the COP26 Coalition Peoples Summit



Made by Eimear McNally  
@eimearmcnally  
eimearmcnally.com



Made by Carlotta Cataldi  
@carlotta\_cataldi  
carlottacat.com







Made by Tofu Creatives  
@tofucreatives  
tofucreatives.com



Their graphic recording made months ago for a client epically made it onto the screens of the COP26 meeting rooms, graphically presenting about global stocktake, and proving the power of (climate data) visualisation.





# COP26 Visual Summary: the COP labyrinth

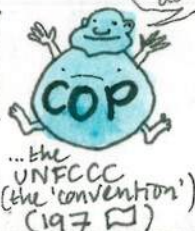
8/11/2021

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The 1.5 yr to get to understand enough about the COP & build the relationships to find a way in, felt like a **labyrinth**. Now I'm 'in', and the labyrinth twists on & away past new horizons. Conceptually (how does this place work??) and practically (where am I? where am I allowed?)

Conceptually, I've learned:

There are **3 'supreme bodies'**, consisting of countries signed up to...

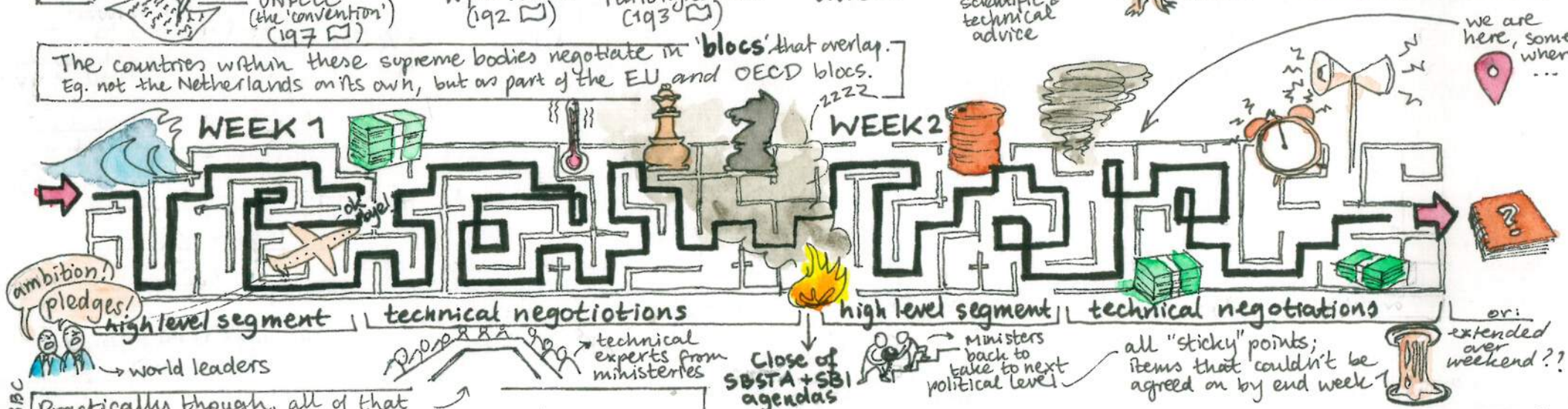


and **2 permanent subsidiary bodies (SB)** under the UNFCCC



All **5 bodies** meet during COP and have their own **agendas** to complete

The countries within these supreme bodies negotiate in '**blocs**' that overlap. Eg. not the Netherlands on its own, but as part of the EU and OECD blocs.



Practically though, all of that happens somewhere far out of my reach and view. Because inside, there are really **3 COPs in the Blue Zone**...

... Most days, I don't even make it to the other side of the **WALL of sensory stimulation** of the first two COPs, and when I do, I'm either out of time, energy, or both, to properly investigate if I, as a '**rogue observer**' have any access or business in any of the '**real**' COP spaces...

