Climate Activism

Edited by

Simon Goldhill and Georgie Fitzgibbon

CONTENTS

Climate activism: introduction

Simon Goldhill and Georgie Fitzgibbon

Abstract: The climate emergency has inspired a range of actions, both individual and collective. This issue of the *Journal of the British Academy* contextualises the climate crisis within the COVID-19 pandemic and the lead up to COP26. It asks what climate action looks like at different levels, and how this action can ensure climate justice.

Keywords: Climate change, activism, protest, climate justice, social action.

Notes on the authors:
Simon Goldhill is Professor of Greek at the University of Cambridge, and a Fellow of King's College, Cambridge. He was elected a Fellow of the British Academy in 2016, and currently serves as Foreign Secretary & Vice-President of the British Academy.
Dr Georgie Fitzgibbon is International Policy Adviser at the British Academy.

Climate change poses existential threats to the planetary life support systems on which we all depend. Its effects are already felt profoundly around the world, with those who are already vulnerable and marginalised suffering most. Poverty, inequality, social conflict and displacement are already worsening, and will worsen further, under unchecked climate change. Both science and everyday experience on this are incontrovertible. We have seen high-level global and national policy commitments to address climate change, yet these have failed to produce enough real action. Addressing climate change requires system-level transformations in how we live, consume, produce, use energy and move around. Technologies can help, but at heart these transformations are political. They require a shift in the political-economies that support fossil fuels, forest burning, climate-damaging agriculture and more, and in the politics of knowledge that enable climate change denialism or claims of 'other priorities'. This is a politics that must extend beyond documents and negotiating chambers to reach the ground, uniting governments, businesses and citizens in alliance for change. This vital climate change politics has sorely lacked momentum, and often been blocked.[1]

Usually the idea of climate activism conjures two images – one of the public protest, of people taking to the streets to petition governments or blockading the carbon arteries of our societies, and the other of the concerned citizen weighing up the carbon and financial costs of air travel, plastic use, eating meat and so forth. Yet much of the most effective climate action is to be found elsewhere, in the collective actions of cities, communities, faith-based groups, even businesses and financiers. Often experimental and below the radar, it is in these spaces of hope that much of the power of climate activism is to be found. Equally importantly, climate activism means holding those with the power to make big differences to account – be it government or business, our employers or those who hold our pension funds. Individual action will mean little if the conditions within which we make choices about our everyday lives are not also changed. Taking climate action means we also have to open our imaginations to new kinds of future – read a climate fiction book, watch a climate movie, engage with artists or a local museum to start creating new forms of meaning and identity for a low-carbon good life.[2]

Individual efforts go only a tiny way towards controlling the menace of climate change. Too few of us will make the effort, and reducing emissions requires big changes in our national infrastructure. Only governments have the resources to control the menace. They can rebuild the infrastructure, and they have powers of taxation and regulation to make everyone reduce their emissions. Although advances in science and technology render zero-emissions electricity grids and prosperous low-emissions

[1] Leach (2019).
[2] Bulkeley (2019).

economies feasible within this century, such systemic changes will be disruptive and will generate strong opposition from established interests. Political opposition and inertia often thwart even incremental measures such as emissions taxes.[3]

In the first article in this issue, Ed Wall (2021) asks how art practices can mobilise to create change in ways that empower situated lives and urban landscapes to address the climate crisis. Mary Miss's works can be read as consistently confronting prevailing social and environmental inequities from the ground up. As concerns for sustainability and the climate crisis have become more pronounced Mary Miss has initiated works that defy the singularity of the sculptural objects – what she terms 'monoliths' – to mobilise artists, experts, agencies, residents, and landscapes as 'constellations'. *City as Living Laboratory* (*CALL*) is the latest phase of Mary Miss's work, a 10-year project that is part framework, part community, part facilitatory network, part installations. As a project of projects, *CALL* aims to bring together artists, scientists, and urban communities to address a range of environmental issues, including the climate crisis, urban equity, and health. Can art suggest future urban practices that can make visible localised environmental challenges while also providing the means to address the climate crisis?

The second article explores the need for urgent climate action through the lens of the COVID-19 pandemic, and draws parallels with and looks to learn from the ways in which the collective loss experienced as a result of COVID-19 may offer a sense of hope in the fight not just against climate change but for climate justice. Lisa Jones *et al.* (2021) argue that appropriate leadership that guides widespread climate action from all is best sought from those groups already facing the loss of climate change and therefore already engaged in climate-related social action and activism, including youth and Indigenous peoples.

In the third article, Andrew Kythreotis *et al.* (2021) situate climate action in the lead up to COP26. A key aim of much climate activism is to enhance climate ambition and hold local and national governments, as well as global governance fora like the UN, to account for the ways in which they implement and monitor climate policy across society. In recent years new local forms of climate activism, particularly at the urban scale, have taken a more prominent role in holding governments to account. This is particularly true in the UK where climate activism has prompted many local councils to declare climate emergencies whilst providing a mechanism by which they can become accountable in the delivery of their climate action plans. Using interview data with experts working on climate emergency declarations research across the UK, this article discusses four key themes that have underpinned and catalysed the changing geographies and the civil-state relationship within the climate emergency and what

[3] Broome (2019).

this may mean for future global climate governance under the UNFCCC Conferences of the Parties (COP). It argues that decision-makers at COP26 need to take greater heed of the significance of this new broader urban climate activism and its role in geopolitically mobilising more equitable, democratic and inclusive forms of climate governance that give citizens and civil society more credence within global climate policy decision-making processes that have been up to now, dominated by national state discourses.

The last contribution draws on similar themes, positioning climate activism in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Paula Serafini (2021) defines extractivist violence as the combination of different forms of violence exerted upon territories and upon racialised, gendered peoples (their bodies and their cultures) resulting from, and with the purpose of, perpetuating the extractivist model. It is engrained in the zones of extraction, but its logic extends beyond it. Taking Argentina as starting point of inquiry, the theoretical discussion is followed by discussion of a series of events and phenomena unfolding during the COVID-19 crisis with the aim of demonstrating how the perspective of extractivist violence is useful for arriving at a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the COVID-19 conjuncture. Serafini concludes with a consideration of the ethics of care as a counterpart to extractivist violence, and of the ways that care has underpinned a series of responses to COVID-19.

Finally, in the 'afterword', Marilyn Strathern (2021) reflects on how these four articles open up questions about action and inaction in response to climate crisis. Drawn from different disciplinary domains of work, research and reflection, these papers enhance appreciation of the role of those who take protest -after so many years ineffective years -into the realm of real-time irritation (creating inconvenience) and confrontation (civil disobedience).

This special issue contextualises the climate crisis within the COVID-19 pandemic and the lead up to COP26. It asks what climate action looks like at different levels, and how this action can ensure climate justice. This issue forms part of the British Academy's COP26 series which aims to raise awareness of the importance of the humanities and the social sciences in understanding the complex human and social dimensions to environmental challenges and their solutions. The authors are drawn from a range of Academy programmes, including the *Youth Futures* programme, which aims to bring a youth lens to global sustainable development challenges, *BA/Leverhulme Small Research Grants*, which support primary research across the humanities and social sciences, as well as from the Fellowship of the British Academy.

References

Broome, J. (2019), 'Eight Fellows of the British Academy respond to climate activism tactics' (blog). https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/blog/eight-fellows-british-academy-respond-climate-change-activism-tactics/

Bulkeley, H. (2019), 'Eight Fellows of the British Academy respond to climate activism tactics' (blog). https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/blog/eight-fellows-british-academy-respond-climate-change-activism-tactics/

Jones, L., Halstead, F., Parsons, K.J., Le, H., Bui, L.T.H., Hackney, C.R. & Parsons, D.R. (2021), '2020-Vision: understanding climate (*in*)action through the emotional lens of loss', *Journal of the British Academy*, 9(s5): 29–68. https://doi.org/10.5871/jba/009s5.029

Kythreotis, A., Howarth, C., Mercer, T.G., Awcock, H. & Jonas, A.E.G. (2021), 'Re-evaluating the changing geographies of climate activism and the state in the post-climate emergency era in the build-up to COP26', *Journal of the British Academy*, 9(s5): 69–93. https://doi.org/10.5871/jba/009s5.069

Leach, M. (2019), 'Eight Fellows of the British Academy respond to climate activism tactics' (blog). https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/blog/eight-fellows-british-academy-respond-climate-change-activism-tactics/

Serafini, P. (2021), 'Extractivist violence and the COVID-19 conjuncture', *Journal of the British Academy*, 9(s5): 95–116. https://doi.org/10.5871/jba/009s5.095

Strathern, M. (2021), 'Climate activism: afterword', *Journal of the British Academy*, 9(s5): 117–121. https://doi.org/10.5871/jba/009s5.117

Wall, E. (2021), 'Constellations versus hero: a conversation with Mary Miss', *Journal of the British Academy*, 9(s5): 7–28. https://doi.org/10.5871/jba/009s5.007

Constellations versus hero:
a conversation with Mary Miss

Ed Wall

Abstract: By developing frameworks of carefully structured art, science, and urban community collaborations, *City as Living Laboratory* (*CALL*) forms constellations of projects that aim to make tangible and address environmental concerns, including the climate crisis, urban equity, and health. Founded by the artist Mary Miss, *CALL* denies the singularity and monumentality of many public art works to instead focus on 'constellations' of situated walks, conversations, and initiatives that lead to specific projects. This article, structured around an interview with Mary Miss, discusses the potential of art practices that organise to create change, empowering people and transforming marginalised landscapes. It reveals how such practices can make visible local environmental conditions while also addressing challenges of the climate crisis.

Keywords: Art, science, community, landscape, environment, climate crisis.

Note on the author: Ed Wall is an Associate Professor of Cities and Landscapes, and Head of Landscape Architecture and Urbanism, at the University of Greenwich. He is a Visiting Professor at Politecnico di Milano, and in 2017 was City of Vienna Visiting Professor: Urban culture, public space and the future–urban equity and the global agenda (TU Vienna). His research explores the intersection of environmental justice, urban public space, and design experimentation. Ed is guest-editor of *The Landscapists: Redefining Landscape Relations* (Wiley/AD 2020) and co-editor of *Landscape Citizenships* (Routledge 2021). He is the author of the forthcoming *Contesting London: Urban Spaces, Social Lives and Redevelopment* (Routledge 2022). In 2007 Ed founded Project Studio. Works such as Lubricity, Park Works, Roaming Forest, and the Valley Project have been published in the *Guardian*, *Architects' Journal*, *Building Design*, *Abitare*, and *Arch Daily*, and exhibited at the Van Alen Institute, Royal Academy, Building Centre, Garden Museum, and Des Moines Art Center.
https://orcid.org/0000–0003–0505–7076   e.wall@greenwich.ac.uk / www.projectstudio.co.uk

Since she trained as a sculptor in the 1960s, Mary Miss's art practice has evolved with consistency and clarity. From her feminist activism in the late 1960s to her acclaimed environmental art produced since the 1970s, Mary Miss's works can be read as always confronting prevailing social and environmental inequities from the ground up. Born in New York City, she is considered one of the pioneers of site-specific art practice, making an impact on her home city with projects such as *Battery Park Landfill* (1973), *South Cove* (1988), and *Framing Union Square* (1998). Mary Miss's work is often discussed in the context of environmental artists, such as Robert Smithson, Robert Irwin, Robert Morris, and Alice Aycock (see Rosalind Krauss 1979), but her work that intersects sculpture, architecture, landscape design, and urban design tends to draw closer relations with concerns for public spaces and public spheres. Reflecting her role as a member of *HERESIES: A Feminist Publication on Art and Politics* (1973–1993), a magazine that combined issues such as art theory, violence, racism, sex, and politics*,* she has contributed to feminist discourses through her social, ecological, and situated art practice. As concerns for sustainability and the climate crisis have become more pronounced Mary Miss has initiated works that defy the singularity of sculptural objects – what she terms 'monoliths' – to mobilise artists, experts, agencies, residents, and landscapes as 'constellations' (Interview 2021). *City of Living Laboratory* (*CALL*) is the latest phase of Mary Miss's work, a 10-year project that is part framework, part community, part facilitatory network, part installation. As a project of projects, *CALL* aims to bring together artists, scientists, and urban communities to address a range of environmental issues, including the climate crisis, urban equity, and health.

This article is structured around a conversation with Mary Miss in March 2021. I first met her when she was developing the *Park as Living Laboratory* (2005–2006) proposal for the Orange County Great Park, in California (see Figure 2). The proposal that was part of a winning competition entry was never realised, but Mary Miss recognised its potential for developing dialogue with artists, scientists, and community residents as a means to bring people closer to the planned infrastructures and urban ecosystems of their landscapes. From *Park as Living Laboratory* Mary Miss initiated *CALL*, in 2011, as a testbed and incubator that could further the ecological ideas and conversations around sustainability. I was keen to explore in the interview how the ideas she had brought together fifteen years earlier in *Park as Living Laboratory* could suggest future urban practices that can make visible localised environmental challenges while also providing a potential means to address the climate crisis. How can art practices mobilise to create change in ways that empower situated lives and transform urban landscapes to address the climate crisis? While Mary Miss's work can be contextualised amongst other artists, such as Miele Laderman Ukeles who has developed an art practice focused on 'maintenance' (see Ukeles 1969) and who has been

Figure 1. *Greenwood Pond: Double Site* (1989–1996).

Art Interventions

A   Boundaries
    Neighborhood
    & Park Permeability

B   Circulation
    heirarchy & usage

C   Utilities
    Hydrology and Energy

D   Canyon
    Microclimate & Biofiltration
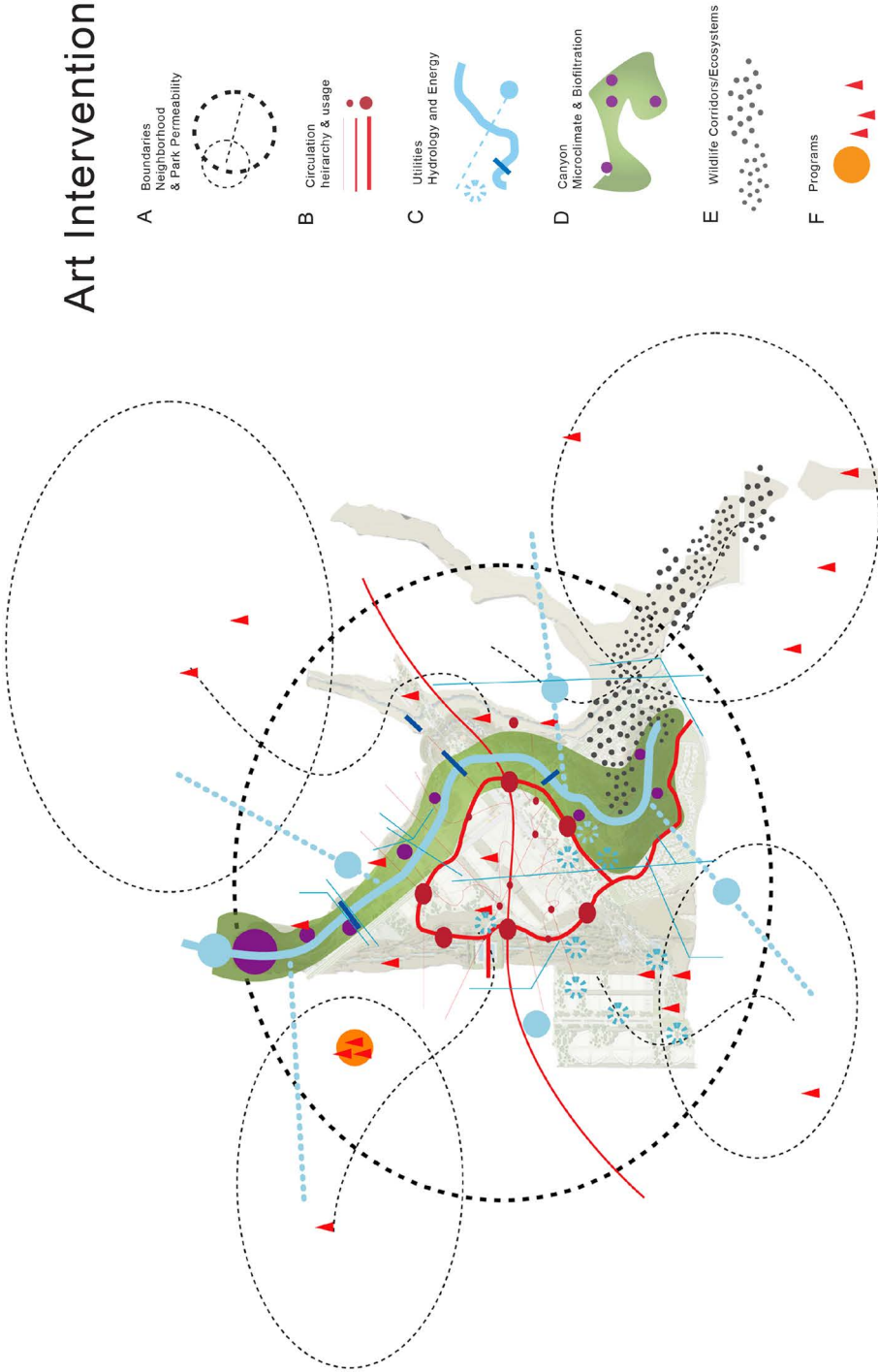
E   Wildlife Corridors/Ecosystems

F   Programs

Figure 2. *Park as Living Laboratory.*

artist-in-residence at the New York City Department of Sanitation, Mary Miss's work forms a unique practice that is engaged with communities and neighbourhoods as a basis to enact change.

CALL is a framework for art, science, and community collaborations that uniquely connect grounded environmental issues within communities to global agendas for climate justice and sustainability. The approach works with, between, and from neighbourhood actions – in cities like Milwaukee – to global agendas, such as UN Sustainable Development Goals. It is structured around four core initiatives, including: walks, workshops, proposals, and projects. The initiatives can be read as sequential stages – inclusive of community members, neighbourhood schools, artists, scientists, policy makers, and funding bodies – that lead to the development of site-specific projects. The walks are situated public engagements led by scientists or other experts along with local citizens and communities, and provide a means of developing awareness, sharing stories, and revealing environmental concerns. The walks aim to raise awareness of environments less visible or threatened, whether culverted rivers or polluted landscapes. Workshops often follow the walks, as the basis for more in-depth conversations, with communities facing challenges such as the climate crisis. The workshops provide opportunities to share stories of places, especially revealing otherwise excluded narratives of living within marginalised or threatened landscapes, while proposals are commissioned based on information gathered during workshops. Proposals are then tested within the *CALL* process in order to realise projects that draw together and work between many different residents, stakeholders, and governance agencies.

Mary Miss aims to provide a platform to work with young artists to inform the projects, developing networks of individuals across the communities and within the *CALL* framework: 'We see artists as leaders who can inspire greater community understanding in the journey toward sustainable living' (Watermarks 2021). For *CALL*, the term 'sustainability' encompasses a range of responses, from the *Watermarks* project, where *CALL* commissioned Melanie Ariens to develop the *9 Pillars Mural* with students from a Milwaukee high school, to *Harlem/Designing Emergency Preparedness* where *CALL* collaborated with WeACT for Environmental Justice resulting in a proposal by the landscape architect Elliott Maltby. In 2021, as COP26 convenes around the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), *CALL* marks its 10-year anniversary. With its unique approach in situating environmental action within global agendas, this article reflects on the strategic art practice of *CALL*, through a reflective conversation with its founder, Mary Miss.[1]

---

[1] Conversation between Mary Miss and Ed Wall, 8 March 2021 [online].

[*Ed Wall*] **I don't have any specific questions; I am just interested to hear about *City as Living Laboratory* [*CALL*]. In the context of informing the future of climate change and cities, I am fascinated by *CALL* as a series of public actions, discourses, and ecologies.**

[*Mary Miss*] You know, we [first] met at a particularly complicated time in my working life. I had spent so much time in the '90s developing projects that didn't happen. As we all know, it's complicated to get a project through the public realm unscathed but it is especially true for artists. It was just very frustrating to spend years, quite regularly years, developing something like the plan for the sewage treatment plant in Arlington, Virginia, or, various [other] projects, that don't happen.

I think a key experience for me was after 9/11 – you know my studio is right down there near the World Trade Center site – and we did a proposal in my studio, for the perimeter of the site and a temporary memorial [see Figure 3]. And somehow it just really clicked for me that I wanted to be working on things that, could be done quite easily and where there was some modesty to the elements. It was in New York City addressing a neighbourhood that I was very concerned about, my own. That was a key thing to triggering my feeling, that I had to start doing projects where it was possible to actually get something done – and that I wanted to be able to address issues in places that I was really concerned about and interested in.

Then, in the early 2000s, working on the Orange County Great Park, another project which did not materialise, I developed the *Park as Living Laboratory* idea. And when that didn't happen, I had the opportunity, because of money received for another cancelled project at the Indianapolis Museum of Art, to think about how the *Park as Living Laboratory* could be developed for cities.

So that was the process I went through, but it was really responding to how difficult it is as an artist to get completed projects out in the world. Also, I've always felt, any time I've done any visiting teaching or doing crits, there are so many interesting ideas that young people are developing in studios, and then they get out of school and go and work at the back desk in an office. And I really thought it was so important for the ideas and thinking of young artists and designers, and not so young ones, to be able to get out on the street.

At the same time, [Michael] Bloomberg was the Mayor [of New York City] and coming up with very ambitious plan for making New York City sustainable. But all of that work was happening at the level of departments and agencies and I really felt that [it] was so important to get things out on the street. So those were the various things that I was responding to.

Figure 3. *Moving Perimeter (9/11 memorial)*.

[*EW*] **The methods, Mary, with which you begin the projects [that are part of *CALL*], include walks and conversations. They are the beginning of a structured approach that appears to have been developed from your earlier art practice.**

[Walking has been central to Mary Miss's practice, as a way of engaging with issues, mobilising people, and creating change. It is also an approach that connects her early activism around inclusivity of women artists in New York galleries, such as the Whitney, to the specifically structured initiatives of *CALL*. In an unpublished paper that Miss presented at the AIANY (American Institute of Architects New York), she explains 'Walking was not an experience to be taken for granted. I knew that it was a privilege and one that I did not necessarily get to share ... Perhaps because it was fraught, walking became a core practice. It was how my activism was expressed in my work' (Miss 2021). As with Mary Miss's early environmental art works, the walks of *CALL* resonate with walking artists such as Richard Long and Hamish Fulton. However, the collective nature of the walks that *CALL* organise and the focus that each walk follows contrast with the documented walks of Long's *A Line Made by*

Walking (1967) or Fulton's *Pilgrims Way* (1971). Instead, *CALL*'s walks reflect the fieldwork approach of artists such as Katie Etheridge whose *Reimagine Your Town* (2016) involved walking with others, providing moments for sharing experiences and stories of places, while looking closely at landscapes participants were already familiar. Importantly, however for the *CALL* projects, the walks, workshops, and proposals are the means to which urban change can be realised through projects.]

[*MM*] Well, I just wrote something on walking for a panel at the AIA [American Institute of Architects] here in New York. It was interesting to reflect back to my earliest work. There's a project that I did in 1968, or '69, where there were ropes, every 20 feet that were anchored, pulled taught and staked along the southern edge of Ward's Island in the East River. And I was remembering back to that time, and what movement meant to me, what mobility meant to me. As a young artist, I very much had a sense that I was not interested in the monolith or the monument. I was looking for new ways to work. I was a part of this mobilisation of women, to change things. Movement became a very important aspect of the work [then] and that has gone all the way through to the present day. Walking as a young woman was a very complicated thing in New York City – I saw it as a privilege that I could not easily share. The City was tough at the time and it was difficult to be out on the streets, after a certain hour. So, all of those things kind of drew me to walking as being integrated into my practice. It's interesting that *Broadway 1000 Steps* [one of the first *CALL* projects; see Figure 4] is based on this idea of walking. Until I sat down to write this, I hadn't, quite thought it through. But it was interesting to trace my own 'steps'.

[*EW*] **And with that walking, they seem to be educational, is that fair to say?**

[*MM*] I think that they're observational ...

Well, first of all, I think that we acknowledge that walking is something that we don't all get to share equally, and you know, what colour you are, what your mobility is, will all depend on what it's like for the individual. But for me, it's that kind of direct experience, and being in the world, seeing things, observing, smelling, hearing, that makes walking so compelling. At the same time, the walks are a way we could begin to introduce ourselves to neighbourhoods in the Broadway project [*Broadway 1000 Steps*], and introduce neighbourhoods to us, and introduce artists to scientists or historians or others. And, so, this was a very practical way to begin an exploration.

[*EW*] **Was the move from walks to workshops [the first two stages/initiatives of the *CALL* approach] more of a grounding of the activities of walking?**

[*MM*] As we would do these walks, it became clear we were aware of only some of the issues that communities were facing. If you come as an outsider into Chinatown [in

Figure 4. *Broadway 1000 Steps* [*City as Living Laboratory*].

New York City], especially where you can't easily have access with so many languages being spoken, not to mention that they're difficult languages. Or walking on the streets of Harlem, how do you become more familiar, beyond a superficial sense, with what's going on? I think that the work we're doing in the Bronx is an interesting example, we had a number of walks there. But then, during an early workshop that was in 2016 we became aware of the flooding that was caused by Tibbetts Brook, a stream that was put into the Broadway sewer [see Figure 5]. It's an issue that the Bronx Council on Environmental Quality and the Community Board had been working on for a decade and a half, but nothing was happening with it. So, through that workshop, we really began to focus on this issue to see how we could help draw attention to it.

The state finally got interested in this issue that the City Department of Environmental Protection did not have the means to pay attention to. The State realised that this was the worst sewage overflow into a waterway in New York City, [and it] goes into the Harlem River. And if they could fix this, they could go a long way towards meeting the Federal consent decree that they had to deal with. We are all interested to make sure this ends up not only as an engineering solution but something that will be an amenity to the community. The proposal is to divert the stream away from the sewer into a nearby rail corridor; this offers the opportunity to create a linear park in the old CSX Rail tracks.

So, the workshop is really a way to begin to get at the issues. In Chinatown there was a workshop we did and one of the artists who attended, Jean Shin, heard from people at the workshop about their interest in Chinese medicinal plants. And Jean came up with a really interesting way to address greening that area of the city, which has narrow sidewalks and so little planting space available. She designed window planters made out of recycled bottles that could hold medicinal plants. If you imagine the windows of Chinatown filled with greenery, that could really change the feeling of the place.

So, [the workshops are] a pathway into knowing more.

[*EW*] **In the context of *City as Living Laboratory*, I have been imagining a move in your practice from your early work that is materially and spatially distinct to something in *CALL* which is more ephemeral, non-material, more social, more relational. Is this something that you also see? Is it intentional?**

[*MM*] Well, I would have loved to be able to keep building things in the world, but it just was not possible. One of my favourite projects that I did was in Des Moines, Iowa, where there's a cut in the water, and you can sit at eye level with water, and that kind of direct experience is so compelling to me [see Figures 1 and 6].

Figure 5. *Rescuing Tibbetts Brook*.

Figure 6. *Greenwood Pond: Double Site* (1989–1996).

[The description that Mary Miss provides reveals a combination of both a pragmatic response to the struggle in getting larger commissions and projects realised and also a recognition that, in the form of walks and workshops, the social and political relations that come to form the work are more prescient than the physical forms of the installations. Mary Miss's criticism of 'monuments' and 'monoliths' resonates with a critique that Ukeles developed in *A Manifesto for Maintenance Art 1969* (1969). In the written work, Ukeles highlights the contradictions in what she terms 'development' and recognises the significance of 'maintenance' as facilitating development. Similarly, the four stages of *CALL*, in walks, workshops, proposals, and projects, are about the social and ecological processes required to bring about change. They entangle Mary Miss's art practice in places, with people, and into infrastructures, and organisations. It appears a messier practice than the recognisable and well photographed work that marks the early part of her career. But the ambition to work between artists and scientists, with communities, and inside of city agencies creates a capacity to make change in the lives of residents as well as wider environmental scales: 'This work is very process oriented and, like walking itself, takes time' (Miss 2021).]

[*MM*] In this past decade, there are six *CALL* projects I've developed, and with each it's really about developing a conceptual framework and then looking to other artists to expand and build upon them. The thing that has become so interesting to me is that if we're going to address the complex issues that we face, it has to happen at scale, it

Figure 7. *Watermarks* [*City as Living Laboratory*].

can't just be individual projects. It's not about the heroine or hero coming up with the ultimate solution. What we really need is a constellation of artists and designers and thinkers, working across neighbourhoods and across cities.

The *Watermarks* project in Milwaukee is a good example of providing this kind of framework. It's a conceptual work as much as anything: the goal is to create an atlas of water for the city where physical markers call out specific issues. Each marker is intended to be a stake in the ground, so that the conversation doesn't go away. And other artists do projects at each of the sites to help get people's interest. Our next step in this process is trying to understand how we can engage communities and keeping these sites active over time [see Figure 7].

> [*Watermarks* is a *CALL* project in Milwaukee that aims to create a city-wide engagement with water and water infrastructure – 'An Atlas of Water' (www. watermarksmke.org 2021). One of the projects that have been developed from the walks, workshops, and proposals is a series of markers that aim to connect residents and communities with the complex and layered systems of water that are essential to

their lives. The project illustrates Mary Miss's interest in constellations of works, where the markers are installed and designed in collaboration with a high school, a neighbourhood action group, a university department, water industries, business districts, and environmental coalitions. The markers go beyond the role of urban landmarks or signs that inform or orientate citizens (see Lynch 1960), they connect, raise questions, reveal, and add to the stories of places.]

[*MM*] So yes, it's relational in so many ways and I've learned so much. In the beginning my main focus going into a project was how we can get people to focus on the environment, and their relationship to it. Within a very short period of time, it became clear to me how equity and environmental justice issues were so often at the heart of this work. As soon as we started looking at the corridor of Broadway, it became apparent that some of the worst problems are in the most underserved neighbourhoods.

There are many interests that have carried over from the earliest work, but there is definitely a shift, as I started the *CALL* projects.

[*EW*] **You mentioned environmental justice there. The publicness of the work, starting with these walks, which seems to be within a public realm, working collectively, talking about issues which are highly political, and at the same time, you describe [on your website] the significance of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). What scales are you able to work at Mary, with the infrastructure or the framework that you've put in place?**

[*MM*] It's really a good question. First of all, I started having regular conversations with a number of key scientists a few years ago that were very formative and have been really important to me: ecologist Eric Sanderson was particularly helpful in understanding how to look at the history of the ecology of a place. I don't know if you know, the work of Steward Pickett, but his work on urban ecology sets many great precedents. And the social ecologist Adrian Cerezo helped me think more about complexity, and how artists and art making is made to take it on. Artists are used to complexity it's something we deal with all the time. Conversations with Adrian brought me to focus more specifically on the UN SDGs. It quickly became apparent that they provided a set of useful lenses to focus the work we were doing.

And my goal is to make experiences available to people that allow them to take on particular aspects of the very complex set of issues that we face. But I also came to realise how interrelated these issues are. In Milwaukee, this large-scale urban project about water is definitely about more than water. It is about health, it is about jobs, it's about equity, all of these things are really interrelated. It's been such an interesting learning process for me as I've developed these projects, coming to understand the implications of them.

A couple of years ago, we had a meeting with various groups we had worked with [on *CALL* projects] over previous years. The scientists were very excited about the

walks and said, 'Oh, we should start doing these all over the country – you know people in the arts and we know scientists.' Since there were only three of us working in the studio at the time it seemed a bit overwhelming. But we got a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, and did six walks across the country in Santa Fe, Pittsburgh, Washington DC, Baltimore, Milwaukee, and New York. From this set of experiences we developed a workbook about how these walks can be organised. We really aspire to be able to get these happening in different parts of the country. So we do think about this work at different scales.

In Milwaukee, we've just applied for a large National Science Foundation grant; they are very competitive but we have been lucky enough to have two in the past. One of the things we would really like to do (in addition to installing more markers in neighbourhoods across the city) is to develop a document that would note the process we are going through. We would like to lay out a path for other cities or communities to take on urban scale projects. We aspire to be able to pass this knowledge along. Somebody said of this project recently, 'isn't this overly ambitious?' And I thought, 'Well, you could say so.' But I feel this is work that has to be done. The problems we face are so pressing. As an artist, I felt like nobody was letting me do the things I wanted to do so I can just dream projects up myself and who's to stop me. I can be overly ambitious if I want to be.

[*EW*] **It seems like there's an opportunity, if it's not already happening with your work, to almost run in parallel with traditional forms of governance, where you are feeding into and challenging the way in which decisions are made about sustainability and climate change.**

[*MM*] I think that is true. I am really so pleased with the way the project in Milwaukee is evolving because a full process is being developed. Milwaukee is one of the most segregated cities in the US and it has huge problems. It's north of Chicago on Lake Michigan and is one of those places where the industries left and communities fell apart. I had worked there in the late 90s and when I went back in 2014, I couldn't believe the changes: the downtown area was full of new housing, the river was accessible, cleaned up. But many parts of the rest of the city were as underserved as ever. And yet, at the same time, it has this old socialist history, going back to the end of the 19th century and there are people there who are really trying to make change, and who are really willing to put in the time to do that. And that's allowed us to pull together a great group of individuals and organisations to do this project. There are people from the university, city government as well as neighbourhood organisations. The head of the municipal sewer district, a very remarkable man, is the person who encouraged me at the beginning of the project to make this an urban scale project.

