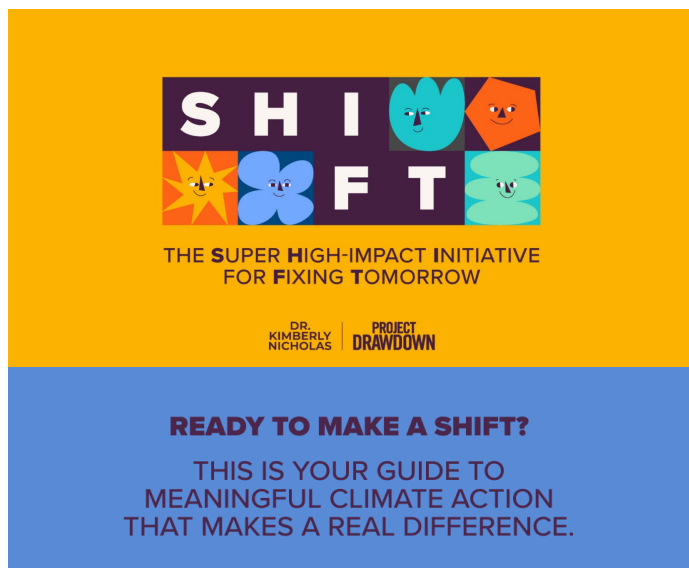


# A digital support tool for evidence-based, high-impact climate action: Five climate superpowers to SHIFT the system



Kim Nicholas

LUCSUS, BECC  
Lund University

Swedish Climate  
Symposium  
May 2026



BECC

substack



We Can Fix It



Kimberly Nicholas

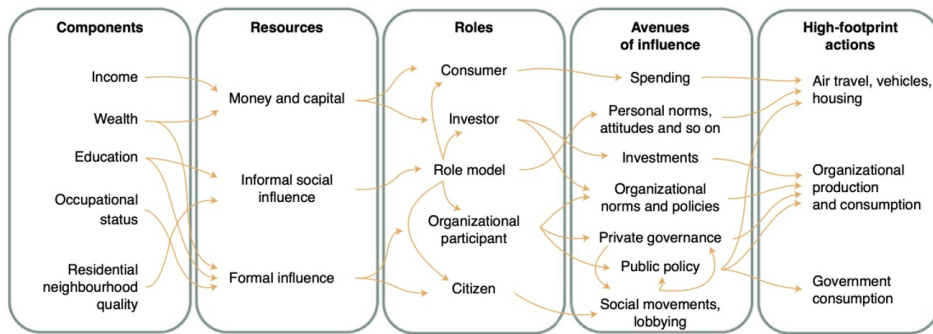


@profKimberlyNicholas



@KimberlyNicholas.bsky.social

## 5 Roles for Climate Action



**Fig. 2 | Links from SES to actions with high climate footprints.** The silos depict how components of SES<sup>15</sup> and the resources they provide may influence high-footprint actions via five social and financial roles that operate through different avenues of influence. The arrows in the figure represent links we hypothesize as important; the figure as a whole and the hypothesized links suggest an agenda for future research. Image credit: Emma Li Johansson (Illustrations).