1. The Pavilion & Side events circus to keep 14000 observers occupied.
2. The media centre, press conference rooms, broadcast studios for 4000 media people
3. ...The maze of 'contact rooms', negotiation rooms & plenary halls & offices for 22000 party delegates

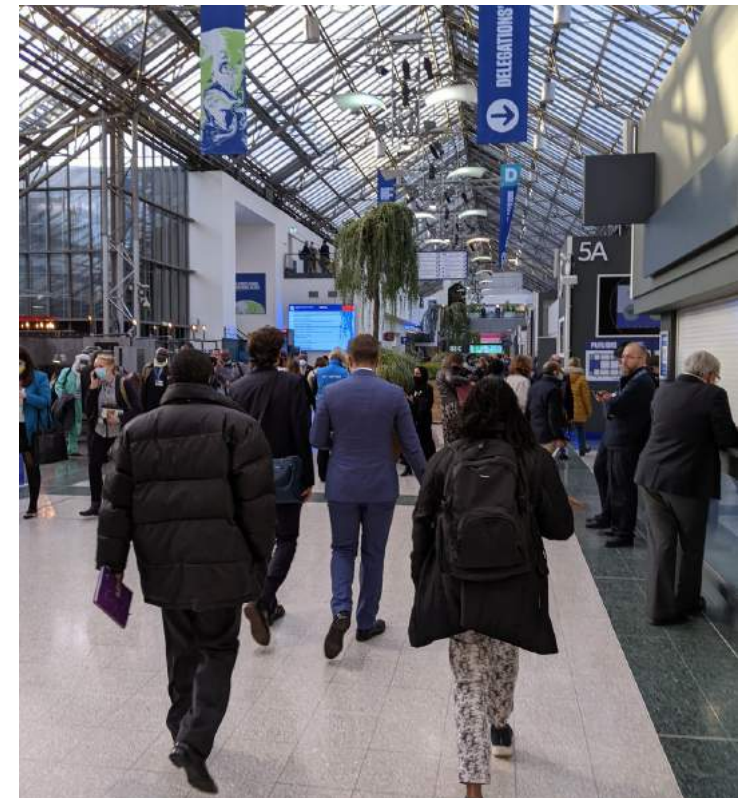


# COP26 Visual Summary 8: the COP Labyrinth

It's been 1.5 weeks and the chaos and overwhelm still persist. There have been 2 hr long queues to get in through a series of tightly controlled funnels, for many after a 1.5 hr commute from Edinburgh as Glasgow was full. There's the sprawling layout, meetings moved or cancelled last minute, mysterious tickets from unknown origin to access 'open' plenaries, planned side events side-lined onto the digital platform with no audience. There were apology emails for the chaos, emails requesting we stay away as the venue was at capacity, an email inviting all to a logistical briefing midway through to alleviate confusion, that was cancelled an hour later. I take it all in stride – I don't know any better and came here without agenda.

But while our shiny badges give the illusion of participation, our place is unmistakably in the bustling pavilion hall, media centre, 'action zone', restaurants, hot desks and hallways. Here we scurry about, anthill without order, and are worn down by an absolutely relentless cascade of events, talks, panels, presentations, videos. There is no battling up against this km long wall of sensory stimulation. If you're a veteran delegate with a large network, pre-existing relationships with your national or constituency focal points and clear objectives for being here, maybe then you know how to barrel through the Wearing Down Wall into the enigmatic meeting and plenary rooms beyond.

Only now towards the end am I beginning to get an inkling of how things here must work – a starting point if I had any mandate to participate in the actual COP process. I don't, and that's alright with me. But if you represent people who suffer daily from extreme weather events, climate crimes and starvation; are here to plead your case from the Global South, forked out a fortune to spend in a nation 100x richer than yours; had to navigate the additional labyrinth of immigration laws and hostile covid restrictions, and are then left clueless, aimless, and excluded while negotiations barrel on at breakneck speed beyond an unfathomable veil, I'm sure it's not alright.





# COP26 Visual Summary 9: Loss & Damage

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9/11/2021

The talks are dragging on, negotiators inside exhausted, activists outside increasingly frustrated.  
There are 3 main 'sticking points' that remain.

**TRANSPARENCY**  
(Regular UN-led checks on countries)

**ARTICLE 6**  
(International carbon markets)

and the stickiest of all:

**LOSS & DAMAGE**

SOURCES: E3G, the Guardian, COP26 Coalition

## SOME FACTS:

- ★ Loss & Damage was agreed under **Paris (2015)**, but not operationalised
- ★ **\$100 BN/yr** in climate finance promised - but not delivered - was only for **adaptation & mitigation**
- ★ **\$210 BN** in climate damage in **2020**, projected to rise to **\$1-2 TN** by **2050**

This is not about mitigating emissions by 2030, or adapting to an abstract cataclysmic future, but about **catastrophic climate change** suffered by the countries that did least to cause it, **today**.