It's not as though anyone was offering a large sum of money beyond an initial design fee. In fact, we are the ones who've been raising a good part of the money for the project – little *City as Living Lab*. But I'm able to work with city government, with agencies like the sewer district, with academic institutions, with organisations, NGOs, neighbourhood groups, and these groups are all decision makers. At this point, we've been able to bring them together as a working group, a coalition. We're finding out what people want and need with neighbourhood project teams. We're finding artists in those neighbourhoods who are very interesting. We're mentoring young artists there. A process and a means of decision making has been developed as the project has evolved. We are, I believe, coming up with means of making issues about climate change accessible and decisions about what to focus on available at the neighbourhood level.

Each of these markers across the city provides access to the stories neighbourhoods have to tell and where they can say to the city what's needed. They become points where the citizens can find out what's going on. It's no longer that these places are totally invisible; you get to see this network that appears from the lakefront spreads through the city. This is the goal.

I think this project is changing how you make things visible and apparent. One of the most important aspects is the stories we're collecting from all these neighbourhoods. When I started out as a young woman artist, one of the things that was so frustrating was that there were no women in the art books that I was looking at. I did not see myself reflected in the world around me – the statues, the street names. The public realm was such a monotone place, without reflecting the diversity of experience, the varied histories of those living there. We have been working with a young journalist in Milwaukee, who does interviews and finds these great stories that we're collecting and archiving. And each site becomes a Wi-Fi hotspot – in many of these neighbourhoods Wi Fi accessibility is not that easy. We are part of this slow braiding together of opportunities and groups.

[*EW*] **Yeah ...**

[*MM*] It's happening.

[*EW*] **But the markers [artworks] also quite striking objects. There is something very physical about their presence, which I quite enjoy. I think it feels like you, it feels like your work.**

[*MM*] The markers function in another way as well. They form the 'network' that radiates out from the central marker which is the stack at the Jones Island Water Treatment plant [see Figure 8]. The stack will be lit with moving light similar to what you see when light is reflected against a surface through moving water. The vapor from

Figure 8. *Watermarks* [*City as Living Laboratory*].

the stack will be lit as well. It will be lit blue during normal functioning of the plant; when there is heavy rain and a threat of a sewerage overflow into Lake Michigan, the stack will be lit red. This is a warning for the residents of Milwaukee not to use their washing machines, to wait on having a bath, to limit heavy uses of water. This makes all the residents of the city into part of its 'green infrastructure'. The letter at the top of each marker of the network pulses when there is a threat of an overflow so that people across the city can participate.

At the beginning people were saying, 'Oh, what are those letters?' I thought of them as creating a kind of 'atlas' where the letter represents each community. The first that went in was at a Latinx Middle school and the children selected the letter 'A' for 'Agua' and the grade they wanted to get. For the next marker that's going in, the 'Ñ' was selected to represent that Latinx community. They want people to know how the neighbourhood identifies itself.

[*EW*] **I like the term markers that you use as well, because it provides an opportunity for the project to continue to spread. It's not something bound by a spatial envelope.**

[The dispersed nature of the installations of *Watermarks* and other *CALL* projects – an approach also evident in *Park as Living Laboratory* – form new infrastructures. The 'markers' defy traditions of framing landscapes (see Wall 2017) and engage with places as fields, across which constellations of markers can be read. The fields also provide a context for the walks that bring together people and practices: 'We want to find ways to connect people to the pressing environmental and social issues they face on the streets in their own neighbourhoods through direct experience. We want to work to begin to create new paths, to see new possibilities, to imagine resilient futures' (www.watermarksmke.org 2021). The field can thus be read as both the horizontal plane of landscape as well as the location and formation of the contrasting practices of *CALL*. In her seminal essay 'Sculpture in the Expanded Field' (1979) Rosalind Krauss sets out challenges to prevailing art practice, beginning with a description of Mary Miss's *Perimeters/Pavilions/Decoys* (1979: 30). Later in the essay, and as if anticipating the work of *CALL* in 2021, Krauss writes: 'Thus the field provides both for an expanded but finite set of related positions for a given artist to occupy and explore, and for an organization of work that is not dictated by the conditions of a particular medium' (1979: 42).]

[*EW*] **You've mentioned gender a few times, Mary, and I'm aware of your contribution to feminist art practice. How does that relate to *City as Living Laboratory* and the work you continue to do? And also, climate change, how does your work around gender relate your concerns for such global challenges?**

[*MM*] I think the whole undertaking is reflective of gender in a way. I can't tell you how uninterested I was as a young woman to see another monolith go up, or another

monumental anything standing like a signpost. I just felt that there had to be a different way of doing things. And, also, that everything didn't have to be about me, you know, the whole idea of the *City as Living Lab*, is my trying to convince people that artists should have a place at the table, as we address the complicated crises that confront us. The first decade of *City as Living Lab* has been laying out these six conceptual frames of projects; I hope the next decade will focus on fleshing those out with projects by other artists. I think this sense of the constellation as opposed to the hero / heroine who solves everything alone, is something that comes out of experience and thinking as a young woman in the '70s.

As far as issues around the environment relating to a feminist practice, it's hard for me to articulate. It's been an interest of mine from the very early years on, looking at the collision between the built and natural environment. Anything I say seems corny to link to feminism: care, caring for place. I think, really, the main thing is about moving out into the world—the walking that I spoke of earlier—and my desire to look at things from a different perspective than what I had previously seen around me. And to try to create intimate connections with our surroundings. Once you start to look at a place or situation closely, problems (as well as pleasures) soon become evident.

[*EW*] **It comes across very strongly in your work, and I think that maybe it's a sign of a good artist that it doesn't need to be articulated in words, Mary.**

[*MM*] That's an easy way out. Thank you!

[*EW*] **The last thing I wanted to touch on was, a few years ago you had work in the Noguchi [Museum] exhibition, *Civic Action*[2] where notions of public action and art intersected. I was wondering if you could describe the publicness of your work and its role within being active, invoking action.**

[*MM*] I really like that project, *Ravenswood, CALL: If Only the City Could Speak* [see Figure 9]. And again, I think it lays out an interesting scenario: here was this area of New York City, Long Island City, that was under pressure from developers. And the question was: 'What is the alternative scenario to the usual development?' I really hoped that the two cultural institutions that were sponsoring that show, the Noguchi Museum and Socrates Sculpture Park could get the attention of powers that be, to say, 'Why don't we think about this area differently, and let it be an R&D [research and development] zone for new ways of living in the city? It could be a place where artists and designers could collaborate with scientists and others to come up with

---

[2] A two-part exhibition, *Civic Action: A Vision for Long Island City*, organised by the Noguchi Museum and Garden Museum in collaboration with Socrates Sculpture Park (2011–2012).

Figure 9. *R/Call: If only the city could speak*, Ravenswood [*City as Living Laboratory*].

ideas to be tested?' I think one of the great frustrations of trying to create change is the resistance that you confront in cities. That caution may seem necessary but it's so ingrained in cities and city governments, that change is almost impossible. To try and do anything new is so fraught with questions about liability. What if there was a part of the city where things could be tested out to see if they worked? I feel like we have to push our boundaries, and not stick to what the codes currently have outlined. You have to believe that there are some alternatives that we can begin to look at. And, yes, we have to make sure they're safe. And yes, we have to test them. But couldn't there be as a zone in the city where you could have the ability to go and check these ideas out, have people come and see what they're like, have companies invest money in supporting research of something that they're interested in?

[The open-endedness of the *CALL* projects is essential for this testing that Mary Miss describes. Cities have consistently been places of experimentation, sites where technologies, policies, and architectures have been first deployed. The structure of *CALL* projects as long-term engagements with people, places, and policy - embedded in communities while engaging with global agendas – provides inventive platforms from which testing, assessment, and development can be achieved. Few artists and designers have been able to dedicate extended periods of time to places and

communities. Along with Ukeles whose work with the New York City Department of Sanitation (1977 -) has spanned decades, or the landscape architect Joanna Gibbons who designed and continues to advocate for the Dalston Eastern Curve in London (2007–), the grounded nature of *CALL* projects is unique. If *CALL* works as city governance, as social infrastructure, and as situated conversations it is only achieved through the long-term commitment and endeavour of Mary Miss and her team of artists and scientists who work *with* people and places of each *CALL* project.]

[*MM*] Let me just mention one other project, because you were asking about cities. I spent about a year at the Department of Design and Construction as the artist in residence – it was part of the programme that was initiated by the Department for Cultural Affairs when Tom Finkelpearl was the commissioner, having 'artists in residents' in various city agencies. And in this year, I had attended lots of meetings, and I tried to understand how more artists could be involved in the making of cites. There is a percent for art programme in New York City, but since the '70s, there have only been 300 art projects done in that period of time [while] there have been thousands of capital projects in the city every year. I wondered if there could be a way that artists could be integrated into more projects, for instance, even a modest replacement of a waterline in a street in a remote corner of Bedsty [Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn, New York].

So much of the city's work is about disruption. In Lower Manhattan we are still undergoing the process of the streets being dug up for reconstruction decades after it started after 9/11. It's like confronting the Grand Canyon around every corner you turn. But what if people could understand better what this infrastructure is doing for them in their lives, and if artists could help tell the story or connect people with what is happening. To do that, could we link artists who are interested in these issues with cultural agencies in the neighbourhoods, whether these are a library or a school or an arts organisation? Is there a way that what artists do, and how they think, could help to connect people with the natural systems and infrastructure that supports their lives? Could this kind of work be integrated across the city, whether it is a $3million project or a $300 million dollar project? Not for every single project, but there seem to be many situations that would seem to lend themselves to this approach. Many more than the mere 300 [projects] that have been done would be possible.

So, the arts residency was, I think, a chance to think through how artists could be integrated into the city's building projects, to show that it is possible. At the end of my tenure the commissioner resigned, so it [has remained] just a proposal. But I think it was something interesting to think through and work on.

[*EW*] **These connections between the infrastructures, that often lie hidden, with more natural systems and urban lives, in a conversation – that does not happen enough.**

[*MM*] Yes, infrastructure is what connects us with the natural systems [that] support our lives. I think that people should come to appreciate both more than they do.

References

CALL (2021), *Watermarks*. https://www.watermarksmke.org/ (accessed 27 July 2021).
Krauss, R. (1979), 'Sculpture in the Expanded Field', in *October 8*, 31–44. https://doi.org/10.2307/778224
Lynch, K. (1964), *The Image of the City* (MIT Press).
Miss, M. (2021), 'Mobility and Cultural Agency', paper presentation at AIANY (American Institute of Architects, New York) [27 January 2021].
Ukeles, M.L. (1969), *Manifesto for Maintenance Art, 1969! Proposal for an Exhibition 'Care'*.
Various (1973–1993), *HERESIES: A Feminist Publication on Art and Politics*.
Wall, E. (2017), 'Post Landscape', in E. Wall & T. Waterman (eds), *Landscape and Agency: Critical Essays* (Routledge).

2020-Vision: understanding climate (in)action through the emotional lens of loss

*Lisa Jones, Florence Halstead, Katie J. Parsons,
Hue Le, Ly Thi Ha Bui, Christopher R. Hackney
and Daniel R. Parsons*

Abstract: We are the midst of a climate emergency requiring urgent climate action that is as yet unforthcoming both on the scale and at the speed needed. This article considers this current state of inaction and how we might understand the processes of attitudinal and behavioural change needed through the emotional framework of loss. These issues are further explored through the additional lens of the year 2020, a year of tumultuous social change created by the COVID–19 pandemic. The article draws parallels with and looks to learn from the ways in which the collective loss experienced as a result of COVID–19 may offer a sense of hope in the fight not just against climate change but for climate justice. The article argues that appropriate leadership that guides widespread climate action from all is best sought from those groups already facing the loss of climate change and therefore already engaged in climate-related social action and activism, including youth and Indigenous peoples.

Keywords: Climate change, activism, climate action, climate movement, climate justice, 2020, COVID–19, loss, emotion, hope, youth, social action.

Notes on the authors: see end of article.

Introduction

The year 2020 has marked an important juncture as the year that measures set by the signatories of the 2016 Paris Agreement were due to take effect (UNFCCC 2020). Aiming to limit climate change driven global temperature rises, the Paris Agreement set out the responsibilities of all nations for urgent climate action to mitigate an existential threat posed to humans. In the lead up to COP26, the forum to share and check progress towards the goals of the Paris Agreement (scheduled for November 2020), young climate activists in particular have made clear their dissatisfaction with the lack of urgency and progress being made towards tackling this emergency, with this prompting the largest ever international climate change protests in September 2019 (Moeve 2019). Then, in the early months of 2020, the COVID–19 pandemic spread across the world, creating an unprecedented period of change. As many nations locked down and focused on the coronavirus, climate change was off the global agenda, the COP26 was postponed and the youth-led climate movement experienced significant disruption to their mobilisation. As the world now looks to transition through and out of the COVID–19 crisis, important questions are being asked about how we can 'build back better' in ways that are both fairer and more environmentally sustainable and consider the role of youth voice within this rebuilding effort (United Nations Environment Programme 2020).

In this article we focus on this culturally significant year of 2020, reflecting on the seemingly intractable issue of large-scale climate *inaction* in dealing with the climate emergency. The COVID–19 pandemic is without doubt a watershed moment that will become a part of defining popular discourse in terms of pre-/-post COVID–19. It also offers a unique opportunity to pause and reflect, to offer insight, and enable vision into what can be different. The pandemic has had an overwhelming emotional impact on many (Maddrell 2020), causing significant disruption to life as we know it. The now popular phrase of 'the new norm' (Lawson 2020) suggests it has replaced what went before signalling a loss of norms. It is therefore through this affective lens of dealing with imposed change akin to loss that we want to consider climate change inaction, drawing parallels with the current pandemic as we do so. We explore the challenges as well as opportunities this highlights as a means for understanding how to mobilise climate *action* over *inaction*. We focus on the ideas of Kübler-Ross (1969), whose initial work was developed within the context of death and dealing with grief.

Whilst applying this frame to our discussion, we recognise that not all societies deal with loss and grief in the same way and thus in drawing parallels between human loss and climate change in societies 'where "endings", including death are "cultural taboo"' (Moser 2020: 2), the article inevitably pulls towards explanations on climate inaction within the context of the Global North. Climate change is a global issue with

problems of inaction permeating many societies, however we argue the overarching 'problem' of climate inaction is one created, and maintained, by the Global North and societies with 'climate/environmental privilege' (Norgaard 2012; Williams 2020) through systemic inaction. Utilising this lens, we unpack 'inaction' as we consider what this looks like in a broader global context. We examine the role of emotion in mobilising individuals into action, before looking to examples of leadership in this area, particularly focusing on those communities already being directly affected by climate change. But first, we focus on understanding the problem of climate change as one of climate (in)justice.

Climate change as an issue of injustice

We are in the midst of a climate crisis (IPBES 2019). With 2020 predicted to be the hottest year on record and 19 of the 20 hottest years occurring since 2001 (NASA 2020), the scientific community unequivocal in locating the reasons for this firmly with human activity (IIPC, 2021). Our reliance on burning fossil fuels as the primary power source for the global economy leads to excess heat being trapped within the earth's atmosphere, creating a range of problems including rising sea temperatures, melting permafrosts and ice sheets and an increased intensity of rainfall (IPCC 2018). The IPCC report (2018) demonstrated the need to cap global heating at 1.5 degrees above the pre-industrial baseline by 2030 and to move towards net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 if we are to avoid irreversible damage (IPCC 2018). The picture is not a positive one and yet despite the overwhelming consensus from within the scientific community that human actions are culpable, the political will to seek change has been lacking (Willis 2020). At the most recent global climate summit, COP25, the nations of the world failed to reach necessary agreements to curb emissions (United Nations 2019). At the same time, the media (both mainstream and social media) remain beset with fake news and in an era of post-truth, fact and opinion converge, experts are dismissed (Willis 2020). Here the very real threat of climate change denial exists, with powerful lobbyists and interest groups maintaining a strong influence in politics, making the task of change nothing if not difficult (DeNicola & Subramaniam 2014).

The dire consequences that climate change is, and will continue to have, on humans is multifaceted. Extreme weather events have seen a 3-fold increase since the 1960s, resulting in over 60,000 additional deaths per year (World Health Organization 2018). All social and environmental determinants of health; clean air, safe drinking water, sufficient food and secure shelter; are at risk (ibid). Between 2030 and 2050, climate change is projected to increase the prominence of malnutrition, malaria, diarrhoea

and heat stress, leading to around 250,000 further deaths annually (World Health Organization 2018). Over 140 million people are predicted to migrate within their countries' borders by 2050 (Rigaud *et al.* 2018), solely because climate change has made their previous homes uninhabitable. Crops will fail to grow in the new conditions presented by climate change, sea level rise will swallow whole settlements, access to clean drinking water will cease, and other locations will simply become too hot to sustain human life. With these challenges, over 100 million additional people will be pushed back into poverty as soon as 2030 (Hallegatte *et al*. 2015). According to the World Wildlife Fund's 2020 Living Planet Report (WWF 2020), the global wildlife population has declined by 68% since 1970. Biodiversity loss from deforestation and the cultivation of land for monocultures, plastic pollution, land degradation, exploitation of the Earth's natural and finite resources, water contamination and air pollution, to name but a few on an even longer list, are all putting our ecosystems under additional pressure and threatening biodiversity on both local and global scales (O'Connor *et al*. 2020; Peters *et al.* 2020).

The situation presented above is bleak for everyone, however the negative impacts of climate change are not equally dispersed and instead, countries in the Global South and otherwise disadvantaged groups are disproportionality affected (World Health Organization 2018). We use the term disadvantaged to categorise those who experience climate inequalities and bear the brunt of climate injustices; paying particular attention to the Global North/South divide and the demographic, socio-economic and political factors such as gender, race, age, ethnicity, religion, income and assets, access to public resources and involvement in public decision making; in governing the unequal distribution of negative climate impacts. The dynamics listed here are not an exhaustive list and there are many other contributing factors that predict an individuals' or communities' (dis)advantage. The climate crisis is thus particularly unjust in that the most vulnerable to its impacts are those least responsible for its creation (Robinson 2019; UNICEF 2015). As such, Sanson & Burke (2020: 343) view the climate crisis as 'an issue of structural violence and intergenerational justice' which may lead to a breakdown of human rights and a 'climate apartheid scenario in which the wealthy pay to escape overheating, hunger and conflict, while the rest of the world is left to suffer' (United Nations General Assembly 2019: 10).

Under the premise that inequalities relating to demographic characteristics such as race, age and gender often present themselves through income and assets, Islam and Winkel (2017) suggest that disadvantaged groups, that is those who face climate inequalities, are: more *exposed* to climate hazards; more *susceptible* to damage caused by climate hazards; and have decreased *ability* to *cope* with and *recover* from climate damages. Put simply, 'the relationship between climate change and social inequality is characterized by a vicious cycle, whereby initial inequality makes disadvantaged

groups suffer disproportionately from the adverse effects of climate change, resulting in greater subsequent inequality' (Islam and Winkel 2017: 2).

This correlation between climate (in)justice and wealth disparities is well documented elsewhere, whereby poverty is considered a key element in determining vulnerability to climate change (Gerrard 2016; Givens *et al.* 2019; Hallegate *et al.* 2015; IPCC 2018; Jorgenson *et al.* 2019; Rigaud *et al.* 2019). On an international scale, the most disadvantaged by climate change are poorer nations, often within the Global South, and Indigenous communities (Givens *et al.* 2019; Hallegate *et al.* 2015). Many of these regions lie in geographically high-risk areas that face increased risk from a rise in both flooding and drought. However, it is not their geographical location alone that puts them at a disadvantage. Positioning them as much more at risk than their wealthier counterparts, poorer nations are more likely to lack quality and accessible healthcare for all adequate information and warning systems, climate resilient infrastructure and developed mitigation and adaptation strategies/technology, positioning them as much more at risk compared to their wealthier counterparts (Hallegate *et al.* 2015).

Deemed to be one of the greatest threats posed by climate change, of particular concern to developing nations is food security (IPCC 2018). Often relying on small scale agriculture for both income and food, a loss of predictable weather patterns and an increase in frequency and magnitude of hydrological extremes in particular, will puts developing nations and their citizens at the epicentre of this challenge (IPCC 2018). It is no doubt that these changes will impact the poorest nations hardest, however the injustice is only fully understood when considered under the backdrop that collectively, the 10 most food insecure countries in the world emit just 0.08% of total global Carbon Dioxide (CO_2) emissions (Ware & Krammer 2019). These nations, despite contributing so marginally to climate change, face much graver challenges than the world's biggest CO_2 producers, and whilst developing countries with a high CO_2 expenditure do exist, it is usually under the pretence of supplying inputs and labour for the West (Prell & Sun 2015). Wealthier nations are in essence 'offshoring' their emissions and environmental degradation elsewhere (Roberts & Parks 2007). These poorer nations, as theorised within the Ecologically Unequal Exchange Concept, act as both a tap and a sink for the rest of the world; as a point to extract resources and dispose of waste within the world's economic system of extraction, production and consumption (Givens *et al.* 2019). Such exploitation further exasperates the environmental and ecological risks that these countries face, which in turn increases their exposure and vulnerability to the negative impacts of climate change (ibid). Within country correlations between inequality and poverty are also apparent and are further nuanced by personal income and assets (and thus poverty), that too are compounded by social categories and identities such as race, age, social class and

gender. These identities are intersectional; that is they 'work together to produce advantages and disadvantages across bodies and space, and … do not act independently of one another' (Pellow 2016: 225).

For many years, climate change communication, particularly in the Global North, had a predominant disposition towards the science, utilising the 'polar bear on a melting ice cap' imagery with which most individuals are now familiar (Manzo 2010; Moser 2010). Over the years facts and figures made headlines, however the unjust impact this might have on *humans* was rarely communicated. Whilst how we communicate climate change to the public has been of academic interest since the initial communication methods in the 1980s, in 2018, a then 15-year-old Greta Thunberg, thrust a new angle upon the world as she made clear the injustices that climate change laid upon her and her peers as they critiqued adults' stewardship of the Earth (Bandura & Cherry 2019). Striking from school to highlight her cause, she gained public and media attention and by 2019 the climate strikes had gone global, occurring every Friday under the now named #*FridaysForFuture*. All acutely aware of how the current status quo was affecting their current and future worlds, countless environmental and Indigenous movements came to the forefront, whilst Extinction Rebellion stepped up their acts of civil disobedience. Environmental movements that had long existed in the Global South soon also built upon the school strikes, both adopting and adapting the approach to connect to their ongoing activities (CIVICUS 2020: 6). Climate injustices towards youth in particular, were now firmly in the public eye.

Youth (and their allies) began to mobilise their political power to highlight these injustices, with an estimated 6 million young people and their supporters from across the globe taking part in the largest climate strikes in history in September 2019 (Taylor *et al.* 2019). The youth voice, and hard to ignore visible evidence, was mounting and in response, governments across the globe made declarations acknowledging the climate emergency, whilst many major corporations committed to divestment from fossil fuels. Pledges to be carbon neutral surfaced from across the economic and political spectrum and the crisis increasingly became front page news (CIVICUS 2020).

For all of civil societies' successes in advancing the climate crisis on the political agenda and within the public eye, views on such forms of activism were often very divided with loud critics vocalising disbelief and discrediting youth's evidence (Trajber *et al.* 2019). International companies with an vested interest in maintaining the status quo channelled their finance into fake news that discredited the movements and climate science (Farrell *et al.* 2019), whilst public figures and politicians undermined the youth that took a stand (Pinheiro 2020). For example, counter-terrorism police in England placed Extinction Rebellion on a list of groups with extremist ideologies (Dodd & Grierson 2020) and Brazil's president Jair Bolsonaro publicly branded Greta

Thunberg as a *pirralha* [little brat] (Watts 2019). With an array of conflicting (mis) information available to the public, opinions about climate change and climate activism were polarised, seeing the public divided into various levels of concern, distress and action; rather than a homogenous group of citizens working towards the same cause. Nevertheless, regardless of the vast disparity of personal opinion, it would be fair to say that 2019 was the year when 'civil society pushed climate change into the headlines and made it part of everyday conversation' (CIVICUS 2020: 6).

The following year of 2020, however, brought the COVID–19 pandemic. As the world went into lockdown, the Climate Strikes were put on hold in aide of mitigating the virus and front-page news became nothing other than COVID–19 related. The climate emergency was seemingly pushed aside. The pandemic disrupted activist's personal lives and circumstances, obstructing progress and slowing momentum. Ways of working had to be adapted, with activism predominantly going online, exposing not only the opportunities for mobilisation through virtual means, but also 'digital divides and online power imbalances between dominant voices and excluded groups, and between the Global North and Global South' (CIVICUS 2020: 6). We return to this focus on climate activism later in the article in considering the future of the climate movement and how it can move forward through wider forms of mass mobilisation on climate action. We also return to 2020, a year of unprecedented change and consider the impact that this has had, and is likely to have, on the thinking through the future for climate action.

Connecting emotionally: climate 'change' as loss

In attempting to understand the difficulty in mobilising an integrated climate movement to date, and the overall widespread inaction on climate change, McAdam (2017) argues that affective dimensions on understanding social movements more broadly have often been underestimated. Coming from a social movement theory perspective, McAdam (2017: 201) notes that '… movement analysts have come to view heightened emotions not simply as a characteristic feature of emergent collective action, but as a necessary causal component of any explanatory theory [of social movements]'. He suggests:

> In general, the reason grassroots movements are rare has more to do with subjective impediments to mobilization than with objective opportunities or the presence/ absence of mobilizing structures. Human beings are creatures of habit, deeply invested in the taken-for-granted routines, behavioral norms, and established worldviews that structure our lives. Emergent collective action almost always requires people to depart from those routines, violate those norms, and begin to act in accordance with new

conceptions of ourselves and the world. As any seasoned organizer knows, getting people to do this is very hard. We tend to resist doing so even when the issue at stake is in our objective interest (McAdam, 2017: 199).

McAdam argues that for a grassroots movement to succeed, the mobilising emotions of anger and/or fear – at the injustice and perceived threat respectively – must combine with a hope that the injustice or threat can be remedied through collective action. Lacking these mobilising drivers means that it is highly unlikely that a movement will develop. Talking more broadly about social movements, McAdam highlights that it is when these 'mobilizing perceptions' come together with 'opportunities and organization' that collective action becomes possible. Talking specifically about climate change, McAdam suggests that 'concern over climate change has not been accompanied by the mobilisation of either of the two strong emotions, fear or anger, normally associated with movement emergence' (2017: 201). Thus, the subjective and affective orientation of *individuals* is perhaps where we may best understand the root impetus for *collective* (social) movements on climate change.

Climate change represents the biggest form of (un)imaginable loss to humans; at worst, the threat to life as we know it and our existence. It represents loss of certainty about what the future holds, a loss of confidence that we can simply carry on as we were and the potential for a loss of, most worryingly, of *hope* for the future. As we have already argued above however, affective responses to climate change have not yet managed to inspire and mobilise the wide scale social movements and/or commitment to action and social change required to address the advancing crisis. One area where humans do experience individual loss at its most extreme is in relation to death – both the anticipation of one's own and that of a loved one, and whilst death has a more 'clear end point' (Hobbs 2013: 147) 'change itself represents a loss of what was there before' (Hobbs 2013: 146), forcing us as 'creatures of habit' to 'depart' from and 'violate' the 'deeply invested in' and the 'taken-for-granted routines, behavioral norms, and established worldviews that structure our lives' (McAdam 2017: 199).

Emerging from the field of psychiatry through her work initially with terminally ill patients, Kübler-Ross (1969) theorised that there are five stages of grief that individuals experience on receiving the news of their impending mortality. These five stages are: Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression and Acceptance. These act as a framework that equips us with dealing with life and loss, with the model being one of the best-known frameworks that attempt to understand the process of grieving. The framework is not without its criticisms, amongst them that it was not based on substantive empirical evidence and that explicitly labelling naming five stages might suggest that those who did not fit within these stages or such a journey that they were grieving incorrectly (Corr 2019). However, despite some perceived shortcomings, the framework has been widely used and adapted across various fields beyond psychiatry,

evolving from its initial focus on death to a wide range of other situations involving a form of individual loss, trauma and/or significant change including, but not limited to the breakdown of relationships and estrangements, the loss or restructuring of work and routines, infertility, disclosures around sexuality and transgenderism and so forth (Coolhart *et al.* 2018; Gibson 2007; Parkes 1972; Sanders 1999; Savin-Williams & Dubé 1998; Vickers & Parris 2007; Wright 2011).

Perhaps unsurprisingly then, there is a growing body of work that focuses upon grief, loss and emotion as linked to climate change and environmental losses more broadly (Antadze 2020; Hobbs 2013). Moser (2020) offers an important summary of these, including work focused on climate grief – where people begin to mourn the losses to habitats, spaces, species and ways of life (Cunsolo & Ellis 2018; Marshall *et al.* 2019), climate anxiety – the impact on people's wellbeing caused due to worrying about climate change (Clayton 2020; Phikala 2018) and 'solastalgia' – 'the distress that is produced by environmental change impacting on people while they are directly connected to their home environment' (Albrecht *et al.* 2007: s95) with Kübler-Ross' ideas having been influential within significant parts of this work. Running (2007), directly using the five staged framework as an analogy to make sense of the emotional responses of people to his work as a climate scientist, argued that most people started at stage 1 – *Denial*, either not believing science itself or that humans are at fault and argued people at this stage see no reason to disturb the status quo. Running (2007) argued that in his experience, many people jumped straight from stage 1 to stage 4 (*Depression*) whereas others moved to stage 2, *Anger* (often directed at him as the bearer of the bad news). They also displayed anger toward the idea of them having to change their lives as a means to mitigate climate change, an observation well echoed elsewhere within the field of climate science (Socolow 2012). This might, at least in part, explain some of the widespread anger and hostility directed towards Greta Thunberg. As a particularly prominent activist, Greta Thunberg often appears targeted as the messenger (McCarthy 2019) and frequently undergoes intense scrutiny aimed to discredit her messages; often via deeply personal and malicious denigration of her status as young person, a female and somebody with autism. Interestingly then, she too unequivocally exhibits and draws upon emotional responses including anger, however it is framed under a different light and instead shows anger directed at the lack of action on climate change (Martiskainen *et al.* 2020).

Following these initial two stages, Running (2007) argues that those who then proceed through the third stage *Bargaining*, are those looking for/clinging to any positives inferred within climate change that enable them not to have to embrace changes to their behaviours or lifestyles, such as celebrating warmer weather and the positives this might bring, including say reduced heating costs and energy consumption. Step 4, *Depression*, represents the shift in thinking and the associated feelings to

understanding change is necessary but is deeply upsetting for many, especially in considering the enormity of the task ahead with Running (2007) saying that he himself often reverts to this stage on bad days. For Running, stage 5 *Acceptance* is the stage at which the problem is acknowledged and solutions are sought, although he adds the important caveat that for addressing climate change, the viability of alternatives need to be clear for all to see to enable 'hope'.

In building upon Running (2007), Wysham (2012) makes clear that stage 5 is often difficult to reach because the implications are so scary, but adds that:

> We must accept this dreadful prognosis if we are to act appropriately. But acceptance does not mean that is all is lost. After years of working through these stages, I've discovered a new sixth stage: Doing The Work. This means taking courage from each other as we look this monster in the eye and fight side-by-side in the battle of a lifetime. Systemic change – not just light-bulb change – is what's required now. This must include everything from replacing the GDP as an outdated measure of progress to getting schools to teach climate science and arm the next generation with the facts.

