

The HOPEFUL REALIST Newsletter: *Looking at the World Today as if Facts Matter*

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Here we explore the latest facts, actions, and perspectives on the New Great Transformation of the Earth System. We apply the Hopeful Realism we all need to work through the greatest predicament in human history.

Latest News from the Hopeful Realist

Survey Results: Here are some of the preliminary results from our little survey on Face Book:

1. How serious is the problem of climate change today?

1	No Problem	1	0.3%
2	Minor Problem	3	0.8%
3	Neutral	6	1.7%
4	Serious Problem	62	17.5%
5	Global Disaster	282	79.7%
	Total	354	
	Average seriousness:	4.8	or, most likely a global disaster

Ninety-seven percent felt that climate change is either a serious problem or a global disaster. That is a hopeful sign. However, this resulted from the fact that our respondents were mostly people who answered our questions because they think that climate change is a serious problem. Surveys of the U.S. population suggest that only around 60% of Americans recognize the seriousness of the climate emergency.

2. Who or what is most responsible for the climate change

Natural processes.	5	1.4%
Modern economies that burn fossil fuels.	290	81.5%
People who waste energy and material.	20	5.6%
Overpopulation.	41	11.5%
None of the above. It is a hoax.	0	0.0%
	Total	356

Again, people concerned about climate change usually recognize that modern economies burning fossil fuels are the primary cause of the problem. Overpopulation is not nearly as important as are the particular populations burning all those petroleum products—those of the industrialized nations of the global north. Our respondents recognized that it is far more complicated than just individual behavior.

Only people in fossil-fueled economies waste large amounts of energy and materials; the economy enables and encourages them to do so.

3. This past decade was the warmest on Record. Do you agree that human activities are a major contributing factor?

Yes	349	97.8%
Undecided	3	0.8%
No	5	1.4%
Total:	357	

Our respondents overwhelmingly acknowledged the human origin of the recent/current rapidly accelerating heating of the planet. Again, not much more than half of the general population do. Why? Mostly a combination of anti-science propaganda, fear of the unknown, and feelings of helplessness.

That is why I invited readers of this newsletter to offer ideas about what *societal* changes are needed to curb emissions and build an ecologically viable future for humanity.

More survey results will appear in the next issue.

You can still download my eBook *HOPEFUL REALISM: A Climate Manifesto*. It is **FREE** via Kindle Unlimited. Or, you could pay the \$2.99 price. Please read, [review and rate](#) it by clicking the button on the lower left of its Amazon page below “Customer Reviews,” and say a few words about what you think about the issues it raises. If you don’t do Kindle, email me and I will send you a .pdf version directly.

Note: You can find past issues of The HOPEFUL REALIST Newsletter archived on my web site:

<https://thehopefulrealist.com/hopeful-realist-newsletter/>

LOOK UP! A Bi-weekly Featured Commentary

The New Occasional Feature: The idea was to invite readers to submit their ideas on specific topics for the ***LOOK UP! Biweekly Featured Commentary***. The first topic I suggested was perhaps the most challenging of all: *What kind of social change is necessary to bring carbon emissions down to zero (not the ‘net-zero’ of the green-washers, but actual zero)?* It wasn’t a trick question, but the essays I received, though thoughtful, missed the point. Here is the winning essay, the shortest of all, which nevertheless captured the essence of them all.

The winning essay simply said: “Live simply.” [Since I have not obtained her permission, I will not mention the author’s name. If it’s okay, author, please let me know.] Of course, she is right, as were the more extensive essays that listed many acts and changes in our industrial-consumer behavior and culture.

However, the essence of the problem is not individual behavior even though it is involved. The core question for climate action is HOW to stop the still growing carbon emissions without throwing society into chaos and collapse. (Continued climate chaos will soon enough do that if we fail to take massive collective action.) To stop burning fossil fuels is to stop the operation of most societal institutions—the organizations in which most of us work and earn our livings. That means to me that to actually do what is needed technically to stop most carbon emissions, we must reorganize, transform, or eliminate many social institutions themselves and begin to perform necessary functions using human and animal power.

That in itself will be a *New Great Transformation of society*, if we are able to pull it off. And that is an open question, but first we must recognize what we are really up against.