nature  
energy

PERSPECTIVE

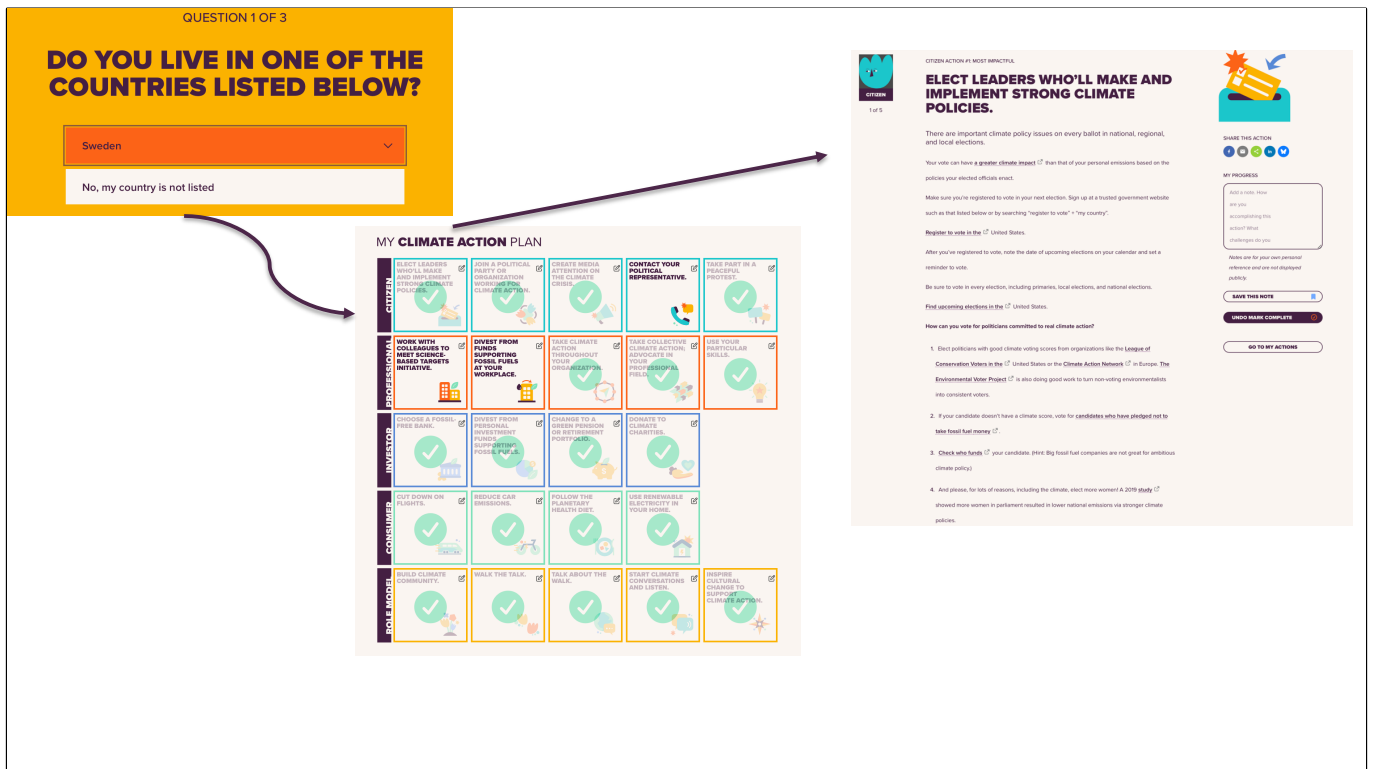
<https://doi.org/10.1038/s41560-021-00900-y>

Kristian S. Nielsen<sup>1</sup>, Kimberly A. Nicholas<sup>2</sup>, Felix Creutzig<sup>3,4</sup>, Thomas Dietz<sup>5,6,7</sup> and Paul C. Stern<sup>8</sup>

Climate action is more than our role as consumer. In our 2021 Nature Energy study, we identified five roles with the potential to link individual and system change, particularly for people of high socio-economic status. (I call these your 5 climate superpowers.)



I got a Formas communications grant to turn our paper and underlying research into a personalized climate action guide. I launched a beta version, then Project Drawdown got in touch and partnered to help improve, redesign, and relaunch the guide. We named it SHIFT: the Super High-Impact Initiative for Fixing Tomorrow.