Here, Running (2007) and Wysham (2012) are both working with the emotional response stages outlined by Kübler-Ross (1969) as applied to understanding the emotional journey individuals go through as they process the implications of change, and the disruption to 'normal life' (McAdam 2017). In adding the sixth stage, Wysham moves away from the function of the original stages within the Kübler-Ross (1969) framework because 'The Work' is not an emotional reaction as much as it is an 'action'. Whilst lesser well utilised than the original Kübler-Ross (1969) framework in most academic fields, the adaption of the model referred to as the Kübler-Ross Change Curve™ has been widely used in the world of business to both understand and manage more *collective* forms of loss and/or change, most notably organisational change (EKR Foundation, n.d.). Within the Kübler-Ross Change Curve™, the stages of grief first developed by Kübler-Ross (1969) are seen as the emotional responses to and reactions regarding the news of change and are seen as 'defence/coping mechanism to change, loss and/or shock' (EKR Foundation, n.d.). Jalagat (2018: 2), highlights the four 'stages of change' present in Kübler-Ross' Change Curve™ with each stage encompassing the emotional reactions to this change, loss and/or shock. Captured within each stage is the present 'state' of change whereby 'the idea is that insights provided at each stage reduce the change impact and move individuals from negative to positive stages in an upward curve towards transformative sustainable change' (Ramos-Volz 2018: 145). The first state is that of '*status quo*' where shock and denial are the reactions to the news of significant change/loss that is experienced as a 'traumatic situation' (Jalagat 2018: 2). The second state of change is '*disruption*' where anger and fear are the typical reactions of those experiencing the changes and there is realisation that their lives are about to undergo significant changes and the negative
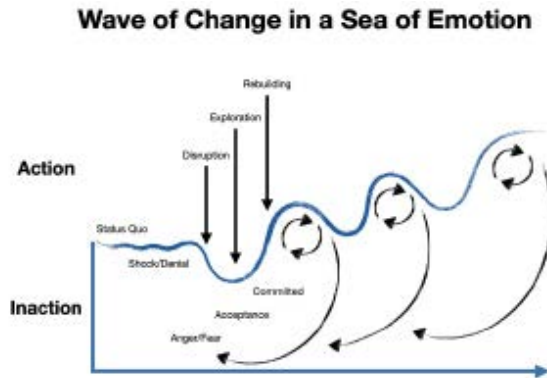
Figure 1. Wave of Change in a Sea of Emotion – adapted from Kübler-Ross (1969).

implications are amplified in providing motivation for resisting (Jalagat 2018). Stage 3, '*exploration*' is where people become able to 'accept' that change is happening and start to explore future opportunities. Jalagat (2018: 3) sees this stage as being the 'turning point for people to slowly discover the significance of change' before then moving into the fourth and final state of change, '*rebuilding*', whereby individuals have reaction moves to 'commitment'; a commitment to engage and shape their response to the change in a positive way. In our view, incorporating the ideas from Kübler-Ross' Change Curve™ allow us think about that relationship between emotions and our commitment to change. However, we would argue that rather than a singular curve of change, to understand the relationship between emotions and change linked to climate action, this might best be understood as resembling a wave as we have depicted in Figure 1.

Here we have focused on attempting to understand the implications for engaging in various forms of action, with the initial first and second 'state' of change ('*status quo*' and '*disruption*') representing inaction, whilst the third and fourth 'state' ('*exploration*' and '*rebuilding*') signalling 'turning point[s]' (Jalagat 2018: 3) towards action. In this way, Wysham's (2012) addition of the sixth stage 'The Work' to Running's initial use of the five stages outlined by Kübler-Ross (1969) is also encapsulated in 'commitment' to 'The Work' needed to rebuild. However, in moving to a more continuous *wave of change* embedded within what we see as a moving *sea of emotion (Figure 1)*, we recognise that this is a messy process with many points for which those on that emotional journey of change can face further emotional *disruptions* that may need to *explore* and rebuild from.

We propose that these *exploration* and *rebuilding* stage[s] are significant in understanding the emotional journeys already travelled by those individuals involved in climate activism and social action; already committing to the enormous task of

'*rebuilding*' in its various guises. In fact, an important part of 'The Work' involved in this '*rebuilding*' state is to get as many people to traverse a similar emotional journey to theirs if they are going to tip people out of the first two stages and reach their turning points but the question remains; how will this happen given the general widespread inaction despite the almost unanimous scientific consensus on the urgent need for action? Returning to McAdam's point (2017: 194) that to mobilise people into a movement, '…at a minimum, people need to feel both aggrieved about (or threatened by) some aspect of their lives and optimistic that by acting collectively they can begin to redress the problem…'. In trying to understand this lack of mobilisation on climate, despite the existential threat, McAdams (2017: 201) argues:

> Concern over climate change has not been accompanied by the mobilization of either of the two strong emotions, fear or anger, normally associated with movement emergence. Two factors I have mentioned above—lack of identity ownership and extended time horizon—help us understand why this is the case. First, relative to other issues, few of us feel a strong identification with the issue of climate change, and strong emotion requires just this kind of identification.

He continues:

> The extended time horizon that people associate with climate change also has affective implications. As long as we can persuade ourselves that the worst effects of climate change lie in some relatively distant future and that we still have time to minimize their damage, our fear of climate change is more likely to be of a dispassionate, intellectual nature than the more visceral fear that catalyzes action.

It is hard to disagree with McAdam's observations here as being highly significant in accounting for the lack of widespread action at a grassroots level. Moser (2020) additionally argues that pushing the urgency of climate change is unlikely to be a vote winner for most global political leaders, meaning agreed and meaningful top-down action is unlikely without the significant pressure that can result from social movements. Climate change then has perhaps just been too big (and philosophical), too impersonal to us as individuals, and perceived to be too far in the future to trigger the personal shock and fear needed to even *disrupt* the 'status quo' of people's lives. Under this guise, the vision of enough people actively engaging in *exploration* and *rebuilding* has seemed, depressingly up until now, an almost impossible feat.

The year 2020 – collective grief and loss

2020 was, in the most simplistic of terms, a tumultuous year. A global pandemic that has caused mass disruption to life as we know it across the globe. David Kessler,

compared the feelings people were going through as akin to dealing with loss and grieving in an interview with Harvard Business School that went viral in March, as much of the world faced lockdown (Berinato 2020). Kessler said:

> …we're feeling a number of different griefs. We feel the world has changed, and it has. We know this is temporary, but it doesn't feel that way, and we realize things will be different. Just as going to the airport is forever different from how it was before 9/11, things will change and this is the point at which they changed. The loss of normalcy; the fear of economic toll; the loss of connection. This is hitting us and we're grieving. Collectively. We are not used to this kind of collective grief in the air (Berinato 2020).

He explains how the emotional responses people were experiencing followed the five stages of grief from Kübler-Ross' (1969) framework:

> There's denial, which we saw a lot of early on: This virus won't affect us. There's anger: You're making me stay home and taking away my activities. There's bargaining: Okay, if I social distance for two weeks everything will be better, right? There's sadness: I don't know when this will end. And finally, there's acceptance. This is happening; I have to figure out how to proceed. ... Acceptance, as you might imagine, is where the power lies. We find control in acceptance. I can wash my hands. I can keep a safe distance. I can learn how to work virtually (Berinato 2020).

Kessler's reflections on the experience of collective grief here is of particular significance to us in this article. Whilst Kessler's point, that the pandemic is 'temporary', of course does not hold true of climate change, if we can even be certain of the temporariness of the pandemic, discussing the 'anticipatory grief' the pandemic has created, Kessler opens up the parallels further:

> … we're also feeling anticipatory grief. Anticipatory grief is that feeling we get about what the future holds when we're uncertain. Usually it centers on death. We feel it when someone gets a dire diagnosis or when we have the normal thought that we'll lose a parent someday. Anticipatory grief is also more broadly *imagined* futures. There is a storm coming. There's something bad out there. With a virus, this kind of grief is so confusing for people. Our primitive mind knows something bad is happening, but you can't see it. This breaks our sense of safety. We're feeling that loss of safety. I don't think we've collectively lost our sense of general safety like this. Individually or as smaller groups, people have felt this. But all together, this is new. We are grieving on a micro and a macro level (Berinato 2020).

The newness of this grief on simultaneously 'a micro and a macro scale' offers us an insight into something not previously possible in exploring people's seeming reluctance (or inability) to comprehend the urgency of addressing climate change. Returning to the Kübler-Ross Change Curve™ and our wave of change, COVID–19 has created, or forced rather, a 'shared' experience of change and *disruption* to the *status quo*, even

if the impacts are felt very differently and unequally (Krieger 2020b.; Maddrell 2020). The sense of anticipation of the devastation of something bad that we cannot see but we know is there draws clear parallels between climate change and the COVID–19 pandemic (Manzanedo & Manning 2020). As Kessler notes earlier, the pandemic represents that things will be 'forever different' and that 'this is the point at which they changed' (Berinato 2020). Of course, 'loss' of any kind is often deeply unpleasant and painful. However, as within the Kübler-Ross Change Curve™ and our wave of change, it might be suggested that after experiencing the low points following the comprehension of loss, when there is *acceptance*, there comes the opportunity for *exploration* to enable *commitment* to *rebuilding*. We therefore now consider what we can learn from the way this collective grief is being experienced and how notions of *rebuilding* are being utilised to talk about different imagined futures – and importantly, what this means, and could mean, to, and for, the climate movement.

A time to pause and reflect – to hope and to act

Whilst the long-term impacts of the pandemic are still to be felt, what 2020 has offered is the opportunity to pause and reflect on the world as it was and how it could, and should, be in the future. This 'pause' creates a space and an opportunity to consider how things can be different. For instance, a report detailing a public consultation in the UK on what society should look like as we come through COVID–19 in UK says that the pandemic 'transformed the national mood' (Reset 2020: 13), and that people across all walks of life had a clear vision of wanting a 'kinder, more united, fairer and greener' society. This renewed vigour for supporting vulnerable people, wealth redistribution and transformative policies is, Zamore & Phillips (2020) argue, echoed globally. The notion of *rebuilding* has gained significant traction and can be seen as represented in calls to 'build back better' in relation to economic and social recovery – this meaning to rebuild in ways that are fairer and more inclusive but also extending this to considerations of environmental sustainability and tackling climate change (OECD 2020). As many Global North countries imposed national lockdowns in March 2020, business as normal halted, the *status quo* was *disrupted* as many industries and sectors paused and most global air travel was temporarily grounded as the streets of towns and cities across the globe emptied. Millions of people watched on as social media was replete with images and videos of how 'nature' and the planet responded without the polluting influences of humans and intimated that another way was possible (MacDonald 2020; Brunton 2020). At the same time, the pandemic was raising awareness of global social and economic inequalities as it became clearer how the impacts of the virus were unequally and disproportionately affecting poorer nations (Maddrell 2020). The pandemic also highlighted (and for many exposed)

inequalities within more prosperous nations, in particular, the disproportionate impact of COVID–19 on poorer communities and Black and Brown people (CIVICUS 2020; Krieger 2020b). In the UK, we also saw how those previously regarded as 'low skilled and low paid' be reclassified as 'key workers' during the pandemic, given the important role of those within social care, alongside keeping food and essential supplies manufactured, distributed and sold. However, as a result, these key workers were exposed to greater risk of catching the virus (Haque *et al.* 2020; Lally 2020).

In the midst of the pandemic, the year 2020 also saw significant social unrest and large-scale activism across many countries in the Global North in connection to the murder of George Floyd in the US and the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement. In many respects, this marked an important juncture for considering the future of collective action and activism on climate change and to consider what we may also learn from such events and the BLM movement in particular. Whilst at first glance, the BLM movement may not seem directly related to climate justice, it illustrated 'the relevant mobilizing emotions are anger at a perceived injustice, or fear at a perceived threat, and hope that the injustice or threat can be redressed through collective action' noted by McAdam (2017: 194) and added to a heightened awareness of the injustices within society, including those that are environmental and climate related, amongst the general public. Whilst connecting the BLM movement and climate change injustices is not new (Mersha 2018), social and online media increasingly became saturated with posts and articles by people connecting systemic racism and climate/environmental injustices (Lakhani & Watts 2020; Thomas & Haynes 2020). Many climate activists whom had taken their activism online in the wake of coronavirus began to post about these links, some even recognising and highlighting their own privileges in activism when white (and/or perceived to be) (Jones 2020; Margolin 2020). A period of deep and critical self-reflection took place, perhaps somewhat facilitated by the space and time that the pandemic created to do so, and whilst these links had of course been made by many long before the Climate Strikes and the BLM protests, these movements thrust them into *public* viewing. However, for all of the noise and positive progress reported by these movements, they still equate to a subculture. They are made up of a mix of those directly impacted by the injustices, most notably Black and Brown people, Indigenous peoples and youth, and though quite literally millions have both led and participated in these movements, it still only equates to minority of the world's population.

What the pandemic has provided, if nothing else, is a collective reference point to utilise in explanations for what large scale *disruption* climate change is going to continue to have on our everyday lives and our taken-for-granted routines and norms. The experience of collective grief as noted by Kessler and the unique insights the

pandemic offers into simultaneous 'micro and macro' grief (Berinato 2020) offers those attempting to contextualise the more abstract, macro scale of climate change that often seems so implausible to compute as something that will increasingly be experienced at that micro, individual level. It has also further highlighted concerns about 'climate apartheid' as the ability to respond to (and flee from) the pandemic was significantly affected by wealth inequalities (Ki-Moon & Verkooijen 2020). The 'pause' and *disruption* to the *status quo* has of course also offered that space to ask important questions about how we begin to 'build back better', including creating a more sustainable world and tackle climate change. Perhaps in part driven by the direct parallels that unflinchingly link climate change, and continued human impact on biodiversity, with the likelihood of both increasing frequency and severity of future pandemics (OECD 2020).

In responding to the pandemic we have also witnessed how most governments and most people have 'acted' in a personal capacity in light the growing evidence-base – in wearing masks, maintaining social distance, following guidance to prevent/mitigate the spread of the virus (Manzanedo & Manning 2020) and the point is already being made that 'the world must now urgently adopt the same approach to the existential challenge of climate change' (Robinson & Reddy 2020). However, COVID–19 also reaffirmed just how unprepared the world was for a global emergency. Be it COVID–19 or climate change, the inadequacy of existing structures limits progress in mitigating the catastrophic impacts. Whilst countries across the globe have risen to this challenge in varying ways, many have faced third and fourth waves of infection spikes and lockdowns, crippled by the social and economic impacts and have contributed to a global death toll exceeding 4.5 million (as of September 2021). Global leadership in handling emergencies was clearly on show:

> The pandemic exposed many of these political leaders as lacking, as they indulged in grandstanding, fostered division, manipulated public opinion, manoeuvred for political gain and seized opportunities to further suppress struggles for justice and rights. The leadership styles that proved more effective were those that respected scientific advice, prioritised the needs of the most vulnerable, understood the need to communicate honestly and sought to preserve the best possible balance between public safety and hard-won constitutional freedoms (CIVICUS 2020: 7).

Of course whilst most people engaged in forms of individual action, others have reacted angrily, with many of these in denial about the (albeit still emerging) science (Wilson 2020; Friedman 2020) and have resisted the need for change to their taken-for-granted routines, stuck we might say in stage 1 of the change curve with many others feeling 'pandemic fatigue', by the ongoing nature on the pandemic and continued *disruption* to their lives (Roberts 2020). Likewise, the often angry *All Lives Matter* mobilisation that aimed to deny the injustices experienced by Black and Brown people

and resistance around the need for change exemplifies the challenges facing attempts to mobilise broad base support for important social movements (Edgar & Johnson 2018). Whilst for the most part, such counter movements represent minority factions, they do remind us that those who cannot see the pertinence in their own lives and/or those who feel threatened, as is the case with the hostility to notions of *white privilege* has highlighted (Murray 2020), are likely to be amongst those most reluctant to accept change (McAdam 2017). This type of vested interest with a strong desire to preserve the status quo and resist societal change in relation to climate change cannot be under-estimated. Most notably, this is exemplified by the global, multibillion pound fossil fuels industry and the force powerful political lobbying that goes on in many nations in their interests (Hein & Jenkins 2017). Furthermore, whilst there have been clear historical examples of huge scale societal change following catastrophic events (for instance, the introduction of the welfare state across many nations following World War 2 – see Obinger *et al.* 2018), there must rightfully be some caution in placing too much emphasis on any certitude about the longevity of this wave of optimism, or that this translates into action. For instance, McAdam (2017) notes that the raised aware-ness of climate change resulting from having directly experienced extreme weather events is only short term. Moreover, there are already concerns that even with the large-scale mobilisation and momentum of the BLM movement, the systemic racism and deep-routed inequalities stay intact with 'change' being limited to important, but nonetheless more symbolic cultural gestures (Malik 2020), or as Fraser (1999) would argue, only the representational forms of injustice are addressed without redistribu-tive aspects. Nevertheless, and most significantly, these important events in 2020 have already given something extremely powerful to both individuals engaged with climate action and within the climate justice movement more broadly – that of hope (Jafry 2020; Larsson 2020; Solnit 2020). We return to this important notion of hope shortly. But first we begin to consider the task ahead of capitalising on what we have learnt in 2020 and applying to how we mobilise action by first of all, being the bearer of bad news.

Communicating (and contextualising) the bad news

There is clear evidence that the majority of people in many different countries believe that climate change is happening and is a major threat to their country (Fagan & Huang 2019). However, as we have illustrated throughout, there is currently wide-spread inaction on addressing climate change or mitigating against its impacts. However, as McAdam (2017: 200) notes, 'how a movement researcher records the objective relevance of an issue for a given individual counts for little if that person

feels no subjective identification with it …'. This has always been an enormous challenge for mobilising climate action. This abstracted notion of climate change not only enables a disconnect between the micro and macro, thus creating a space for cognitive dissonance to thrive, but it also locates the solutions and routes to mitigating the damaging effects of climate change in the hands of scientists (Gifford 2011; Rommetveit *et al.* 2010). Through the lens of 2020, there is a collective experience to draw upon to 'frame' the problem (Tannen 1993; Morton *et al.* 2011) and those who see the urgency of a need for action should be looking at the most effective ways to converge the macro (global) and the micro (individual) in enhancing the communication of climate change. Earlier we highlighted the injustices of climate change and foregrounded the way in which climate change impacts on humans and its unequal nature. Many now contend that couching the message in this way is central highlighting the human rights and social justice aspects of climate change (Robinson 2019). Additionally, the term 'climate change' itself can be argued as problematic as it is non time-specific, it future-orientated and enables people to relegate the issue to one to address at a later state (McAdam 2017). Language is important and discussions should 'frame' the message clearly, for example, the phrase 'climate emergency' suggest the need for immediate action. These views are not new, but the general language used through most mainstream media communication channels and political discourse in the UK for instance as well as other countries, still focuses on 'climate change' as the issue, with a few exceptions (Zeldin-O'Neill 2019). Instead, the messaging needs to be personalised and relevant to the here and now; people need to understand what the climate crisis means to their everyday lives. There are clear parallels with the impacts of COVID–19 on lives and livelihoods and importantly, messaging needs to be able to detail what is stake for the individual and the threat to their everyday lives that climate change represents. In the first section of this article, we briefly outlined the human costs of the climate crisis – the likelihood of increases in health issues, food shortages and so on. The pandemic enabled some insight that would help contextualise these issues. In the UK for instance as with many other countries, access to many food items and other essentials were limited as transportation, manufacturing and supply chains were temporarily disrupted and empty shelves and forms of rationing were introduced (Smithers & Collinson 2020). For many richer nations, this experience is not a familiar one in recent history but does offer an important contextual framing device that could act as a resource to situate the macro context of climate change within the micro context of individuals' everyday lives.

The realities of the climate crisis and what future climate projections indicate are upsetting. In order to understand that we need change as a society, the message of the personal significance and urgency of this is imperative. In returning to Kübler-Ross' framing, the *status quo* must be *disrupted* to initially force people to *accept* the need

for change and move from the state of inaction into action. Whilst people remain unaware of the severity of the situation and the urgent need for action, the status quo will remain intact and without concerted global governmental action, the climate movement will not be able to make the progress it needs. The above tactics of careful wording and personal relevance, help ensure that individuals understand the loss that is required to experience the various stages of change. Finally, the delivery of the bad news on the climate crisis must be 'framed' with a clear sense of hope and optimism (Morton *et al.* 2011). There exists a need to take individuals on a change journey of understanding the problem, which can often (though not always) take people to a low point, before *exploring* the opportunities for *rebuilding*. Whilst such change journeys can be seen as embedded into established climate leadership programmes (for example, the Climate Reality Project 2018) this needs to be framed from the perspective of possibility, that is, what is to be gained, not just what is to be lost (Nabi *et al.* 2018). How this bad news is communicated is also, of course, multifaceted. The delivery of knowledge and 'facts' based around the issues, even if they are focused on humans and made contextually relevant to people, will not work for everyone and therefore other avenues of communication must be considered, kept open and explored – for instance, through use of the arts (Cozen 2013; Roosen *et al.* 2018).

Whilst we need to 'individualise' the bad news to make it subjectively real and relatable in people's lives, we need to 'collectivise' the response (Climate Reality 2020; McAdam 2017). People need to understand that once they *accept* that change is needed and that they themselves can engage in, importantly meaningful, forms of change (including around values and behaviours) and they are not alone in *exploring* what needs to be done and the *committing* to change. Importantly, 'action' itself needs to be demystified and made accessible so that people are able to fully understand what can be done and what role they have to play in this. Or put another way, they need to have confidence that their action can contribute towards making a difference (Gifford 2011; Lorenzoni *et al.* 2007) and, in the words of Rommetveit *et al.* (2010: 150), that there is 'no solution to the issue without the radical involvement of citizens'. We now move on to focus on exactly this, understanding and unpacking what action looks like and the role all citizens can have before importantly moving on to look at whom we might look to for leadership.

Unpacking 'action' for change making

Once citizens understand that change is urgently needed, they then need to understand what they can do, developing a sense of agency linked to tangible actions. This is an important facet in mobilising people (McAdam 2017). In discussing climate change, a

range of terms are often used, often interchangeably, to denote the actions of those engaged in such work (whether individually or collectively) including 'social action' and 'activism' alongside notions focused around 'social movements' (Staeheli *et al.* 2013). All of these terms denote being engaged in activities and/or practices with a focus on attempting to create and steer change within some aspect of society – as a response to some form of perceived shortcomings. However as is often the case, the terms used to describe and identify this body of people engaged in similar works are not neutral, have a history and come to be viewed in particular ways that have particular connotations. In what follows, we spend some time unpacking these terms within the context of climate change. We navigate the different elements of climate action as important layers of a broader social movement beginning by first focusing on the notion of activism, a term we would argue, can be perceived somewhat negatively.

Activism

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (2020), activism is defined as 'the use of vigorous campaigning to bring about political or social change' with an activist defined as a person engaged in this. Activism then is rooted in a belief that there are underlying structural, political, social and/or economic problems in need of redress (Ojala 2015). However, understandings of activism and what it means to therefore be 'an activist' have increasingly been viewed as 'dirty words' (Parsons 2016). In many societies, activism, and thus activists, have become seen as at best, a nuisance, at worst, hostile, aggressive and deviants (Lindblom & Jacobsson 2014). In keeping with the negative perception of activism in many other key areas, climate activists are also likely to be viewed negatively, often seen as 'militant', 'overreactive' and 'self-righteous', pejoratively stereotyped as outside of societal norms and values with regard to their views and lifestyles, often caricatured for instance as 'tree huggers' (Bashir *et al.* 2013: 617) leading to concerns that such negative perceptions can actually deter change rather than creating it, particularly by putting people off engaging in change themselves. There has also been a growing tendency to see climate activism as synonymous with engaging in forms of deviant and dangerous behaviour (Reis 2020). For instance, Extinction Rebellion, the UK-based group committed to civil disobedience that has been overwhelming peaceful are almost routinely castigated and were recently labelled as an 'extremist' alongside Greenpeace in a document produced by UK anti-terrorist police (Dodd & Grierson 2020; Hilton 2019). As activism is always about trying to enact change and thus creating a *disruption* to the *status quo*, it is perhaps unsurprising that such activism is often viewed suspiciously, especially by those in power. This is a seemingly rational response from those who wish to preserve the status quo, especially when traditional activism has been the driver of so much

social change, for instance the civil rights movement in the US, the fight for universal suffrage and changes to equality laws and policies across many countries. Even where seeming gains are later lost, such as in relation to the 2010 Arab Spring, activism can and often has led to social change and it is important to note here that in some nations, (climate) activism is not permitted/illegal and can be dangerous (Middeldorp & Billon 2019). Throughout 2019 climate activism began to make a mainstream impact, with the biggest ever international demonstrations focused on climate change, whereby it was estimated that over 6 million people, led by youth made their voices heard (Cagle 2019; Godin 2020). Whilst this mass mobilisation as part of the *#FridaysforFuture* and the school strikes for climate has attracted many supporters, it has nevertheless been framed by some political leaders and media outlets as moving beyond 'dutiful' through 'disruptive' and migrating into 'dangerous' forms of dissent in posing major challenges to the status quo, especially in seeing youth exercise their political agency outside of the normative political structures (O'Brien *et al.* 2018). The most 'dangerous' forms of dissent in the Global North for instance, are those that move beyond calls for an urgent transition towards carbon neutrality and instead question the premise of neoliberal capitalism and its compatibility with the goals of sustainability (Klein 2014). Nevertheless, the message being delivered by youth; that change was desperately needed and that our children's and their children's futures are dependent on this, was coming through as it was being widely reported and increasingly discussed (Bandura & Cherry 2019).

The COVID–19 pandemic has of course had significant impacts on youth climate activism and there are serious concerns that this message has been side-lined as the world has moved both its focus and its efforts to the pandemic (Cockburn 2020; Poidevin 2020). Whilst these concerns are real, there are also important lessons emerging out of the pandemic in relation to climate action and we return shortly to this alongside how we can draw hope from the youth-led climate movement in particular. Many argue that the need for such activism has never been greater (Robinson 2019; Willis 2020) and thus there is an important role for not only the continuation but also for the growth of activism in facing the climate crisis, particularly in trying to assert pressure on the political leaders in many Global North countries, that have high carbon emissions. There are clear challenges here, not least in how to move away from the negatively perceived image of 'activists' as deviant and dangerous, especially when it suits the vested interests of the status quo, giving them perceived justification to ignore these voices when presenting activists in this way (as outside of normative structures). However, it is important to recognise that 'traditional' activism is not the only type of action that people can, and already are engaged in, as part of an inclusive and broad-based climate movement.

Social action

Social action is a broad term with a long history as a concept primarily within the discipline of Sociology (Parsons 1937; Ekström 1992). It captures a diverse range of actions, activities and practices that people might engage in either as individuals or as a collective that focus directly on creating positive social change. Such social action may be driven by either a top down, institution and/or government, shaped agenda, or can emerge from grassroots, community-based, movements. The UK government, for example has embedded social action, and forming a generation of climate ambassadors, at the heart of its 25-year environment plan (DEFRA 2018) and likewise, international NGOs such as the UNs International Year of Volunteers program illustrate this in action (Taylor-Collins *et al*. 2019). Whilst there is an important role for such top-down social action, McAdam (2017), outlined above, stresses the importance of grassroots movements for seeking a more meaningful and systemic style of change. This is particularly the case given that many such organisations leading top-down initiatives derive their funding from governments and are thus dependent on those structures remaining intact for their own existence. McAdam argues 'as such, they are typically loath to jeopardize their standing in this structure by engaging in the forms of sustained disruptive action that are the hallmark of successful grassroots struggles' (McAdam 2017: 199). Forms of grass-roots social action here would include varied and diverse forms of activities evidenced globally. Their aims might be linked to addressing particular local issues linked directly to climate change and environment-related elements for instance in relation to land adaption and mitigation strategies (Irlbacher-Fox and MacNeill, 2020) one such example being planting mangroves in coastal Vietnam (Powell *et al.* 2011; Tri *et al.* 1998).

Social action and 'activism' are not mutually exclusive and instead are highly interrelated (Staeheli *et al.* 2013) especially given the often shared goals, particularly in regard to climate justice (Walker 2020). Willis (2020) makes an important and compelling argument that what is really needed to help influence political processes to take climate action are more deliberative and democratic processes, whereby citizens and politicians talk through the issues around climate change and what can/might be done. Willis (2020: 93) argues that 'people are concerned about climate, but uncertain about what can be done about it' and a shift in thinking in politics that foregrounds discursive encounters including citizens and leaders as opposed to one off 'assembly-style' activities is a mechanism for action leading to change. Localised mechanisms are likely to be especially important in political systems that have political representation at a local level (for instance, the UK and the US). We would suggest that whilst this is an important role that all citizens can engage in, there is perhaps also an important role to be played here by those already engaged in forms of social action

or even the more 'traditional' activists in creating these important discursive spaces that enables citizens and leaders to be brought together to discuss influencing change at national/systemic levels. Such spaces can also begin to enable citizens to understand the role in which they can play in such collective endeavour as individuals, and additionally in terms of their own habits and behaviours (to which we turn shortly), thus highlighting the significance of highlighting the multi-phased nature of possible action.

Individual action

Agency and a clear sense that we can all contribute towards making a difference in the fight against the climate crisis is central in mobilising action (McAdam 2017). If people do not believe they personally can make a difference, there is no reason for them to believe that they have to change if change is out of their hands. *Act Now*, the United Nations' campaign for individual action on climate change and sustainability, launched in 2018 with a clear focus on highlighting how we can all make positive changes to our everyday practices and habits. Framed as 'start with ten simple actions', the significance was in engaging people with clear and easy changes focused around reducing both personal energy use and consumption – such as 'unplug', 'drive less', 'bring own bag', 'plant-based meals' (United Nations 2018). Whilst of course these changes at an individual level might seem insignificant and alone cannot tackle the problem, they challenge taken-for-granted practices at the heart of many societies, particularly in the Global North and our reliance on carbon that we often invisibly consume (Sanson & Burke 2020) these small actions act as important steps into taking climate action. Taking these steps further, others have also advocated the important role citizens can have in exerting economic pressure on the financial institutions that invest in fossil fuels by divesting their personal money from banks, insurance and pension companies, and making the reason for such divestment clear (Ayling & Gunningham 2015). However, as Willis (2020) notes, the 'personal is political' and she argues that these actions become more effective if we talk about them and influence others, speaking out (as well as listening) to others to 'spread the message'. Lastly, Willis argues that being 'good climate citizens' should, wherever possible, involve engaging in the political process and exerting pressure, whether that be through traditional forms of activism such as protest and/or the more deliberative forms of policy (Willis 2020).

Climate action as a movement

The three broad 'types' of climate action outlined above, as we have illustrated, are intimately interrelated. We have referred to them as *activism*, *social action* and *individual action* although we might have easily referred to each as different forms of activism as others have previously (O'Brien *et al.* 2018). We are mindful of the (often unfair) negative perceptions of activism and the importance of being able to more broadly mobilise people into action globally, including in places where activism is not permitted/illegal. Irrespective of semantics, the three 'types' of action all aim to bring about change. Whether that be small, individual changes; exerting influence over national and international policy and practice and/or everything in between, change is the common goal regardless of scale. The importance of connecting the individual and the collective, the micro and the macro, are central because 'change' has to be systemic and wide-reaching (Sanson & Burke 2020). Willis (2020) also highlights that change of this kind has to be political with people acting as 'good climate citizens' as change is going to require government intervention and change of this magnitude cannot be done through stealth but instead has to be embroiled within a 'a story of transformation' (p. 94) framed around both a positive, and importantly, a possible vision. As we have argued throughout the article, the story underpinning the need for action and its goals have to be 'an appeal to the heart' (Willis 2020: 96) and able to invoke emotional responses because the appeal to the head, which in this case would be the messages couched within the language of science, have has thus far not managed the forms of mass mobilisation into action required. This is especially important in the current political climate of growing right wing populism and increasingly heavy authoritarian overtones in several carbon emission-heavy countries (Wodak & Krzy anowski 2017), where emotion has often been successfully mobilised to distance 'normal people' from the science of climate change (Lockwood 2018). Thus, as we argued in the previous section, the 'problem' of climate change needs to be delivered in a way that is two-fold. Through stories of injustice and its impacts on people, both oneself and the injustice of 'others', in ways that evoke a collective sense of loss with the framing of action equally needing to be affective, focusing on what can be gained by making these changes through stories that resonate with people in ways that evoke hope.

Mobilising climate action: hope and horizontal leadership

In the previous sections we have argued that in order to mobilise climate action, emotion and affect are central in both ensuring citizens understand that change is

needed and also that they can play an important role in to enact meaningful change. Underpinning these are the notion of hope – hope that it is not too late and that something can be done about it, alongside hope that individuals can have a meaningful impact by engaging with change within their own lives. Hope is an important emotion because hope offers empowerment and faith in a better future (Lindroth & Sinevaara-Niskanen 2019) and a form of 'anticipatory consciousness' about a future of unknown possibility (Bloch 1986). Hope is especially central in attempting to mobilise action on the climate crisis because without it, the contemplation of the future is terrifying and yet 'fear' is, as we have seen, is also an important emotion required to enact change. As McAdam (2017: 204) noted:

> Fear is a tricky emotion. It can paralyze as well as mobilize. Accordingly, climate change activists would be wise not to rely on fear alone to motivate popular concern and action on the issue. The combination of anger and hope has proven to be a powerful motivator in many successful movements. In general, rights movements have traditionally relied on this potent mix of emotions.

In 2020, the pandemic in particular and the mobilisation of the BLM movement to a lesser extent, have given many of those committed to the fight against the climate emergency hope – hope because they have seen that the world can respond, on a global scale, and thus change *is* possible (Parker 2020). Hope is therefore vitally important. However, there are inherent dangers of hope, not least that rather than mobilising action, it may actually inhibit it, as a distraction from reality (Chandler 2019). As Lindroth & Sinevaara-Niskanen (2019: 646) note:

> The logic here is that, with hope, one can endure dispossession today in anticipation of a reward tomorrow. By reaching to the future, a politics of hope is able to maintain the status quo; where it succeeds in instilling hope, it succeeds in endlessly postponing the materialization of promises. Ultimately, the vision of a brighter future traps those in need in an 'endurance test' of time.

