

Zozo and Kiwi, 8 and 11

Germany

Isn't this Dangerous – Kids Abseiling down a Bridge?

No, the Climate Crisis Is Dangerous

When we abseil down a bridge or climb a lamppost to hang up a banner, people ask us: 'But isn't this totally dangerous?' Of course, this question is not completely unexpected. We actually want people to ask themselves where the dangers are.

Climbing, however, is not dangerous. The climate crisis is.

OKAY, we have to say this here: dear adults, please don't try this at home. Of course you have to know what you are doing. You have to know about redundancy and abseil devices, about knots and breaking loads. We are lucky to have rescue climbers as parents. That's why we cannot even remember when we started climbing. The technique we use is called 'industrial climbing'. You always use two separate systems (e.g. ropes). If one breaks or you mess up with one, the other one will still hold you. That's why climbing can be done safely.

What we don't understand is why everyone else feels safe, even though we are heading with full speed into the biggest crisis of humankind.

The climate crisis is already here. People are starving because of droughts, people are dying in floods, and the forests are burning everywhere on the planet. Even in our safe and protected home in Germany, we can see it. We live in a small village and go climbing in the trees pretty often (who would have thought it?). But last summer, a whole spruce forest just died in the drought. On one day, all the trees

lost their needles. A couple of days later, the bark of whole trees fell off. We talked to the local forest warden. He said that even the beech trees are starting to get sick. For millennia, our region was covered in primeval beech forest. Beeches are what define our forests. And now the forest warden doesn't know what to plant any more.

We cannot understand why people still feel safe with this. Do we really need more forests burning or more people dying before we realize that we have to change things big time?

Another question that people ask us is this: 'How old are you? Eight and eleven? Did anyone tell you to do this? Did your parents tell you to do this?' It's strange. For some people it seems impossible that children can think for themselves. Of course, we ask for help where we need it. And of course, we bring our rescue-climbing parents with us when we climb. That is what professionals do: always have a rescue scenario.

We guess that there are three possible reasons to ask that question. Maybe they actually haven't understood the urgency of the climate crisis. OKAY, we can help there, it's not really hard: there is a certain amount of CO₂ that the world may produce and still have a 67 per cent chance of staying below 1.5°C. This amount has been calculated by the IPCC. If we don't make really, really big changes in how we live, this budget will be used up in eight years, or at least this was true at the time of writing, in December 2019. Most scientific studies since 2015 show that we'll reach many tipping points between 1.5°C and 2°C. One example of a tipping point is the permafrost soil. If that thaws, huge amounts of methane will be released. With these tipping points, we might quickly end up in a 3, 4 or 5°C world. And in that world, the question will be if there are millions of people dying or billions. That's terrible, but not hard to understand.

But maybe people take their anger out on children who speak their minds, because it would be too hard for them to accept the consequences. Maybe they just want to go on driving their SUVs?

Or maybe they are like the German minister for environment, Svenja Schulze. We had the chance to ask her about the CO2 budget for 1.5°C. Of course, she didn't answer. She explained, in many words, how wonderful the German and European plans to reduce CO2 are. She certainly must know the IPCC numbers, right? If she does, she must know that her plans are by far not enough for the 2°C goal, let alone the 1.5°C goal, right? So she must know that her plans will cause hunger, death and war in the future. So anyone who reminds them of what they should already know must be very annoying. Or maybe some people want to distract the attention from the fact that they are the ones telling others what to do?

Did you know that Fridays For Future activists were thrown out of COP25 because they went up to the stage and chanted together with Indigenous people? And did you know that the climate summits, hosted by the United Nations, are sponsored by fossil fuel companies? Sponsored like a soccer match. And guess who was not thrown out of COP. Guess who could still tell the politicians what to do.

That's why we are the Climbing Kids. That's why we won't stop speaking up. That's why we won't stop annoying them.

Our parents call it non-violent direct action (NVDA). What it means is: don't let them stroke your hair, and tell you how sweet you are, and don't let them lie to you with a smile on their face about what they pretend to do against the climate crisis. But be better than them. Know the science and confront them with it. Be angry, but don't be rude. And if you have to break the rules a little bit for a

greater good, remember: you are responsible for it, responsible that no one is harmed.

Interestingly, though, we have found out that there is no law that explicitly forbids children from climbing up lampposts or abseiling down bridges.