(Un)Sustainable Lives

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“We aren’t really responsible for climate change. Pakistan isn’t. We are just on the receiving end of its impact, really. [...] We contribute less than 0.8 percent to global greenhouse gas emissions. That is literally negligible. And yet look what is happening; we lost more than a thousand lives since June, 23 million are affected, 1 in 7 Pakistanis is sleeping outside in the open.” (Hayat 2022)
The same lives that could be considered *sustainable* from an environmental point of view, are apparently deemed *unsustainable* politically, in terms of the collective will to commit resources and drastically change ways of living, production and consumption to save them.
What makes for a grievable life?

“‘Who counts as human? Whose lives count as lives? And, finally, What makes for a grievable life?’.

[...] Do they have names and faces, personal histories, family, favorite hobbies, slogans by which they live? What defense against the apprehension of loss is at work in the blithe way in which we accept deaths caused by [climate change]?” (Butler 2020)
The future is already here

“The future is already here. It’s just not evenly distributed yet.” […]

A climate-destabilized future is not some faraway science fiction fantasy. Climate change impacts are here, with many people already living in a modern dystopia.” (Nevitt 2022)
‘No one left behind’

“[No one left behind in the SDGs means] that the international community has agreed to make a concerted effort to identify and lift up those who are furthest behind first. This means targeting the most vulnerable people who societies so often miss: from youth, and especially girls; to refugees and migrants; to rural farmers and indigenous populations – and so many others living on the margins of society.” (van Loggerenberg 2016)
Burning their way to kingdom come

“Richer countries have got rich on the back of fossil fuels... and have been burning their way to kingdom come. [...]”

[The people of Pakistan] "are now feeling the heat - quite literally of other people's development and greed” (Rehman 2022)
After the fire

Photos and title by Sarah Smizz, 23 July 2022 -
https://smizz.wordpress.com/2022/07/23/after-the-fire/
If this was in another area...

“If this was in another area this would be deemed a national emergency.

This is devastating for people’s lives.” (Nicholson 2019)
The double bind of the SDGs

“Live as if the environment does not matter because, otherwise, you are threatened by poverty and unemployment’
&
‘Protect nature because, otherwise, you are threatened by catastrophe and extinction’”

(García and Cabrejas 1996, quoted in Krauss, Jimenez Cisneros, Requena-i-Mora 2022)
Reparations, not paper straws

“Forget solidarity: the global south will not survive this century without climate justice.

You in the west are talking about paper straws, we in the global south are talking about reparations.” (Bhutto 2022)
Un/Sustained Lives

What does ‘no one left behind’ mean when some people or communities are not counted as ‘one’ in the first place, but simply remain ‘no one’...

A family sits under a tent set up next to their demolished house, surrounded by floodwaters, in Sohbatpur, a district of Pakistan's southwestern Baluchistan province. (Photo | AP)