



“The Summer Academy was very useful, I am more confused now!”

Participants in this year’s Summer Academy grappled with the complexities of climate change and social vulnerability. After one week full of debates around “tipping points in humanitarian crises” we spoke with five participants.

What is the most interesting tipping point?

Johnson Nkem, Cameroon:

The risks surrounding climate change, especially under the occurrences of extreme events, such as droughts, floods, fire, etc., could easily cause a humanitarian crisis if they attain a dangerous state that is irreversible, and could be referred to as a tipping point.

Ian Verhaeghe, USA:

In my opinion, the most interesting tipping point is the moment in which individuals and institutions begin to stand by and accept the status quo in the face of inequality and unjust social, economic and governing systems. I believe in redemption; however, once thresholds are crossed, it becomes increasingly difficult and painful to return to the original system.

Sebnem Sener, Turkey:

For me the most important tipping point is linked to the current financial crisis. The actual tipping point was already some four years ago. In the absence of the right measures to stabilise the system, the whole world is deeply impacted now.

What is needed if we want to better manage tipping points?

Johnson Nkem, Cameroon:

The assessment and prediction of tipping points will greatly enhance preparedness and provide a sustainable solution to avert humanitarian crisis. At the academy we developed a new “hot

systems” approach. This tool makes it easier to understand crises and upheavals at an early stage. If the manifold causes are considered and monitored in their systemic contexts, symptoms can be correctly diagnosed more swiftly.

Sebnem Sener, Turkey:

Policy-makers and scientists have to work together in a more coherent way. Uncertainties with regard to costs, benefits and risks have to be reduced as far as possible by the conduct of scientific case studies based on clear evidence.

Kuan-Hui Lin, Taiwan:

From my perspective, we need two important elements. We have to change our thinking on tipping points towards a more positive way of taking it as a window of opportunity for change and reorganisation following the previous, unsustainable lifestyle. We further need social learning and institutional change on national, regional, and county scale. Government, NGOs, and companies should learn the values of and respect for cultural and knowledge divergence.

Another take-home from the Summer Academy?

Rahmawati Husein, Indonesia

I am working in the area of disaster risk and reduction. I now can better incorporate climate-change-related social vulnerability and adaption issues that trigger tipping on humanitarian crisis into my work.

Johnson Nkem, Cameroon

The Summer Academy opened reflections on another dimension in integrating humanitarian crisis perspectives. I now see the urgent need to incorporate humanitarian crisis in the response strategies to climate change.

Sebnem Sener, Turkey

The Summer Academy was very useful to me, I am more confused now and this questioning process will help me refine my research focus.