The point here is that unfettered hope can mean that 'faith' in a future possibility without then acting and, 'while allowing us to maintain the illusion that man [sic] still has agential power, lures us to orient ourselves to the future instead of the present. It traps us in an illusion of our (human) agency' (Lindroth & Sinevaara-Niskanen 2019: 647). Thus, the notion of 'complex hope' as used by Grace (1994) in referring to the desire for change in education to effect social justice is a helpful term. Grace (1994: 59) defined complex hope as 'an optimism of the will that recognises the historical and structural difficulties which need to be overcome'. The message of hope here then has to be that change is possible, but for it to be possible, people have to act; as without action, hope becomes an empty gesture that replaces plausible possibility.

Change will not therefore happen on its own and whilst the previous section set out a range of actions that people can and are doing, without leadership, change will not happen far and fast enough. We cannot simply sit back and 'hope' that the problem will be solved by those who created it – the global status quo most be *disrupted*. A major issue in mobilising the climate movement, according to McAdam (2017), is the problem of there being no clear 'ownership' of the problem and he suggests that rather than attempting to mobilise a broad movement through a general education campaign, the mobilising enough of those people most at risk of the impacts of climate change should be the strategy within the US. Whilst we agree that 'ownership' is a problem and also agree with McAdam in the identification of the core groups most at risk and therefore most likely to be motivated to mobilise, we offer a slightly different take that a general education campaign should be the goal and that this should be led by those most at risk from the climate crisis. These groups are, we would contend, best placed to understand the problem, communicate it and lead action to effect change. In our view, it is therefore youth, the disadvantaged, Black, Brown and Indigenous people, who are unequivocally those groups most at risk from climate change (Sanson & Burke 2020; Whyte 2018) and best placed to lead, with many already 'showing the way despite having more barriers to overcome' (Robinson 2019: 143). Leadership in this sense is understood as multifaceted and horizontal (and more distributive). This is important not least because these groups most likely to experience the impacts of climate change (both presently and to come) and yet they are also least likely to have created the problem and least likely to be in national and global leadership roles in traditional political systems. Moreover, these groups are also most likely to be politically disadvantaged by, and feel unrepresented in, most political systems within nation states and are therefore less able to exert political influence, or be ineligible to pressurise governments with their vote. It is well-known that traditional, top-down hierarchal power structures are unequally distributed. In the Global North, they are disproportionately male, white, wealthy and elder, and it is perhaps no coincidence that this also happens to fit the profile of the biggest creators of climate change (Robinson 2019). Therefore 'ownership' of the problem and thus leadership in seeking change cannot not rely on the same mechanisms and the same people that created the problem. The adage 'if you always do what you've always done, you'll always get what you always got'[1] is significant here. Those who 'created' the problem, cannot be entrusted to act. As Shiva (1994: 196) argued, 'the "global" does not represent any universal human interest; it represents a particular local and parochial interest that has been globalized through its reach and control' (Shiva 1994: 196).

---

[1] Proverb often attributed to Henry Ford but provenance unclear

Instead, the world needs to be taking its leadership on tackling climate change from those with a significant stake.

The youth-led climate movement is already a beacon of success in beginning to democratise and generate horizontal forms of leadership (Krieger 2020a) and the mass mobilising of climate activism with a teenage girl now the most well-known climate activist in the world. Whilst the pandemic interrupted the climate strikes, the movement has solidified their mastery of using social media to continue to build the movement (Parker 2020). Social media platforms are transforming political engagement by offering actors, in particular a younger generation, significant agency, notably through the opportunity to connect a broader global audience. During the pandemic, youth have witnessed that change *is* possible, they have seen nation states respond to the COVID–19 crisis, highlighting that action on the climate remains possible (Parker 2020). Youth have also mobilised as part of the BLM movement and are, as we have noted, seeing the parallels between the movements focused on climate justice, social justice and racial justice (Lakhani & Watts 2020; Thomas & Haynes 2020).

There is much to be learnt from engaging cross-cultural forms of learning (Head *et al.* 2018; MacGregor *et al.* 2019; Walker 2020) and engaging with Indigenous knowledge's (Schlosberg & Carruthers 2010) in relation to climate change. However, there has been a tendency to position climate action and activism as white and originating in the Global North (Jones 2020). For instance, Burton (2019) notes that with Greta Thunberg positioned as the figurehead of the global youth-led climate movement, 'and by the media and wider public making her the centre of youth-led climate activism, the work of many Indigenous, Black, and Brown youth activists is often erased or obscured'. Such a side-lining of Black, Brown and Indigenous peoples in the imaginary of youth-led climate action was illustrated after the Black Ugandan youth-activist Vanessa Nakate was removed by the Associated Press from a picture that was then widely used showing only the other four, white activists and not referred to at all in coverage after the group of five had given a news conference at the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting in Davos in January 2020 (Evelyn 2020).

Whilst many in the Global North contemplate climate change as something that is still to come, many Indigenous communities have already faced significant environmental damage resulting from climate change (Whyte 2018). However, as Irlbacher-Fox & MacNeill (2020: 271–2) note:

> … using Indigenous experiences as evidence for climate change is often where the conversation stops – it should instead be a starting point. The conversation needs to turn to how Indigenous Knowledge, cultures, and the ways of life grounding Indigenous decision-making authority are a viable, legitimate, sustainable, and adaptive climate change strategy.

In addition, Indigenous peoples have also experienced significant environmental damage from colonial violence (Curnow & Helferty 2018) and epistemic violence (Knopf 2015) enacted upon them. As the world, increasingly turns to Indigenous communities to learn from their wisdom on land guardianship, to avoid their own 'dystopian future', Whyte (2018: 224) argues that the present already feels distinctly dystopian for many Indigenous peoples where 'in some cases, [they] serve as the backdrop for allies' narratives that privilege themselves as the protagonists who will save Indigenous peoples from colonial violence and the climate crisis'. As international groups and organisations seek solutions to the climate and associated biodiversity crises, Indigenous peoples' rights and livelihoods remain at threat. Archana Soreng, an Indigenous youth representative and member of the Secretary-General's Youth Advisory Group on Climate change speaking at the UN's first Global Biodiversity Summit supported the view that Indigenous knowledge and practices are an important tool in mitigating against climate change and that that Indigenous peoples should play an important role decision-making structures for biodiversity conservation (United Nations 2020). Soreng also warned:

> Doubling protected areas to cover 30% of the globe, as some want to see in the Post–2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, will lead to immense human rights violations. It could constitute the biggest land grab of world history reducing millions of people to landless poverty – all in the name of conservation. Removing us from our land in order to protect 'nature' is deeply colonial and environmentally damaging. We should be the leaders of Conservation – not victims of it (OMMCOM News 2020).

The point here reminds us that even as attempts are made to mitigate the climate crisis, the negative consequences of these efforts are likely to also be unjust, as they disproportionately impact further upon those communities already affected. It also reminds us of the way in which solutions also run the risk of re-enacting colonial forms of oppression akin to further enclosure. Indigenous peoples have lived upon and managed the lands for *time immemorial* and their role in leadership in climate action is therefore central. As Irlbacher-Fox & MacNeill (2020: 273) argue:

> In other words, the best climate change adaptation strategy is for governments (and voters) to support Indigenous governance of climate change strategies for their communities and territories, ensuring the provision of resources needed to accomplish targeted outcomes and goals.

Leadership of this kind must remain grounded in lived experience and bound by a core purpose where 'climate change is fundamentally about human rights and securing justice for those suffering from its impact – vulnerable countries and communities that are least culpable for the problem' (Robinson 2019: xii). This lived experience lens is important to humanise climate change as an issue of justice, hopefully helping

traverse the pitfalls of the image problem of traditional activism in the Global North, including that it has been perceived as endemically middle class and not grounded in the day-to-day struggles of the global poor and working-class communities (Clark 2018; Willis 2020). Leadership must also seek to draw upon a range of critical perspectives that are situated outside normative political processes to assist in holding nations to account by disrupting the *status quo*. Thus, there is an important role for social and cultural perspectives outside of normative policy making structures, for instance feminism (Haq *et al.* 2020; Robinson 2019) as well as those whom seek to pose uncomfortable questions about the root causes of climate change as embedded within capitalism (Klein 2014). The COVID–19 pandemic has 'disrupted' people and there is an appetite for positive change as part of the momentum to 'build back better' and this opportunity must now be harnessed.

Summary and conclusions

The aim of this article was to examine climate action *and* inaction through applying an emotional framework of loss and drawing upon the ideas of Kübler-Ross (1969). Moreover, the article used this framework but did this through the lens of the year 2020, one that will undoubtedly go down as an unprecedented year of enforced change as a result of the COVID–19 global pandemic. Our purpose in doing this was to understand not only the challenges arising from this tumultuous year of change but also in terms of what could be learnt from the ways in which the pandemic forced a sense of collective loss not previously experienced in modern history. Through this affective framework, the article itself is framed as akin to an emotional journey starting with understanding the need for urgent action but in the context of widespread global inaction. The article addresses the scale of the challenge ahead and argues that to move towards effecting the change needed, climate change must be understood as an issue of human rights and injustice whereby citizens are more able to see the threat of climate change as happening now, in unjust ways and to be contextualised to their own lives. We argued that the year 2020 offers both an important reference point for framing future discussions of climate change *and* also offers us important insights about the intersectional nature of inequalities and injustice and its role in mobilising citizens into climate action. In building upon the framework of loss, we highlight the important role of hope in mobilising climate action, noting the significance of agency whereby people understand the various ways in which they can engage in action (ranging from making individual change to everyday practices, through to engaging in forms of climate activism and/or social action projects focused on climate adaption/mitigation) whereby all action is valued and part of a broad-based climate movement.

Throughout the article, we argued that the *disruption* brought about by the pandemic is fuelling an appetite for positive change and *rebuilding* for fairer and more environmentally sustainable futures for all. Finally, remaining with the notion of hope, we suggested that leadership in mobilising wide spread climate action might best be found with those groups who have already experienced and/or perceived climate change as a loss and threat to their futures and as such, are already most engaged with climate action. As we set out in the introduction to the article, whilst climate change is a global issue, systemic climate inaction is largely driven by the Global North as resistance to disrupting our status quo of consumption and success continually tied to economic growth (reliant on increasing power needs including a reliance on fossil fuels). As such, our article inevitably focuses on climate inaction (and the need for mobilisation into action) from this perspective but argues specifically that climate action must go beyond, and pose important challenges to our normative cultural and social roles, expectations and approaches by seeking leadership from those groups usually least empowered globally: young people, Black, Brown and Indigenous peoples and those facing poverty and disadvantage globally and within societies. Thus in recognising that injustice is intersectional, we must also recognise that the responses to these injustices must be similarly intersectional (Jones 2020). It must also be inclusive (Krieger 2020a.) where everyone understands the important role they can, and must, play in effecting positive change thereby creating some sense of ownership which is needed to sustain climate action. But importantly, and in the famous words of Margaret Mead (Lutkehaus 2008: 4):

> Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.

References

Albrecht, G., Sartore, G., Connor, L., Higginbotham, N., Freeman, S., Kelly, B., Stain, H., Tonna, A. & Pollard, G. (2007), 'Solastalgia: The Distress Caused by Environmental Change', *Australasian Psychiatry*, 15(1): S95-S98. https://doi.org/10.1080/10398560701701288

Antadze, N. (2020), 'Moral Outrage as the Emotional Response to Climate Injustice', *Environmental Justice*, 13(1): 21–6. https://doi.org/10.1089/env.2019.0038

Ayling, J. & Gunningham, N. (2015), 'Non-state governance and climate policy: the fossil fuel divestment movement', *Climate Policy*, 17: 131–49. https://doi.org/10.1080/14693062.2015.1094729

Bandura, A. & Cherry, L. (2019), 'Enlisting the power of youth for climate change', *The American Psychologist,* 75(7): 945–51. https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0000512

Bashir, N.Y., Lockwood, P., Chasteen, A.L., Nadolny, D. & Noyes, I. (2013), 'The ironic impact of activists: Negative stereotypes reduce social change influence', *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 43(7): 614–26. https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.1983

Berinato, S. (2020), 'That discomfort you're feeling is grief', *Harvard Business Review* (23 March). Available at https://hbr.org/2020/03/that-discomfort-youre-feeling-is-grief [accessed 13 November 2020].

Bloch, E. (1986), *The principle of hope* (Cambridge MA, MIT Press).

Cozen, B. (2013), 'Mobilizing Artists: Green Patriot Posters, Visual Metaphors, and Climate change Activism', *Environmental Communication*, 7(2): 297–314. https://doi.org/10.1080/17524032.2013.777353

Brunton, J. (2020), '"Nature is taking back Venice": wildlife returns to tourist-free city', *Guardian* (20 March). Available at https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/mar/20/nature-is-taking-back-venice-wildlife-returns-to-tourist-free-city [accessed 10 November 2020].

Burton, N. (2019), 'Meet the young activists of color who are leading the charge against climate disaster', *VOX* (11 Oct online). Available at https://www.vox.com/identities/2019/10/11/20904791/young-climate-activists-of-color [accessed 16 November 2020].

Cagle, S. (2019), '"Protesters as terrorists": growing number of states turn anti-pipeline activism into a crime', *Guardian* (8 July). Available at https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/jul/08/wave-of-new-laws-aim-to-stifle-anti-pipeline-protests-activists-say [accessed 10 November 2020].

Chandler, D. (2019), 'The death of hope? Affirmation in the Anthropocene', *Globalizations*, 16(5): 695–706. https://doi.org/10.1080/14747731.2018.1534466

CIVICUS (2020), *State of civil society report 2020*. Available at https://www.civicus.org/index.php/state-of-civil-society-report–2020 [accessed 10 November 2020].

Clark, P. (2018), 'Climate change is firing up middle-class activism', *Financial Times* (9 December). Available at https://www.ft.com/content/4460eb0e-f964–11e8-af46–2022a0b02a6c [accessed 29 October 2020].

Clayton, S. (2020), 'Climate anxiety: Psychological responses to climate change', *Journal of Anxiety Disorders*, 74: 102263. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.janxdis.2020.102263

Climate Reality Project (2018), 'Four Lessons Psychology Teaches Us about Inspiring Climate Action', *Climate Reality Project* [Blog] (5 February). Available at https://climaterealityproject.org/blog/four-lessons-psychology-teaches-us-about-inspiring-climate-action [accessed 5 November 2020].

Climate Reality Project (2020), 'Race and the climate movement: what our Black colleagues want the rest of us to know. Climate Reality Project Statement on Racial Justice', *Climate Reality Project* [Blog] (19 June). Available at https://www.climaterealityproject.org/blog/race-and-climate-movement-what-our-Black-colleagues-want-rest-us-know [accessed 10 November 2020].

Cockburn, H. (2020), 'David Attenborough warns coronavirus pandemic is threat to global climate action', *Independent* (21 October). Available at https://www.independent.co.uk/environment/david-attenborough-greta-thunberg-coronavirus-cop26-covid–19-climate-change-b1201634.html [accessed 02 November 2020].

Coolhart, D., Ritenour, K. & Grodzinski, A. (2018), 'Experiences of Ambiguous Loss for Parents of Transgender Male Youth: A Phenomenological Exploration', *Contemporary Family Therapy*, 40: 28–41. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10591–017–9426-x

Corr, C.A. (2019), 'The "five stages" in coping with dying and bereavement: strengths, weaknesses and some alternatives', *Mortality*, 24(4): 405–17. https://doi.org/10.1080/13576275.2018.1527826

Cunsolo, A. & Ellis, N.R. (2018), 'Ecological grief as a mental health response to climate change-related loss', *Nature Climate Change*, 8(4): 275–81. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41558–018–0092–2

Curnow J. & Helferty, A. (2018), 'Contradictions of solidarity', *Environmental Sociology*, 9(1): 145–63. https://doi.org/10.3167/ares.2018.090110

DEFRA [Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs] (2018), *A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment*. Available at
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/25-year-environment-plan [accessed 8 November 2020].

DeNicola, E. & Subramaniam, R. (2014), 'Environmental attitudes and political partisanship', *Public Health*, 128(5): 404–9. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.puhe.2014.03.005

Dodd, V. & Grierson, J. (2020), 'Greenpeace included with neo-Nazis on UK counter-terror list', *Guardian* (17 January). Available at https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/jan/17/greenpeace-included-with-neo-nazis-on-uk-counter-terror-list [accessed 10 November 2020].

Edgar, A.N. & Johnson, A.E. (2018), *The Struggle over Black Lives Matter and All Lives Matter* (London, Lexington Books).

Ekström, M. (1992), 'Causal Explanation of Social Action: The Contribution of Max Weber and of Critical Realism to a Generative View of Causal Explanation in Social Science', *Acta Sociologica*, 35(2): 107–22. https://doi.org/10.1177/000169939203500203

Evelyn, K. (2020), '"Like I wasn't there": climate activist Vanessa Nakate on being erased from a movement', *Guardian* (29 January) Available at https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jan/29/vanessa-nakate-interview-climate-activism-cropped-photo-davos [accessed 29 October 2020].

Fagan, M. & Huang, C. (2019), 'A look at how people around the world view climate change', *Pew Research Centre* (18 April). Available at https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/04/18/a-look-at-how-people-around-the-world-view-climate-change/ [accessed 10 November 2020].

Farrell, J., McConnell, K. & Brulle, R. (2019), 'Evidence-based strategies to combat scientific misinformation', *Nature Climate change*, 9(3): 191–5. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41558–018–0368–6

Fraser, N. (1999), 'Social Justice in the Age of Identity Politics: Redistribution, Recognition and Participation', in L.J. Ray & A. Sayer (eds), *Culture and Economy after the Cultural Turn* (London, Sage), 53–75. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446218112.n2

Friedman, L. (2020), 'Covid, Climate and Denial', *New York Times* (7 October). Available at https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/07/climate/covid-climate-and-denial.html [accessed 30 October 2020].

Gerrard, M. (2016), *Climate change and human trafficking after the Paris climate agreement* (Columbia, Sabin Center for Climate change Law).

Gibson, D.M. (2007), 'The relationship of infertility and death: Using the relational/cultural model of counseling in making meaning', *The Humanistic Psychologist*, 35(3), 275–89. https://doi.org/10.1080/08873260701415348

Gifford, R. (2011), 'The Dragons of Inaction: Psychological Barriers That Limit Climate change Mitigation and Adaptation', *American Psychologist*, 66(4): 290–302. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0023566

Givens, J.E., Huang, X. & Jorgenson, A.K. (2019), 'Ecologically unequal exchange: A theory of global environmental justice', *Sociology Compass*, 13(5): e12693. https://doi.org/10.1111/soc4.12693

Godin, M. (2020), 'Record Number of Environmental Activists Killed In 2019', *Time* (29 July). Available at https://time.com/5873137/record-number-killing-environmental-activists–2019/ [accessed on 29 October 2020].

Grace, G. (1994), 'Urban education and the culture of contentment: The politics, culture and economics of inner–city schooling', in N. Stromquist (ed.), *Education in urban areas: Cross–national dimensions* (Westport, Praeger), 45–59.

Hallegatte, S., Bangalore, M., Bonzanigo, L., Fay, M., Kane, T., Narloch, U., Rozenberg, J., Treguer, D. & Vogt-Schilb, A. (2015), *Shock waves: Managing the impacts of climate change on poverty* (Washington DC, World Bank). https://doi.org/10.1596/978–1–4648–0673–5

Haq, Z.A., Imran, M., Ahmad, S. & Farooq, U. (2020), 'Environment, Islam, and women: a study of eco-feminist environmental activism in Pakistan', *Journal of Outdoor and Environmental Education*, 23: 275–91. https://doi.org/10.1007/s42322–020–00065–4

Haque, Z., Becares, L. & Treloar, N. (2020), *Over-Exposed and Under-Protected: The Devastating Impact of COVID–19 on Black and Minority Ethnic Communities in Great Britain. A Runnymede Trust and ICM Survey* (London, Runnymede). Available at https://www.runnymedetrust.org/uploads/Runnymede%20Covid19%20Survey%20report%20v3.pdf [accessed 13 November 2020].

Head, L., Klocker, N. & Aguirre-Bielschowsky, I. (2018), 'Environmental Values, Knowledge and Behaviour: Contributions of an Emergent Literature on the Role of Ethnicity and Migration', *Progress in Human Geography*, 43(3): 397–415. https://doi.org/10.1177/0309132518768407

Hein, J.E. & Jenkins, C.J. (2017), 'Why does the United States lack a global warming policy? The corporate inner circle versus public interest sector elites', *Environmental Politics*, 26(1): 97–117. https://doi.org/10.1080/09644016.2016.1244966

Hilton, N. (2019), 'It is no longer acceptable to question climate change. So why is it now mainstream to criticise Extinction Rebellion?', *Independent* (20 July). Available at https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/extinction-rebellion-protests-summer-uprising-climate-change-policy-exchange-a9013421.html [accessed 20 October 2020].

Hobbs, R.J. (2013), 'Grieving for the Past and Hoping for the Future: Balancing Polarizing Perspectives in Conservation and Restoration', *Restoration Ecology*, 21(2): 145–48. https://doi.org/10.1111/rec.12014

IPBES [Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services] (2019), *Report of the plenary of the intergovernmental science-policy platform on biodiversity and ecosystem services on the work of its seventh session* (Paris, IPBES).

IPCC [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate change] (2018), *Global warming of 1.5°C: An IPCC special report on the impacts of global warming of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels and related global greenhouse gas emission pathways, in the context of strengthening the global response to the threat of climate change, sustainable development, and efforts to eradicate poverty* (Geneva, IPCC).

IPCC (2021), Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis. Contribution of Working Group I to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Irlbacher-Fox, S. & MacNeill, R. (2020), 'Indigenous Governance is an Adaptive Climate change Strategy', *Northern Review*, 49: 271–75. https://doi.org/10.22584/nr49.2020.019

Islam, N. & Winkel, J. (2017), *Climate change and social inequality* (New York, United Nations).

Jafry, T. (2020), Climate Justice and Inequality in the Wake of the Coronavirus Pandemic, *Centre for Climate Justice* (16 November). Available at https://www.caledonianblogs.net/climatejustice/2020/09/15/climate-justice-and-inequality-in-the-wake-of-the-coronavirus-pandemic/ [accessed 15 October 2020].

Jalagat, R. (2018), 'Reflecting Change in a Changing World: The Human and Spiritual Dimension', *European Business & Management. Special Issue: Change and Change Management: the Path into Coping up with Uncertainties*, 4(3–1): 1–5.

Jones, R. (2020), 'The environmental movement is very white. These leaders want to change that', *National Geographic* (29 July). Available at https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/2020/07/environmental-movement-very-white-these-leaders-want-change-that/ accessed 30 October 2020].

Jorgenson, A.K., Fiske, S., Hubacek, K., Li, J., McGovern, T., Rick, T., Schor, J.B., Solecki, W., York, R. & Zycherman, A. (2019), 'Social science perspectives on drivers of and responses to global climate change', *Climate change*, 10(1): e554-n/a. https://doi.org/10.1002/wcc.554

Ki-Moon, B. & Verkooijen, P. (2020), 'As Black Lives Matter puts injustice in spotlight, climate emergency risks new "apartheid"', *USA Today Opinion* (n.d). Available at https://eu.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2020/08/11/climate-change-cannot-ignored-its-effects-impact-social-inequality-column/3331165001/ [accessed 16 October 2020].

Klein, N. (2014), *This changes everything* (London, Penguin Books Ltd).

Knopf, K. (2015), 'The Turn Toward the Indigenous: Knowledge Systems and Practices in the Academy Author(s)', *American Studies*, 60(2/3): 179–200.

Krieger, N. (2020a), 'Climate crisis, health equity, and democratic governance: the need to act together', *Journal of Public Health Policy*, 41: 4–10. https://doi.org/10.1057/s41271–019–00209-x

Krieger, N. (2020b), 'ENOUGH: COVID–19, Structural Racism, Police Brutality, Plutocracy, Climate change – and Time for Health Justice, Democratic Governance, and an Equitable, Sustainable Future', *American Journal of Public Health,* 110(11): 1620–23. https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2020.305886

Kübler-Ross, E. (1969) *On Death and Dying* (New York, Macmillan).

Lakhani, N. & Watts, J. (2020), 'Environmental justice means racial justice, say activists', *Guardian* (18 June). Available at https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/jun/18/environmental-justice-means-racial-justice-say-activists [accessed 10 October 2020].

Lally, C. (2020), 'COVID–19 and occupational risk', *The Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology* (19 October). https://post.parliament.uk/covid–19-and-occupational-risk/ [accessed 6 November 2020].

Larsson, A. (2020), 'Covid and hope: Is this the turning point we've been waiting for?', *Greenpeace* (28 August). Available at https://www.greenpeace.org/new-zealand/story/covid-hope-is-turning-point/ [accessed 10 November 2020].

Lawson, R. (2020), 'Coronavirus has led to an explosion of new words and phrases – and that helps us cope', *The Conversation* (28 April). Available at https://theconversation.com/coronavirus-has-led-to-an-explosion-of-new-words-and-phrases-and-that-helps-us-cope–136909 [accessed 19 November 2020].

Lindblom, J. & Jacobsson, K. (2014), 'A Deviance Perspective on Social Movements: The Case of Animal Rights Activism', *Deviant Behavior*, 35(2): 133–51. https://doi.org/10.1080/01639625.2013.834751

Lindroth, M. & Sinevaara-Niskanen, H. (2019), 'Politics of hope', *Globalizations*, 16(5): 644–8. https://doi.org/10.1080/14747731.2018.1560694

Lockwood, M. (2018), 'Right-wing populism and the climate change agenda: exploring the linkages', *Environmental Politics*, 27(4): 712–32. https://doi.org/10.1080/09644016.2018.1458411

Lorenzoni, I., Nicholson-Cole, S. & Whitmarsh, L. (2007), 'Barriers Perceived to Engaging with Climate change among the UK Public and their Policy Implications', *Global Environmental Change,* 17: 445–59. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2007.01.004

Lutkehaus, N.C. (2008), *Margaret Mead: The Making of an American Icon* (Princetown, Princetown University Press). https://doi.org/10.1515/9780691190273

MacDonald, M. (2020), 'Animals are rewilding our cities. On YouTube, at least', *New York Times Magazine* (15 April). Available at https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/15/magazine/quarantine-animal-videos-coronavirus.html [accessed 16 October 2020].

MacGregor, S.,Walker, C. & Katz-Gerro, T. (2019), '"It's What I've Always Done": Continuity and Change in the Household Sustainability Practices of Somali Immigrants in the UK', *Journal of Physical, Human, and Regional Geosciences*, 107: 143–53. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2019.09.013

Maddrell A. (2020), 'Bereavement, grief, and consolation: Emotional-affective geographies of loss during COVID–19', *Dialogues in Human Geography*, 10(2): 107–11. https://doi.org/10.1177/2043820620934947

Malik, N. (2020), 'For a few weeks, Black lives mattered. Now what?', *Guardian* (21 June). Available at https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/jun/21/Black-lives-mattered-revolt-cultural-debate-hostile-establishment [accessed 21 June 2020].

Manzanedo, R.D. & Manning, P. (2020), 'COVID–19: Lessons for the climate change emergency', *The Science of the total environment*, 742: 140563. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scitotenv.2020.140563

Manzo, K. (2010), 'Beyond polar bears? Re-envisioning climate change', *Meteorological Applications*, 17(2): 196–208. https://doi.org/10.1002/met.193

Margolin, J. (2020), 'Why the Climate Movement Must Unite Behind the Black Lives Matter Movement', *The Elders* [Blog] (8 June). Available at https://www.theelders.org/news/why-climate-movement-must-unite-behind-Black-lives-matter-movement [accessed 8 June 2020].

Marshall, N., Adger, W.N., Benham, C., Brown, K., Curnock, M.I., Gurney, G.G. & Thiault, L. (2019), 'Reef grief: Investigating the relationship between place meanings and place change on the great barrier reef, Australia', *Sustainability Science*, 14: 579–87. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11625–019–00666-z

Martiskainen, M., Axon, S., Sovacool, B.K., Sareen, S., Furszyfer, D.R.D. & Axon, K. (2020), 'Contextualizing climate justice activism: Knowledge, emotions, motivations, and actions among climate strikers in six cities', *Global Environmental Change*, 65: 102180. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2020.102180

McAdam, D. (2017), 'Social movement theory and the prospects for climate change activism in the United States', *Annual Review of Political Science*, 20(1): 189–208. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci–052615–025801

McCarthy, J. (2019), 'If Greta's message bothers you, how do you think she feels?', *Sunday Times* (29 September). Available at https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/justine-mccarthy-if-greta-s-message-bothers-you-how-do-you-think-she-feels-h52wp7ldk [accessed 13 October 2020].

Mersha, S. (2018), 'Black lives and Climate Justice: Courage and power in defending communities and Mother Earth', *Third World Quarterly*, 39(7): 1421–34. https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2017.1368385

Middeldorp, N. & Le Billon, P. (2019), 'Deadly environmental governance: Authoritarianism, eco-populism, and the repression of environmental and land defenders', *Null*, 109(2): 324–37. https://doi.org/10.1080/24694452.2018.1530586

Moeve, M. (2019), *When 4 million people rise up, there is no turning back: use your power.* Available at https://globalclimatestrike.net/when–4-million-people-rise-up-there-is-no-turning-back-use-your-power–2/ [accessed 29 October 2020].

Morton, T.A., Rabinovich, A., Marshall, D. & Bretschneider, P. (2011), 'The future that may (or may not) come: How framing changes responses to uncertainty in climate change communications', *Global Environmental Change*, 21(1): 103–109. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2010.09.013

Moser, S.C. (2010), 'Communicating climate change: History, challenges, process and future directions', *WIREs Climate change*, 1(1): 31–53. https://doi.org/10.1002/wcc.11

Moser, S.C. (2020), 'The work after "it's too late" (to prevent dangerous climate change)', *WIREs Climate Change*, 11(1): e606. https://doi.org/10.1002/wcc.606

Murray, J. (2020), 'Teaching white privilege as uncontested fact is illegal, minister says', *Guardian* (20 October). Available at https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/oct/20/teaching-white-privilege-is-a-fact-breaks-the-law-minister-says [accessed 4 November 2020].

Nabi, R.L., Gustafson A. & Jensen, R. (2018), 'Framing Climate change: Exploring the Role of Emotion in Generating Advocacy Behavior', *Science Communication*. 40(4): 442–68. https://doi.org/10.1177/1075547018776019

NASA [National Aeronautics and Space Administration] (2020), *Facts: Global temperatures. Global Climate change: Vital Signs of the Planet.* Available at https://climate.nasa.gov/news/?page=0&per_page=40&order=publish_date+desc%2C+created_at+desc&search=&category=19%2C98 [accessed 11 November 2020].

Norgaard, K. (2012), 'Climate Denial and the Construction of Innocence: Reproducing Transnational Environmental Privilege in the Face of Climate change', *Race, Gender & Class*, 19(1/2): 80–103.

Obinger, H., Petersen, K. & Starke, P. (eds) (2018), *Warfare and Welfare: Military Conflict and Welfare State Development in Western Countries*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press). https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198779599.001.0001

O'Brien, K., Selboe, E. & Hayward, B. (2018), 'Exploring youth activism on climate change: Dutiful, disruptive, and dangerous dissent', *Ecology and Society,* 23(3): 42. https://doi.org/10.5751/ES–10287–230342

O'Connor, B., Bojinski, S., Röösli, C. & Schaepman, M.E. (2020), 'Monitoring global changes in biodiversity and climate essential as ecological crisis intensifies', *Ecological Informatics*, 55. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecoinf.2019.101033

Ojala, M. (2015), 'Hope in the face of climate change: Associations with environmental engagement and student perceptions of teachers' emotion communication style and future orientation', *Journal of Environmental Education*, 46(3): 8. https://doi.org/10.1080/00958964.2015.1021662

OMMCOM News (2020), 'Are World Leaders Ready To Work With Youth, Asks Archana Soreng At UN Biodiversity Summit', *OMMCOM News* (1 October). Available at https://ommcomnews. com/odisha-news/are-world-leaders-ready-to-work-with-youth-asks-archana-soreng-at-un-biodiversity-summit [accessed 21 October 2020].

OECD [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development] (2020), *Building back better: A sustainable, resilient recovery after COVID–19. OECD Policy Responses to Coronavirus (COVID–19)*. Available at http://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/building-back-better-a-sustainable-resilient-recovery-after-covid–19–52b869f5/ [accessed 27 October 2020].

Oxford English Dictionary (2020), 'Activism/Activist'. Available at https://www.oed.com [accessed 16 November 2020].

Parker, L. (2020), 'For young people, two defining events: COVID–19 and climate change', *National Geographic* (1 May). Available at https://www.nationalgeographic.co.uk/science-and-technology/2020/05/young-people-two-defining-events-covid–19-and-climate-change [accessed 4 October 2020].

Parkes, C.M. (1972), *Bereavement: Studies of grief in adult life*. (New York, International University Press).

Parsons, E.C.M. (2016), '"Advocacy" and "Activism" Are Not Dirty Words – How Activists Can Better Help Conservation Scientists', *Frontiers in Marine Science*, 3(229): 1–6. https://doi.org/10.3389/fmars.2016.00229

Parsons, T. (1937), *The structure of social action* (New York, McGraw Hill).

