

## 27/ THE ZERO-CARBON CITY

PAUL CHATTERTON

The climate emergency is also a city emergency. We know that the climate crisis isn't a natural phenomenon. It's a human-made problem, and one that is lock-stepped with the growth of our industrial urban world. Most of the world's population will soon be in cities. They are locked into high-energy throughputs, are responsible for about three quarters of global greenhouse gases, have ecological footprints way bigger than their city limits, and are the beating heart of our pro-growth, consumer-saturated way of life.

Fundamentally changing the way we live in – and design – city life makes sense. It's where the big battles against the climate emergency can be waged. And there will be wider rewards. We need to tackle the climate crisis in our cities in ways that also tackle long-standing urban problems – poverty, alienation, segregation, violence, corporate greed and powerlessness. The way cities respond to the climate emergency will determine the very fate of humanity. We literally need to save the city from high-energy, high-emission, high-inequality life. Here are four areas that can be the focus of our attempts. Let's explore them.

First, the overarching challenge is to repurpose and redesign city life, infrastructures and institutions to meet the target set at the UN talks at Paris in 2015 – to hold global temperature rises to no more than 1.5 degrees Celsius of global warming. While there's a real focus on figuring out

a roadmap for how to do this at a global and national level, we have almost no idea what this means for cities, and especially urban neighbourhoods. Exactly how much carbon, what changes, by when, by whom and how? We are largely in the dark.

There are already ambitious targets. Cities across the world are rapidly bringing forward their plans to reach zero-carbon targets. Big global cities like New York, Paris and London are pitching at 2050, while in the UK Bristol and Manchester have brought it into the 2030s and Nottingham by 2028. Emissions-reduction pathways are also littered with confusion. Do they refer to net zero and carbon neutral, which opens up easier routes through emissions offsetting? Or are we aiming for genuine zero-emissions planning, where zero means zero, and now, more realistically, net negative? We have to go beyond zero emissions and start to drastically drawdown carbon from the atmosphere.

The big message is to create city carbon transitions based on social justice. The average citizen has to reduce their emissions to the equivalent of almost three tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> per person by 2030. What's clear is that the majority of city dwellers across the world, mainly in the Global South, already live well below this level. And the big elephant in the room is Scope 3 emissions from consumption and travel outside city boundaries. Bringing them back on to the city balance sheet completely changes the nature and scale of the task and focuses our attention on reversing almost all externally sourced consumer habits. We are not looking at adjustments any more. It's a complete overhaul of what we know as city life and city economies.

This is the zero-carbon city challenge. It requires locking down an ageing, centralized, corporate-controlled and externally dependent energy system unfit for the challenges

to get around the city is connected to a set of choices about the very future of the city itself. Driverless cars may yield some marginal emissions gains. But cities full of Google and Tesla driverless cars will not stop the descent into alienated street life, status anxiety and debt-fuelled, corporate-controlled consumerism. The driverless-car city is the next step in the great car take-over of the urban world.

Putting ourselves front and centre of the car-free city is one of the most crucial but difficult tasks ahead. We are not stuck in traffic. We are the traffic. Recognizing our own personal implication in car culture and the damage it is doing is personally threatening. So much is invested in it that it is easier to ignore it. For many of us, perhaps the car represents the only crumb of sanity, freedom and control in an otherwise out-of-control world. It might be the only way we can get food, get our kids to school and get to work in a world full of complicated, expensive and seemingly dangerous options. But we need a step change. Only by designing out the car, and the corporate and fossil-fuel webs that support it, can we save the city.

The third area is the Bio City. An urgent lock-down of the destructive ecological tendencies of urban life is required. The air, water and land ecosystems that cities depend upon are being intensely degraded, and resources are being depleted and commodified. There are vast deadzones of alienated urban sprawl and dereliction, retail areas, highways and industry where residents have little connection with the natural systems that underpin human flourishing. Worse, there's a binary division between us humans and the nature out there. This leads to us treating nature as something external rather than as a life-support system we depend upon.