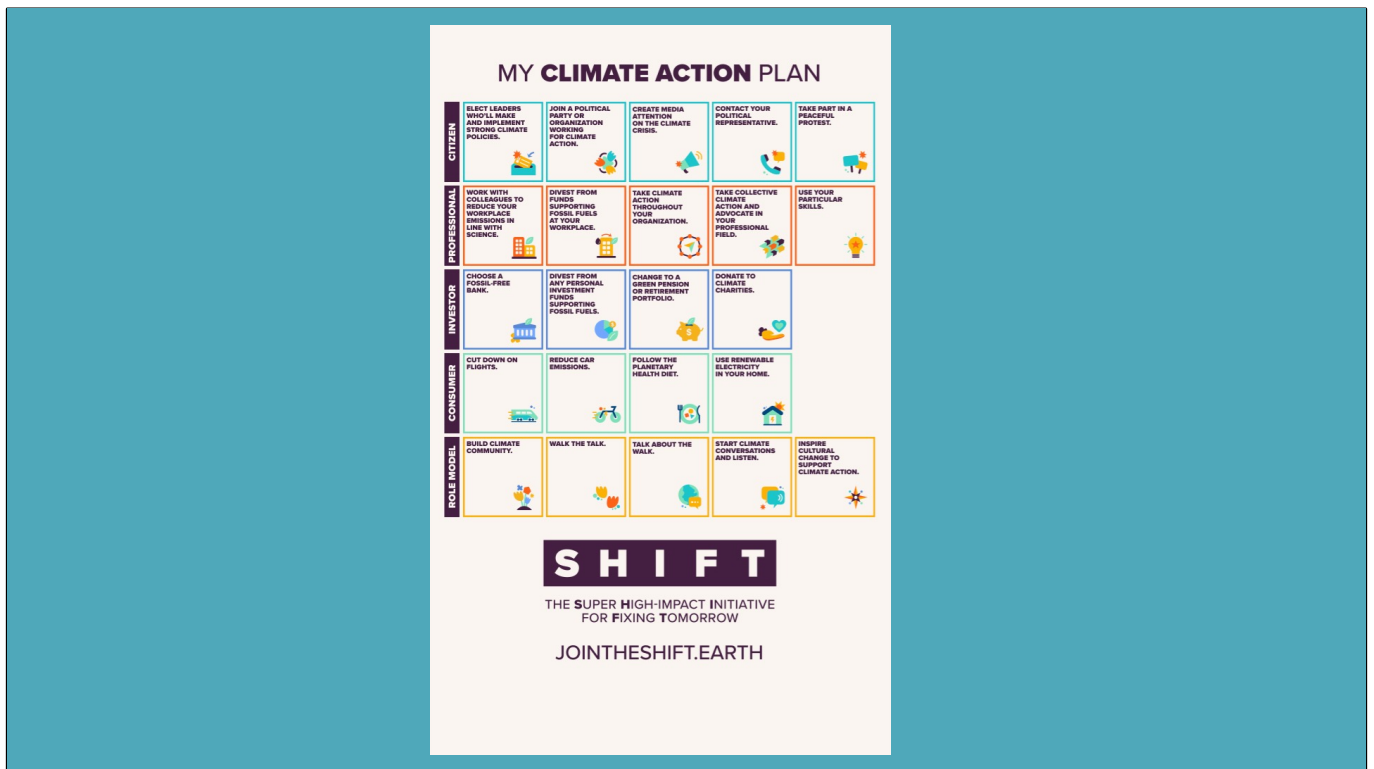


SHIFT asks three questions to identify which climate superpowers apply to you:

- Living in a democracy unlocks the most powerful actions, as a citizen.
- Having a college degree unlocks the professional superpower.
- Earning over \$38,000/year puts you in the top 10% globally. This unlocks investor and consumer actions in the guide.
- Everyone has the role model actions available.

The structure is meant to focus you on your highest impact actions and help you to take them!

There are several ways to navigate SHIFT: you can start with the 3 question quiz to identify your superpowers, then take the step-by-step guide to go through how to take each one, linked to research and resources...



Or you can jump straight to the actions themselves. You can create a profile to keep track of which ones you've taken and what's next.

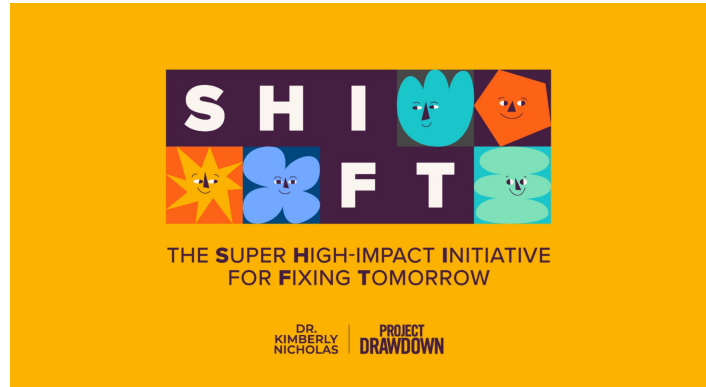
Usually when I talk about SHIFT I'd tell you what the high impact actions are and have you go through this checklist yourself. But for this 10 minute talk I'm going to focus on how I've used SHIFT in teaching.