Pellow, D. (2016), 'Towards a critical Environmental Justice Studies: Black Lives Matter as an Environmental Justice Challenge', *Du Bois Review*, 13(2): 221–36. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1742058X1600014X

Peters, G.P., Andrew, R.M., Canadell, J.G., Friedlingstein, P., Jackson, R.B., Korsbakken, J.I. & Peregon, A. (2020), 'Carbon dioxide emissions continue to grow amidst slowly emerging climate policies', *Nature Climate Change*, 10(1): 3–6. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41558–019–0659–6

Pihkala, P. (2018), 'Eco-anxiety, tragedy, and hope: Psychological and spiritual dimensions of climate change', *Zygon*, 53(2): 545–69. https://doi.org/10.1111/zygo.12407

Pinheiro, G. (2020), *"Change is coming, whether you like it or not": Greta Thunberg as a threat to the stability of capitalist and patriarchal systems*. Available at https://www.justgender.org/change-is-coming-whether-you-like-it-or-not-greta-thunberg-as-a-threat-to-the-stability-of-capitalist-and-patriarchal-systems/ [accessed 30 October 2020].

Poidevin, O. (2020), 'Coronavirus and climate change a "double crisis"', *BBC News* (5 May) Available at https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/science-environment–52508829 [accessed 16 November 2020].

Powell, N., Osbeck, M., Tan, S.B. & Toan, V.C. (2011), *Mangrove restoration and rehabilitation for climate change adaptation in Vietnam. World Resources Report Case Study* (Washington DC, World Resources Institute).

Prell, C. & Sun, L. (2015), 'Unequal carbon exchanges: Understanding pollution embodied in global trade', *Environmental Sociology,* 1(4), 256–67. https://doi.org/10.1080/23251042.2015.1114208

Ramos-Volz, Y. (2018), '"Living Life in the Meantime": An arts-based coaching model offering an alternative method of managing personal and professional change', *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring,* 16(1): 143–58.

Reis, P. (2020), 'Environmental Citizenship and Youth Activism', in A. Hadjichambis, P. Reis, D. Paraskeva-Hadjichambi, J. Cincera, J.B. Pauw, N. Gericke & M.C. Knippels (eds), *Conceptualizing Environmental Citizenship for 21st Century Education. Environmental Discourses in Science Education*, vol. 4 (Cham, Springer), 139–48. https://doi.org/10.1007/978–3–030–20249–1_9

Reset (2020), *Time to Reset. The public desire for a fairer, greener Britain after Covid. A report by the All Party Parliamentary Group on the Green New Deal*. Available at https://reset-uk.org/ [accessed 16 November 2020].

Rigaud, K.K., Sherbinin, A., Jones, B., Bergmann, J., Clement, V., Ober, K., Schewe, J., Adamo, S., Mccusker, B., Heuser, S. & Midgley, A. (2018), *Groundswell: Preparing for internal climate migration* (World Bank, Washington, DC). https://doi.org/10.1596/29461

Roberts, J.T. & Parks, B.C. (2007), 'Fuelling Injustice: Globalization, Ecologically Unequal Exchange and Climate change', *Globalizations*, 4(2): 193–210. https://doi.org/10.1080/14747730701345218

Roberts, M. (2020), 'Coronavirus: Europe experiencing "pandemic fatigue"', *BBC News* (6 October). Available at https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health–54417547 [accessed 3 November 2020].

Robinson, M. (2019), *Climate Justice: A man-made problem with a feminist solution* (London, Bloomsbury Publishing).

Robinson, M. & Reddy, D. (2020), Tackling Climate change with COVID–19 Urgency, *Project Syndicate* (1 April). Available at https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/tackling-climate-change-with-covid19-urgency-by-mary-robinson-and-daya-reddy–2020–04 [accessed 9 November 2020].

Roosen, L.J., Klöckner, C.A. & Swim, J.K. (2018), 'Visual art as a way to communicate climate change: a psychological perspective on climate change–related art', *World Art*, 8(1): 85–110. https://doi.org/10.1080/21500894.2017.1375002

Rommetveit, K., Funtowicz, S. & Strand, R. (2010), 'Knowledge, Democracy and Action in Response to Climate change', in R. Bhaskar, C. Frank, K.C. Hoyer, P. Naess & J. Parker (eds), *Interdisciplinarity and Climate change* (London, Routledge), 149–63.

Running, S.W. (2007), 'The 5 stages of climate grief', *Missoula: Numerical Terradynamic Simulation Group Publications*, 173. Available at https://scholarworks.umt.edu/ntsg_pubs/173

Sanders, C. (1999), *Grief, the mourning after: Dealing with adult bereavement (2nd edition)* (New York, John Wiley). https://doi.org/10.1046/j.1365–2850.1999.00227–5.x

Sanson, A.V. & Burke, S.E.L. (2020), 'Climate change and Children: An Issue of Intergenerational Justice', in N. Balvin & D.J. Christie (eds), *Children and Peace: From Research to Action* (Cham, Springer), 343–62. https://doi.org/10.1007/978–3–030–22176–8_21

Savin-Williams, R. & Dubé, E. (1998), 'Parental Reactions to Their Child's Disclosure of a Gay/Lesbian Identity', *Family Relations*, 47(1): 7–13. https://doi.org/10.2307/584845

Schlosberg, D. & Carruthers, D. (2010), 'Indigenous struggles, environmental justice, and community capabilities', *Global Environmental Politics*, 10(4): 12–35. https://doi.org/10.1162/GLEP_a_00029

Shiva, V. (1994), 'Conflicts of Global Ecology: Environmental Activism in a Period of Global Reach. Alternatives: Global, Local, Political', *Against Global Apartheid: Contemporary Perspectives on World Order and World order Studies*, 19(2): 195–207. https://doi.org/10.1177/030437549401900208

Smithers, R. & Collinson, P. (2020), 'UK supermarkets take steps to prevent panic buying and shortages', *Guardian* (17 March). Available at https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/17/supermarkets-take-steps-to-prevent-coronavirus-panic-buying-and-shortages [accessed 16 November 2020].

Socolow, R.H. (2012), 'Truths We Must Tell Ourselves to Manage Climate change', *Vanderbilt Law Review*, 65(6): 1455–78.

Solnit, R. (2020), 'Climate change, Covid – our hearts ache. But a new era is possible. We can do it', *Guardian* (19 September). Available at https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/sep/19/covid-climate-change- [accessed 16 November 2020].

Staeheli, L.A., Attoh, K. & Mitchell, D. (2013), 'Contested Engagements: Youth and the Politics of Citizenship', *Space and Policy*, 17(1): 88–105. https://doi.org/10.1080/13562576.2013.780715

Tannen, D. (ed.) (1993), *Framing in Discourse*. (Oxford, Oxford University Press).

Taylor-Collins, E., Harrison, T. & Thoma, S.J. (2019), 'A Habit of Social Action: Understanding the Factors Associated with Adolescents Who Have Made a Habit of Helping Others', *Voluntas*, 30: 98–114. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11266–018–00070–8

Taylor, M., Watts, J. & Bartlett, J. (2019), 'Climate Crisis: 6 million people join latest wave of global protests', *Guardian* (27 September). Available at www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/sep/27/climate-crisis–6-million-people-join-latest-wave-of-worldwide-protests [accessed 4 Nov 2020].

Thomas, A. & Haynes, R. (2020), 'Black Lives Matter: the link between climate change and racial justice', *Climate Analytics* (22 June). Available at https://climateanalytics.org/blog/2020/Black-lives-matter-the-link-between-climate-change-and-racial-justice/ [accessed 6 November 2020].

Trajber, R., Walker, C., Marchezini, V., Kraftl, P., Olivato, D., Hadfield-Hill, S., Zara, C. & Fernandes Monteiro, S. (2019), 'Promoting Climate change Transformation with Young People in Brazil: Participatory action research through a looping approach', *Action Research*, 17(1): 88–107. https://doi.org/10.1177/1476750319829202

Tri, N.H., Adger, W.N. & Kelly, P.M. (1998), 'Natural resource management in mitigating climate impacts: Mangrove restoration in Vietnam', *Global Environmental Change*, 8: 49–61. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0959–3780(97)00023-X

UNICEF (2015), *Unless We Act Now. The impact of climate change on children* (New York, UNICEF).

United Nations (2018), 'Act Now', *The UN Campaign for Individual Action*. Available at https://www.un.org/en/actnow/ [accessed 13 November 2020].

United Nations (2019), *An important opportunity lost as COP25 ends in compromise, but Guterres declares 'we must not give up'* (15 December). Available at https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/12/1053561 [accessed 13 October 2020].

United Nations (2020), *Make Bold Environmental Action Central Focus of Post Pandemic Economic Recovery, Speakers Urge as General Assembly Holds First Ever Global Biodiversity Summit Online* (30 September). Available at https://www.un.org/press/en/2020/ga12274.doc.htm [accessed 28 October 2020].

United Nations Environment Programme (2020), *Building Back Better: Why we must think of the next generation* (8 May). Available at https://www.unenvironment.org/news-and-stories/story/building-back-better-why-we-must-think-next-generation [accessed 1 November 2020].

UNFCCC [United Nations Framework Convention on Climate change] (2020), *The Paris Agreement* (Geneva, United Nations).

United Nations General Assembly (2019), *Climate change and poverty: Report of the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights* (Geneva, United Nations General Assembly).

Vickers, M,H. and Parris, M.A. (2007), '"Your Job No Longer Exists!": From Experiences of Alienation to Expectations of Resilience – A Phenomenological Study', *Employee Responsibilities and Rights Journal*, 19: 113–25. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10672–007–9038-y

Walker, C. (2020), '"Generation Z" and "Second Generation": An agenda for learning from cross-cultural negotiations of the climate crisis in the lives of second generation immigrants', *Children's Geographies*. https://doi.org/10.1080/14733285.2020.1817334

Ware, T. & Kramer, K. (2019), *Hunger strike: The climate and food vulnerability index* (London, Christian Aid).

Watts, J. (2019), 'Greta Thunberg, schoolgirl climate change warrior: "Some people can let things go. I can't"', *Guardian* (11 March). Available at https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/mar/11/greta-thunberg-schoolgirl-climate-change-warrior-some-people-can-let-things-go-i-cant [accessed 16 October 2020].

Whyte, K. (2018), 'Indigenous science (fiction) for the Anthropocene: Ancestral dystopias and fantasies of climate change crises', *Environment and Planning E: Nature and Space*, 1(1–2): 224–42. https://doi.org/10.1177/2514848618777621

Williams, J. (2020), *What is climate privilege? The Earthbound Report.* Available at https://earthbound.report/2020/08/25/what-is-climate-privilege/ [accessed 13 November 2020].

Willis, R. (2020), *Too Hot to Handle? The Democratic Challenge of Climate Change* (Bristol, Bristol University Press). https://doi.org/10.46692/9781529206036

Wilson, J. (2020), 'How the right is responding to the coronavirus: denial, realism or dangerous contrarianism', *Guardian* (7 April). Available at https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/apr/07/how-the-right-is-responding-to-the-coronavirus-denial-realism-or-dangerous-contrarianism [accessed 10 September 2020].

Wodak, R. & Krzyżanowski, M. (2017), 'Right-wing populism in Europe & USA Contesting politics & discourse beyond "Orbanism" and "Trumpism"', *Journal of Language and Politics*, 16(4): 471–84. https://doi.org/10.1075/jlp.17042.krz

World Health Organization (2018), *Climate change and health*. Available at https://www.who.int/newsroom/fact-sheets/detail/climate-change-and-health [accessed 14 September 2020].

WWF (2020), *Living Planet Report 2020: Bending the curve of biodiversity loss.* Available at https://www.wwf.org.uk/living-planet-report [accessed 16 November 2020].

Wysham, D. (2012). The six stages of climate grief [blog]. Available at http://www.otherwords.org/articles/the_six_stages_of_climate_grief [accessed 20 September 2020]

Zamore, L. & Phillips, B. (2020) *COVID–19 and Public Support for Radical Policies*. Available at https://cic.nyu.edu/sites/default/files/zamore-phillips-covid19-public-support-radical-policies-web-final.pdf [accessed 16 November 2020].

Zeldin-O'Neill, S. (2019) 'Guardian climate pledge 2019. "It's a crisis, not a change": the six Guardian language changes on climate matters', *Guardian* (16 October). Available at https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/oct/16/guardian-language-changes-climate-environment [accessed on 10 November 2020].

Notes on the authors

Lisa Jones is a Senior Lecturer in Education at the University of Hull. Her research focuses on issues of disadvantage, inequality and social justice with particular interests in social class, poverty as well as the role of place and space in shaping inequalities. Lisa has a keen interest in creative and participatory research approaches, particularly with young people and disadvantaged groups.
https://orcid.org/0000–0001–9463–639X

Florence Halstead is a Research Assistant and part-time PhD student at the University of Hull. She works on a number of research studies that engage children and youth, with a particular focus on Education for Sustainable Development and Climate Resilience. Her PhD project investigates children's perceptions of Climate Change and Flooding in the Mekong Delta and she has an interest in Participatory and Creative Methodologies, Climate Resilience, Social and Climate Justice, Youth Climate Activism and Children's Rights.
https://orcid.org/0000–0001–9945–1845

Katie J. Parsons is a researcher and PhD student at The University of Hull. Her PhD explores the use of the natural environment to raise attainment, wellbeing and pro-environmental behaviours in children and young people within the education system and youth groups. She has a keen interest in climate-related social action and social justice with children and youth and has many ongoing research projects within this field.
https://orcid.org/0000–0002–4980–7206

Hue Le is senior researcher and lecturer from the VNU-Central Institute for Natural Resources and Environmental Studies (CRES), Vietnam National University (VNU), Hanoi. Her research focuses on natural resource management, land tenure, and gender. Her scholarship examines the differentiating effects of the macro policy and investigates how social differentiation and power relations affect the way in which different classes of people use the resources and the income that each class earns from forest-related resources.
https://orcid.org/0000–0003–1130–4272

Ly Thi Ha Bui has 14 years of research expertise working at the Central Institute for Natural Resources and Environmental Studies (CRES), Vietnam National University, Hanoi, as a researcher at the Department of Wetlands, Marine, and Islands Studies. She has a varied range of experiences in working with local authorities, communities, and other civic organisations, such as the Women's Union, Farmers Association, and Youth Union through a range of different projects.

Christopher R Hackney is a NUAcT fellow in Geography, Politics and Sociology at Newcastle University. His research focused on the impacts that climate change and human actions have on water and sediment transport processes through the world's rivers and deltas.
https://orcid.org/0000–0001–5390–9136

Daniel R. Parsons is Director of the Energy and Environment Institute at the University of Hull. His research is focused on the geosciences, with interests in climate change and impacts of earth surface processes, such as flood hazard, and how these change over time.
https://orcid.org/0000–0002–5142–4466

Re-evaluating the changing geographies of climate activism and the state in the post-climate emergency era in the build-up to COP26

Andrew P. Kythreotis, Candice Howarth, Theresa G. Mercer, Hannah Awcock and Andrew E.G. Jonas

Abstract: A key aim of much climate activism is to enhance climate ambition and hold local and national governments, as well as global governance forums like the United Nations (UN), to account for the ways in which they implement and monitor climate policy across society to reverse long-term climate change. In recent years new local forms of climate activism, particularly at the urban scale, have taken a more prominent role in this. Although place-based, such local forms of climate activism are at the same time multi-scalar in orientation and strategic focus. This is particularly true in the UK where climate activism has prompted a number of local councils to declare climate emergencies, providing a mechanism by which they can become locally accountable in the delivery of their climate action plans, whilst at the same time holding national government to prior and future commitments to global climate governance. Using interview data with experts working on climate emergency declarations research across the UK, we critically discuss four key themes that have underpinned and catalysed the changing geographies of civil-state relationships within the climate emergency and what this may mean for future global climate governance under the UNFCCC Conferences of the Parties (COP). We argue that decision-makers at COP26 need to take greater heed of the significance of this new broader urban climate activism and its role in geopolitically mobilising more equitable, democratic and inclusive forms of climate governance which give citizens and civil society more credence within global climate policy decision-making processes that have been up to now, dominated by national state discourses.

Keywords: Climate activism, climate policy and the state, climate emergency, COP26, democracy, civil society.

Notes on the authors: see end of article.

1. Introduction

The twenty sixth United Nations (UN) Conference of the Parties (hereafter 'COP26') due to be held in November 2021 in Glasgow, UK (in partnership with Italy) aims to 'bring parties together to accelerate action towards the goals of the Paris Agreement and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change' (UK Government & United Nations 2020). This suggests a greater policy emphasis than in previous years to bring state and civil actors closer together in collaboration to tackle the current climate crisis and reach the goals of the Paris Agreement. This state-civil relationship is further cemented by statements that 'the UK is committed to working with all countries and joining forces with *civil society* [emphasis added], companies and people on the frontline of climate change to inspire climate action ahead of COP26' (UK Government & United Nations 2020). These words resonate with what we have seen in the last few years: climate activism has come to the fore and garnered public attention globally with mass civil demonstrations happening all around the world.

Climate activism can be understood as a civil movement with the key aim of mobilising knowledge about the dangers and impacts of anthropogenic climate change (ACC) and catalysing action. Whilst climate activism has been considered as a subset of the broader environmental movement that evolved in the 1960s and 1970s (O'Brien *et al.* 2018), it has also been regarded as a new social movement that traverses not only social and political relations but also spatial scales from the local to the global (Barr & Pollard 2017; North 2011). As such, climate activism has broader transformational aims extending beyond the physical environment; notably, where cities are concerned, the movement aims to connect up the politics of space, scale and circulation to bring about meaningful global societal and environmental changes (Ward *et al.* 2018). Insofar as local activism relates to the promise of transformational societal change at the global scale (O'Brien & Leichenko 2019), climate activism has a significant – if not indispensable – global governance role alongside state-led international climate policy institutions and processes, like the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Conference of the Parties (COP), as the COP26 quotes above suggest.

Nonetheless, there remains something of a theoretical and practical disconnect between urban and local scale climate activism and formal international climate policymaking. This has prompted North (2011) to differentiate between 'prefigurative' or grassroots action, which is undertaken at the community/local scale, and 'outward' activism, which involves international NGOs and environmental groups lobbying governments at national and international scales. Contemporary climate activism as a civil movement originating in cities, therefore, should not be understated. It has a diffusive quality that attracts a diversity of social actors (e.g. see Hadden 2014)

into a broader international movement that has mobilised citizens and groups to oppose what they see as inadequate state policy action on climate change through the UN and COP process, despite increased warnings from scientific experts who, ironically, are actually also part of the UN machinery on climate change (IPCC 2018). However, there are many examples of where urban scale civil activism has been marginalised (or even jettisoned) from international climate policy processes like the COP process because activists feel that the policies transpiring from such negotiations have been inadequate in controlling carbon emissions and enhancing resilience to climate change (de Moor 2018). This has led to activist calls of UN negotiations not being inclusive of citizens. Hence, formal climate policy processes have been criticised as anti-democratic, excluding particular forms of civil protest, whilst maintaining the political status quo of hegemonic state territorialism and capitalism (Chatterton *et al.* 2013; Craggs & Mahony 2014; Kythreotis 2012b; Weisser & Müller-Mahn 2017). A reliance on formal climate policy processes alone has proved wholly inadequate in alleviating the sufferings of many citizens who experience extreme climate impacts as political alliances between member states in the paradoxical international climate governance regime 'game' continue under the failing and arguably inconsistent UN Paris Agreement (Geden 2016; Kythreotis 2015). The agreement is underpinned by a pledge and review system that has been deemed inequitable and dysfunctional in catalysing effective international climate governance action, given the dominant capital-centric realpolitik of the international political economy (Buhr *et al.* 2014; Ciplet & Roberts 2017; Falkner 2016; Kemp 2017). This article feeds into this premise.

The juxtapositioning of climate action failure and extreme weather has not gone unnoticed by other powerful international organisations. Climate action failure and extreme weather have been deemed the most significant global threats in terms of both likelihood and impact by the World Economic Forum (World Economic Forum 2020). This further demonstrates why civil action has recently burgeoned as a reaction to the political economy of capitalism, with mass rallies that involve citizens of varied socio-demographics and attitudes (Boucher *et al.* 2021) e.g. The People's Climate March in 2014, the recent emergence of Extinction Rebellion (XR), (This Is) Zero Hour and the School Strikes Movement (Skolstrejk för Klimatet) garnering momentum on a world stage. Such intra- and inter-generational inspired civil action has made national governments around the world sit up and take a bit more notice of this increasingly diverse populist climate movement, with the understanding that citizens, regardless of age, creed or class, are becoming increasingly frustrated with the lack of climate policy urgency by national governments and the supporting international climate regime under the UN. Arguably, the sheer scale of global civil climate activism has led some governments to declare a climate emergency. Both UK national and

local governments have declared such emergencies, in some cases as a result of climate activism (Howarth *et al.* 2021), highlighting the powerful nature of collective, populist climate activism – yet with diverse civil actors – as an important climate policy driver (Piggot 2018).

Given the rapid expansion of the global civil climate movement and resultant declarations of climate emergencies by national and local governments across the UK, this article examines two fundamental questions in relation to contemporary climate activism in the build up to the COP26 climate negotiations in Glasgow, UK in 2021. Firstly, where has climate activism featured in the evolution and declaration of climate emergencies in the UK at large? Secondly, how effective is the civil climate activism movement at the urban scale in holding UK city councils to account for their climate actions? These questions are key in helping us understand how to develop a greater collaboration between civil society and state policymaking through future COP processes. It has been argued that there is a need to establish a relational link between local and urban climate action and global climate governance processes (Kythreotis *et al.* 2020b). This article uses data from interviews with a range of UK stakeholders involved in climate action in the UK through the form of declarations of local climate emergency, research into urban (city) climate action, or implementation and assessment of democratic deliberative processes on climate change such as citizen juries and assemblies. In so doing we provide a broad representation of the perspectives and interpretations of key state and non-state actors involved in the climate action sphere, as COP26 looms. This involves a close appreciation and critical perspective of the internal and external factors that influence the climate activism-action interface and the role of the state in either facilitating or circumscribing greater state-civil collaboration in climate governance and policy.

After this introduction, the literature review (section 2) contextualises the relationship between new geographical forms of climate activism and the climate emergency with an emphasis on the relationship between climate activism and the state in the context of the climate emergency. Section 3 discusses the methods, followed by a main analytical section (4) that critically discusses the interview findings in relation to our literature review and key questions. Our interview findings pinpoint four distinct themes related to our two research questions concerning the changing geographies of contemporary climate activism and the state as COP26 looms: i) Increased knowledge and awareness – this relates to how knowledge and awareness has grown from an enhanced understanding of scientific knowledge beyond IPCC framings; ii) Strikes and protests as drivers – this relates to how climate activism has acted as a platform for bringing citizen's voices and concerns forward; iii) Building pressure for action – this relates to how climate activism helps to provide a social mandate for policymakers to take action to address the climate crisis; and iv) Build-up of multiple elements and

leverage for action – this relates to how urban climate activism has brought to the fore a critical contingent of mass civil action movements such as Youth Strikes and Extinction Rebellion, and how the rise of these mass movements have provided potential leverage for greater action and a platform for accountability (Martiskainen *et al.* 2020). Such movements, we argue, have been so impactful because they have occurred during a time when momentum existed, and uptake was more likely. We conclude by briefly discussing the ways in which new forms of climate activism are contributing to the contemporary politics and geographies of climate change and the state-civil relationship by levering a political impasse through the climate emergency. Additionally, we also argue how this year's COP (26) hosted by the UK and Italy needs to recognise that, unlike previous years, understanding civil climate activism, particularly its human and moral dimensions, as part of a governance system that legitimately involves scientists, the state, activists and citizens, is central in catalysing a more democratic and inclusively defined global climate governance under the Paris Agreement that move beyond state-led technocratic climate policy discourse responses.

2. Literature review

2.1 New forms of urban climate activism and the climate emergency

Climate change has become a focus for a variety of civil urban activism springing up around the world. Although directed globally at thinking through the spaces of circulation in which cities are situated, nonetheless such movements are often place specific and effectiveness varies from city to city. Whilst such movements have distinct modes of knowledge, emotions, motivations and actions (Martiskainen *et al.* 2020), they are all united through a broader global civil climate movement that is pushing national governments for increased policy action on climate change. The most prominent of these new movements include Extinction Rebellion (often called XR) and the Youth Strike for Climate movement.

Extinction Rebellion is a non-violent direct-action group that was formed in the UK in late 2018. Since then, the movement has spread rapidly with branches around the world. XR's goal is the prevention of further climate change and species diversity loss, through three key demands: (1) Tell the Truth: Government must tell the truth by declaring a climate and ecological emergency, working with other institutions to communicate the urgency for change; (2) Act Now: Government must act now to halt biodiversity loss and reduce greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2025; and (3) Beyond Politics: Government must create and be led by the decisions of a Citizens' Assembly on climate and ecological justice (Extinction Rebellion 2020).

The Youth Strike for Climate is best described as a movement rather than a group. Also known as Fridays for Future, Youth for Climate, and the School Strike for Climate (Skolstrejk för Klimatet), the movement was kick-started by climate activist Greta Thunberg when she staged a solo protest outside the Swedish parliament in August 2018 (Fridays for Future 2020). Since then, it has spread rapidly, with school-children around the world striking on Fridays. Some students take part every week, but most participate less frequently; every few months there is a global strike which attracts much larger numbers. This movement has also led to other youth climate movements springing up, like the Sunrise Movement, Zero Hour and One Up Action.

Extinction Rebellion and the Youth Strike for Climate are the latest iterations of the environmental movement, which first emerged in the 1960s. Some of the pioneering groups of this movement, such as Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth, have grown and become institutionalised over the last few decades, which has enabled them to develop relationships with policymakers in government as trusted consultants (Kythreotis 2012a). However, this has also made them more averse to risk for fear of losing their privileged position (Rootes 1999). New groups such as Extinction Rebellion and Youth Strike for Climate have no such formal relationship with governments. On the one hand, the influence of such groups seems less direct because they are not engaging in the formal policy spaces of government. On the other hand, they are not constrained by the risk of losing access to formal policy spaces and are therefore able to engage in more radical tactics. These autonomous tactics enable such groups to exert direct geographical action across different world cities. In turn, such geographical civil proliferation puts pressure on governments for increased policy action on climate change. This certainly has repercussions in the way that policymakers and decision-makers must be seen to enhance climate ambition at global governance platforms like the COP. The pervasiveness of this new broader climate activist movement also needs to be reflected in the actions of national government decision-makers at global platforms like the COP, because citizens hold sway in holding governments to account for their actions. Thus, it is no coincidence that the declarations of climate emergencies currently witnessed have their provenance in the recent upwelling of contemporary climate activism of groups like XR and the Youth Strikes.

There has been an abundance of literature describing the constitution of climate activism – especially urban climate activism – as a broader social, as well as environmental justice movement (Jamison 2010; McAdam 2017; North 2011; Pettit 2004). Notwithstanding these important social justice elements, the recent climate emergency declarations have cast the role of climate activism in a more influential light on contemporary world climate politics and policy, where new civil social movements led by XR and Greta Thunberg have repositioned a diverse set of civil actors more closely with the necessary formal state policy systems that can catalyse political change

(Bomberg 2012). In this sense, civil mobilisation over climate change has undergone a sea change in the last few years in terms of being able to garner formal political attention from government institutions and potentially influence wider state climate policy processes.

Featherstone (2013) has argued that the broader climate movement – particularly the way it has highlighted the systemic weaknesses of global neoliberalism – has opened up new ways to think about climate activism beyond 'post-politics' (e.g. a globally defined technocratic and administration management state consensus) that may have different recourses to formal state policy administration and action on climate change. However, others have pointed out how the myriad of new voices coalescing around climate activism does not necessarily mean that government climate policy will result in more equitable change. For example, Kenis (2019), through a study of grassroots climate movements through the lens of the post-political, argued how having different climate movements does not necessarily mean they're an agreed form of climate activist politics. Instead, there are different forms of civil contestation – sometimes in opposition to one another – even though they all draw from post-political understandings of how state climate policy depoliticises certain civil actors. This illustrates the significance of being able to critically intellectualise and understand this new evolving citizen-state relationship in contemporary climate politics and policy. This 'new civil politics of climate change' needs to moves beyond a simple definitional reinterpretation of a dialectical relationship between citizen and state whereby consensus-making over climate politics is dominated by governments and the state, as post-political arguments uphold. Rather there is a need to acknowledge how civil climate activism is entrenched in a more pluralised, nuanced and often place-based climate politics that can significantly influence the way that state policymakers formalise climate policy through this new 'emergency' policy discourse.

Political access of local civil groups to state policy processes and/or institutions will inevitably be differentiated, with the state often choosing which civil actors can suit their own preferred policy management trajectory (Kythreotis 2010; Weisser & Müller-Mahn 2017). This inevitably depoliticises the very essence of climate activism as an alternative democratic entity that seeks to penetrate elite policymaking spaces that have been historically difficult for civil actors to influence. It also reframes any cogent analysis of climate activism in terms of what 'activism' politically means in the context of the current climate emergency and what equitable role civil society groups can play in contributing to or influencing future climate policy. Indeed, there are arguably many climate emergencies espoused by different civil groups, and the state alike, even though the upshot is that the contemporary broad climate activism we are witnessing has a more active voice than in preceding years. Therefore in this article one of the key questions we ask is where has climate activism featured in the evolution

and declaration of climate emergencies at the national scale in the UK over the past few years? This key question must be freighted with caveats because we not only have different activist movements e.g. XR, Transitions, Skolstrejk för Klimatet, that make up the broader climate activism social movement (Gunningham 2019; Jamison 2010), but also different ideas – from both activists and state policymakers – as to what constitutes 'climate emergency'. Rootes (2012) has argued how in the UK, bottom-up grassroots initiatives have sometimes moved away from larger Environmental Non-Governmental Organisations (ENGOs) who work more closely with governments in a top-down fashion within the formal confines of the political economy of states. Hence, teasing out the relationship between climate activism and state climate policy action in the context of these recent climate emergency declarations warrants significant empirical examination. This is especially the case in terms of what it means more broadly for how locally-inspired action geographically fits with future global governance of climate change through formal processes like the COP, that are often far removed from the everyday experiences of citizens and their perceptions of what effective climate action constitutes.

2.2. Climate activism as a precursor for state climate policy action

A new broader and inclusive form of contemporary climate activism appears to be taking a more prominent role in holding governments to account when it comes to informal civil climate action on the streets, but policy change has been limited despite governments recognising the climate emergency (Gills & Morgan 2020). Similarly, it has been noted that although many climate protagonists firmly believe greater communication and collaboration is needed between state and non-state actors, there remains some serious systemic (institutional) and collective (governance) barriers to communication and collaboration (Wamsler *et al.* 2020). So, is there anything different about this new contemporary form of climate activism that has resulted in national and local/city governments declaring climate emergencies? The recent upwelling of UK subnational activism certainly highlights how new civil forms of climate governance could contribute to more rapid and equitable state policy responses to climate change at national and international scales (Galarraga *et al.* 2017). Recent research by Corry & Reiner (2020) found that radical climate activism outside of formal policy arenas was correlated with – rather than opposed to – knowledge and interest in policy agendas. This suggests that contemporary climate activism shouldn't be viewed solely as a social civil movement that is traditionally at odds with the state, but rather a more sophisticated and hybrid morphological form that can enable government policy change, without losing its autonomy, diversity or moral messaging (Delina & Diesendorf 2016).

Using Erik Olin Wright's theories of social transformation, Stuart *et al.* (2020) have also recently argued how this broader contemporary climate social movement inspired by XR, Fridays for Future, and the Sunrise Movement has exposed and politicised gaps in the system of reproduction (e.g. our fossil fuel infrastructure) that has enabled meaningful social transformation to become more possible through social emancipation. That is, social emancipation occurs through one or more of three strategies. These are:

(1) *interstitial*, which bypass the state and create cracks in the current system; the XR and the Skolstrejk för Klimatet movements have certainly done this by proffering alternatives to the current Patriarchal and capital-based political system;

(2) *ruptural*, which directly confront the current system through confrontation; again there are elements of Skolstrejk för Klimatet and certainly XR that resonate with rupturing – for example, through direct interventions on public infrastructure we have recently seen in cities, that are sympathetic to this strategy, but these tend not to result in effective democratic outcomes; and

(3) *symbiotic*, which relies on collaboration with the current political system to reform policy of which the pressure from these broad contemporary forms of climate activism have certainly created transformational conditions for citizens and the state to work more closely together in tackling climate change. This last strategy is certainly the ideal strategy for governments – and one that we proffer in this article – as they seek to tackle climate change through formal global processes related to the UNFCCC. Yet the first two strategies are more appealing to climate activists who have (quite rightly) been incalcitrant to the way national governments and global climate platforms have made limited progress on curbing emissions and creating more inclusive participatory climate governance processes over the past 30 years.