The arguments for a Loss & Damage framework and fund comes from core principles of climate justice:

**POLLUTER PAYS!**

**FAIR SHARES!**

"Failure to deliver critical finance is measured in lives & livelihoods"

"We must wield the sword of central Banks"

Mia Mottley,  
Prime Minister  
of Barbados  
from her  
COP26 speech,  
1 Nov 2021

What it comes down to really is **reparations** from former colonial powers for centuries of **resource theft, landgrabbing & genocide**, the economic legacy of which has left now poor countries unable to cope with the impacts of climate change.  
But there are words tabooed in Blue Zone.

These **extreme weather events, climate disasters & eco-crimes** are caused by climate change, -and corporate greed - which is predominantly caused by **developed countries**.

## SOME MORE FACTS:

- ★ 1005 environmental activists murdered since Paris Agreement
- ★ 1 in 3 of them indigenous
- ★ 6% of people indigenous, protect 80% of our biodiversity





# COP26 Visual Summary 9: Loss & Damage

The talks drag on. The negotiators inside are exhausted, meeting through the night with new draft texts being published at first dawn. Activists outside have ramped up their presence, their raised voices breaking with despair and rage. The main 'sticking points' are what's still on the table now. Unlike previous COPs, these are no longer arguments about climate science or need for fossil fuel phase out. The world seems to have finally caught onto the science and way forward now. What seems intractable now comes down to pace and money.

1. Transparency – regular UN-led checks to see countries are delivering on promises.
2. Article 6 – international carbon markets. Vital to draw in private finance and rich countries, or a scam to cheat on real cuts? Should proceeds of these carbon credits partially go to an adaptation fund for vulnerable countries?
3. Loss & damage – most sensitive of all. This is not about mitigating emissions by 2030, or adapting to an abstract dystopian future. Poor countries that did least to cause climate change are hardest hit by its catastrophic consequences today. With many stranded in vicious debt cycles, they need unconditional (i.e. grants) help to recover.

Some facts:

- Loss & damage was agreed under Paris (article 8), but not operationalised
- \$100 billion/yr promised is for mitigation & adaptation, not yet for already occurring loss and damage
- \$210 billion in climate damage in 2020 alone, with \$1-2 trillion projected by 2050



The argument for loss and damage comes from some core principles of climate justice – 'polluter pays' and 'fair shares' (in technical UN terms: common but differentiated responsibilities). Catastrophic climate change is suffered now, mainly by the MAPA (most affected people and areas), struggling to cope. The argument is that the reason of these extreme weather events is climate change, and climate change is predominantly caused by developed countries, who acquired their development largely on resources extracted from the Global South over centuries. It's reparations from former colonialist empires, to put it in bold words tabooed in the Blue Zone.

These economic costs are real, not projected, and so long as they're not covered by international treaties, it's the farmers losing harvests and people losing their homes in floods and fires who pay. In many places, when these people rise up to defend their communities and land, they do so at risk of their lives. 1005 environmental activists have been murdered since the Paris Agreement. Out of them, 1 in 3 was indigenous; these are what First Nation people in North America call the MMIP (missing and murdered indigenous people). Whilst only 6% of world population is indigenous, they protect 80% of the world's biodiversity.





# COP26 Visual Summary 10: Music for Climate action 10/11/2021

On Wednesday I joined in on the MUCH anticipated single <sup>live</sup> street performance of the powerful music piece 'Enough Is Enough', in Govan, Glasgow. Between the disembodied formality of the Blue Zone & the frustration-borne hostility of the climate justice activism hub, this was the third piece that had been missing for me.

A cathartic space to unload the tension of straddling those two disparate places;

a joyful, hopeful space to replenish my depleted emotional reserves;

a space to reintegrate, tap back into the soul of this work,

which is our greatest potential as humanity to care and to create

Didn't I give you everything  
Didn't I give you everything  
Didn't I give you everything you need





## COP26 Visual Summary 10: Music for Climate Action

This visual summary chronicles a highlight of my time here: the single live performance in Glasgow of the powerful musical collaboration between Karine Polwart, Oi Musica, the Soundhouse Choir and others, 'Enough is Enough', a piece written for COP26 in Glasgow.

