

1. For a start, carbon neutrality is a controversial topic because the data at stake is complicated to calculate : One can estimate the carbon emissions for certain activities (transport, heating of the building etc), but how does one calculate the offset ? For example, when one plants a tree for instance, does one count the carbon it captures over a year, or its whole life etc ? Also, many carbon offsetting schemes aren't exactly capturing carbon, but are just reducing emissions.

2. This brings me to the second point. The main issue the La Rocha organisation seems to pose is that the schemes it advertises on the website are "aid projects" in developing countries - this isn't necessarily bad in itself, but it isn't exactly the answer to the climate crisis. For instance, providing "clean stoves" to women in Kenya isn't capturing carbon, and it certainly isn't significantly reducing emissions - we can agree that it is not the lifestyle of populations in developing countries that is causing the crisis. So these types of projects aren't bad in themselves, but are eye wash if they aim to reduce global emissions.

So to sum it up, these schemes are based on approximative data and science (to calculate offsetting value etc), and have a limited effect in terms of reducing carbon emissions (once again, this is not a judgement of the social value of these projects, but on their effective capacity to offset carbon emissions).

3. Finally, in the way these carbon offsetting schemes are being used today, they can even have a negative effect : since organisations believe they can offset their emissions, they also believe they don't even need to reduce their own - leading to more carbon actually being emitted. (This won't be the case of our congregation, but these organisations can implicitly encourage this behaviour. ) In a way, one could compare it to buying indulgences.

My friend was wary of the organisation, and I personally agree with the points she raised. I find it difficult to put the onus of carbon offsetting on developing countries when it is western lifestyles which are causing the climate crisis in the first place (a scheme to keep billionaires from flying into space would be more effective!).

Anyway, this was our analysis of the La Rocha organisation. I believe as a congregation, we could maybe focus directly on local projects - not only will the money be put to more direct and effective use, it also encourages shorter circuits, which are the lifestyle changes we need to be implementing and which will become increasingly necessary. As an idea, what if we set up an AMAP for the congregation ? This would enable the same kind of reduction in carbon emissions as some of the projects La Rocha finances, while directly supporting local organic farmers and benefiting the congregation members.