Meanwhile, the global climate/ecological emergency accelerates. The corporate/federal cooperation in sustaining the neoliberal model of endless economic growth despite all the science having proven the catastrophic limits to further growth, continues with ‘business as usual’ under the guise of ‘green growth.’ Nevertheless, for survival’s sake, humanity must somehow take extreme action to transform the global economy by eliminating fossil fuel as its energy source.

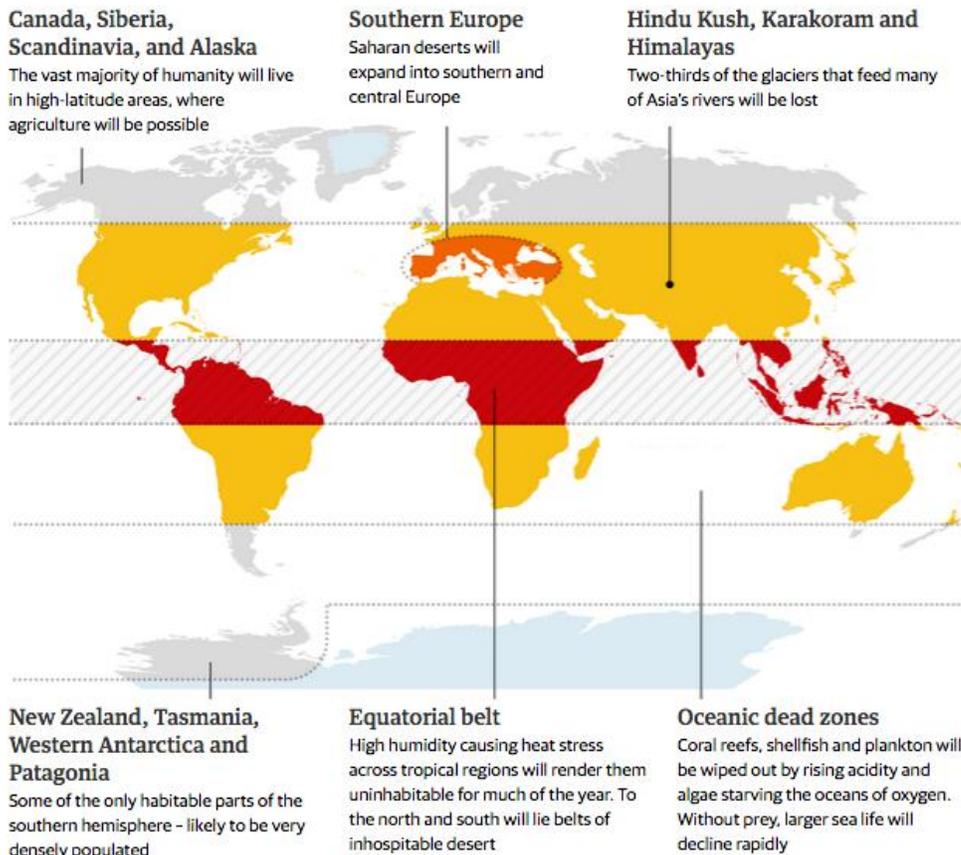
We must respond to the climate/ecosystem emergency now. Its importance outweighs every other social, political, or economic issue, most of which must be resolved as part of a viable climate-crisis response. Despite their importance, climate chaos will override otherwise important matters of justice and societal morality. Yet, we cannot achieve an ecologically viable social order without social, economic, and climate/ecological justice. For more discussions of various related matters, go to:

<https://thehopefulrealist.com/the-hopeful-realist-blog/>

Today’s Featured Image:

Climate Code Red: Unrecognizable Earth at 4 degrees C.

A 4C rise in global average temperatures would force humans away from equatorial regions



Guardian graphic

Our Most Likely Future May be Hard to Recognize

Let's face it. Carbon emissions have not slowed; they continue to grow rapidly with global economic expansion. The nations that have 'pledged' to reduce emissions to meet the compromise 2.0 degree C above pre-industrial average global temperature, or the 'aspirational' yet necessary 1.5 degree target, offer plans that will fail to reach either. Besides, they are not doing what's necessary to achieve those goals.