I had been greatly anticipating this show on the streets of Govan, but it turned out to be more cathartic than I could have anticipated, with me breaking down in floods of tears before my hero Karine Polwart. I had been soaking up the geopolitical tensions within the Blue Zone, the tensions between the Blue Zone and activists outside, trying to straddle both very contrasting spaces and stay open to both. This uplifting and hope-giving party on the streets was the third and missing piece for me, a space to reintegrate the contrasting bits inside of me, to replenish my depleted emotional reservoirs, receive my own grief and despair and that of others into the balm of joy, hope and beauty. And from there, to find the strength to check back into the soul of this work, which is our greatest potential as humanity to deeply care. Caring is what we need to come through this momentous challenge together, and moments like these enable me to keep doing that.

At the time of posting this however, we're a few days on again, and a Glasgow deal has been agreed. That's brought with it a flood of new emotions, which I have more to say about in my final visual summaries coming up. But this is the last one I'm posting here in Glasgow, an hour before I leave for my ferry back across the Irish Sea. While I'm still here, I do want to name the disappointment, grief, anger and desperation developing countries, Small Island Developing States, indigenous people, women and girls, disabled people on the frontline of climate change will have to travel home with. I don't want to just have more lovely street parties when I go home. I want to have them so I can continue to do what I can in solidarity, in a sustainable way.



Stills from the video of the 'Enough is Enough' Govan show by Heather Longwell



# COP26 Visual Summary 11: In the Eye of the Storm

11/11/2021

On the Thursday before the end of COP26, I accidentally ended up on the front row during a plenary informal stocktake with civil society & all parties...

We can't believe we actually have to make these remarks; that human & indigenous rights are not negotiable and must be in the text of article 6.  
(Environmental NGOs)

We urge parties to recognise the role of farmers in mitigation & adaptation  
(Farmer NGOs)

The world is watching and human & indigenous rights are the minimum standard  
(Indigenous Peoples Orgs)

On point 26, we are concerned reference to cities & subnational government is completely removed  
(Local Govt's & municipal authorities)

We want guarantee from rich countries to deliver the climate finance promised 9 years ago - this shameful situation must end  
(Trade Union Movement)

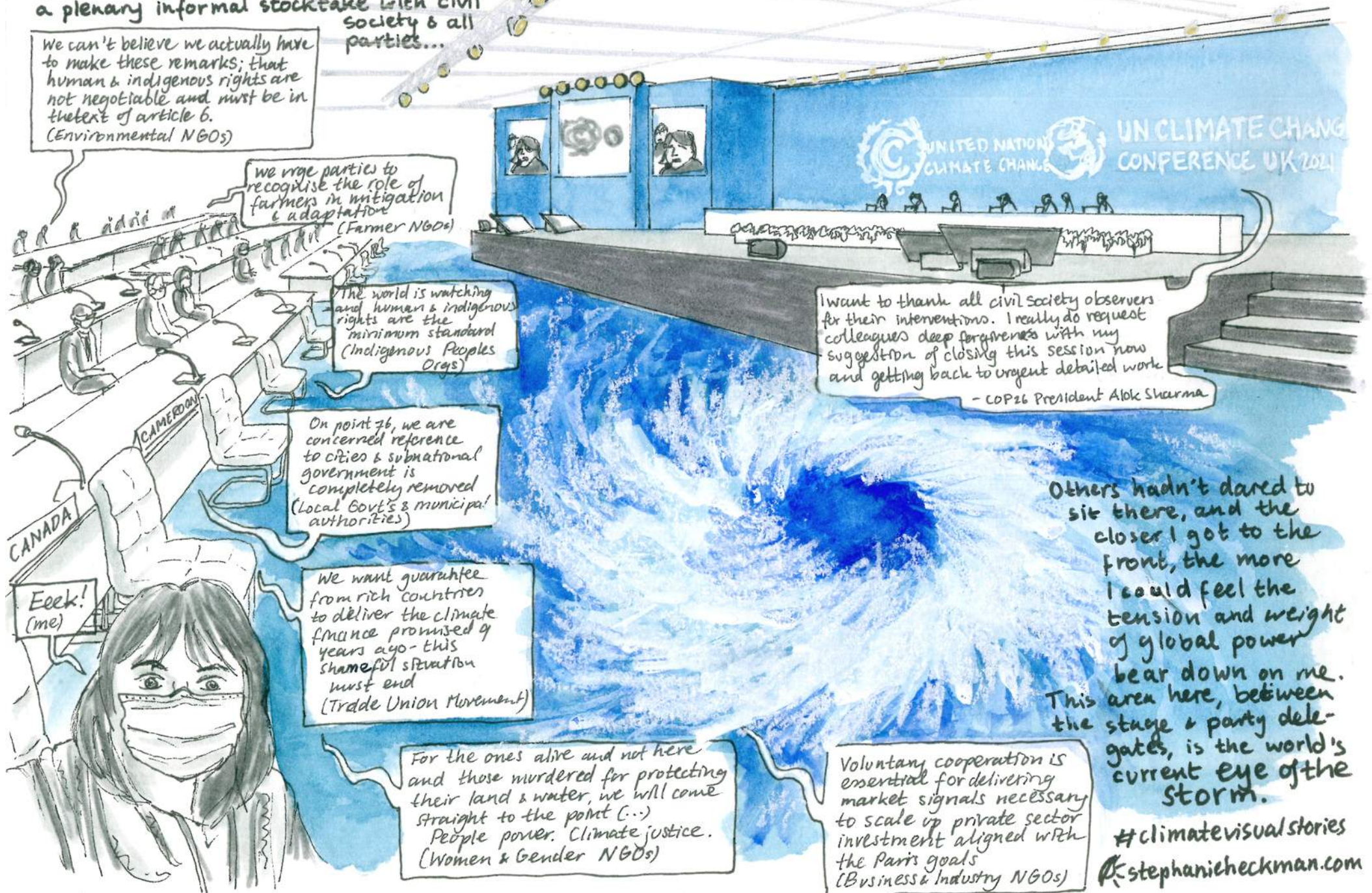
For the ones alive and not here and those murdered for protecting their land & water, we will come straight to the point (...)  
People power. Climate justice.  
(Women & Gender NGOs)