Hence, cities (or the 'urban') have inevitably played a key role in climate activism and the climate emergency. Although there is significant variety in the responsibilities and structures of local and city governments globally, adaptation to climate change predominantly occurs at the local/urban scale (Baard *et al.* 2012; Kythreotis *et al.* 2020a; McGuirk *et al.* 2014). By the end of November 2019, more than 1200 city governments and local authorities around the world have passed resolutions declaring a climate emergency, moving away from the 'business as usual' response to climate change taken previously (Davidson *et al.* 2020). The framing of the situation as an 'emergency' is significant as it implies the need for radical and rapid action, instilling a sense of urgency that has previously been lacking (Davidson *et al.* 2020). The resolutions that we have witnessed typically contain language recognising that climate change is already having significant irreversible impacts, and a commitment of

resources to prevent further change and tackle the unavoidable impacts. In the UK, there is a propensity for rural local authorities – especially those controlled by a Conservative Council – to be reluctant in either declaring a climate emergency or at least highlight the fact that declaring such emergencies are not legally binding with national carbon targets. This is a key political tension between rural and city councils in the UK. Cities have become more forthcoming as geographical focal points in catalysing local climate mitigation and adaptation action (Grafakos *et al.* 2020), although there are also marked differences between urban areas in the UK in terms of climate action and targets (Heidrich *et al.* 2013). Hence, there remains significant place-based obstacles that hinder the progress of climate action and policy *solely* through cities. These include the challenge of overcoming UK-wide administrative and political boundaries that exist across local government administrations in two-tier areas which makes it difficult for territorially adjacent, overlapping, or political diverse local governments to work together to resolve often contradictory urban and rural considerations and achieve alignment in local climate policy objectives.

As the above implies, declaring a climate emergency is not a guarantee that effective and meaningful action will be taken. In order for attempts to mitigate climate change to be successful, they have to take priority over all other goals and policies, whilst also ensuring that vulnerable groups are not disadvantaged further; even relatively progressive local authorities are unlikely to adopt this approach (Davidson *et al.* 2020). It is also important to remember that there are limits to the powers of local governments. Without support from both national governments and local communities there is only so much that can be achieved (Davidson *et al.* 2020), although local councils in the UK do have it in their power to aim for carbon neutrality by 2030, even though the UK central government target is 2050 (which many rural councils still work to). So, there is an obstacle as to the extent to which local scale government administrations can exert climate policy influence vis-à-vis the political legitimacy/authority of national scale government (UK). The 2030-2050 target tension is an example of a scalar political tension that is also exacerbated through the UK devolved government system (England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland), which impedes a spatially equitable climate policy consensus between place and scale, resulting in inconsistent climate policy leadership across the UK that can enervate a concerted and consistent UK policy response to climate change at the international scale through the UNFCCC and COP process. In this sense, the local and urban climate policy experience is causally linked to global climate governance processes of the UNFCCC and the COP.

Other obstacles can be the lack of a shared understanding of the meaning and purpose of climate change adaptation (Fünfgeld & McEvoy 2014). In addition, climate change mitigation and adaptation involves complex and uncertain

decision-making, which local authorities are often not well-equipped to undertake (Baard *et al.* 2012). Hence, we see how many cities around the world have been fertile grounds for inspiring climate policy leadership (e.g. see Homsy 2018; Wurzel *et al.* 2019), whilst rural areas can lag behind (e.g. see Fallon & Sullivan 2014). This urban-rural dichotomy creates inconsistent climate change action across distinct state territorial jurisdictions, which in turn, has necessitated the upwelling of new forms of climate action through different social movements springing up across society. What follows is an empirical analysis of how the declaration of climate emergencies by local councils in the UK have been influenced by climate activism. We argue that this plays an important role in changing the geographies of climate change governance and policy between the local, national and international scales, where often local action is disconnected from national and international climate forums (Di Gregorio *et al.* 2019; Kates & Wilbanks 2003; Kythreotis *et al.* 2020b)

3. Methods

The empirical data and theory presented in this article stems from a UK study undertaken by the ESRC Place-based Climate Action Network (PCAN) and a British Academy grant respectively exploring the extent to which climate emergency declarations are effective ways to enhance (local) climate action and how this 'new civil politics of climate change' is reconfiguring UK state-civil geographies in the context of climate change communication, action and policy. Sixteen semi-structured interviews were carried out: five (5) UK academics, six (6) policymakers or representatives of policymakers/policy organisations, and five (5) civil society organisations. Interviewees were selected based on their knowledge and experience of climate emergency declarations in the UK, with expertise on climate governance, climate deliberation, climate activism, climate policy and decision-making. Interviewees were asked a series of questions on UK climate emergency declarations and in this article we focus on the broader question around the evolution of the climate emergency declarations (from their inception to the declaration being made) and the role that civil activism did or did not play in this process as a means to form new insights into the changing geographies and relationship between contemporary civil activism and government policy action on climate change. These changing geographies would inevitably have upscale implications to the way global climate governance processes at the COP are undertaken. Interviews took place in the UK in person or over the phone, lasting up to one hour each, and audio transcripts were transcribed and analysed using thematic analysis.

4. Findings

The findings of this research are based around two major questions. Firstly, where has climate activism featured in the evolution and declaration of climate emergencies at the urban and national scales? Secondly, how effective is climate activism and civil society movements in holding councils to account for their climate actions? A number of prevalent themes related to these two questions emerged from the interview analysis that would be directly relevant to COP26's policy trajectory of a more inclusive and collaborative relationship between state and civil actors in future negotiations.

4.1. Increased knowledge and awareness

The first main issue that emerged out of the interviews suggested that increased knowledge and awareness of the climate crisis has grown from the enhanced scientific knowledge (e.g. IPCC 1.5°C report published in 2018) on the risks the world faces and the need for a 1.5°C target. Resulting activism builds on this and is reflected in climate strikes and the XR movement which acted to bring together citizens and increase public salience of the types of risks they may be exposed to. Several interviewees touched on this in interviews:

> *I think what we saw was amazing coming together by this time last year, of a public awareness of the IPPC stuff, which was interesting because normally there's not that much public awareness right, it's kind of like quite [techy].* Interviewee 6

> *But that really got out didn't it that, in November 2018 before. And then by Spring 2019, we had a big understanding of that 1.5-degree thing, everybody was talking about 1.5 degrees. And then that came together with Extinction Rebellion, who were really live and pushing debate on the street.* Interviewee 6

> *the sudden uptake in an interest in pollution (…) which then leads to a broadening of the debate so that members of the public begin to talk about a public policy issue which precisely feeds into the debate about the environment.* Interviewee 8

The above chimes with the findings of Ogunbode *et al.* (2020), who found that if people were newly exposed to the 1.5°C IPCC report their concern and awareness of dangerous climate change were enhanced. This awareness, combined with increasing coverage of climate change, its impacts and solutions, has been further legitimised by demonstrable interest and stepping up of several local authorities through their own climate emergency declarations. As a few interviewees alluded to:

> *there have been councillors in most of the councils who have picked this up and run with it. But they have been able to get the declarations through because there's clear public support, you know, that most of the council meetings where these have been successful,*

the public galleries have been packed. And it was definitely triggered by the IPCC report, the ten years left report. That's kind of where it all started. And the growing understanding of the urgency. Interviewee 2

I think that the declarations and all the information around the press coverage and social media has helped to put this topic into the agenda of the people in these councils. We know this is one topic that is important for the people and with elections the candidates will try to allure them and include those concerns into their political platforms. Interviewee 3

Other interviewees expressed the view that the current activity (and that since 2018) witnessed in the UK has built on an underlying interest and historical public knowledge of the risk of climate change, from particularly younger generations. Hence by not starting 'from scratch' this renewed awareness has come at a time where society has demonstrated a stronger interest and response mirroring, and mirrored by, responses by individuals in positions of power.

I think we've come back to a place where some real hard-hitting facts have been given to us. And councils, as leaders of their local place, are building on their role that they've been playing to sort of put this more at the forefront of a local place's agenda. And I think at that point people maybe thought that we needed to do something about this, which is maybe a bit more drastic. Interviewee 12

And climate change was much higher up the political agenda in young people's viewpoints than perhaps the older generation. Interviewee 10

Climate change was coming back up the agenda anyway, kind of before [Greta], who I think is a key influence and also I think Extinction Rebellion. So, I think to an extent they weren't building from a zero platform. Interviewee 10

So, in terms of awareness raising amongst the general public, the recent 1.5ºC IPCC report was helpful, but there also were also pre-existing policy conditions that had been created through the recent upwelling of social climate movements that made governments sit up and take greater notice. This also resonates with the opportunity streams of Kingdon (1995) who argued that a *problem stream* was created when an issue like climate change lurches more prominently into public attention. This is then followed by a *policy stream* where a solution is available to governments. This then creates a *politics stream*, whereby governments have declared climate emergencies in a collective fashion. The strikes and protests were certainly central to creating the politics stream, as the next subsection illustrates.

4.2. Strikes and protests as drivers

Building on the dissemination and prominence of the evidence base on the risk of climate change and the need to reduce emissions to a 1.5°C target, citizen activism played an important role in building a platform from which citizens' voices and concerns became more vocal and governments began to witness that greater policy changes was needed. There was a strong sense in our interviews that grassroot activities, energy and a sense of urgency has provided a space for local forms of democracy to be heard and catalyse the need for greater climate policy action:

> *And I think the population has, you know, grass roots have come up and said we need to do something about this and change it. And I think local democracy has responded to that.* Interviewee 11

> *I think those small groups of people that have organised Extinction Rebellion and climate strikes have had a profound impact on the dialogue and the space.* Interviewee 14

> *It has definitely been fuelled by extinction rebellion and the youth strikers.* Interviewee 2

> *The school strikes, the Greta Thunberg and related campaigning issues, protest movements like Extinction Rebellion, I think have helped to shift public and political opinion.* Interviewee 4

The above interview quotes suggest an enabling of old dialogues being revisited and new ones forming, all driven by a desire to go 'beyond' knowledge exchange and instead put pressure on those who have an important role to play in shaping future climate action. While climate strikes and activist organisations such as XR have played a vital role in shaping the UK national policy conversation on climate action (Gunningham 2019), local pockets of voices exogenous to the state have equally been instrumental in advocating for local governance and action (e.g. see Corry & Reiner 2020) in order to respond to the climate crisis:

> *I think decisions by people in positions of authority can be greatly impacted by outside pressure, and I think the combination of having school climate strikes (…) there was a period of six months where fairly regularly there was several thousand people outside the council chambers. And this was happening all around the country. As well as all of the media and the noise the Extinction Rebellion had generated, I think, it had a profound effect on things.* Interviewee 14

> *I think that the way that the emergency declarations were made was very strongly influenced by the external pressures of the social groups. And I think that's in the moment in that context, the councils are quite receptive to these suggestions and probably one political party or one member of the council took the proposal and put it forward. So, there was no way they would run away from it.* Interviewee 3

> *Of course, smaller groups of individuals, constituents, they put pressure on their council leaders as well. And a few champions within cabinet and local authorities that have taken this forward and basically said 'now we need to do something about this'.* Interviewee 5

Hence, we see how local action, whether related to the state or not, has a key policy influence at other higher geographical scales. Schwartz (2019) found that enhanced local climate action, particularly in large urban conurbations created greater inter-governmental relations (with national and international policy scales) with respect to climate policy action enhancement, although there was a requirement for greater national government support in some localities who had less effective climate action spheres. This indicates how local activism remains a key driver for policy change at higher policy scales, in order to build greater pressure for action from below. This has also been reported in analyses of UK local authorities, where though the role of the citizen has been important in councils' declarations of a climate emergency, people will only buy into the declarations if local authorities can show how tackling climate change will improve local well-being (Gudde 2020). Building greater pressure for action is further explored in the next subsection.

4.3. Building pressure for action

All climate activism activities played a role in building pressure and build on past momentum of awareness of climate change. In so doing, many interviewees claimed that these activities helped to bring to the fore widespread civil society awareness and dissatisfaction with ongoing political efforts, and a call for greater climate action which undoubtedly led to a tipping point beyond which the climate crisis was seen to be taken more seriously by policymakers, as evidenced in the amount of climate emergency declarations occurring over the past few years. As the following interviewees argued:

> *I think you know, you have the one point five-degree report, it got a lot of press [and] of course you had the school climate strikes and then the extinction rebellion protest. There has been this up soaring of kind of momentum around climate action for the last what 18 months or so and I think that's where it's kind of getting people to say 'Right, we really need to do something about this' and it's getting some political support.* Interviewee 1

> *You can't discount the idea that maybe they suddenly made it a priority because it's getting a lot more attention.* Interviewee 1

The increasing pressure resulting from the growing civil unrest regarding climate change provided an opportunity for policy responses to mirror what activist citizens where calling for through these strikes:

And I think that the Climate Emergency Declarations were very much a political response to that. Interviewee 11

And so that kind of disruption, from my perspective, has been quite an important force in pushing councils. And then they've kind of – and then there's the peer pressure amongst councils. Interviewee 13

The above quotes show the power of broader social movement pressure in facilitating policy change regardless of the ideological creed of the government administration in question. In the UK, there is an established tradition of greater climate action being supported by the Labour Party, where the Conservatives have traditionally been less pro-environmental (Carter 2014; Carter & Jacobs 2014; Carter *et al.* 2018). Whilst more recently in the UK, this division has been less pronounced, particularly at the local authority level, many rural councils controlled by Conservative councils (e.g. Lincoln County Council) are being less ambitious with their future climate plans and have aligned local climate planning policy with the national government 2050 net zero carbon target, whilst Labour controlled local authorities (e.g. Lincoln City Council) have targeted being net zero carbon emissions by 2030 in their local planning, which has partly been driven by new local climate governance institutions like local Climate Commissions that have local authority support and private, community and third sector buy-in which ramps up bottom-up activism beyond the state.

4.4. Build-up of multiple elements and leverage for action

Climate activism appears to have conjoined hitherto disconnected phenomena relating to climate change and critical mass, namely, the IPCC 1.5°C report, the Youth Strikes and XR. This build-up of momentum contributed to a combination of growing pressure to act, as well as to be seen to be responding with appropriate agency to the climate crisis. It has been pointed out by Castree (2020), that moving beyond the abundant (albeit arguably monistic) broad physical evidence we see in global environmental assessments that proposition a climate emergency because of the surpassing of a number of physical and biological planetary boundaries, to a plan of direct state action, remains somewhat elusive. Whilst action is still needed on the part of governments (as the interview quotes in section 4.3 alluded to), such action needs to involve various types of (citizen) social agency (e.g. XR, School Strikes, Sunrise) that moves society beyond the institutionalised science (which has identified the problem) and government (with its piecemeal and inadequate tackling of the climate crisis through the UN) response to tackle climate crises (Castree *et al.* 2020; Kythreotis *et al.* 2019).

Increased action(s) through the broad types of contemporary climate activism we are witnessing have been integral in pushing the climate crisis up the political agenda:

> *So, there's kind of a confluence of different events that were shoving climate change up the agenda, which meant, you know, the presses actions then were, you know, more a spark to a kind of dry kindling.* Interviewee 10

> *So, in 2018 towards the end of the year, you had Extinction Rebellion, the school strikes. I can't remember when the school strikes started but, you know, Greta Thunberg and the IPCC report and I think all these kind of came together at a similar time and said, you know, 'There's a big problem going on there.' So, yeah, I think it was the coalescing of all those things at once.* Interviewee 15

> *I think this absolute momentum, monumental momentum, where people realise that, there's a bit, I think a lot of it was peer pressure, and a lot of it was not understanding what they were signing up to.* Interviewee 6

> *I know that there was this huge upsurge through both in the Climate Strikes and then Extinction Rebellion from the citizens really wanting more action.* Interviewee 11

These activities play an instrumental role in helping to both pressure and persuade those in authority not only of the need to act but also that there is a social mandate to do so. Interviewees then suggest that this increased pressure and momentum to some extent, gives policy actors 'permission' to build on this mandate, enabling a snowball effect to occur whereby one after another local authorities began to declare their own local climate emergencies:

> *I think that civil society has a really important role in persuading institutions, and clearly my own, I guess, but not mainly my own because we are by nature an environmental organisation. But in persuading the authorities, democratic and otherwise that they need to change and public policy needs to change and that organisational and individual behaviour needs to change and I think without that civil society pressure, you wouldn't get that democratic response, I don't think.* Interviewee 4

> *And then found the political allies that happened to create these coalitions. From there on I think it was more like a snowball. There was the BBC documentary on climate change with David Attenborough, then the COP two years ago.* Interviewee 3

A number of interviewees (5, 7, 10) also speculated that one of the reasons why the climate strikes and XR movement had been so impactful was that they took place at a specific time, where momentum already existed and were building on fertile ground.

I think the way we have politicised through Brexit and other things, possibly also helped. People became over the last five years much more active, took to the streets, many different agendas. And I think that level of activism nurtures also the green movement. Interviewee 7

Probably brewing under the surface for a while and it's emerged in this way. Interviewee 5

And XR's actions also landed on very fertile ground. I think that's, you know, and the Green Party were, you know, they had [canvassed] and canvassed across the country, you know, not huge amounts but a good sprinkling in places as well. And particularly that enabled them to think about what we need as local authority motions in this space. Interviewee 10

In so doing, they provide a loud moral voice to wider civil society on climate change providing leverage for action and a platform for accountability.

I think that confluence of actions and particularly a kind of the Greta effect and the young people standing up I think had a massive moral voice behind it. XR I think was more polarising (…). Interviewee 10

The ongoing citizen's engagement and the constituent engagement process. If one of the reasons is pressure from constituents that have made them declare this and they would expect a follow-up – action plans, things like that. The constituents, not all of them of course, but the noisy ones will continue to make noise and the momentum gained by declaring an emergency can only last so long. But what comes after and how do they intend to engage with their constituents and say 'yes, we've declared it – yes, we met your goal: now don't speak to us for another ten years.' Obviously, that's not going to happen. They will come back in a few months' time and say 'well, where's the plan? What have you done? How are you investing it? What are you going to do?' I think that's – how are they going to navigate that politics, because it would be interesting, I think. It would be interesting to ask, in fact, how they're doing that. Interviewee 5

The role that grassroots organisations and civil actors play in this regard is one of accountability in that they have both provided the social mandate for policy action on climate change, and the delivery of local climate action plans, whilst simultaneously providing a mechanism for holding these actors to account. This further degree of accountability (or perceived at least) not only legitimises the role of civil activism in climate action design and implementation but ensures that this action is robust and adheres to demands and requests from non-state actors. In so doing it provides a more effective way to monitor, evaluate and alter processes as and when they evolve.

5. Conclusion

This article has sought to examine and re-evaluate the changing geographies of climate activism and the state in the post-climate emergency era in the build-up to COP26. Through interviews with key stakeholders we have found that there was a perception amongst our interviewees that climate activism has played a much more prominent role in influencing decision-making processes at the national scale, particularly in pre-empting government climate emergency declarations. The interviews also revealed the importance of urban climate action to the broader global climate social movement, particularly the activities of XR and School Strikes, which have provided a human-centred foregrounding to the shortcomings of previous national government climate policymaking – a 'national scalar policy dissonance' – which has relied on ill-defined arbitrary temperature targets and other technofixes in tackling dangerous climate change. Additionally, the recent mobilisation and success of new (urban) forms of climate activism in catalysing a new climate emergency discourse is significant in as much as it highlights a civil society reaction to the major weakness in the way national states have politically ratified a Paris Agreement in international negotiations of the COP. This system is built upon a 'house of cards' pledge and review system that can easily be reneged upon within the existing institutional governance structures of the UNFCCC – an 'international collective scalar policy dissonance' – that signposts a significant weakness of the institutional and governance structures of international climate governance forums. The increase in recent strikes and protests – the new civil politics of climate change – have helped raise public and state awareness of the acuteness of the climate emergency and have started to build greater pressure for action within nations, including the UK. However, real policy change has yet to be fully realised through the decision-making processes of the COP and UNFCCC.

There also remain challenges of upscaling from the local/urban action to the national and international scales as our interviews revealed. There is a need to build more effective political alliances across cities and rural areas in order to meet national, and therefore, global climate targets through the Paris Agreement. For that, local climate activism in its broadest sense, needs the recognition and support of local government. Whilst specific movements like XR have been more extreme in how they have gone about demanding this through action (and disruption) that goes 'beyond politics', their tactics have certainly made national governments sit up and take notice, which our findings found were essential in catalysing the climate emergency discourse. The School Strikes movement can also be construed as being just as extreme as the XR movement because it involved disruption of a system of education predicated upon meritocratic principles which are sympathetic to global capital accumulation. This highlights a disconnect between local activism and international policy action.

Local activism seeks to highlight the uneven distribution of climate impacts between those disenfranchised by abrupt climate impacts and those social and political elites who do not experience dangerous climate change impacts, but have been tasked with the political tools to actually tackle climate change by having a seat at the international climate negotiating table through forums like the COP.

This brings us squarely back to how those decision-making elites at COP meetings (forthcoming COP26 at the time of writing) choose how to acknowledge at worst, or include at best, the emerging role of the broader climate activism we have recently witnessed around the world. There is certainly an evolving relationship between climate activism and the UK state, which we have empirically illustrated in this article. No longer can climate activism be viewed as a deterrent or a usurper of formal climate policymaking by political elites. We argue that this changing civil-state relationship is not just solely attributed to the efficacy of climate activism as an oppositional form to the state *in toto*, but also reflects a societal-wide non-discriminatory intra- and inter-generational reaction to the traditional dominant political economy regime of national governments at COPs. Such an inclusive civil reaction has certainly been necessary to lay the groundwork for fundamental changes on the climate policy implementation side at the international scale. For states to acknowledge that a climate emergency is omnipresent and rooted in the everyday lives of citizens, future policy progress will involve a need to move beyond a policy goal of mitigating the arbitrary temperature target of <2°C using a pledge and review system. Taking a more human-centred approach to policymaking, beyond technocracy, must be explored further in the negotiations at COP26. If COP26 policymakers are to recognise, acknowledge and lay a platform for this, then future COP negotiations will be able to better navigate the geopolitical, economic and territorial tensions between different UNFCCC member states more empathetically, diplomatically and effectively.

Likewise, the broader climate activist movement also needs to acknowledge the limitations of national state policy discourses in being a 'silver bullet' in neutralising the climate emergency and reducing global climate emissions and impacts. The COVID-19 pandemic has certainly illustrated the limitations of national government policymaking in instigating change, even when policy changes have been highly reactive, immediate and extreme, e.g. when R-rates have risen. Yet the 'covid catalyst' has has also shown how both activists and the state need to deliberate together more to create a shared social mandate for more concerted future climate policy action (Howarth *et al.* 2020). A future shared socio-political imaginary based fundamentally on human and moral dimensions as key drivers for change – the raison d'être of climate activism – and acknowledged and supported by scientific and political institutions, will determine whether future climate policy action is successful or not. This is what the decision-makers at COP26 need to take greater heed of if we are to success-

fully connect local, national and international scales through a more effective and socially inclusive climate governance.

References

Baard, P., Vredin Johansson, M., Carlsen, H. & Edvardsson Björnberg, K. (2012), 'Scenarios and sustainability: tools for alleviating the gap between municipal means and responsibilities in adaptation planning', *Local Environment*, 17(6–7): 641–662.
https://doi.org/10.1080/13549839.2011.646969

Barr, S. & Pollard, J. (2017), 'Geographies of Transition: Narrating environmental activism in an age of climate change and "Peak Oil"', *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, 49(1): 47–64.
https://doi.org/10.1177/0308518X16663205

Bomberg, E. (2012), 'Mind the (Mobilization) Gap: Comparing Climate Activism in the United States and European Union', *Review of Policy Research*, 29(3): 408–430.
https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1541-1338.2012.00566.x

Boucher, J., Kwan, G.T., Ottoboni, G.R. & Mccaffrey, M.S. (2021), 'From the suites to the streets: Examining the range of behaviors and attitudes of international climate activists', *Energy Research & Social Science*, 72: 101866. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.erss.2020.101866

Buhr, K., Roth, S. & Stigson, P. (2014), 'Climate Change Politics through a Global Pledge-and-Review Regime: Positions among Negotiators and Stakeholders', *Sustainability*, 6(2): 794–811.
https://doi.org/10.3390/su6020794

Carter, N. (2014), 'The politics of climate change in the UK', *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change*, 5(3): 423–433. https://doi.org/10.1002/wcc.274

Carter, N. & Jacobs, M. (2014), 'Explaining radical policy change: the case of climate change and energy policy under British New Labour Government 2006-10', *Public Administration*, 92(1): 125–141.
https://doi.org/10.1111/padm.12046

Carter, N., Ladrech, R., Little, C. & Tsagkroni, V. (2018), 'Political parties and climate policy', *Party Politics*, 24(6): 731–742. https://doi.org/10.1177/1354068817697630

Castree, N. (2020), 'The environmental humanities in "the age of consequences"', *Ecocene: A Journal of the Environmental Humanities*, 1(1): 32–43. https://doi.org/10.46863/ecocene.2020.4

Castree, N., Bellamy, R. & Osaka, S. (2020), 'The future of global environmental assessments: Making a case for fundamental change', *The Anthropocene Review*, 205301962097166.
https://doi.org/10.1177/2053019620971664

Chatterton, P., Featherstone, D. & Routledge, P. (2013), 'Articulating Climate Justice in Copenhagen: Antagonism, the Commons, and Solidarity', *Antipode*, 45(3): 602–620.
https://doi.org/10.1111/J.1467-8330.2012.01025.X

Ciplet, D. & Roberts, J. T. (2017), 'Climate change and the transition to neoliberal environmental governance', *Global Environmental Change*, 46: 148–156.
https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2017.09.003

Corry, O. & Reiner, D. (2020), 'Protests and Policies: How Radical Social Movement Activists Engage with Climate Policy Dilemmas', *Sociology*, 003803852094310.
https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038520943107

Craggs, R. & Mahony, M. (2014), 'The Geographies of the Conference: Knowledge, Performance and Protest', *Geography Compass*, 8(6): 414–430. https://doi.org/10.1111/gec3.12137

Davidson, K., Briggs, J., Nolan, E., Bush, J., Håkansson, I. & Moloney, S. (2020), 'The making of a climate emergency response: Examining the attributes of climate emergency plans', *Urban Climate*, 33. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.uclim.2020.100666

de Moor, J. (2018), 'The "efficacy dilemma" of transnational climate activism: the case of COP21', *Environmental Politics*, 27(6): 1079–1100. https://doi.org/10.1080/09644016.2017.1410315

Delina, L.L. & Diesendorf, M. (2016), 'Strengthening the climate action movement: strategies from contemporary social action campaigns', *Interface*, 8(1): 117–141.

Di Gregorio, M., Fatorelli, L., Paavola, J., Locatelli, B., Pramova, E., Nurrochmat, D.R., … Kusumadewi, S. D. (2019), 'Multi-level governance and power in climate change policy networks', *Global Environmental Change*, 54: 64–77. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2018.10.003

Extinction Rebellion (2020), 'Our Demands – Extinction Rebellion UK'. Retrieved 25 November 2020, from https://extinctionrebellion.uk/the-truth/demands/

Falkner, R. (2016), 'The Paris Agreement and the new logic of international climate politics', *International Affairs*, 92(5): 1107–1125. https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2346.12708

Fallon, D.S.M. & Sullivan, C.A. (2014), 'Are We There Yet? NSW local governments' progress on climate change', *Australian Geographer*, 45(2): 221–238. https://doi.org/10.1080/00049182.2014.899030

Featherstone, D. (2013), 'The Contested Politics of Climate Change and the Crisis of Neo-liberalism', *ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographies*, 12(1): 44–64. Retrieved from https://www.acme-journal.org/index.php/acme/article/view/951

Fridays for Future (2020), 'Fridays For Future is an international climate movement active in most countries and our website offers information on who we are and what you can do'. Retrieved 1 December 2020, from https://fridaysforfuture.org/

Fünfgeld, H. & McEvoy, D. (2014), 'Frame Divergence in Climate Change Adaptation Policy: Insights from Australian Local Government Planning', *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy*, 32(4): 603–622. https://doi.org/10.1068/c1234

Galarraga, I., de Murieta, E.S. & França, J. (2017), 'Climate policy at the sub-national level', in *Trends in Climate Change Legislation* (Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd), 143-174.
https://doi.org/10.4337/9781786435781.00018

Geden, O. (2016), 'The Paris Agreement and the inherent inconsistency of climate policymaking', *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change*, 7(6): 790–797. https://doi.org/10.1002/wcc.427

Gills, B. & Morgan, J. (2020), 'Global Climate Emergency: after COP24, climate science, urgency, and the threat to humanity', *Globalizations*, 17(6): 885–902.
https://doi.org/10.1080/14747731.2019.1669915

Grafakos, S., Viero, G., Reckien, D., Trigg, K., Viguie, V., Sudmant, A., … Dawson, R. (2020), 'Integration of mitigation and adaptation in urban climate change action plans in Europe: A systematic assessment', *Renewable and Sustainable Energy Reviews*, 121: 109623.
https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rser.2019.109623

Gudde, P. (2020, August), 'Local authorities and climate action', *Transform*. Retrieved from https://transform.iema.net/article/local-authorities-and-climate-action?utm_source=Adestra&utm_medium=email&utm_term=

Gunningham, N. (2019), 'Averting Climate Catastrophe: Environmental Activism, Extinction Rebellion and coalitions of Influence', *King's Law Journal*, 30(2): 194–202. https://doi.org/10.1080/09615768.2019.1645424

Hadden, J. (2014), 'Explaining Variation in Transnational Climate Change Activism: The Role of Inter-Movement Spillover', *Global Environmental Politics*, 14(2): 7–25. https://doi.org/10.1162/GLEP_a_00225

Heidrich, O., Dawson, R.J., Reckien, D. & Walsh, C.L. (2013), 'Assessment of the climate preparedness of 30 urban areas in the UK', *Climatic Change*, 120(4): 771–784. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10584-013-0846-9

Homsy, G.C. (2018), 'Unlikely pioneers: creative climate change policymaking in smaller U.S. cities', *Journal of Environmental Studies and Sciences*, 8(2): 121–131. https://doi.org/10.1007/s13412-018-0483-8

Howarth, C., Bryant, P., Corner, A., Fankhauser, S., Gouldson, A., Whitmarsh, L. & Willis, R. (2020), 'Building a Social Mandate for Climate Action: Lessons from COVID-19', *Environmental and Resource Economics*, 76(4): 1107–1115. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10640-020-00446-9

Howarth, C., Lane, M. & Fankhauser, S. (2021). 'What next for local government climate emergency declarations? The gap between rhetoric and action', *Climatic Change* 167, 27 https://doi.org/10.1007/s10584-021-03147-4

IPCC (2018), *Global Warming of 1.5 °C: An IPCC special report on the impacts of global warming of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels and related global greenhouse gas emission pathways, in the context of strengthening the global response to the threat of climate change, sustainable development, and efforts to eradicate poverty*.

Jamison, A. (2010), 'Climate change knowledge and social movement theory', *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change*, 1(6): 811–823. https://doi.org/10.1002/wcc.88

Kates, R.W. & Wilbanks, T.J. (2003), 'Making the global local: Responding to climate change concerns from the ground up', *Environment*, 45(3): 12–23. https://doi.org/10.1080/00139150309604534

Kemp, L. (2017), 'A systems critique of the 2015 Paris agreement on climate', in *Pathways to a Sustainable Economy: Bridging the Gap between Paris Climate Change Commitments and Net Zero Emissions* (Springer International Publishing), 25-41. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-67702-6_3

Kenis, A. (2019), 'Post-politics contested: Why multiple voices on climate change do not equal politicisation', *Environment and Planning C: Politics and Space*, 37(5): 831–848. https://doi.org/10.1177/0263774X18807209

Kingdon, J. (1995), *Agendas, alternatives, and public policies*, 2nd edn (New York, Longman).

