

## THIS CHANGES EVERYTHING

### CAPITALISM vs THE CLIMATE (INTRODUCTION, PAGES 24 TO 28)

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#### **Power, Not Just Energy**

I was struck recently by a mea culpa of sorts, written by Gary Stix, a senior editor of Scientific American. Back in 2006, he edited a special issue on responses to climate change and, like most such efforts, the articles were narrowly focused on showcasing exciting low-carbon technologies. But in 2012 Stix wrote that he had overlooked a much larger and more important part of the story – the need to create the social and political context in which these technological shifts stand a chance of displacing the all too profitable status quo. “If we are ever to cope with climate change in any fundamental way, radical solutions on the social side are where we must focus, though. The relative efficiency of the next generation of solar cells is trivial by comparison.”<sup>31</sup>

This book is about those radical changes on the social side, as well as on the political, economic, and cultural sides. What concerns me is less the mechanics of the transition-the shift from brown to green energy, from sole-rider cars to mass transit, from sprawling exurbs to dense and walkable cities- than the power and ideological roadblocks that have so far prevented any of these long understood solutions from taking hold on anything close to the scale required.

It seems to me that our problem has a lot less to do with the mechanics of solar power than the politics of human power-specifically whether there can be a shift in who wields it, a shift away from corporations and many people who are getting a rotten deal under our current system can build a determined and diverse enough social force to change the balance of power. I have also come to understand, over the course of researching this book, that the shift will require rethinking the very nature of humanity’s power-our right to extract more without facing consequences, our capacity to bend complex natural systems to our will. This is a shift that challenges not only capitalism, but also the building blocks of materialism that preceded modern capitalism, a mentality some call “extractivism”.

Because, underneath all of this is the real truth we have been avoiding: climate change isn’t an “issue” to add to the list of things to worry about, next to health care and taxes. It is a civilizational wake-up call. A powerful message – spoken in the language of fires, floods, droughts, and extinctions – telling us that we need an entirely new economic model and a new way of sharing this planet. Telling us that we need to evolve.

## Coming Out of Denial

Some say there is no time for this transformation; the crisis is too pressing and the clock is ticking. I agree that it would be reckless to claim that the only solution to this crisis is to revolutionize our economy and revamp our worldview from the bottom up – and anything short of that is not worth doing. There are all kinds of measures that would lower emissions substantively that could and should be done right now. But we aren't taking those measures, are we? The reason is that by failing to fight these big battles that stand to shift our ideological direction and change the balance of who holds power in our societies, a context has been slowly created in which any muscular response to climate change seems politically impossible, especially during times of economic crisis (which lately seems to be all the time).

So this book proposes a different strategy: think big, go deep, and move the ideological pole far away from the stifling market fundamentalism that has become the greatest enemy to planetary health. If we can shift the cultural context even a little, then there will be some breathing room for those sensible reformist policies that will at least get the atmospheric carbon numbers moving in the right direction. And winning is contagious so, who knows? Maybe within a few years, some of the ideas highlighted in these pages that sound impossibly radical today – like a basic income for all, or a rewriting of trade law, or real recognition of the rights of Indigenous people to protect huge parts of the world from polluting extraction – will start to seem reasonable, even essential.

For a quarter of a century, we have tried the approach of polite incremental change, attempting to bend the physical needs of the planet to our economic model's need for constant growth and new profit-making opportunities. The results have been disastrous, leaving us all in a great deal more danger than when the experiment began.

There are, of course, no guarantees that a more systemic approach will be any more successful – though there are, as will be explored later on, historical precedents that are grounds for hope. The truth is that this is the hardest book I have ever written, precisely because the research has led me to search out such radical responses. I have no doubt of their necessity, but I question their political feasibility every day, especially given that climate change puts us on such a tight and unforgiving deadline.

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It's been a harder book to write for personal reasons too.