I want to thank all civil society observers for their interventions. I really do request colleagues deep forgiveness with my suggestion of closing this session now and getting back to urgent detailed work

- COP26 President Alok Sharma

Others hadn't dared to sit there, and the closer I got to the front, the more I could feel the tension and weight of global power bear down on me. This area here, between the stage & party delegates, is the world's current eye of the storm.

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# COP26 Visual Summary 11: In the Eye of the Storm

The day before negotiations were scheduled to end, Thursday 11th Nov, saw another highlight, very different from the street party in Govan that day before. It followed from an exceptionally rare moment of having nowhere in particular to be and ambling about the Blue Zone letting my feet guide me. They steered me into one of the two plenary halls I had previously been unsuccessful trying to get into. This time I strolled in with no trouble, and found myself at the start of an 'informal stocktaking' – plenary moments called by COP26 President Alok Sharma for feedback on the current draft text and process.

This stocktake was for feedback from all civil society constituencies. Constituencies are groupings of related NGOs and other accredited observer organisations that act as informal watchdogs, 'observing' the COP process but not allowed to co-author the text (that's just for the 197 parties – or countries – represented). There are 9 constituencies, ranging from environmental NGOs (ENGO) to universities & research institutions (RINGO) to youth NGOs (YOUNGO) and business and industry reps (BINGO). Almost all 9 fed back during this session, which was cut short by Alok Sharma to get back to negotiation work ('twas mega crunch time at this point).

I had started out safely hiding against the back of the room, a fly on the wall, but was moved on by security and told to find a seat or I had to leave. There were some seats left, but no-one had dared to sit in them – front row, in front of all party delegation desks, right across from the podium with people like Alok Sharma and Patricia Espinosa (Executive Secretary of the UNFCCC). Hesitantly I made my way, but no one stopped me. The closer I got, the more I felt the air weighing heavier on me and the intense focus in that space like a vortex. A little voice going 'Make yourself small, make yourself small'. As I sat down in disbelief of where I was, I could feel: This is the eye of the storm in current geopolitics. This weight bearing down is the weight of global power, the focal point of all the world watching, this is the physical location that millions, billions have tuned into, awaiting the verdict on their future.





# COP26 Visual Summary 12: the Outcomes

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12-13/11/2021

It's a firm  
baby step  
forward...

...when we need  
leaps & bounds

## The nuance

"Be wary of interpreting this outcome as a binary success/failure. It's a process"  
Irish Times

## The disappointment

"Be vigilant not to spin this COP as a success when it is a failure."  
COP26 Coalition

## First timers:

Science language in COP agreement now as urgent as that of IPCC

Problems are named: coal & other fossil fuels must go

1.5°C is the new 2°C as absolute ceiling

Stricter targets not in 5 years, but next year

More inclusive & holistic than ever

"biodiversity"  
"oceans"  
"Mother Earth"

shout out to youth  
OUR FUTURE

"Keep pushing. I am with you"  
Antonio Gutierrez

## Watered down:

"I am deeply sorry."  
last minute change "phase out down" of coal

Adaptation still not enough

\$100 billion still not delivered

No loss & damage fund, a "dialogue" instead

...It's just

# NOT ENOUGH

"What will we tell our people when we come home from Glasgow with a death sentence?"