Kythreotis, A.P. (2010), 'Local Strategic Partnerships: A panacea for voluntary interest groups to promote local environmental sustainability? The UK context', *Sustainable Development*, 18(4): https://doi.org/10.1002/sd.487

Kythreotis, A.P. (2012a), 'Autonomous and pragmatic governance networks: Environmental leadership and strategies of local voluntary and community sector organizations in the United Kingdom -ORCA', in D.R. Gallagher (ed.), *Environmental Leadership: A Reference Handbook* (Thousand Oaks CA, Sage), 282-94. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781452218601.n31

Kythreotis, A.P. (2012b), 'Progress in global climate change politics? Reasserting national state territoriality in a "post-political" world', *Progress in Human Geography*, 36(4): 457–474. https://doi.org/10.1177/0309132511427961

Kythreotis, A.P. (2015), 'Carbon pledges: Alliances and ambitions', *Nature Climate Change*, 5(9). https://doi.org/10.1038/nclimate2764

Kythreotis, A.P., Jonas, A.E.G. & Howarth, C. (2020a), 'Locating climate adaptation in urban and regional studies', *Regional Studies*, 54(4): 576–588. https://doi.org/10.1080/00343404.2019.1678744

Kythreotis, A.P., Jonas, A.E.G., Mercer, T.G. & Marsden, T.K. (2020b), 'Rethinking urban adaptation as a scalar geopolitics of climate governance: climate policy in the devolved territories of the UK', *Territory, Politics, Governance*. https://doi.org/10.1080/21622671.2020.1837220

Kythreotis, A.P., Mantyka-Pringle, C., Mercer, T.G., Whitmarsh, L.E., Corner, A., Paavola, J., … Castree, N. (2019), 'Citizen social science for more integrative and effective climate action: A science-policy perspective', *Frontiers in Environmental Science*, 7(FEB). https://doi.org/10.3389/fenvs.2019.00010

Martiskainen, M., Axon, S., Sovacool, B.K., Sareen, S., Furszyfer Del Rio, D. & Axon, K. (2020), 'Contextualizing climate justice activism: Knowledge, emotions, motivations, and actions among climate strikers in six cities', *Global Environmental Change*, 65. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2020.102180

McAdam, D. (2017), 'Social Movement Theory and the Prospects for Climate Change Activism in the United States', *Annual Review of Political Science*, 20(1): 189–208. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-052615-025801

McGuirk, P., Dowling, R. & Bulkeley, H. (2014), 'Repositioning urban governments? Energy efficiency and Australia's changing climate and energy governance regimes', *Urban Studies*, 51(13): 2717–2734. https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098014533732

North, P. (2011), 'The Politics of Climate Activism in the UK: A Social Movement Analysis. *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, 43(7): 1581–1598. https://doi.org/10.1068/a43534

O'Brien, K. & Leichenko, R. (2019), 'Toward an integrative discourse on climate change', *Dialogues in Human Geography*, 9(1): 33–37. https://doi.org/10.1177/2043820619829933

O'Brien, K., Selboe, E. & Hayward, B.M. (2018), 'Exploring youth activism on climate change: Dutiful, disruptive, and dangerous dissent', *Ecology and Society*, 23(3): https://doi.org/10.5751/ES-10287-230342

Ogunbode, C.A., Doran, R. & Böhm, G. (2020), 'Exposure to the IPCC special report on 1.5 °C global warming is linked to perceived threat and increased concern about climate change', *Climatic Change*, 158(3–4): 361–375. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10584-019-02609-0

Pettit, J. (2004), 'Climate Justice: A New Social Movement for Atmospheric Rights', *IDS Bulletin*, 35(3): 102–106. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1759-5436.2004.tb00142.x

Piggot, G. (2018), 'The influence of social movements on policies that constrain fossil fuel supply', *Climate Policy*, 18(7): 942–954. https://doi.org/10.1080/14693062.2017.1394255

Rootes, C.A. (1999), 'The transformation of environmental activism: Activists, organizations and policy-making', *Innovation*, 12(2): 155–173. https://doi.org/10.1080/13511610.1999.9968595

Rootes, C.A. (2012), 'Climate change, environmental activism and community action in Britain', *Social Alternatives*, 31(1): 24–28. Retrieved from https://search.informit.com.au/documentSummary;dn=201206398;res=IELAPA;type=pdf

Schwartz, E. (2019), 'Autonomous Local Climate Change Policy: An Analysis of the Effect of Intergovernmental Relations Among Subnational Governments', *Review of Policy Research*, 36(1): 50–74. https://doi.org/10.1111/ropr.12320

Stuart, D., Gunderson, R. & Petersen, B. (2020), 'The climate crisis as a catalyst for emancipatory transformation: An examination of the possible', *International Sociology*, 35(4): 433–456. https://doi.org/10.1177/0268580920915067

UK Government & United Nations (2020), 'HOME - UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) at the SEC – Glasgow 2021'. Retrieved 25 November 2020, from https://www.ukcop26.org/

Wamsler, C., Schäpke, N., Fraude, C., Stasiak, D., Bruhn, T., Lawrence, M., … Mundaca, L. (2020), 'Enabling new mindsets and transformative skills for negotiating and activating climate action: Lessons from UNFCCC conferences of the parties', *Environmental Science and Policy*, 112, 227–235. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.envsci.2020.06.005

Ward, K., Jonas, A. E. G., Miller, B. & Wilson, D. (2018), *The Routledge Handbook on Spaces of Urban Politics*, 1st edn (London, Routledge). https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315712468-1

Weisser, F. & Müller-Mahn, D. (2017), 'No Place for the Political: Micro-Geographies of the Paris Climate Conference 2015', *Antipode*, 49(3): 802–820. https://doi.org/10.1111/anti.12290

World Economic Forum (2020), *The Global Risks Report*. Retrieved from http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Global_Risk_Report_2020.pdf

Wurzel, R.K.W., Moulton, J.F.G., Osthorst, W., Mederake, L., Deutz, P. & Jonas, A.E.G. (2019), 'Climate pioneership and leadership in structurally disadvantaged maritime port cities', *Environmental Politics*, 28(1): 146–166. https://doi.org/10.1080/09644016.2019.1522039

Notes on the authors

Dr Andrew P. Kythreotis is Senior Lecturer in Political Geography, in the School of Geography, University of Lincoln, a Lincoln Climate Commissioner, and a Senior Researcher at the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research, University of East Anglia.

Dr Candice Howarth is Senior Policy Fellow at the Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment, London School of Economics and Political Science. She is co-Director of the Place-based Climate Action Network (PCAN).

Dr Theresa G. Mercer is Senior Lecturer in Biogeography & Planetary Health, at the School of Geography, Lincoln Centre for Water and Planetary Health, Lincoln Centre for Ecological Justice, University of Lincoln.

Dr Hannah Awcock is University Teacher in Human Geography, in the School of Geosciences, University of Edinburgh.

Andrew E.G. Jonas is Professor of Human Geography, in the Department of Geography, Geology and Environment, University of Hull.

Extractivist violence and the COVID-19 conjuncture

Paula Serafini

Abstract: This article consists of a theoretical development of the concept of extractivist violence, which is proposed as useful for understanding a conjuncture that is not only characterised by the COVID-19 pandemic, but also by an urgent climate crisis resulting from violent extractivism. Extractivist violence is defined as the combination of different forms of violence exerted upon territories and upon racialised, gendered peoples (their bodies and their cultures) resulting from, and with the purpose of, perpetuating the extractivist model. It is engrained in the zones of extraction, but its logic extends beyond it. Taking Argentina as a starting point of enquiry, the theoretical proposal is followed by discussion of a series of events and phenomena unfolding during the COVID-19 crisis, with the aim of demonstrating how the perspective of extractivist violence is useful for arriving at a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the COVID-19 conjuncture. The article concludes with a consideration of the ethics of care as a counterpart to extractivist violence, and of the ways that care has underpinned a series of responses to COVID-19.

Keywords: Extractivism, violence, climate crisis, COVID-19, care.

Note on the author: Paula Serafini is Lecturer in Creative and Cultural Industries at the Department of Business and Society, Queen Mary University of London. Her work is in the field of cultural politics, and her research interests include extractivism, socioenvironmental movements, cultural production and cultural policy. She is the author of *Performance Action: The Politics of Art Activism* (Routledge 2018) and co-editor of *artWORK: Art, Labour and Activism* (Rowman & Littlefield International 2017) and *Arte y Ecología Política* (IIGG-CLACSO 2020).
https://orcid.org/0000–0002–4278–1832

Introduction

The climate crisis has often been described as a catastrophe, as having irreversible effects, and as an issue affecting the lives of millions across the world, including the lives of generations to come. But mainstream discourse on the climate crisis continues to lack proper contextualisation of its effects, and to highlight certain stages and aspects of human production chains (e.g. emissions) over others (e.g. extraction). As a result, particularly in Global North countries and/or urban centres that remain, for now, detached from the daily realities of the extractive industries, the climate crisis is often still equated to global warming and climate change, without fully considering the long-standing destructive and violent processes of extraction that lie behind. In order to address this persistent lack, I propose that one of the ways in which we can understand the current climate crisis is through the lens of violence, and specifically what I will refer to as extractivist violence.

In Latin America, extractivism goes back to the colonisation of the continent, and is currently embodied in the re-primarisation of economies of the last few decades, in the shape, for instance, of open-pit mining and large scale monocrop agriculture, expressions of the merger of political power and property. Such dynamics result in extreme forms of violence towards human populations and their environments; life is commodified, and security is only guaranteed to those who are proprietors (Segato 2016: 100). In response to this context, scholars and activists in the region have developed important theoretical and empirical work visibilising, analysing and theorising extractivism in Latin America and beyond. Particularly over the last decade and a half, such studies have demonstrated that the industries that are driving climate change, such as the fossil fuel industry—but also large scale farming—are not only responsible for global warming, but are also implicated in a series of violent processes that have devastating effects for local communities, ecosystems, and for the fabric of democracy (e.g. Svampa & Viale 2014; Merlinsky 2013; Machado Aráoz 2015).

In 2020, the COVID-19 crisis shed light on how environmental destruction and the disruption of ecosystems are exposing humans to new diseases, with the potential of fast-felt devastating effects for all human life. Also, it has brought to the forefront different forms of inequality and injustice (some historically less visible than others) that have led to the disproportionate death of Global South, working class and racialised communities (Sultana 2021). With this conjuncture in mind, this article consists of a theoretical development of the concept of extractivist violence, informed by years of empirical research in Argentina (e.g. Serafini 2018; 2019; 2020) and engagement with anti-extractivist movements, and building on the work of scholars of extractivism and relevant theories on the nature of violence. I develop the concept of extractivist

violence as a way of encapsulating the different forms of violence linked to the extractivist development paradigm.

Echoing the proposal by Navas *et al.* (2018), in this task I highlight the need for approaches to socioenvironmental violence that are multidimensional. In addition, I follow from Verónica Gago in her call for a *pluralización de las violencias* [pluralisation of violences], meaning an approach to the study of violence that takes the form of 'a political cartography that connects the threads that make different forms of violence reveal themselves as interrelated dynamics', so that we can 'denounce that their segmentation looks to lock us into isolated boxes' (Gago 2019: 67, my translation).

This theoretical discussion is followed by a discussion of the COVID-19 crisis in which I look at events and phenomena that unfolded during the pandemic in Argentina and beyond, in order to demonstrate how the perspective of extractivist violence is useful for arriving at a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the COVID-19 conjuncture—and the environmental and social challenges of our time more generally. This is followed by a consideration of the ethics of care as a counterpart to extractivist violence, and a discussion on how care has underpinned a series of responses to COVID-19.

On extractivist violence

Extractivism is a framework developed by Latin American scholars to describe and understand an economic model based on the intensive and extensive extraction of natural resources, mainly for export. Such model, which dominates the region, is rooted in its violent colonisation and has defined the construction of Latin American states; as a result, extractivism is not a solely economic phenomenon, but rather permeates the spheres of the political, the social and the cultural (Serafini 2020). Recent scholarly work looking beyond the specific context of Latin America and other regions heavily marked by long-established, colonial extractivism, have proposed that extractivism is the material and social manifestation of a logic of extraction, the underpinning logic of contemporary capitalism, which is found in economic activities and labour dynamics beyond the extractive industries and at a global scale (Mezzadra & Neilson 2017). Under this view, the logic of extraction has become the ultimate form of production of value, embodied most notably in the finance sector (Gago 2019: 106). While focusing mostly on Argentina, a site where extractivism describes a long-standing, colonial logic, in this paper I engage as well with the geographically expansive use of the term, in order to highlight the presence of colonial extractivist dynamics and geographies beyond regions historically conditioned by the

dominance of extractivism. This will allow me to shed light on connections between colonialism, the climate crisis and contemporary forms of violence such as those experienced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, and to demonstrate the usefulness of extractivism as a framework of analysis for social and environmental violence at a time of interconnected global crises.

In extractive societies and in the socioenvironmental conflicts that occur therein, violence can be 'structural, cultural and ecological' (Martinez-Alier & Roy 2019: 29), and it can manifest in different forms, from pollution to militarisation to epistemicide. In order to understand these different forms of violence and how they are interconnected, I propose the notion of extractivist violence, as the combination of different forms of violence exerted upon territories and upon racialised, gendered peoples (their bodies and their cultures) resulting from, and with the purpose of, perpetuating the extractivist model.

As described earlier, at the basis of extractivist violence in Latin America we find its colonial roots. In colonial states, as argues Fanon, violence becomes present from the first encounter between native and settler (Fanon 1963: 35). The conqueror and the native are constructed as inherently different, where natives are not considered subjects. The colonial power operates as the administrator of violence, and the colonies are ruled in absolute lawlessness as a result of 'the racial denial of any common bond between the conqueror and the native' (Mbembe 2003: 24). Writing on the colonial context, Mbembe builds on Foucault's notions of biopower and biopolitics and proposes the frame of necropolitics. He argues that 'the ultimate expression of sovereignty resides, to a large degree, in the power and the capacity to dictate who may live and who must die' (Mbembe 2003: 11). In this way, Mbembe differentiates between sovereignty as a pursuit of autonomy by the people, and sovereignty as 'the generalized instrumentalization of human existence and the material destruction of human bodies and populations' (ibid: 14). In this context, race functions to 'regulate the distribution of death' (ibid: 17). The colony is therefore a formation of terror that takes place outside of the law, and violence here operates in the name of civilisation (ibid: 24).

In addition to the racial hierarchies that were instrumental to the implementation of slavery and forced extractive labour, colonialism also imposed an extractive geography, which in Latin America facilitated the intensive extraction of metals to expand the fortunes of the 'old continent' and the colonial elites (Machado Aráoz 2015). After the independence struggles, the newly formed sovereign states imposed their own delimitations of space, and these were once again sustained through violence. In this case violence inflicted the rationality of capital accumulation, bureaucracy and the armed forces. Such rationality was imposed by suppressing all other forms of experiencing the territory, specifically those of indigenous peoples (Nouzeilles 1999:

37). At the same time, this period saw the consolidation of the enclaves, spaces where the territorial sovereignty of the state in relation to foreign entities is suspended or displaced by a foreign normative, and where the aim is 'to guarantee the appropriation and free transfer of capital gain to the capitals that set up therein' (Machado Aráoz 2015: 23, my translation), sustaining and formalising an unequal and violent geography of extraction that reproduces its colonial roots. These different geographical formations and manifestations of violence across time all gave place to dynamics of ecological destruction for accumulation, dynamics that are sustained to this day and exacerbated through the implementation of new technologies that have increased exponentially the magnitude of extractive projects. The sight of an open-pit mine (what many call 'megamining') is so unprecedented that it has inspired the work of many contemporary artists, as a paradigmatic image of ecological violence.[1]

In contemporary forms of extractivism, oil extraction, mining, and other large-scale extraction projects across the region are mostly backed by transnational companies whose interests are protected by the state through increased militarisation. As Da Costa and Da Costa put it, militarisation and corporate plunder are manifestations of different 'coexisting and converging colonialisms' (Da Costa & Da Costa 2019: 347). The problem that arises, however, is that 'corporate extraction under the threat of militarised state violence refuses the label of colonialism because it is done in the name of "public good" of citizens' development' (Ibid: 348). Indeed, the discourse of development functions as a legitimising actor of extractivist violence: both development and modernisation permeate politicians' rhetoric, on the right and on the left. In my main field of enquiry, which is media and cultural production, we can see how such discourses are mobilised through mainstream media narratives (e.g. celebratory articles framing investments in fracking as Argentina's 'salvation'), and through extractive companies' own acts of cultural sponsorship and greenwashing (Serafini 2020). But as post-development theorists have long argued, both the epistemological and ontological bases of development and the structures of the global development industry are based on colonial visions of the world, which perpetuate the extractive-oriented nature of many Global South economies with the aim of reproducing the current geopolitical dynamics that benefit the accumulation of resources in investing countries and for local elites (Escobar 2005, Gudynas 2011, Ulloa 2015). The development project –itself based on ecologically unsustainable goals in terms of its projections of unlimited growth—has not actually contributed to

---

[1] Some examples include Diana Dowek's work *Bajo la Alumbrera*, depicting an open-pit mine in Argentina, which received the 2015 Grand National Painting Award in that country, and the 2018 film installation *María Elena* by artist Melanie Smith, featuring drone images of an open-pit mine in the Atacama dessert.

increasing the wellbeing, stability and sovereignty of states –in terms of the management of resources and adequate provision of basic services, as is the case with the much sought 'energy sovereignty'—but to the contrary, has deepened Latin America's position as exporter of nature, and as such, its vulnerability to the fluctuation of commodity prices and its dependency on central economies (Svampa & Viale 2014). Recognising that coloniality is embedded in these dynamics and processes is crucial because it allows us to identify and 'challenge colonial violence wherever it is erased', be this because it is normalised or because it is read as something else, for instance as nationalism, when extractive development is presented as a national programme (Da Costa & Da Costa 2019: 349). For these reasons, it is necessary to think about extractivist violence as a complex, multi-layered phenomenon that is bound by structural and political factors, is embedded in cultural specificities, and develops according to local and global histories and politics.

Returning to the issue of the imposition of the extractive regime, we must consider not only the agents of enforcement—the police, the military, and in some regions also private security agents and paramilitary—but also the legal framework that is being defended by state forces, and which consequently endorses the use of physical violence. The role of the law in the management of violence is complex. The state holds the monopoly of violence, and militarism, argues Benjamin, 'is the compulsory universal use of violence as a means to the ends of the state.' (Benjamin 1986: 284) The police applies violence for legal ends, and in addition has 'the authority to decide these ends itself', within certain limits (Benjamin 1986: 286). Benjamin adds that:

> the law's interest in a monopoly of violence vis-à-vis individuals is not explained by the intention of preserving legal ends but, rather, by that of preserving the law itself; that violence when not in the hands of the law, threatens it not by the ends that it may pursue but by its mere existence outside the law. (Benjamin 1986: 281)

An important point here is that in the case of conflicts concerning indigenous land rights, what is at stake is not just the state's preservation of the law, but also the preservation of a Western paradigm and its accompanying ideas of development, resource use and modernisation, all of which are threatened by the understanding of territory put forward by indigenous ontologies and practices, which sometimes do not abide for instance by the principles of private property or the imperative of growth (Ulloa 2015). Significant also is that laws and treaties guaranteeing the rights of indigenous communities actually do exist and are recognised by constitutions across Latin America, yet they are too often not upheld (Svampa 2012: 30).

The intensive and extensive extraction of natural resources for profit can generate different forms of violence, from the violation of land rights to impacting people's health, the destruction of ecosystems and even the murder of environmental activists.

For this reason, it is necessary to create frameworks that contemplate violence on multiple scales and multiple manifestations. For instance, looking at conflicts surrounding oil production, Michael Watts proposes the term petro-violence as

> a way of thinking about the intersection of environment and violence: both biological violence, as it were, perpetrated upon the biophysical world, and the social violence, criminality and degeneracy associated with the genesis of petro-wealth and with its ecological destructiveness. (Watts 1999: 1)

Adopting a broader perspective that considers all forms of extractive activity, Eduardo Gudynas (2013) proposes the term *extrahección* as a way of naming the most violent forms of resource extraction, and the violations of rights that these activities generate. The extractivist form of resource extraction, argues Gudynas, is inherently violent, and it always entails the violation of rights. This can take different forms, and it includes (in)actions on behalf of the state such as the non-implementation of environmental legislation; lack of controls and the neglect of rights of consultation; and actions from corporations such as illegal processes, the use of banned substances and poor conditions for workers. To this we must add, of course, the violence exerted upon those who stand against extractivism, from the judicialisation of opponents to the criminalisation and repression of protesters, which goes in hand with forms of symbolic violence such as delegitimisation campaigns carried out by the media, and, in its most extreme form, the murder of land defenders (Gudynas 2013: 14). Gudynas's framework offers a valuable perspective because it invites us to think about the violence of extraction in gradual terms, to recognise the levels of violence in different types of activity, and to identify the legal, illegal, and alegal mechanisms through which corporations and states infringe rights.

While Gudynas offers a comprehensive and useful tool in the concept of *extrahección*, in order to understand extractivist violence we must engage more deeply with the gendered, racialised and classed nature of such violence, as well as its basis in coloniality, as developed earlier. Indeed, the United Nations has recently recognised that extractivism is linked to and exacerbates racial inequalities, including violence (United Nations Human Rights Council 2019). In facing this task, it is useful to consider contemporary empirical work on extractivism and violence that highlights such issues. For instance, Gutiérrez Ríos (2014) applies Gudynas's framework to the case of Argentina, particularly the case of the Vaca Muerta shale oil and gas deposit and the advance of fracking. He points to the violent repression that took place on 28 August 2013, when legislators in the province of Neuquén were signing off a deal between the partly state-owned oil company YPF and the transnational company Chevron, and different sectors of society took to the streets to protest the deal. The mobilisation was violently repressed, and the following day three houses belonging to

members of an indigenous Mapuche community, who were visible opponents to the deal, were burnt down (Gutiérrez Ríos 2014: 50). This case, adds Gutiérrez Ríos, not only saw physical violence against Mapuche people and other protesters, but also saw symbolic violence in the shape of the violation of collective rights. The communities' right to free and informed consent to extractive developments was violated, their juridical condition as indigenous peoples was unacknowledged, and the approval of the deal resulted in the invasion of their territory (Gutierrez Rios 2014: 51). As the extractive frontier expands and conflicts intensify, so does repression of activists and land defenders. Indeed, state and corporate violence have not only been a consequence of the advance of transnational extractive corporations, but also necessary factors for it (Gutierrez Rios 2014: 39), and such forms of violence are often underpinned by colonial racial hierarchies.

Part of the racialised exercise of violence, as argued by philosopher Elsa Dorlin (2019), is the way in which certain subjects are constructed as violent. This dynamic of violence is rooted in coloniality, and is supported through symbolic means. Western societies have an engrained and perverse way of dealing with 'the other' (Herrera Flores 2006: 22), yet there is a 'hegemonic cultivation of colonial unknowing that ensures that our recognition of colonialisms remains limited' (Da Costa & Da Costa 2019: 354). Returning to Fanon,

> [i]t is not enough for the settler to delimit physically, that is to say with the help of the army and the police force, the place of the native. As if to show the totalitarian character of colonial exploitation the settler paints the native as a sort of quintessence of evil. (Fanon 1963: 40)

This construction of the violent subject is visible for instance in the deligitimisation media campaigns against the Mapuche people in both Argentina and Chile, and in the use of anti-terrorist laws to persecute land defenders (Eissa 2018, Trentini & Pérez 2015).

Another distinctive element in extractivist violence is its gendered dimension. In her study of oil extraction in Nigeria, Turcotte proposes that 'understanding pet-ro-politics—or, for that matter, any politics—means recognizing that gender violence is part of a larger political economy of violence that creates the conditions fostering and facilitating petro-politics in the first place' (Turcotte 2011: 201). What this means for extractive violence, is that gender violence takes place within extractive economies (e.g. physical, symbolic, economic), but also, transnational structures within a colonial, patriarchal system *enable* different forms of extractive violence to occur, including but not limited to its gendered manifestations.

Important to consider when we speak of extractivist violence is also the different temporalities that this can take. We are used to thinking of violence as spectacular

acts, tied to specific moments and events. But several consequences of extractivism, from the many effects of pollution at the local level to climate change, unfold over long periods of time, sometimes in ways that are not clearly visible. This is what Rob Nixon has termed slow violence (2011), a form of violence whose danger lies in the fact that it is often not perceived as violence at all.

In addition to time, there are spatial dynamics that condition extraction, both at the local and global scale. For instance, while most extraction takes place outside of cities, in recent years scholars in Argentina have begun to employ the framework of extractivism to describe urban dynamics, and to connect different forms of violence, displacement and dispossession in urban settings to the dynamics of rural environments and extractive sites. Urban extractivism thus emerges as a framework that connects the logics of extraction, destruction and dispossession reproduced by the extractive industries with similar and interrelated processes occurring in urban areas (Vásquez Duplat 2017). The concept of 'urban extractivism seeks to provide a new explanatory matrix that can address the problems and inequalities in cities, not as isolated elements, but as the result of a specific and planned development model' (Centro de Estudios y Acción por la Igualdad & Fundación Rosa Luxemburgo 2017: 11, my translation). Examples of this include pollution and sanitation problems in urban settings, the demise of green spaces, the privatisation of public space and the displacement of working class communities as a result of gentrification processes.

Finally, a situated and nuanced understanding of extractivist violence in any one context requires considering the historical precedents of the locality, and how previous experiences of violence have shaped collective understandings and imaginaries. In my field research I found that in order to denounce violence, struggles against extractivism in Argentina often use terms like 'genocide', 'ecocide' and 'terricide'. In this context, the term genocide echoes both the mass murder of indigenous populations through colonialism, as well as the persecution and killing of 30,000 people during the last civic-military dictatorship (1976–1983). As such, it is a term that is an important part of the framework of the local human rights movement (Feierstein 2014), a movement that has supported various social struggles throughout the decades, and that is now also supporting mobilisations against the devastating effects of extractivism. The term 'ecocide' in turn has been used for denouncing extractivist violence from an eco-centric perspective, and finally, the term 'terricide', notably put forward by the collective Movimiento de Mujeres Indígenas por el Buen Vivir [Movement of Indigenous Women for Good Living], highlights the different forms of violence experienced by indigenous people and their territories, from pollution to racism and epistemicide. Such terms offer increasingly holistic conceptions of violence, which allow us to understand extractivism from a comprehensive, necropolitical perspective. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, as I will propose, necropolitics

have acquired new dimensions, as the links between life, death and environmental destruction are exposed in new ways.

The COVID-19 conjuncture

Conjunctural analysis, an approach famously developed by Stuart Hall building on Gramsci, is a way of seeking to understand the complex and multi-layered nature of a particular moment, made up of specific political, social and cultural forces. The conjuncture condenses 'forces, tendencies, forms of power, and relations of domination and subordination' (Clarke 2014: 115). Conjunctural analysis thus avoids 'seeing history as a series of repeats', and duels on contradictions and the different tempos of overlapping phenomena (Hall 1979: 14). Doing conjunctural analysis involves considering the multiple causes in a crisis, as well as the multiple possible outcomes. It stems from a 'commitment to understanding how social relations and underlying historical processes c[o]me together in particular contexts' (Featherstone 2017: 38), and it is a political task, as argued by Hall, because it aims to 'reveal the possibilities and resources for progressive action' (Ibid). The concept of conjuncture can be useful for attempting to understand the present moment, a moment characterised by multiple, overlapping crises and in which the COVID-19 pandemic and the unknowns it carries have led to unexpected and sometimes contradictory acting on behalf of governments. Rather than conducting an in-depth conjunctural analysis, in the following pages I focus on demonstrating how the notion of extractivist violence can contribute to the understanding of the COVID-19 conjuncture. I do this by considering a number of phenomena, dynamics and events, focusing first on Argentina as a site of enquiry and then looking beyond.

In the first place, the COVID-19 pandemic can be understood in terms of extractivist violence because it is the result of a changing relationship between humans and their environment and humans and other living beings, relationships that are increasingly based on violence and destruction. This includes deforestation, extraction, carbon-fuelled climate change, the trafficking of animals, and factory breeding of animals for human consumption. As a result, the risk of inter-species disease transmission has increased, and as the COVID-19 pandemic has taught us, humanity is not prepared to contain such new forms of ailments, which are propagated with greater ease in an era of global mobility (Merlinsky 2020). COVID-19 can thus be understood as the result of a relationship to other beings and ecosystems that is based on a logic of extraction.

COVID-19 has also brought to light certain urban dynamics of structural violence and inequality, dynamics that are connected, in different ways, to the roots of extractivism. Consider the following four examples.

In cities where there are shantytowns and informal settlements, as is the case of Buenos Aires, crowded housing has not only made lockdown more difficult for some people, but has also prevented the possibility of socially distancing, placing some at a higher risk of infection. Such living conditions are directly connected, in this context, to the migration from rural areas to urban centres resulting from the enclosure of land and the expansion of monocrop, large scale, GMO agriculture, one of the key sectors of the extractivist models of countries like Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay (Nodal 2013).

In cities across the world, the lack of access to green space has become an increasingly urgent matter in terms of wellbeing, and one that has been found to be classed and racialised (Boyce Kay 2020). The restrictions on movement imposed as a result of the pandemic highlighted dynamics of enclosure of green (and) public space that are common to many cities, and that are often related to the financialisation of housing. In the Latin American context, this phenomenon is understood as a form of urban extractivism, and considered in parallel to the financialisation of agriculture and the processes of enclosure and displacement it gives place to in rural areas (Vásquez Duplat 2017).

Also in Buenos Aires, access to running water has gone from a longstanding yet neglected issue affecting the poor and marginalised in urban centres and their peripheries, to a recognised matter of public health, as neighbourhoods with inexistent or inconsistent access to running water have become hot spots for the virus, which then circulated elsewhere. It is worth noting that the lack of water in popular neighbourhoods and settlements is not coincidental, as the planning and expansion of service infrastructure deliberately avoids such locations and prioritises the provision to wealthier areas (Merlinsky & Tobías 2020). This form of environmental and social inequality can thus be understood as a form of violence within the frame of urban extractivism. Not only this, but COVID-19 has also meant a change in the temporality of extractivist violence: while issues like frequent cuts to running water are often normalised despite their detrimental effects, the pandemic situation has accelerated and exacerbated the effects of such forms of violence and neglect on behalf of states.

And finally, in the UK, air pollution has been found to have an effect on how people respond to COVID-19, and data shows that black and other ethnic minority groups are being disproportionally affected by it (Soltan 2020). This racialised and classed differential exposure to pollution, which is in fact a longstanding matter

(Olufemi 2020, 126), demonstrates the imposition of colonial, extractivist geographies and necropolitics in different contexts (from former colonies to the belly of empire), and how environmental factors and consequently health are conditioned according to those geographies.[2]

Another way in which the perspective of extractivist violence contributes to our understanding of the conjuncture is through the specific way in which it activates the concept of necropolitics. Who lives and who dies during this pandemic is linked to political decisions and the logics and ideologies that underpin them, and to the economic and infrastructural capabilities of different countries, which are, for many countries in the Global South, conditioned by histories of extractive colonialism. It is also linked, as expected, to race and class, as pre-existent patterns of inequality were only exacerbated by the crisis context. Building on Foucault as does Mbembe, Agamben (1998) recovers the notion of bare life to describe the merely biological aspect of life, which is different to the good life afforded to citizens. This notion, he proposes, underpins how biopower operates, and as a result, which lives become justifiably disposable. In general terms the disproportionate death of the poor and of racialised minorities, which often intersect, has been linked—in different degrees according to context—to the kinds of employment people are able to access (often low-paid 'essential' or 'frontline' jobs which mean greater exposure) and their living conditions (e.g. access to water, possibility of distancing, and a pollution-free environment). In places like Brazil, furthermore, we have seen extreme examples of a necropolitics that rests on a neo-fascist and neoliberal logic, and reproduces a violence of inaction. In Brazil, where the recent prison population count is 773,151, making it the third largest in the world, multiple news sources reported that inmates were left to die after spikes of COVID-19 in prisons. The prison population in Brazil is majority Black and poor, as are those most affected by COVID-19 across the country. Given president Bolsonaro's history of racist remarks and his disdain for the wellbeing and basic rights of imprisoned people, his government's inaction has been interpreted not as a matter of unpreparedness, but as a deliberate disregard for those lives (Arantes 2020). Here, as well that the Amazon rainforest had recently been put up for sale to the highest bidder, with the argument that preserving the environments of indigenous peoples is an obstacle for progress (Phillips 2019). In Brazil, a country long-affected by extractivism but which is in addition currently under an administration that is openly neoliberal, racist, homophobic and violent, the commodification of eco-systems and territories and the lack of safeguarding of minoritised groups in the face

[2] This phenomenon was termed environmental racism by grassroots activists in the US in the 1980s, when different communities began to organise around the awareness of a classed and above all, racialised distribution of environmental hazards (Colsa Perez 2015).

of COVID-19 are part of one same accelerated and intensified logic of extraction that sees certain lives and whole ecosystems as disposable unless economically profitable, and that is executed through, and gives way to, multiple forms of violence. Indeed, as Gudynas has observed, necropolitics has become *functional* to the preservation of 'an economy that rests on the massive appropriation of natural resources for export' (Gudynas 2021, my translation).

As a final example, I look at a recent trade-related development in Argentina, in order to shed light on both the transnational dimension of extractivist violence, and to return to the matter of the direct link between extractivism and the generation of conditions that can give place to future pandemics. In March 2020, when COVID-19 hit the country, Argentina was already experiencing a deep economic crisis, and presented astonishing levels of foreign debt. The pandemic therefore found Argentina at a time of very limited funds, and in the midst of the restructuring of debt payment plans with the International Monetary Fund. As cases of COVID-19 continued to rise, in July it was announced that the government was negotiating an agreement with China for the production of pork meat, an agreement that foresaw investments of US\$ 3,800 million over four years, and which would involve Argentina breeding an extra 900,000 tons of pork meat during that period, effectively doubling its current production in a short period of time (Télam 2020). The deal entailed outsourcing China's local production to Argentina, and was framed by the Argentine government and by the local agribusiness sector as a hugely beneficial deal that would strengthen the sector by increasing value added; at the moment Argentina exports crops to China where they feed their own pigs for meat production. However, what was left out of the announcement was the environmental consequences of such a rapid and exponential increase in cattle breeding. While feeding crops are already being produced, at this scale the breeding of pigs would require over 500,000 extra hectares for soya and corn for feeding (Napoli & Di Paola 2020). To this we must add, of course, how the production of meat in itself is a known driver of climate change, and the ethical implications of mass, factory breeding. And second, there is the reason why China decided to withdraw from the mass breeding of pigs in the first place. In 2019 Chinese breeders had to put down 1 million pigs due to an outbreak of African swine fever. The proposed trade deal between Argentina and China can therefore be seen as a transfer of environmental risk, a form of extractivist necropolitics in which the possibility of uncontrollable disease, death –and sudden economic loss—is transferred to a country that is dependent on the exploitation of nature in order to generate revenue. Argentina's economic dependency means that in the eyes of the global market (and of its own political and economic elites) it is a risk worth taking. In other words, the economic dependency underpinning an extractivist development model makes the lives and livelihoods of Argentinians less valuable. In this case, the connection between

extractivism and public health is a key factor for considering the reasons behind China's decision to outsource production, as well as for evaluating the possible consequences for Argentina. The concept of an extractivist necropolitics is useful here for framing the relationships of power between countries, and the risks that Argentinians are expected to take under an uneven, extractivist global economy.