(Passed out hard copy at the talk, I've used this in workshops with students or public talks where I ask a few framing questions, have people go through it on their own and check what they're already doing, share with a small group, reflect on enablers and barriers, commit to taking their next concrete action.)

# Teaching SHIFT: Individual paper

30% grade  
1500 words

Write a reflection paper on the connections between personal and systemic climate action, reflecting on your experience with taking action yourself, and on the policies (and/or norms and/or infrastructure) that support or hinder climate action in your own lived experience.



Jointheshift.earth  
#makeSHIFThappen

For my new Climate Science and Politics class for 24 MSc students in Sustainability Science, fall 2025 I used SHIFT in 2 assignments: An individual reflection paper, and a social media campaign. (The other assignment was a group project to write a plan for a real organization to cut their emissions in half by 2030.)

For the individual paper:  
30% of course grade.

Take the SHIFT (Super High-Impact Initiative for Fixing Tomorrow) guide at [jointheshift.earth](http://jointheshift.earth)

Go through once and answer for yourself. (You may choose to go back a second time and answer differently to see what the different paths include.) Write a reflection paper on the connections between personal and systemic climate action, reflecting on your experience with taking action yourself, and on the policies that support or hinder climate action in your own lived experience.

Some guiding questions:

What did you consider "climate action" to be before taking the guide? Did this view change?

Which of the five climate superpowers are available to you, and which are your overall strongest/weakest? Any surprises?

What's the highest-impact action you're already taking, that you find easiest

to maintain? How could you share this /get others onboard to scale up its effectiveness? What policies support you in taking this action?  
What's the highest-impact action the guide suggests you take next? Take one tangible step towards taking that action in your own life, and reflect on your experience. What policies currently hinder, or could better support you in taking this action?  
Word limit: 1500 words.

# Sample Student Projects, New Climate Action Fall 2025, Climate Science & Politics, LUMES MSc



Joined group  
1<sup>st</sup> protest  
Called rep  
E-mailed rep



(less relevant for those currently studying, I need to add student actions to the guide!)



Switched bank  
Divested portfolio



Flight-> train  
Plant-based week  
Promoted cycling



Potluck + film for 13!  
Asked partners' mom to take train to family holiday  
Called 5 family members

# Assessment Rubric: SHIFT Individual paper

Topic	Criteria
1. Climate action	Sophisticated reflection on what counts as climate action, and how to identify high-impact climate actions, with clear links to emissions reduction potential and system change.
2. Reflections on own position and agency	Reflections on possible climate superpowers, your own experience of your agency to affect change, where you see your strengths in galvanizing climate action.
3. Choice and implementation of own action	Clear description of the action chosen, explanation of why chosen, description of how it was taken and what the results were.
4. System change	Concrete, creative, nuanced understanding of systemic enablers and barriers to personal action (policies, infrastructure, and/or norms).
5. Links between personal & system change	Reflections on connections, synergies and limitations between personal and system change.
6. Writing	The structure of the paper is logical and clear, using section headings and formatting to guide the reader and clearly address the criteria. Every paragraph uses a topic sentence. Each paragraph contains one main idea. The writing is clear, concise, and sophisticated. The paper is a pleasure to read.

(would be good to update assignment on slide 6 to better align with these!)

## Student reflection

“Before I took the guide, I viewed climate action as being largely limited to behaviours connected to individual consumption...

To me, these actions felt superficial, dependent on the systems around them, and left me wanting to be more proactive....

After using the SHIFT guide, I feel more hopeful and inspired as individual’s climate actions are put into perspective. As I had never considered these [citizen] actions before, the guide helped me reclaim my agency.”

– LUMES Student 2025

The students did great projects and had really thoughtful reflections.

# Social media campaign

30% grade

3 posts + Reflection paper (600 words) +3 min presentation



30% course grade

Design and carry out a social media campaign promoting a high-impact climate action, based on EITHER your individual paper (personal to systemic actions), OR your group paper (a specific action for a specific kind of organization, such as Swedish municipalities or Brazilian shoe manufacturers). The goal is to get individuals/organizations to take one of the highest-impact climate actions you identified.