At the same time, we need to unlock a new 'human-city nature' deal, which is slowly emerging through restorative

and regenerative practices in urban nature. A constellation of pioneering innovators and ideas, including rewilding, permaculture, urban agriculture, continuous productive urban landscapes and blue-green infrastructure is driving this. It is underpinned by a broader shift in the relationship between nature and the city away from resource extraction, private profit, linear notions of progress and privatization and towards equality, stewardship, nature-based regeneration and restorative cyclical and interconnected relations. By reducing wealth and social inequalities and the drive for individual profit, humans can also begin to value and reconnect with each other and the natural world. For too long natural systems have been regarded as a replaceable and free resource at the disposal of the human quest for maximizing individual gain in the service of infinitely growing economies.

A more fundamental rethink of urban nature is underway. Two ideas help here. First, 'biophilia' refers to the innate emotional affiliation of human beings to other living organisms and the strong emotional and psychological benefits that are derived through connection to nature. As an urban design approach, this can replicate the experiences of nature in cities in ways that reinforce that connection. Second, 'biomimicry' refers to emulating or mimicking the complex engineering and design principles found in the natural world. Insights into how nature solves problems can be used to tackle significant social challenges such as climate breakdown or air pollution. Practical applications are emerging through hybrid natural and built forms: living walls, rooftop farms, vertical or sky gardens and breathing buildings. Through these, the challenge remains to create a deep reconnection and love for nature and other species. Without this deep reconnection, most people will simply not see the rationale for protecting

and regenerating the natural systems that we depend upon. Reversing the trend of industrial urbanism confronts us with a complex and seemingly inevitable social and political history that incorporates colonialism, imperialism, capitalism and advanced technology. Saving the city requires recovering a very different human–natural deal – one that puts nature and our deep connections with it back in the driving seat. The question remains whether action can be fast enough to respond to the urgent threats of climate breakdown, water stresses, pollution and the annihilation of animal species and biodiversity.

The fourth area for action is what I call the common city. In the contemporary urban experience, something is amiss. It is in fact deeply uncommon. The signature characteristic is the significant and growing gap between the haves and the have-nots, a deep and lasting sense that, for vast swathes of the urban population, what is happening is not for them. Civic democracy has become detached, over-bureaucratic, ossified into silo thinking, and public trust in it continues to plummet. Urban economies no longer attempt to distribute wealth and ameliorate income and social polarities. Instead, they largely function to facilitate large capital enterprises so they can extract value from local economies, suck out and concentrate wealth within extra-local corporate supply chains. We need to unlock a city commons.

Civil society is bursting with potential, ideas and skills to respond to the climate crisis and build community resilience. Examples abound of community- and place-making that challenge the uncommon corporate city and show glimpses of novel forms of citizen housing, common ownership, social/solidarity economy, community wealth, citizens forums, civil disobedience, attempts to revive local places, neighbourhoods and high streets, as well as to reclaim land. The

# LIFE



**OR DEATH**

Cleveland Model, Co-operation Jackson, the shack-dwellers' movement, renters' unions, housing cooperatives, open-source digital manufacture and crowd-sourced city plans are all showing how to reverse-engineer city communities and democracies to become places of safety and equality. Saving the city requires building a common city, which can put into reverse the pro-growth capitalist city.

So what's the overall place that this points to? A car-free, negative-emissions, commons-based bio city. This needs to be a positive vision of a beautiful place, thriving communities, abundant commons, pleasurable mobility, sufficient energy, a climate-safe future together. But we have to be realistic. We need to acknowledge and unravel the structural conditions that drive urban unsustainability. The challenge, as always, remains to strategically reflect on what this means. How do micro-examples connect and scale without losing their potency? How do we embed social justice in cities as we respond to climate breakdown? How do we ensure that the way we respond is inclusive and representative of diverse voices? What coalitions of actors will move us in these directions?