The announcement of the trade deal generated a lively public debate which included an open letter in July 2020, signed by several Argentine intellectuals and public figures opposing the deal, centring their argument on the potential dangers for public health of such a large-scale animal breeding project, among other concerns related to the forms of extractive violence discussed earlier.[3] In this way, the environmental dimension gained a central role in a public debate on a trade deal in an unprecedented manner, and this dimension was also clearly linked to matters of public health, opening in this way the door towards a new way of considering and debating economic decisions in the public and political spheres.

Care at the conjuncture

In the face of different manifestations of extractivist violence, frontline communities, grassroots groups and activist networks have for long been leading the resistance to extractivism across Latin America, advocating for ways of living that are more socially just and in balance with our ecosystems. Resistance to extractivist violence has pursued a plethora of avenues, from campaigning to legal challenges, protests, the creation of autonomous spaces, networks and economies, and the production of artistic work that envisions and enacts non-extractive ways of being. Resistance manifests as spectacular acts, but also in the form of daily acts of care.

Within the opposition and alternatives to extractivism, there are a range of coexisting perspectives, paradigms and practices, such as ecofeminism (Korol 2016), Sumak Kawsay and other indigenous world(view)s and social projects (Cuestas-Caza 2018), agroecology and the movement for food sovereignty (Goulet *et al.* 2014), and autonomous organising (Zibechi 2012). Two common elements among these different visions and practices are that they place care at the centre, and that they are based, whether implicitly or explicitly, on the notion of interdependence. By interdependence, I refer to the fact that the survival and thriving of individuals is dependent on others, and in turn, the survival of human communities is connected to and dependent

---

[3] See 'No queremos transformarnos en una factoría de cerdos para China, ni en una fábrica de nuevas pandemias' https://argentina.indymedia.org/2020/07/24/no-queremos-transformarnos-en-una-factoria-de-cerdos-para-china-ni-en-una-fabrica-de-nuevas-pandemias/

on the survival of wider ecosystems. Care is thus understood not only as a human-oriented task or form of labour, but rather in an expanded way that includes care for human and nonhuman ecosystems. This perspective is summed up in the words of Sergio, a member of the assembly against open-pit mining in the Argentine town of Andalgalá: 'the love of the land, of water, of ourselves, of each other. The struggle is for love.'[4]

The notions of care and interdependence have been developed in the work of Latin American indigenous women and ecofeminists (e.g. Gargallo Celentani 2014; LaDanta LasCanta 2017), in the practices of Latin American autonomous and territorial movements in the 1990s and 2000s (Sitrin 2010) and also in the writing of Global North feminist thinkers studying the ethics of care (e.g. Tronto 1995; Puig de la Bellacasa 2017). These ideas are therefore not new, but as a counterpart to the forms of extractivist violence that led to and were exacerbated by COVID-19, the pandemic gave place to a widespread realisation of how much we depend on other humans and on other elements of our ecosystem for our personal and communal wellbeing and survival (Fine & Tronto 2020, 2). This broadened realisation has not only had consequences in terms of how we understand the world we live in, but has also guided immediate responses to the virus at the personal and community levels. These responses can be understood as manifestations of an ethic of care (The Care Collective 2020).

For instance, at the local and grassroots level, we have seen the surge of mutual aid responses around the world, often fostered by feminist organisations (Sultana 2021: 451) in ways that prefigure societies based on closer social bonds and a more present understanding of interdependence (Sitrin & Colectiva Sembrar 2020), where care is seen as an element of the social commons (Hardt & Negri 2020: 82). The delivery of food and medicine to the elderly and the vulnerable, the collection and distribution of groceries for those who were suddenly found without an income, and the organised provision of emotional support to those affected by isolation are just some of the many expressions of care that looked to address the most immediate problems caused by the COVID-19 crisis at a community level. Important to note is that in some parts of the world, as is in the UK, where I am currently writing from, we might argue that many of the problems that emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic are related to pre-pandemic forms of living, structures and attitudes, which include high levels of isolation, insufficient small-scale, local food production for subsistence, and an underlying and now hyper-enhanced crisis of the care sector (The Care Collective 2020),

[4] Personal interview with Sergio, 29 March 2018.

issues resulting from the composition of the global economy as well as the local embeddedness of neoliberalism.

With regards to activist and intellectual responses, May 2020 saw the publication of a collaborative document titled *Hacia un Gran Pacto Ecosocial y Económico en Argentina* [Towards a great ecosocial and economic pact in Argentina],[5] and soon after the *Pacto Ecosocial del Sur* [Ecosocial pact of the South].[6] These proposals are comparable to other recent initiatives such as the Green New Deal in the United States, but emerge from the Latin American context, and respond not only to the crises of inequality and environmental destruction, but also to the challenges and opportunities posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The document for a great ecosocial and economic pact in Argentina states that 'what awaits is not only other pandemics, but the multiplication of diseases linked to ecological degradation and the worsening of the climate crisis',[7] in this way pointing to the links between the violence of extractivism on territories and the emergence of viruses like COVID-19. At the same time, these pacts view the current conjuncture as an opportunity to rethink the organisation of society, proposing new models of production and governance based on notions of interdependence and care that 'connect redistributive, gender, ethnic and environmental justice.'[8]

Beyond the work of grassroots groups and activist and intellectual networks, under the current system it is of course the responsibility of governments and state institutions to care for the population at a time of crisis. In reference to this, Fine and Tronto propose that '[t]he strengths of successful responses to the pandemic and the failings of other strategies can all be traced back to how care, understood in this broad way, has been enabled, supported, managed and matched to needs' (Fine & Tronto 2020: 2) – without minimising, I would add, the financial possibilities of different states. It is important, therefore, that we consider care as a political act, which not only responds to the effects of the virus on the human body, but to the acts of extractivist violence that led us here, and to the structural inequalities that define the necropolitics of the conjuncture.

In Argentina, the context of the pandemic saw advances in policy on the economy of care, a sector that experienced a rapid, increased visibility during the period of isolation, and that as a result brought to the forefront long-standing yet invisibilised debates on the nature of care labour. In July 2020, the Inter-ministerial Table of Politics of Care, coordinated by the National Ministry of Women, Gender and

---

[5] See https://pactoecosocialyeconomico.blogspot.com/2020/05/
[6] See https://pactoecosocialdelsur.com/
[7] See https://pactoecosocialyeconomico.blogspot.com/2020/05/ , my translation.
[8] See https://pactoecosocialdelsur.com/#1592362596334–8e141cec–613c

Diversity, presented its first document, titled 'Let's Talk about Care'. The report defines the economy of care and highlights the negative impact that the unequal distribution and organisation of care has on the struggle for gender equity (Risso 2020). The fact that at the same time the government was negotiating the trade deal for pig farming with China, however, points to the need for an expanded and transversal understanding of care that includes caring for communities and ecosystems through actions that are sustainable, non-destructive, and based on the notion of interdependence.

Returning to the matter of interdependence, we can say that COVID-19 has brought to the forefront certain ontological questions concerning our understanding of nature, of humanity, and consequently, the location of agency in care. Not long before the pandemic, Puig de la Bellacasa had asked:

> What does caring mean when we go about thinking and living interdependently with beings other than human, in 'more than human' worlds? Can we think of care as an obligation that traverses the nature/culture bifurcation without simply reinstating the binaries and moralism of anthropocentric ethics? How can engaging with care help us to think of ethical 'obligations' in human-decentered cosmologies? (Puig de la Bellacasa 2017: 13)

In other words, what Puig de la Bellacasa, among others, had already proposed, was that we desist to understand care as an exclusively human activity, and instead acknowledge that we are immersed in relations of care with other non-human actors. Such ontological questions bring to mind Andean views on the agency of different elements of ecosystems, what Marisol de la Cadena has termed 'Earth Beings', and include entities such as mountains (de la Cadena 2015). Perhaps the unexpected shift that COVID-19 has generated in certain public debates and understandings of our place in the world –albeit if not generalised—is also an opportunity to go deeper into these questions and to push the public debate further, so that it is not only about recognising that the destruction of ecosystems has led to our current situation, but also, that hegemonic conceptions of nature and of humans' place in the world is why and how this happened in the first place.

Conclusion

The extractive frontier is expanding, and as it expands, we can witness an increase in territorial conflicts, in environmental degradation, and in violence exerted against territories, against women, against indigenous peoples and other racialised subjects, against those who are deemed 'unproductive', and against those who dare say 'no' to

the extractivist model. In the hegemonic narrative, extraction is the road to development and modernisation, and any opposition to it must be repressed, be that through physical violence, or through symbolic violence in the form deligitimisation and the refusal of rights. This violence is part of the colonial condition that characterises many Latin American and other Global South states, one that is also defined by engrained racism and an understanding of territory as land to be conquered and utilised as economic resource. But the colonial extractivist logic, as I have argued, is not confined to the colonised territories, and it is easy to identify dynamics of colonial, extractive violence beyond those contours.

In this article, I proposed the perspective of extractive violence as a lens for further understanding the causes of the COVID-19 crisis, the way it unfolded, and some of the specific violent dynamics it exposed, reproduced, and exacerbated. Specifically, I argued that extractivist violence has its roots in colonialism, that it is inflicted on humans, non-human beings and ecosystems, that it is structural and manifests as both physical and symbolic, and that it is inherently gendered and racialised. Further, I demonstrated how the notion of extractivist violence can help us understand the connections between environmental violence and health and the kinds of inequalities that have left certain groups more exposed to COVID-19. I also showed how the notion of extractivist violence can contribute to elaborating a necropolitical perspective that is intersectional and ecological. In other words, the perspective of extractivist violence highlights the violent origins of the pandemic, and the ways in which this violence is intrinsic to longstanding social and economic models based on a logic of extraction.

In addition, I examined the notion of care as a counterpart, and considered how care underpinned immediate responses to the COVID-19 crisis. I argued that in some cases responses can be understood as adhering to an ethics of care based on a heightened awareness of interdependence, and that this awareness is in line with the kind of perspectives and responses elaborated by frontline communities and scholars in the face of extractivist violence.

Since the early stages of the pandemic, we have seen multiple attempts to understand the origins, dynamics and consequences of COVID-19. During the time since COVID-19 first appeared, I found myself writing a number of pieces on the matter, each time adopting a slightly different perspective. Why the need to keep tackling the same subject? In this case, why adopting the lens of extractivist violence to understand the COVID-19 conjuncture? The answer I offer, is that it is about putting forward perspectives that allow us to better identify certain connections between processes, even if some of those processes have been discussed before. It is about the power of the story, and about iteration with difference. Donna Haraway eloquently expresses this idea in the conclusion to a chapter that relates the use of oestrogen with

medical purposes for animals and humans with multispecies responsibility and environmental matters:

> It is no longer news that corporations, farms, clinics, labs, homes, sciences, technologies, and multispecies lives are entangled in multiscalar, multitemporal, multimaterial worlding; but the details matter. The details link actual beings to actual response-abilities. Each time a story helps me remember what I thought I knew, or introduces me to new knowledge, a muscle critical for caring about flourishing gets some aerobic exercise. Such exercise enhances collective thinking and movement too. (Haraway 2016: 115–116)

I hope that the reflections and analytical tools offered here contribute to strengthening important conceptual links between extractivism and matters of social justice and public health, and to the understanding of the unprecedented crisis we are currently facing. In the words of Stuart Hall: 'Why analyse the current conjuncture? Because I want to know what to do about it!' (Hall 2004).

References

Agamben, G. (1998), *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. D. Heller-Roazen (Redwood City, Stanford University Press).

Arantes, M. (2020), 'COVID-19 in Brazilian prisons: Pandemic or a necropolitical project?', *Democary Now*, 7 July. https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/democraciaabierta/COVID-19-brazilian-prison-pandemic-or-necropolitics/

Boyce Kay, J. (2020), '"Stay the fuck at home!": feminism, family and the private home in a time of coronavirus', *Feminist Media Studies*. https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2020.1765293

Benjamin, W. (1986 edn) *Critique of Violence, in Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*, trans. E. Jephcott (New York, Schocken Books).

de la Cadena, M. (2015), *Earth Beings: Ecologies of Practice across Andean Worlds* (Durham NC, Duke University Press). https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv11smtkx

Centro de Estudios y Acción por la Igualdad & Fundación Rosa Luxemburgo (2017), 'Presentación', in A.M. Vásquez Duplat (ed.), *Extractivismo urbano. Debates para una construcción colectiva de las ciudades* (Buenos Aires, Fundación Rosa Luxemburgo; Ceapi; El Colectivo), 9–11.

Clarke, J. (2014), 'Conjunctures, crises, and cultures valuing Stuart Hall', *Focaal*, 70: 113–22. https://doi.org/10.3167/fcl.2014.700109

Cuestas-Caza, J. (2018), 'Sumak Kawsay is not Buen Vivir', *Alternaturas*, http://www.alternautas.net/blog/2018/3/2/sumak-kawsay-is-not-buen-vivir

Da Costa, D. & Da Costa, A.E. (2019), 'Introduction: Cultural Production under multiple colonialisms', *Cultural Studies*, 33(3): 343–69. https://doi.org/10.1080/09502386.2019.1590436

Escobar, A. (2005), 'El "postdesarrollo" como concepto y práctica social', in D. Mato (ed.), *Políticas de economía, ambiente y sociedad en tiempos de globalización* (Caracas, Facultad de Ciencias Económicas y Sociales, Universidad Central de Venezuela), 17–31.

Eissa, S.G. (2018), 'Construyendo al enemigo: la securitización del reclamo mapuche (agosto-diciembre de 2017)', *Perspectivas Revista de Ciencias Sociales*, 3(5): 35–61.
https://doi.org/10.35305/prcs.v0i5.214

Fanon, F. (1991 [1963]), *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York, Grove Weidenfeld).

Featherstone, D. (2017), 'Stuart Hall and our current conjuncture', *IPPR Progressive Review*, 24(1): 36–44. https://doi.org/10.1111/newe.12035

Feierstein, D. (2014), *Genocide as Social Practice: Reorganizing Society under the Nazis and Argentina's Military Juntas* (New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press).
https://doi.org/10.26530/OAPEN_625248

Fine, M. and Tronto, J. (2020), 'Care goes viral: care theory and research confront the global COVID-19 pandemic', *International Journal of Care and Caring*, 4(3): 301–9.
https://doi.org/10.1332/239788220X15924188322978

Gago, V. (2019), *La potencia feminista. O el deseo de cambiarlo todo* (Madrid, Traficantes de Sueños).

Gargallo Celentani, F. (2014), *Feminismos desde Abya Yala. Ideas y proposiciones de las mujeres de 607 pueblos en nuestra América* (Mexico DF, Editorial Corte y Confección).

Goulet, F., Magda, D., Girard, N. & Hernández, V. (2014), 'La agroecología y la cuestión de la convivencia de modelos de desarrollo agrícola', in V. Hernández, F. Goulet, D. Magda & N. Girard (eds), *La agroecología en Argentina y en Francia: miradas cruzadas* (Buenos Aires, INTA), 141–7.

Gudynas, E. (2011), 'Más allá del nuevo extractivismo: Transiciones sostenibles y alternativas al desarrollo', in F. Wanderley (ed.), *El desarrollo en cuestión. Reflexiones desde América Latina* (La Paz, Oxfam & CIDES UMSA), 279–410.

Gudynas, E. (2013), 'Extracciones, Extractivismo y Extrahecciones. Un marco conceptual sobre la apropiación de recursos naturales', *Observatorio del Desarrollo*, 18: 1–18.

Gudynas, E. (2021), 'Necropolítica: la política de la muerte en tiempos de pandemia', *SERVINDI*, 16 April. http://www.servindi.org/actualidad-opinion/16/04/2021/necropolitica-la-politica-de-la-muerte-en-tiempos-de-pandemia

Gutierrez Rios, F. (2014), 'Acuerdo YPF-Chevron: Violencia física y simbólica en el contexto extractivista petrolero en la Argentina', *Anuari del Conflicte Social*, 4: 37–57.

Hall, S. (1979), 'The Great Moving Right Show', *Marxism Today*, January: 14–20.

Hall, S. (2004), 'Through the prism of an intellectual life', paper presented at the Caribbean Reasonings Conference- Culture, Politics, Race and Diaspora: The Thought of Stuart Hall, University of the West Indies. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-soRbC6BbJ8

Haraway, D. (2016), *Staying with the Trouble. Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham NC, Duke University Press). https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv11cw25q

Hardt, M. & Negri, A. (2020), 'Empire twenty years on', *New Left Review*, 120: 67–92.

Herrera Flores, J. (2006), 'Colonialismo y violencia. Bases para una reflexion pos-colonial desde los derechos humanos', *Revista Crítica de Ciências Sociais*, 75: 21–40. https://doi.org/10.4000/rccs.897

Korol, C. (2016), *Somos tierra, semilla, rebeldía: Mujeres, tierra y territorios en América Latina* (GRAIN, Acción por la Biodiversidad & América Libre).

LaDanta LasCanta (2017), 'De la teología al antiextractivismo: ecofeminismos en Abya Yala', *Ecología Política*, 54: 35–41.

Martinez-Alier, J. & Roy, B. (2019), 'Editorial: Some Insights on the Role of Violence. Ecology, Economy and Society', *INSEE Journal*, 2(1): 27–30. https://doi.org/10.37773/ees.v2i1.53

Mbembe, A. (2003), 'Necropolitics', *Public Culture*, 15(1): 11–40.
    https://doi.org/10.1215/08992363–15–1–11

Merlinsky, G. (2013), *Política, derechos y justicia ambiental. El Conflicto del Riachuelo* (Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica).

Merlinsky, G. (2020) 'La pandemia como crisis ecopolítica. Desafíos de investigación', *CLACSO*, https://www.clacso.org/en/la-pandemia-como-crisis-ecopolitica-desafios-de-investigacion/

Merlinsky, G. & Tobías, M. (2020), 'Pandemia, desigualdades ambientales y acceso al agua en el Área Metropolitana de Buenos Aires', *Revista Sociedad*, 41: 46–8.

Napoli, A. & Di Paola, M.M. (2020), 'Cerdos para China: más preguntas que certezas', *Infobae*, https://www.infobae.com/opinion/2020/08/14/cerdos-para-china-mas-preguntas-que-certezas/

Navas, G., Mingoría, S. & Aguilar-Gonzáles, B. (2018), 'Violence in environmental conflicts: the need for a multidimensional approach', *Sustainability Science*, 13: 649–60.
    https://doi.org/10.1007/s11625–018–0551–8

Nixon, R. (2011), *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press). https://doi.org/10.4159/harvard.9780674061194

Nodal (2013), *Entre Argentina, Bolivia, Brasil, Paraguay y Uruguay se sembraron 50 millones de hectáreas con soja transgénica en 2012*. https://www.nodal.am/2013/09/argentina-bolivia-brasil-paraguay-y-uruguay-sembraron–50-millones-de-hectareas-con-soja-transgenica-en–2012/

Nouzeilles, G. (1999), 'Patagonia as borderland: Nature, culture, and the idea of the state', *Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies*, 8(1): 35–48. https://doi.org/10.1080/13569329909361947

Olufemi, L. (2020), *Feminism, Interrupted: Disrupting Power* (London, Pluto).
    https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvxrpzvs

Phillips, D. (2019) 'Bolsonaro declares 'the Amazon is ours' and calls deforestation data 'lies'', *The Guardian*, 19 July. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jul/19/jair-bolsonaro-brazil-amazon-rainforest-deforestation

Puig de la Bellacasa, M. (2017), *Matters of care: speculative ethics in more than human worlds* (Posthumanities, Minnesota, University of Minnesota Press).

Risso, N. (2020), **'**Informe del Ministerio de Mujeres, Género y Diversidad**.** Valorar la economía del cuidado', *Página12*, 27 July.
    https://www.pagina12.com.ar/281031-valorar-la-economia-del-cuidado

Segato, R.L. (2016), *La Guerra contra las Mujeres* (Madrid, Traficantes de Sueños).

Serafini, P. (2018), 'Mediating Identities: Community Arts, Media, and Collective Identity in the Frontline Resistance to Fracking', *Journal of Cultural Analysis and Social Change*, 3(2): 11.
    https://doi.org/10.20897/jcasc/3992

Serafini, P. (2019), 'Community Radio as a Space of Care: An Ecofeminist Perspective on Media Production in Environmental Conflicts', *International Journal of Communication*, 13: 1–18.

Serafini, P. (2020), 'Cultural Production beyond Extraction? A First Approach to Extractivism and the Cultural and Creative Industries in Argentina', in K. Oakley & M. Banks (eds), *Cultural Industries and the Environmental Crisis: New Approaches for Policy* (Cham, Springer), 51–64.
    https://doi.org/10.1007/978–3–030–49384–4_5

Sitrin, M. (2010), 'Horizontalidad, autogestión y protagonismo en Argentina', *Historia Actual Online*, 21: 133–42.

Sitrin, M. & Colectiva Sembrar (2020), *Pandemic Solidarity: Mutual Aid during the COVID-19 Crisis* (London, Pluto). https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv12sdx5v

Soltan, M. *et al.* (2020), 'To what extent are social determinants of health, including household overcrowding, air pollution and housing quality deprivation, modulators of presentation, ITU admission and outcomes among patients with SARS-COV–2 infection in an urban catchment area in Birmingham, United Kingdom?', *BMC Public Health* (preprint).
    https://doi.org/10.21203/rs.3.rs–35617/v1

Sultana, F. (2021), 'Climate change, COVID-19, and the co-production of injustices: a feminist reading of overlapping crises', *Social & Cultural Geography*, 22(4): 447–60. https://doi.org/10.1080/14649365.2021.1910994

Svampa, M. (2012), 'Consenso de los *commodities*, giro ecoterritorial y pensamiento crítico en América Latina', *Revista del Observatorio Social de América Latina*, 32: Movimientos socioambientales en América Latina, 15–38.

Svampa, M. & Viale, E. (2014), *Maldesarrollo: La Argentina del extractivismo y el despojo* (Buenos Aires, Katz). https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvm7bcs8

Télam (2020), *El acuerdo con China para producir carne de cerdo prevé inversión de US$ 3.800 millones*. https://www.telam.com.ar/notas/202008/498399-el-acuerdo-con-china-para-producir-carne-de-cerdo-preve-inversion-de-us-3800-millones.html

The Care Collective (2020) 'COVID-19 pandemic: A Crisis of Care', *Verso Blog*. https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/4617-COVID-19-pandemic-a-crisis-of-care

Trentini, F. & Pérez, A. (2015), 'Formas de violencia hacia el pueblo mapuche en Argentina: Reflexiones a partir del caso de la comunidad Roberto Maliqueo', *Argumentos*, 28(78): 139–59.

Turcotte, H.M. (2011), 'Contextualizing Petro-Sexual Politics', *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*, 36(3): 200–220. https://doi.org/10.1177/0304375411418597

Tronto, J.C. (1995), 'Care as a Basis for Radical Political Judgments', *Hypatia*, 10(2): 141–149. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1527–2001.1995.tb01376.x

Ulloa, A. (2015), 'Environment and Development. Reflections from Latin America', in T. Perreault, G. Bridge & J. McCarthy (eds), *The Routledge Handbook of Political Ecology* (London & New York, Routledge), 320–331.

United Nations Human Rights Council (2019), *Global extractivism and racial equality. Report of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance* (A/HRC/41/54). https://undocs.org/A/HRC/41/54

Vásquez Duplat, A. M. (ed) (2017), *Extractivismo urbano. Debates para una construcción colectiva de las ciudades* (Buenos Aires, Fundación Rosa Luxemburgo; Ceapi; El Colectivo).

Watts, M. (1999), 'Petro-Violence: Some Thoughts on Community, Extraction, and Political Ecology', *Berkeley Workshop on Environmental Politics* (UC Berkeley). https://escholarship.org/uc/item/7zh116zd

Zibechi, R. (2012), *Territories in Resistance: A Cartography of Latin American Social Movements*, translated by Ramor Ryan (Oakland, AK Press).

Climate activism: afterword

Marilyn Strathern

Abstract: A short 'Afterword' commenting on the multidisciplinary nature of the articles, and their appropriateness to the multi-purposed orientations to be found in climate change activism. It touches on the importance of diverse frames of thought: one crisis is also many crises.

Keywords: Multidisciplinary, multi-purpose orientations, climate change, activism, crisis.

Note on the author: Dame Marilyn Strathern is Emeritus Professor of Social Anthropology at Cambridge. Her research career began in Papua New Guinea, with work on law, kinship and gender relations. Subsequently involved in anthropological approaches to assisted conception, intellectual property and audit cultures, she is most well-known for *The gender of the gift* (1988). A recent book is *Relations: an anthropological account* (2020). She declares an interest as an XR supporter. She was elected a Fellow of the British Academy in 1987.

A notable feature of climate activism, at least as it has unfolded over the last two or three years, is how multi-purposed it is. Activists find themselves envisaging new forms of governance, and in the idea of citizens' assemblies new modes of decision-making, not just in relation to specific climate targets but by taking on general issues of equality, justice and the nature of society. There are many obvious reasons: the crisis is not containable in the singular – its ramifications are affecting or will affect every corner of people's lives; demands for action accompany visions of remedies, and these are required on innumerable fronts; above all is the acceptance that human activity is at the heart of it and somehow human beings must change their priorities in how they conduct themselves. Otherwise put, if the single object is the planet's future as a habitable future for all kinds of life, then that encompasses everything, including all kinds of human inventions, cultural, ethical, technological and economic.

It is good to see the British Academy focusing on activism as a phenomenon, and as a subject for research and funding. It is particularly germane to be reminded of activist contributions in the crucial year of COP26, given that its deliberations are likely to be diminished because of global Covid restrictions as far as adjunct meetings and popular participation by NGOs and informal political bodies are concerned. Action in respect of climate change needs advocates of all stripes. I take the four articles presented here for the very interesting way in which they highlight different facets of a phenomenon that takes its many shapes from what is also a common cause.

Climate activism would not exist if there were not certain pre-existing conditions, among them if it could not tap into a reservoir of responsiveness towards and concern over what people understand as their environment. This is what is described in the first article. Artists' engagement with matters that are otherwise supposed to be the province of policy or science or medicine are so often tacked on to the end of other of other modes of argument, it is distinct pleasure to begin with *Ed Wall's interview with the American landscape sculptor Mary Miss* (Wall 2021). Art is too restrictive a term for her encompassing 'project of projects', *City as Living Laboratory*, which in the spirit of activism aims to connect environmental issues, as they are experienced within communities, with the climate crisis, urban equity and health. Climate change has a locus in cities as much as anywhere else, and has been in the sights of urban planners and architects for many years. Some of what was being put in place over those years emerges from the way Mary Miss talks of the details of her earlier environmental visions in relation to diverse schemes for local development. She speaks of the possibility of integrating projects across a city, and thus bringing to people's attention – and thereby connecting them to – the integration of natural systems and infrastructures. We shall come back to infrastructure. The point is the stimulating and nurturing of certain sensibilities that would be open (in her words) to alternative development scenarios.

When sensibilities are open to the gross and ugly implications of climate change, the scaling up can also be terrifying. *Lisa Jones and her colleagues* are eloquent on the vision of a fairer and greener society that many in the UK envisaged after COVID–19, and the collective grief it generated (Jones *et al.* 2021). In fact they argue that its intervention may have been a wake-up call for people to realise how much is lost, and will be lost, through climate change. Turning a generic grief for the earth's degradation into personal expressions of grief is at once a motive for taking action, and (evident especially in the organisation of pre-Covid Extinction Rebellion [XR]) must be channelled to avoid being overwhelming. In making a connection between 'collective' demands for climate justice (including for the Global South) and 'individual' orientations towards actions that will make a difference, the authors argue (after McAdam) that the heightening of emotions plays a crucial role. Here they draw on the diverse stages of grief as they have been analysed for the process of mourning, from negative to positive stages culminating in the person suffering loss being ready to take action for change. Over a multitude of issues – and global situations – this wide-ranging paper offers a point-by-point commentary of activists' emotional journeys in a context where the majority of the Global North is by and large inactive.

Although an individual may indeed move between emotional states, a society will consist of people in diverse stages all at once. What the previous paper calls 'social action', mobilising institutions and communities, is in effect the arena taken up by *Andrew Kythreotis and his co-authors* (Kythreotis *et al.* 2021). They specifically argue that, as a civil movement, climate activism needs to be manifest as a plurality, that is, carried forward through manifold bodies and types of social agency. It is in variously holding existing forms of government and institutionalised interests to account that they will be playing a governance role. That said, there is a particular tension between the formal policy processes of international negotiation and urban scale activism that puts pressure on local – and national – government, especially city councils, which is the present focus of enquiry. (Urban councils have been readier that rural ones to declare a climate emergency.) While here the civil actors are among themselves diverse and entertain diverse visions, and while the authors detail the relatively long history of environmental protest and politics, it is interesting that the same examples of recent climate activism keep reappearing across the different UK interviews, notably the Youth Strike for Climate and XR. These specific movements have provided, the authors suggest, a vocal platform for accountability, and contribute to evolving forms – changing geographies – of citizen-state relations. Indeed, they see a role for symbiosis here.

We return to what we might imagine as infrastructures in *Paula Serafini's* examination of underlying causes (Serafini 2021): she matches the singular concept (albeit pointing to 'multiple outcomes') of climate crisis with a singular diagnostic

(albeit pointing to 'multiple causes'), the violent extractivism that lies behind a phenomenon such as global warming. The intention is to focus on aspects of production that hasten the impact of environmental destruction. These are based on social and economic models for growth, resource deployment and land use, under the aegis of modernisation, common to thinking across the globe, even while many in the Global South have particularly suffered its manifestation as colonialism (after Mbembe). It is not just a matter of economics: extractive violence is deeply embedded in the many ways in which (we)people conceal it from (our)themselves. As an antidote Serafini dwells on resistance that mobilises the affect and practice of care, as it has emerged out of feminist theorising; drawn so to speak from the infrastructure of acknowledged human interdependency, its promise is sensitising people to a broad ethic of concern, and in human and other than human situations alike. English speakers take both caring about and caring for [someone / something] as signs of responsiveness. So we return also to sensibility as activism, as we do to several other of the themes that these papers have raised.

My reference to English-speaking picks up from the last paper the reminder that how we frame the issues participates in how we deal with them. Having access to diverse frames of thought is of course crucial to visualising what is seen as necessarily multi-purposed. In this vein, describing different movements in parallel to one another depending on whether they are focused on climate justice, social justice or racial justice, the second paper (Jones and colleagues) further touches on cross-cultural forms of learning and the particular situation – encompassing many situations of course – of what are generically called Indigenous peoples. With respect to such people, one wonders about registers of emotion and the forms that action take, as one wonders too about the basis of conceptual constructs. Here we might note that Serafini's several exemplifications come from Latin America, including from Indigenous sources there, and she records the conceptual work thereby generated: particular people and places comprised her initial locus for thinking about interdependency as well as formulating the very notion of extractive violence.

These articles are drawn from different disciplinary domains of work, research and reflection, and they offer no closure. But it is in a very positive sense that they have opened up questions about action and inaction in relation to what should be thought of simultaneously as one crisis and many crises. They have also enhanced appreciation of the role of those who take protest – after so many years ineffective years – into the realm of real-time irritation (creating inconvenience) and confrontation (civil disobedience).

References

Jones, L., Halstead, F., Parsons, K.J., Le, H., Bui, L.T.H., Hackney, C.R. & Parsons, D.R. (2021), '2020-Vision: understanding climate (*in*)action through the emotional lens of loss', *Journal of the British Academy*, 9(s5): 29–68. https://doi.org/10.5871/jba/009s5.029

Kythreotis, A., Howarth, C., Mercer, T.G., Awcock, H. & Jonas, A.E.G. (2021), '2020-Vision: understanding climate (*in*)action through the emotional lens of loss', *Journal of the British Academy*, 9(s5): 69–93. https://doi.org/10.5871/jba/009s5.069

Serafini, P. (2021), 'Extractivist violence and the COVID–19 conjuncture', *Journal of the British Academy*, 9(s5): 95–116. https://doi.org/10.5871/jba/009s5.095

Wall, E. (2021), 'Constellations versus hero: a conversation with Mary Miss', *Journal of the British Academy*, 9(s5): 7–28. https://doi.org/10.5871/jba/009s5.007