What gets me most are not the scary scientific studies about melting glaciers, the ones I used to avoid. It's the books I read to my two-year-old. *Have You Ever Seen a Moose?* is one of his favorites. It's about a bunch of kids that really, really, really want to see a moose. They search high and low – through a forest, a swamp, in brambly bushes and up a mountain, for “a long legged, bulgy nosed, branchy antlered moose.” The joke is that there are moose hiding on each page. In the end, the animals all come out of hiding and the ecstatic kids proclaim: “We've never ever seen so many moose!”

On about the seventy-fifth reading, it suddenly hit me: he might never see a moose. I tried to hold it together. I went back to my computer and began to write about my time in northern Alberta, tar sands country, where members of the Beaver Lake Cree Nation told me about how the moose had changed – one woman described killing a moose on a hunting trip only to find that the flesh has already turned green. I heard a lot about strange tumors too, which locals assumed had to do with the animals drinking water contaminated by tar sands toxins. But mostly I heard about how the moose were simply gone.

And not just in Alberta. “Rapid Climate Changes Turn North Woods into Moose Graveyard,” reads a May 2012 headline in *Scientific American*. A year and a half later, *The New York Times* was reporting that one of Minnesota’s two moose populations had declined from four thousand in the 1990s to just one hundred today.<sup>32</sup>

Will he ever see a moose?

Then, the other day, I was slain by a miniature board book called *Snuggle Wuggle*. It involves different animals cuddling, with each posture given a ridiculously silly name: “How does a bat hug?” it asks. “Topsy turvy, topsy turvy.” For some reason my son reliably cracks up at this page. I explain that it means upside down, because that’s the way bats sleep.

But all I could think about was the report on some 100,000 dead and dying bats raining down from the sky in the midst of record-breaking heat across part of Queensland, Australia. Whole colonies devastated.<sup>33</sup>

Will he ever see a bat?

I knew I was in trouble when the other day I found myself bargaining with starfish. Red and purple ones are ubiquitous on the rocky coast of British Columbia where my parents live, where my son was born, and where I have spent about half of my adult life. They are always the biggest kid pleasers, because you can gently pick one up and give it a really good look. “This is the best day of my life!” my seven-year-old niece Miriam, visiting from Chicago, proclaimed after a long afternoon spent in the tide pools.

But in the fall of 2013, stories began to appear about a strange wasting disease that was causing starfish along the Pacific Coast to die by the tens of thousands. Termed the “sea star wasting syndrome,” multiple species were disintegrating alive, their vibrant bodies melting into distorted globs with legs falling off and bodies caving in. Scientists were mystified.<sup>34</sup>

As I read these stories, I caught myself praying for the invertebrates to hang in for just one more year – long enough for my son to be amazed by them. Then I doubted myself: maybe it’s better if he never sees a starfish at all – certainly not like this...

When fear like that used to creep through my armor of climate change denial, I would do my utmost to stuff it away, change the channel, click past it. Now I try to feel it. It seems to me that I owe it to my son, just as we all owe it to ourselves and one another.

But what should we do with this fear that comes from living on a planet that is dying, made less alive every day? First, accept that it won't go away. That it is a fully rational response to the unbearable reality that we are living in a dying world, a world that a great many of us are helping to kill, by doing things like making tea and driving to the grocery store and yes, okay, having kids.

Next, use it. Fear is a survival response. Fear makes us run, it makes us leap, it can make us act superhuman. But we need somewhere to run *to*. Without that, the fear is only paralyzing. So the real trick, the only hope, really, is to allow the terror of an unlivable future to be balanced and soothed by the prospect of building something much better that many of us have previously dared hope.

Yes, there will be things we will lose, luxuries some of us will have to give up, whole industries that will disappear. And it's too late to stop climate change from coming; it is already here, and increasingly brutal disasters are headed our way no matter what we do. But it's not too late to avert the worst, and there is still time to change ourselves so that we are far less brutal to one another when those disasters strike. And that, it seems to me, is worth a great deal.

Because the thing about a crisis this big, this all-encompassing, is that it changes everything. It changes what we can do, what we can hope for, what we can demand from ourselves and our leaders. It means there is a whole lot of stuff that we have been told is inevitable that simply cannot stand. And it means that a whole lot of stuff we have been told is impossible has to start happening right away.