We need three things. First, we need a new post-growth storyline – a safe and just operating space. Second, we need an ambitious post-carbon target – and to understand what the task is to comply with the Paris 1.5 target. Finally, we need post-capitalist interventions to create common and civic economies that retain community wealth and build climate-safe solutions. To unlock all this we will need huge shifts in subsidies and primary legislation to raise corporation tax, curtail corporate power and shift the burden of tax from income to land. This will need a new and powerful political movement that can take power and radically redistribute it. It will need ambitious coalitions of city actors prepared

to move away from traditional ways of working: renegade entrepreneurs, break-away academics, dissident public officials, rebellious citizens. We need to experiment wide and fast, and we need the finances and political support to do so. This is a climate and city emergency. To save the climate and the city, we need to think big, start small, but act now.



we are part of is obviously a 'neighbour' in the most dramatic way, the life-giving cradle of human existence, the source of air, water, food, not to mention beauty and challenge. 'Neighbourhood', 'neighbourliness' – we all understand pretty much what such words mean, and their homely and prosaic character is itself a reminder that finding a new and fuller way of being human is not at all finding a way of being superhuman (or post-human). It is about settling to inhabit where we are and who we are.

A revolution is a turn of the wheel, and the paradox of true revolution is that it takes us back from insanely dangerous places to having our feet on the ground again – coming back to where we started and knowing the place for the first time, as T. S. Eliot puts it in his greatest poem. In this time of massive public denial and displacement – so miserably evident in the ego-boosting dramas of the Brexit debates and the resurgence of surly, self-protective localism across the world's political landscape, Extinction Rebellion urges on us the revolution of coming to ourselves, coming to truthfulness, healing the broken connection with what we are.

It might just work. It might allow a new space and a new imagination to flower in the face of incipient tragedy, a new hope and dignity for human agents, not least among the young, who can so easily feel completely ignored and unvalued in a world apparently indifferent to *their* future. Change the narrative, and who knows what is possible? Accept the diseased imagination of the culture we have created and the death count begins now. Anger, love and joy may sound like odd bedfellows, but these are the seeds of a future that will offer life – not success, but life.



## WHAT IS YOUR PLACE IN THESE TIMES?

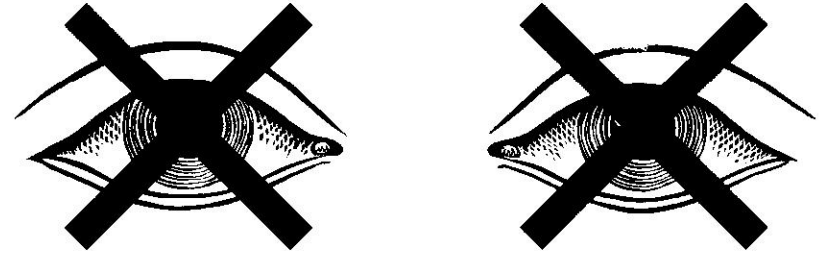
GAIL BRADBROOK

Standing above the crowds in Oxford Circus, in the pink Extinction Rebellion boat, Daiara Tukano spoke of existence as resistance. Coming from the Tukano indigenous nation of Brazil's Upper Rio Negro, a community enduring severe human rights abuses and under sustained environmental attack, she told us that indigenous nations protect 82 per cent of the Earth's biodiversity. Her message to us was that if you are alive at this moment in history, it is because you are here to do a job.

So what is your place in these times? Have you felt the call to join Extinction Rebellion? Which of your gifts are needed right now? Maybe you feel ill equipped. Bring your uncertainty, together with a willingness to learn. You may feel your gifts are simple. Simple offers, made with true love, are the stuff of life. Do you feel the call to be with us on the streets? Come along and remember the power of togetherness, when the people are determined and strong. Join us in our home communities, let us grow as we are needed. You are so very welcome.

These are times of unravelling, dissolving, transformation. Don't expect to be the same person as before you took part in this journey. For each of us there is an individual challenge, there are waves of difficulties, obstacles, challenges that can be hard to anticipate and hard to name. It's time to trust what is happening and to be willing to be changed.

