

Abstract

This thesis is borne out of my almost life-long experience as a change maker and activist, my commitment for building engagement in the fundamental changes needed to restore the earth's liveability, my struggles and connections with the world of action on climate. For this reason, the experiential account of my participation in this activism is the real driver of the methodological approach to this thesis, such that the research partly intermingles and illuminates the personal, communal, national and global impediments to effective climate action through an unusual combination of personal stories, relevant art works, scientific research, and interviews with activists.

I am primarily an activist-practitioner and this professional doctorate speaks of my biography, ideas, struggles, relationships, involvements, questions, searches and is written with practice/action in mind and with learning for making that practice more successful. It sets about achieving this through a process of evaluation and synthesis, to deepen, broaden and collate understandings of the obstacles that came to light and to learn how to more successfully promote and affect their removal addressing the critical need for pace and scale.

In addition to furthering the practical application - by both activist citizens and professionals - of this widening set of

knowledges, the research process and the resulting thesis that documents it aim to facilitate necessary reprioritizations of intentions at all intersecting levels and so clear a possible and hopeful path to the reversing of global warming. The thesis thus frames the case for rapid transformative change in the context of an ever-tightening timeline and makes it obvious that the necessity of effective action applies across the board from the individual and family unit through our communities, institutions and organisations to the global levels of decision making, notably including the political-economy.

The research underpinning this dissertation started from the premise that global warming has increasingly become critical, necessitating personal, social, political and economic changes commensurate with the scale and time limitations of the existential risk to human civilisation.

To begin to meaningfully address – let alone solve – the problem, a deep understanding of the climate emergency and a thorough review and re-prioritisation of human activities and intentions - an *'Emergency Response Mode'* - is essential. In spite of years of work and efforts by scientists, innovators, movements and others seeking to urge decision-makers and mobilisers, social and political action critical for climate

repair was resolutely withheld. Many available, scale-able solutions and promising theories tailored to the complexities of the challenge have been presented and even experimented with, but far from reversing causes and consequences of global warming, Earth's temperature continues to rise. Humankind's collective failure to adequately act to restore climate conditions safe for life's abundance and diversity intensifies the need to 'know' properly and appropriately.

Channeling attitudes of tactical pessimism, alarm and curiosity into an approach to research that combined elements of heuristic (combining self-discovery and problems solving methods), auto-ethnographic (contextual self-reflection) and participatory (grounded in my ongoing activist involvements and including co-activists as conversation partners in the interviews) methodologies, together generated a focus on the obstacles blocking vital responses. Conversations with interviewees were lightly thematically structured, reflecting on safe climate restoration, the barriers to transformative change and the perceived potential for a breakthrough.

Data deriving from the diverse sources evoked by the above methodologies were synthesised, eventually translating into the capability to anticipate constraints and proactively

overcome them; improve leadership capacity and validate emerging possibilities. Hence, the thesis concludes with a strategically optimistic package of possibilities, comprising *Threat, Solutions and Plan* – allowing fear to be 'held' – and a framework, *The Educative Activist*, hoping to equip the next wave of actors and leaders to mobilise whole communities for climate restoration work.