Can we pull it off? All I know is that nothing is inevitable. Nothing except that climate change changes everything. And for a very brief time, the nature of that change is still up to us.

## Notes

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<sup>31</sup> Gary Stix, "Effective World Government Will Be Needed to Stave Off Climate Catastrophe," *Scientific American*, March 17, 2012.

<sup>32</sup> Daniel Cusick, "Rapid Climate Changes Turn North Woods into Moose Graveyard," *Scientific American*, May 18, 2012; Jim Robbins, "Moose Die-Off Alarms Scientists," *New York Times*, October 14, 2013.

<sup>33</sup> Josh Bavas, "About 100,000 Bats Dead After Heatwave in Southern Queensland," ABC News (Australia), January 8, 2014.

<sup>34</sup> Darryl Fears, "Sea Stars Are Wasting Away in Larger Numbers on a Wider Scale in Two Oceans," *Washington Post*, November 22, 2013; Amanda Stupi, "What We Know – And Don't Know – About the Sea Star Die-Off," KQED, March 7, 2014.

Introduction: One Way or Another, Everything Changes. "Most projections of climate change presume that future changes-greenhouse gas emissions, temperature increases and effects such as sea level rise-will happen incrementally. A given amount of emission will lead to a given amount of temperature increase that will lead to a given amount of smooth incremental sea level rise. However, the geological record for the climate reflects instances where a relatively small change in one element of climate led to abrupt changes in the system as a whole. In other words, pushing global temperatures past c In the book, This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. Climate Change, the author Naomi Klein, an award-winning journalist, author, and syndicated columnist, explains why capitalists are denying climate change even though they know the consequence of it and how they are procrastinating the appropriate responses to this crisis. Just as Klein states, "The bottom line is that we are all inclined to denial when the truth is too costly- whether emotionally intellectually, or financially"(46). Even though we all aware of the implications of our actions to the environment, we continue to repeat those actions. Some of us chose to look away, especially "political right"(Klein 63)because they fear to change; fear to accept the consequence of climate changing. Filter by page count 1-24 Pages 25-50 Pages 51-100 Pages 100+ Pages. Climate Change and Migration. 287 Pages 2014 3.94 MB 52,718 Downloads. Perceptions about Climate Change and Extreme Weather. Events. 8 .. Mediterranean Integration in Marseilles, the Europea The shock doctrine: the rise of disaster capitalism. 575 Pages 2007 8.52 MB 14,356 Downloads New! The bestselling author of No Logo shows how the global free market has exploited crises and shock for three decades, from ... the consideration: climate change and human rights, disaster prevention and research, and disasters . impacted eco- t The Uninhabitable Earth: Life After Warming. 291 Pages 2005 1.85 MB 4,620 Downloads New! Capitalism vs. Climate ( Image ). Importing a pen from halfway across the globe doesn't raise an eyelid, but the idea of helping a poor island in sustainable growth seems preposterous. The book explains how climate change is not a problem but a symptom of a much larger problem called Capitalism. Although an informative book in several ways, here are my top five key takeaways. 1. Fossil fuel companies have carbon reserves almost five times our existing carbon budget. Pumping out fossil fuel for the last 200 years is what has primarily resulted in today's situation. But what already sounds like This changes. Everything. Capitalism vs. The Climate. NAOMI KLEIN. 0. Klein, Naomi, author This changes everything : capitalism vs. the climate / Naomi Klein. Includes bibliographical references. ISBN 978-0-307-40^9^ eBook ISBN 978-0-307-40202-8. Title Page. Copyright. Dedication. Epigraph. Introduction One Way or Another, Everything Changes. Part one bad timing. 01. The Right Is Right: The Revolutionary Power of Climate Change. 02. Hot Money: How Free Market Fundamentalism Helped Overheat the Planet. 03. Public and Paid For: Overcoming the Ideological Blocks to the Next Economy.