We have shown in the UK something of what we are made of – which is perhaps fitting for the nation that unleashed this incredible and destructive industrial society on the world. Our challenge now is to look beyond our island nation and see with fresh eyes the rest of our family, spread across the world. To open our hearts. When we are able to fully feel the losses among us, then we will be able to do what these times truly require from us. All the children are our children. We can protect those closest to us only when we remember our love for those furthest away. This is an international rebellion, aligned with all peoples living with struggles to protect life on Earth. This is sacred.



**TIME TO  
STOP  
READING**

why I was at the launch event of Extinction Rebellion, was on the bridges in November and in the streets in April and why I will continue to encourage all people, especially my LGBTQ brothers and sisters and all who are concerned about social justice, to join us. If we don't, then, for gay people, the bad days of the past will soon be with us again – and that may be the least of our worries.



## **11/ DOOM AND BLOOM: ADAPTING TO COLLAPSE**

**PROFESSOR JEM BENDELL**

Our climate is changing rapidly, destroying lives and threatening our future. We must act now to reduce harm and save what we can. In doing so we can rediscover what truly matters. That may seem less of a rallying cry than 'This is our last chance to prevent disaster.' But I believe it is more truthful and will be more lasting. It will also invite less disillusionment over time and help each of us to prepare. After all, when harvests collapse, we won't be eating our placards. We will be relying on the love we have for each other and the ways we have prepared.

Scientists and activists have been shouting for the past fifteen years about the imminent disaster we are creating. The latest message is 'We've only got twelve years' to prevent a disastrous 1.5 degrees Celsius of warming, but I'm not swayed any more. My reading of the latest data is that climate change has gone too far, too fast, with too much momentum, so that any talk of prevention is actually a form of denial of what is really happening. It is a difficult conclusion to arrive at. And a difficult one to live with. We have too little resilience in our agricultural, economic and political systems to be able to cope. It is time to prepare, both emotionally and practically, for a disaster.

I am a social scientist, not a climatologist. So who am I to spread panic and fear when the world's top scientists say



we have twelve years? Like many readers, I had assumed the authority on climate was the IPCC – the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change – but it turns out they’ve been consistently underestimating the changes. In 2007 they said an ice-free Arctic was a possibility by 2100. That sounds far enough away to calm the nerves. But real-time measurements are documenting such rapid loss of ice that some of the world’s top climate scientists are saying it could be ice free in the next few years.

Sea-level rise is a good indicator of the rate of change, because it is affected by many factors. In 2007, satellite data showed a sea-level rise of 3.3 millimetres per year. Yet that year the IPCC offered 1.94 millimetres a year as the lowest mark of its estimate for sea-level rise. Yes, you’re right: that’s lower than what was already happening. It’s like standing up to your knees in flood water in your living room, listening to the forecaster on the radio saying she is not sure if the river will burst its banks. It turned out that when scientists could not agree on how much the melting polar ice sheets would be adding to sea-level rise, they left out the data altogether. That’s so poor, it’s almost funny.

Once I realized that the IPCC couldn’t be taken as climate gospel, I looked more closely at some key issues. The Arctic looms large. It acts as the planet’s refrigerator, by reflecting sunlight back into space and by absorbing energy when the ice melts from solid to liquid. Once the Arctic ice has gone and the dark ocean starts absorbing sunlight, the additional global warming blows the global two-degree warming target out of the window.

The implications even of small changes are immense for our agriculture, water and ecosystems. Even just one warmer summer in the northern hemisphere in 2018 reduced yields of wheat and staples like potatoes by about a quarter in the UK.

Unlike other years, the unusual weather was seen across the northern hemisphere, with declines in rain-fed agriculture reported across Europe. Globally, we only have grain reserves for about four months, so a few consecutive summers like 2018 and the predicted return of El Niño droughts in Asia could cause food shortages on a global scale.

