

Leiden, 16 October 2024.

Dear Board members of Naturalis,

Over the last four years, Extinction Rebellion has been alerting you about the urgency of your museum communicating properly on the massive and ongoing global biodiversity crisis. After several letters and a series of disruptive actions to get your attention, we accepted to enter a phase of discussion with you on these topics.

Unfortunately, after a year we must conclude that, despite the many exchanges between XR and Naturalis, very little to no progress has been realized regarding museum policy and meaningful change.

For example, on the first floor of Naturalis, the museum still puts stuffed animals on display, without any logic or scientific meaning behind it as proper support for education on zoology or ecology. This has no other apparent goal than providing empty and increasingly grim entertainment for the youngest visitors, who are introduced right from the start to a reductive image of biodiversity only meant to generate profit.

Nowhere in the building can any significant information be found about the dire reality of today's biodiversity and our direct influence on it. So far the public unfortunately seems to be better off at zoos like Diergaard Blijdorp to learn about these topics. The most remarkable accomplishment of the new Naturalis building so far seems to be the morbid conjuring of a "nature" version of Disneyland based on dead exhibits.

Meanwhile, a clear and international scientific consensus has emerged regarding the systemic causes behind the current 6<sup>th</sup> massive biodiversity extinction. For the first time in history, it is being caused by a single species, *Homo sapiens*. Therefore, we must ask you one more time to take on the following responsibilities:

**Naturalis, be honest.**

1. Inform the public, clearly and honestly, in a permanent and well documented exhibition, that most of the beautiful animals they admire on the first floor are facing extinction. So is biodiversity in general on Earth, within a rapidly shrinking time frame.
2. Explain to visitors that this biodiversity crisis is only one of the many symptoms of the current dominant globalized economic system. This system is created and sustained by humans and prioritizes profit over the protection of the planet. Because of this system, we also are facing the climate crisis, the increasing scarcity of drinking water and other natural resources, continuous massive environmental

pollution, increasing social inequalities, forms of systemic discrimination, (neo/green) colonialism and institutional and structural forms of oppression.

3. Commit fully to your role and responsibility in dealing with and mitigating this systemic crisis, not just by thoroughly highlighting the above, but also by confronting your historical role in colonialism. It is colonialism that has set the precedent for today's system of exploitation which has extorted and robbed indigenous cultures. As a result, the Global South is left with fewer resources to cope with biodiversity loss, ecosystem destruction, and climate catastrophe, caused to a large extent by the Global North.
4. Specifically, repair some of the damage that this colonial exploitation has done: take for example Indonesia, where the Dubois collection was stolen from its country of origin years ago and now wrongfully resides in your collection, in the Netherlands, a former colonial power.

Until all of the above has been put into practice we shall go back to what has been our *raison d'être*, and we shall act accordingly and radically once again, for as long as it appears necessary.

A final important point: we address this letter specifically to you and not to the whole staff of Naturalis, many of whom actually agree with most of these issues. They are committed to developing and disseminating knowledge about the biodiversity crisis through their excellent (scientific) work.

We call upon you, as members of the Board of Naturalis, to fulfill your duty to society and to our natural world.

With love and rage, Extinction Rebellion.

With the support of:

Doorbraak

Scientist Rebellion

Animal Rebellion

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