The above image depicts an estimate of the far more likely result: 4 degrees C and consequent unlivable conditions on much of the planet. Living under such conditions will involve massive migrations and likely widespread conflict, suffering and death.

Moreover, the IPCC estimates for achieving such targets also assume the deployment of highly speculative and carbon-costly technologies to capture carbon from the atmosphere—technologies that remain undeveloped and are as Band-Aids on a compound fracture. In addition to their speculative nature, carbon capture is at the wrong end of the problem. We need to stop emissions, not try to capture the result with unproven methods after the fact.

Books and other Sources on the New Great Transformation

One of the problems with the climate crisis is that so many people have grown weary of what many consider overly strident 'doomsday talk.' For example, David Wallace Wells, a New York journalist, wrote *Uninhabitable Earth*, which consisted almost entirely of a litany of the elements that make the climate emergency an existential threat to humanity. He also wrote an article titled, "Time to Panic." Well, people feel disempowered by such talk, which is not to say it isn't true or accurate. Wells derived all his dire warnings from solid data. Yet, "What can I do?" is a reasonable response from any individual.

We face a grave environmental future as the biosphere destabilizes further. Bill McGuire's latest book, *Hothouse Earth*, makes that quite clear. McGuire is a highly respected emeritus professor of geophysical and climate hazards at University College London. Robin McKie describes the implications of his research findings in this article in the Guardian, one of the best newspapers on the planet:

Robin McKie, "Soon the world will be unrecognisable: is it still possible to prevent total climate meltdown?" 30 Jul 2022. *The Observer, Climate crisis*. On the **Guardian** website: <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/jul/30/total-climate-meltdown-inevitable-heatwaves-global-catastrophe>

As I argued in my eBook, ***HOPEFUL REALISM: A Climate Manifesto***, extensive research has shown that survivors are people who shift paradigms in a crisis in order to respond effectively to the new emergency conditions they face. Victims are those who fail because they are stuck in their old no longer valid paradigm for framing reality. (I commented on this dilemma in a recent blog post at thehopefulrealist.com.)

This is not a made-for-TV drama; we are living in a new reality still unrecognized by too many people. We don't get to change the channel. The Earth System is undergoing a new great transformation, one that we caused but are reluctant to acknowledge. Those who so many dismiss as doomsayers are pleading with us to become survivors; after all, we are all in this together whether we like it or not. The bottom line is whether we take massive collective action or die without trying.

Quotable Quote

“Short of a global economic collapse, it becomes nearly impossible to see how we can cut emissions fast enough to have much chance of staving off climate chaos.”

~ Jeff Goodell, “The Truth About These Climate Change Numbers: A new report shows carbon emissions are moving in the wrong direction, and we’re running out of time.” *Rolling Stone*, Dec. 7, 2018. <https://medium.com/rollingstone/the-truth-about-these-climate-change-numbers-7716bc951d2>

Goodell made that statement four years ago. Although it is difficult to measure exactly, we seem on the verge of ‘too late’ right now.

It may seem odd, but we have only one choice that leads to survival. If we watch as the global corporate economic system upon which we have become so dependent for our everyday lives, collapses, it will drive the planetary systems upon which it depends into total chaos. Or, we can step outside our conventional thinking, which is simply no longer valid or relevant to our emergency situation, and take the formerly inconceivable steps necessary to abandon the collapsing system to build a new one that is compatible with the living earth-systems upon which all life depends. The first path (on which we are still plodding along) leads to societal collapse and likely species extinction.

To take the only reasonable path to survival, we must “shrink the technosphere” to the extent that it no longer dominates human life and no longer destroys the human habitat because it no longer burns fossil fuels. That may allow the complex living system some call *Gaia*, after the Greek goddess of the Earth to rebalance itself, allowing our survival. In the above article, Jeff Goodell expresses the urgency of making that choice.

I have often cited the film a [world out of balance](#); to illustrate why we cannot remain mere predators upon the Earth. Its powerful imagery gives a visceral feeling for the facts we find so difficult to face. Nevertheless, we must find ways to replace industrial-consumer culture and its high-energy infrastructure, by forming ecologically harmonious communities that remain in balance with our habitats.

See you in two weeks. Meanwhile, stay safe and read [HOPEFUL REALISM: A Climate Manifesto](#).