Our civilization would struggle to hold itself together under such conditions. I hear many voices fending off despair with hopeful stories about technology, political revolution or mass spiritual awakenings. But I cannot pin hopes on those things. We should be preparing for a social collapse. By that I mean an uneven ending of our normal modes of sustenance, security, pleasure, identity, meaning and hope. It is very difficult to predict when a collapse will occur, especially given the complexity of our agricultural and economic systems. My guess is that, within ten years from now, a social collapse of some form will have occurred in the majority of countries around the world.

Having worked for over twenty-five years in environmental sustainability, I find it hard to accept that my career has added up to nothing; my sense of self is shaken because I had believed humanity would win in the end. We had been walking up a landslide. I find myself regretting all the times I settled for small changes when my heart was calling for large ones. I’ve grieved how I may not grow old. I grieve for those closest to me and the fear and pain they may feel as their food, energy and social systems break down. Most of all I now grieve for the young, and the more beautiful world they will never inherit.

This realization meant that I began feeling the impermanence of everything in a far more tangible and immediate way than before. My attention had always been fixed in the future but now arrived in the present, and I became aware as never



before of other people and animals – of love, beauty, art and expression. I was reminded of what my friend with terminal cancer had said about his experience of gratitude and wonder, and of the peculiarly intense quality of our last meeting.

I am hardly the first to notice this phenomenon. The Russian author Dostoevsky described the delicious intensity of the last moments before his false execution. I believe we all need to go through such a process, individually and collectively. Putting all our hopes in a better future allows us to make compromises in the present, while letting go of a better future can allow us to drop false hopes and live in the present with more integrity. It might even make our activism more effective.

If we are to stop the rapid extinction of species and avert the possible extinction of our own, what might we do, as publicly engaged citizens?

If societal collapse or breakdown is now likely due to climate change, might we communicate that view as widely as possible without offering a set of answers and action agendas? There is a lot that people can gain from feeling lost and despairing before then piecing things back together for themselves, in their personal, professional and political lives. Without loving support of any kind, a sudden realization that collapse is now likely or inevitable in the not-so-distant future can trigger some ugly responses to difficult emotions.

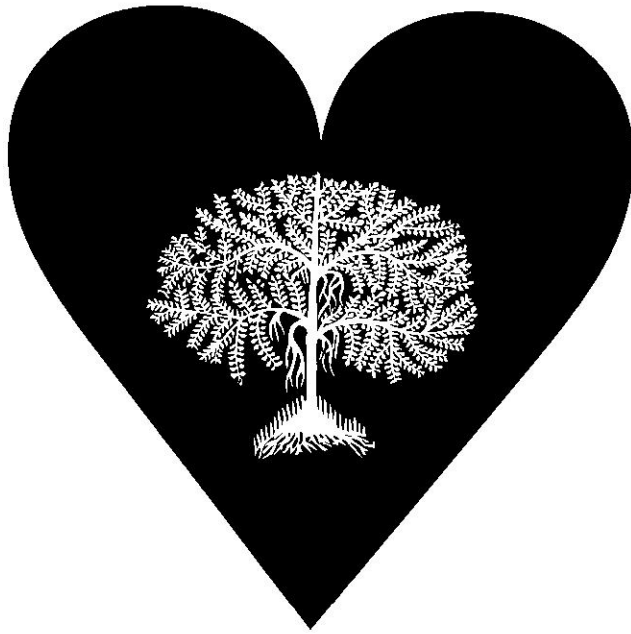
My view is that normalizing discussions about how to prepare for and soften collapse will benefit society. Only collective preparations have a serious chance of working. Deep adaptation to climate change means asking ourselves and our leaders these four questions.

First, how do we keep what we really want to keep? As we seek resilience, our capacity to adapt to changing circumstances is crucial to survive with valued norms and behaviours.