Make at least three posts on the social media platform of your choice, to promote the action in an actionable, engaging, and creative way.

See Canvas calendar for post due dates over the last 3 weeks of class.

You may post from an existing social media account, or create one for this assignment. Consider that you may want to include your work in future job applications as a portfolio of your social media skills.

Research the most successful approaches for your chosen platform, and follow best practices (e.g., including hashtags, tagging and engaging with relevant accounts, etc.)

Write a short reflection paper (ca. 600 words). Describe how you identified and targeted your intended audience, explain how you designed the posts to appeal to them (cite sources/inspirations), and any metrics of impact from your campaign. Reflect on the role of policies that enable or hinder this action for your target group. Include links to AND screenshots of your three posts.

On October 30, you will have 3 minutes to present your campaign to the

class. You can choose which elements to include to best meet the rubric criteria for the presentation. Please upload your presentation in advance at the Google Sheets link given, and use screenshots or embed images/posts/videos (rather than clicking on links during your presentation).



## Want to #MakeSHIFThappen?

- Take the quiz ([jointheshift.earth](https://jointheshift.earth))
- Take your next action!
- Share the quiz (social media, at work, innebandy...)
- Link to SHIFT from your website
- Teach high-impact climate action
- Get in touch to collaborate!
- ...



Please use SHIFT yourself and help others use it to take high-impact climate action!

# Thank you!

Kimberly.Nicholas@lucsus.lu.se



Extra slides for teachers

# Assessment Rubric: Social media campaign

Topic	Criteria
1. Post 1	Select strategic, high-impact action. Make specific action steps clear. Messaging is expertly tailored to clear and specific target group. Post content is accurate, appropriate, creative, and engaging. Post invites engagement. Research-backed approach to use the chosen platform effectively clearly applied.
2. Post 2	Select strategic, high-impact action. Make specific action steps clear. Messaging is expertly tailored to clear and specific target group. Post content is accurate, appropriate, creative, and engaging. Post invites engagement. Research-backed approach to use the chosen platform effectively clearly applied.
3. Post 3	Select strategic, high-impact action. Make specific action steps clear. Messaging is expertly tailored to clear and specific target group. Post content is accurate, appropriate, creative, and engaging. Post invites engagement. Research-backed approach to use the chosen platform effectively clearly applied.
4. Reflection paper	<p>Clear and convincing description of how selected action(s) and target audience were chosen and why they are strategically important.</p> <p>Sophisticated, evidence-based justification of how posts were designed to appeal to target group and to motivate them to actually take the action.</p> <p>Sophisticated analysis of impact (using platform metrics and reflecting on any other indicators).</p> <p>Nuanced, well-supported reflection on relevant policies to support or hinder your chosen action for your chosen group.</p> <p>Full images (screenshots) of posts and links to posts are included as an appendix (does not count towards word count). You may want to use this to include relevant engagement (e.g., comments, likes).</p>
5. Presentation	Your time is used effectively to highlight the most effective, creative, and compelling elements of your campaign. Visuals and media are used well. You include information about your key learnings on best practices and impact from social media.

## Student summative evaluation

*"I really enjoyed the assignments in this course, were my favourite, and felt very relevant whilst also providing skills and work examples that can be used in broader life and future career paths."*

*"While especially the social media campaign was really outside my comfort zone, I was glad about it in the end. I feel like the assignments did not only help me academically, but also made me reflect on the role I want to play in society and how the knowledge I am gaining through my studies is also a great privilege that should be used in a meaningful way!"*

Evaluation item: "The course assignments are engaging and/or intellectually stimulating": 4.8/5

– LUMES Students 2025

*Consider how to incorporate next year: "for the individual assignment (social media campaign), I would encourage either a reflection paper OR a presentation, not both. Having both felt a bit redundant as I just felt like I was repeating myself. One criteria of the reflection paper (what policies hinder/facilitate action) resembled individual assignment 1 a lot and felt like I had already done before, which felt redundant. Otherwise I did really enjoy doing the assignments!"*