And when every hope is gone  
let the raven call you home...

and home is where  
the real work  
continues...

the raven's  
harsh call  
to action.



This is a negotiated consensus text.  
the lowest common denominator  
of 197 countries' stance on climate change...





# COP26 Visual Summary 12: The Outcomes

This visual summary took me a while to make, as it did processing the outcomes.

During one of the movement assemblies in the first week, a speaker had warned us: “We must be vigilant not to let a failure be spun as a success.” Now not only activists, but also media are asking in such black and white terms: “Good COP or bad COP?”

In the second week I was added to a WhatsApp group with Ireland’s civil society delegates. A helpful discussion arose on the eve of the agreement, a warning not to take the outcome of COP26 in binary terms of success or failure. “Anybody who knows COPs knows not to expect a big bang solution, but baby steps” and “this is the lowest common denominator” of 197 countries’ stance on climate change. It’s no given to reach agreement at all, which only happened at two earlier COPs (resulting in the Kyoto Protocol and Paris Agreement).

Some progress was made, including:

- For the first time the science language in the text is as urgent as IPCC reports, with phrases as “Expresses alarm and utmost concern”
- For the first time coal and other fossil fuels are mentioned by name as the problems; there is consensus that the fossil days are numbered
- The Paris Agreement only passed with the compromise of “well below 2°C, pursuing efforts for 1.5°C”. Now, 1.5°C has been accepted as ‘the new 2°C’
- Instead of revising NDCs in another 5 years as stipulated in Paris, countries must now bring new targets next year.

And yet the reality outside of the COP process remains that this is not enough. Not enough for developing countries who held out hope for desperately needed Loss & Damage and more Adaptation finance, and demanded delivery on the promised \$100 billion. Not enough for small island states for whom the NDCs, timelines, the last minute ‘phasing down coal’ aren’t ambitious enough to stay alive.

It was naïve to hope that our leaders would step up to the plate together and get us out of this mess. But of course we did hope. And so there is also huge disappointment. With the COP behind us, we must now all return home and focus on the implementation ahead. It’s down to us all to push, act and vote where we are – in our cities, in our homes, at Christmas dinner, at elections – while 1.5 is still (just about) alive.



Still from UNFCCC footage of a final huddle before the COP closing ceremony



COP26 Visual Summary 13

14/11/2021

Thanking the land and people who hosted us  
these mad two weeks

Tapadh leibh Alba

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# COP26 Visual Summary 13: Giving thanks

And finally, the end is here. These past two weeks have been the busiest and most intense of my career to date, and I am so hugely thankful for the privilege of witnessing and experiencing the whole whirlwind of impressions, interactions, places and events.

This marks the end of a road of almost two years of dreaming and scheming. With the quest for badges and the close brushes with covid, it was touch and go down to the last moment whether I'd get to be there and participate. But I made it! And I made it through!

I'm very grateful for new and renewed connections with people in COP26 Coalition, Global Wind Energy Council, Climate Generation, Global Covenant of Mayors, EU Commission, Forest Stewardship Council, Radboud University, IPCC and UNFCCC.

It was a dream come true to be able to collaborate on this with colleagues from Drawesome, Tofu Creatives, and #climatevisualstories.

Also, it was such a support to know there were people waiting, watching and following the COP26 through these visual summaries, and to receive your thanks, questions and words of encouragement when the going got tough for me halfway through. So thank you to all of you who have been following along.

And lastly, before we forget that we were all here to work on transforming our relationship to our planet, our natural environment and each other, a heartfelt thanks to the land and the people who hosted this hurricane of delegates and activists from around the world for these two mad weeks. Tapadh leibh Alba (Thank you Scotland).

Photo: Along the road to Glen Coe





With special thanks to Kiane de Kleijne, Carlijn Hendriks and Radboud University, as well as to Leo van der Vlist, Pina Gervassi and the Forest Stewardship Council, for getting me the 'winning ticket'

And to my colleagues Hazel, Maia, Carlotta, Desiree, Nityalila and Eimear for keeping me company nearby and from afar

All visual summaries by Stéphanie Heckman

All photos by Stéphanie Heckman unless otherwise stated

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