A likely collapse in rain-fed agriculture means that governments need to prepare for how to ration some basic foodstuffs and enable irrigation systems for crops such as potatoes. It's unclear how our financial markets will respond to the realization of climate shocks: there is a risk that our systems of both credit and payments could seize up. Governments need to ensure we have electronic means of payment outside of the private banking system so trade can continue in the event of a financial collapse. Some responses for resilience will take a bit longer. We need to try to buy more time. Many geo-engineering ideas are highly dangerous and impractical. But one makes sense right now. We should be seeding and brightening the clouds above the Arctic immediately, as a global emergency response. We need to be reacting as we would if an Armageddon-sized meteor was hurtling towards Earth.

Second, what do we need to let go of in order not to make matters worse? People and communities will need to relinquish certain assets, behaviours and beliefs: withdrawing from coastlines, shutting down vulnerable industrial facilities, giving up expectations for certain types of consumption. There will be the psychological challenge of how to help people who experience dread, grief and confusion. Many of us may be deeply affected by the falling away of our assumption of progress or stability. How do we plan our lives now? That will pose huge communications challenges if we want to enable compassionate and collaborative responses from each other as much as possible. Helping people, with psychological support, to let go of some old attachments and aspirations will be important work.

Third, we need to explore the restoration of attitudes and approaches to life and organization that our hydrocarbon-fuelled civilization eroded. Examples include rewilding landscapes so they provide more ecological benefits and require



**FRUGALITY**  
**HUMILITY**  
**EMPATHY**

less management, changing diets back to match the seasons, rediscovering non-electronically powered forms of play and increasing community-level productivity and support.

Fourth, as we contemplate endings, our thoughts turn towards reconciliation: with our mistakes, with death and, some would add, with God. We can also seek to be part of reconciliations between peoples with different political persuasions, religions, nations, genders, classes and generations. Without this inner deep adaptation to climate collapse, we risk tearing societies apart.

Bold emissions cuts and carbon-drawdown measures are still necessary, to reduce as much as possible the mass extinction and human suffering of climate change, but we must also prepare for what is now inevitable. This Deep Adaptation agenda takes us beyond mainstream narratives and initiatives on adaptation to climate change, as we no longer assume that society as we know it can continue.

Faced with these scenarios, some people react by calling for whatever-it-takes to be done to stop such a collapse. That is, to attempt whatever draconian measures might cut emissions and achieve carbon drawdown in case it might stop the disaster. The problem is that such a perspective can quickly lead to calls for those with power to impose on people without it, for the powerful to satisfy themselves that what they are doing needs to be done no matter what the implication for people's lives and well-being. It is now clear that there will be tough decisions ahead. But rather than suggest that we can sacrifice our values for a chance to survive, instead we can make universal love our compass as we enter an entirely new physical and psychological terrain.

I cannot honestly hope for a better future, so instead I'm hoping for a better present. I'm earning less money and instead I'm eating better and feeling better. I'm not compromising

my truth, because I have nothing to lose. I'm sleeping more, enjoying more and loving more. In this sense, my life is not doom and gloom. Instead, both doom and bloom are part of my everyday experience.

In facing our climate predicament, I have learned that there is no way to escape despair. But there seems to be a way through despair. It is to love.



## 12/ NEGOTIATING SURRENDER

**DOUGALD HINE**

The place looks like an Italian monastery, all cloistered gardens and red-tiled rooftops. On a bright spring day you can get caught off-guard: stepping out on to the open walkway that links one building to another, you find the air two seasons colder than the view from the windows seemed to promise. We are a long way north of the Alps, in the small lakeside town of Sigtuna, thirty miles outside Stockholm.

There are advantages to the location. A few weeks after I moved to Sweden we had a friend passing through, one of the fiercest activists I ever knew, whose work has run from hacking together networks for the Syrian resistance to fighting for transgender people's right to exist. As we sat together in a patch of sunshine on a chilly April morning she stretched her arms and sighed: 'This is the one place I come where it feels like I'm back from the front line.' No country is without its front lines, but two centuries of neutrality have given Sweden a sense of peace that is striking by comparison to most corners of the world, and nowhere more so than in Sigtuna, a town whose street plan hasn't changed in a thousand years. In an upper room of one of the wooden houses that line its main street, in 1942 the German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer held secret meetings with George Bell, the Bishop of Chichester, bringing news to the Allies from the German resistance of its plot to overthrow Hitler.

For a hundred years the cloistered buildings of the Sigtuna

technological wizardry could be applied towards less romantic but entirely more collective interests right now.

They were amused by my optimism, but they didn't really buy it. They were not interested in how to avoid a calamity; they're convinced we are too far gone. For all their wealth and power, they don't believe they can affect the future. They are simply accepting the darkest of all scenarios and then bringing whatever money and technology they can employ to insulate themselves – especially if they can't get a seat on the rocket to Mars.

Luckily, those of us without the funding to consider disowning our own humanity have much better options available to us. We don't have to use technology in such antisocial, atomizing ways. We can become the individual consumers and profiles that our devices and platforms want us to be, or we can remember that the truly evolved human doesn't go it alone.

Being human is not about individual survival or escape. It's a team sport. Whatever future humans have, it will be together.



## 9/ CLIMATE SORROW

**SUSIE ORBACH**

It is a curious paradox. The more we are connected at a national and global scale, the less we seem to be able to take on the calamities that are brought to our screens. Flooding in the UK, the Arctic ice melts, the tsunami in Indonesia, the poisoning of water in Canada.

Five years ago, a flood in lower Manhattan knocked out the electricity, devastated New Jersey beaches. The activities of New York City residents ceased. Elevators didn't work. The food shops had no lighting or fridges. Hospitals were on back-up generators. My daughter sent photos of lower Manhattan as a river. With the water receding, the city returned to normal and, with it, for many, the awareness of what should have been the wake-up call receded, too.

How can we explain this curiosity, the fact of climate change being in our face and yet our capacity for denial? We know there are nefarious political players involved in disputing the evidence – evidence they know is incontrovertible for it has often come from their own reports, such as those from Exxon Mobil in the 1970s. Such players change the language to soften what we hear and dump a surfeit of words and advertisements arguing that climate change is not proven. They aim to destabilize the certainties we know. They are always there to provide 'balance': either in the form of outright denial (and in the guise of how they are cleaning things up), or, more dishonest still,

they contest the idea that fracking, deforestation and pipelines are polluting.

As these voices generate ever more distortions, we inadvertently accommodate them in some way. There are mechanisms inside of ourselves that allow us to cut off from what we know even as we separate our rubbish, take our shopping bags to market, watch our screens aghast, and endeavour to limit our footprint.

I've been puzzling this much as I puzzle over other forms of denial. We participate in activities that are often against our self-interest. We are seduced into thinking that uncomfortable things will go away or that 'science' will solve the problems. But it's not accurate and the urgency upon us means we need to engage with our own denial.

How can we do this? What is required of us psychologically to engage with rather than cut off from this knowledge? How can we envision what is happening when it isn't right in front of us? It's difficult to imagine one's own death. How much more impossible to imagine that human activities might mean extinction?

Among North Americans polled at the end of last year by the Yale Program on Climate Change, 73 per cent said they believed it and 69 per cent said they were worried. This is an eight-point increase since March 2018, so consciousness is changing. But the politics aren't. They are going backwards and the capacity to hold on to what we know and want seems slippery. We know and we don't know.

To come into knowing is to come into sorrow. A sorrow that arrives as a thud, deadening and fearful.

Sorrow is hard to bear. With sorrow comes grief and loss. Not easy feelings. Nor is guilt, nor fury, nor despair.

Climate sorrow, if I can call it that, opens up into wretched states of mind and heart. We can find it unbearable. Without

even meaning to repress or split off our feelings, we do so. I am doing so now as I write. Staying with such feelings can be bruising and can make us feel helpless and despairing. It is hard, very hard, to stay with, and yet there is value in this if we can create contexts for doing so.

The feminist movement taught us that speaking with one another allows truths to enter in and be held together. In creating spaces to talk, we transformed our isolation and, although we have not focused our energy on issues of extinction, we need to do so now. We need to take that practice, to create spaces in which we can share how difficult this hurt is and how to deal with our despair and rage.

Facing feelings is not a substitute for political action, nor is it a distraction from action. Feelings are an important feature of political activity. Acknowledging our feelings – to ourselves, to one another – makes us more robust. We need to mourn *and* organize. It should not be one or the other.

We know from conventional political struggles that the less we understand emotionally, the more our potential victories will lead us to missteps and a weakening of our legitimate concerns. When setbacks and external manipulations occur, which they inevitably will, there can be a pull to manage difficult feelings by collapsing into sectarianism. We can find ourselves projecting our frustrations, fury and disappointments at the slowness of change on to those we mostly agree with rather than those responsible for endangering social justice and planetary conservation. We need to work in broad coalitions where differences can be tolerated rather than fracture effective political interventions. This doesn't mean weakening our positions or not having sound leadership. Leadership is critical, and we need a leadership that finds ways to encompass the range of progressive activities while speaking to people's emotional upset as well as their hopes.

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The feminist movement taught us that speaking with one another allows truths to enter in and be held together. In creating spaces to talk, we transformed our isolation and, although we have not focused our energy on issues of extinction, we need to do so now. We need to take that practice, to create spaces in which we can share how difficult this hurt is and how to deal with our despair and rage.

Facing feelings is not a substitute for political action, nor is it a distraction from action. Feelings are an important feature of political activity. Acknowledging our feelings – to ourselves, to one another – makes us more robust. We need to mourn *and* organize. It should not be one or the other.

We know from conventional political struggles that the less we understand emotionally, the more our potential victories will lead us to missteps and a weakening of our legitimate concerns. When setbacks and external manipulations occur, which they inevitably will, there can be a pull to manage difficult feelings by collapsing into sectarianism. We can find ourselves projecting our frustrations, fury and disappointments at the slowness of change on to those we mostly agree with rather than those responsible for endangering social justice and planetary conservation. We need to work in broad coalitions where differences can be tolerated rather than fracture effective political interventions. This doesn't mean weakening our positions or not having sound leadership. Leadership is critical, and we need a leadership that finds ways to encompass the range of progressive activities while speaking to people's emotional upset as well as their hopes.

Climate emergency is too important for us to go into the splits that can haunt progressive struggles. We have superb political analysis. What's missing is how to hold the feelings we fall into denying. If we look at how moved and concerned children are when they hear about endangered bears, we see a tap root for political action. That tap root should be part of the toolkit for activists. We need to accept our own feelings of grief and fear and we need to provoke conversations that touch the hearts of others. In doing so we will build a movement that can handle the horrors we are facing, without the secondary issue of internal denial. We will be more, not less, robust. More, not less, effective. More, not less, compelling.



## 10/ THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY AND THE END OF DIVERSITY

**MATTHEW TODD**

Over the last thirty years, scientific reports of wildfires and floods have by and large enabled us to make a bargain with ourselves: 'I'll settle for some bad weather over giving up burgers and flying.'

During that time, too, the West has undergone staggering social change. In 1987, when I was a struggling teenager, according to the British Social Attitudes survey 75 per cent of the British public said they believed homosexuality was 'always' or 'mostly' wrong. Fanned by a hostile media, violence against gay and lesbian people was common, people were legally fired from their jobs because of their sexuality and others were barred from funerals of long-term partners by homophobic parents. Most of the media was homophobic. Some was explicitly racist.

Racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia and other issues are still pernicious problems (trans people are the current media punchbag), but society has changed massively. We have, thankfully, become significantly more civilized: the concept of 'equality' is mainstream in the West; diversity is taken up by major companies; footballers wear 'rainbow laces' to show support for gay people; schools – with some exceptions – teach kids that everyone should be respected; the MeToo movement has shaken society. The accepted view is that our society is progressing and will continue to do so.