

The Shock

Nature is currently doing its job, providing answers to many questions and challenges. The climate movement would do better to lean back and relax for a while. Watching the river flow. How water is breaking rocks and stones. When things are running pretty smooth, don't stick an arrow in it.

Believe me, it's by no means unpleasant to observe how the biggest climate killers go to rack and ruin in no time - in particular aviation, the international flower trade and [ornamental](#) plant culture, international sport and international tourism – which in the past thirty years were putting only pushy expansion on the table of the international community, despite the heavy cloud of superfluosity and rich luxuries hanging over it. It is not bad at all that this self-glorification – full of supremacy and self-evidence to be moved around the world, pampered, nurtured, and served, but openly [totally dismissive](#) in relation to global climate mitigation goals – publicly gets a slap in its face. This had to happen someday. There are limits.

I hear people say that what is happening now is a good drill to resist (or prevent?) the climate catastrophe. I like that character sketch but I don't think that it is correct. The present situation does not give me the feeling to be a large scale drill. Likewise [Adam Frank's](#) 'fire drill' characterization seems premature and too soft to me. This is not a simulation (which can be switched off), and no communication (which has options). This is an heavy serious accident. I mean we're in a **crash**. And humanity is **in shock**.

When I was a kid (16 and 17 years old), I had two pretty big truck accidents (as a co-driver). I noticed that all those involved were walking around pale and silent for days, and how many days it took for such a fatal event to **get through to** everyone. That's what happening now too. Nobody's crying. The often used term 'extinct' for scarce moments of deserted shopping streets, gets a unpleasant different meaning without being noticed. The meetings between people take a hesitant turn, because of uncertain looks in search of what has disappeared under the other. As if the other person is now in a situation that you have not yet determined together, that you cannot yet determine, while scanning what you can still hang on to together. It is true that these moments are short. It's certainly not unpleasant either, but feelings have lost their anchors.

And rightly so, I'm afraid. With our power play over the past twenty years, we have gone straight against essential basic conditions of almost all natural processes, and crossed the red line. We have been careless with basic processes that can be terribly cruel if tortured for too long. Corona becomes the litmus test (a test that gives a definitive answer to something still uncertain or doubtful) of the statement that we're in the middle of destructing the complete earthly miracle of life. The screws got loose, the future is falling apart, and man is holding his breath. Everyone is forced to learn how to deal with these sudden feelings.

I mean, for example, that among the younger generations this epidemic will send an existential shock wave through their sense of home; that they will look at their parents with different eyes. Do they still know, and did they know? Do they know where we are going to?

The hedonistic and rather selfish way of interacting with essential natural processes that their parents have shown them throughout their lives as feasible, controllable and successful, and that they have been taught in the core subjects at school, turns out to be **quicksand** in which everything can disappear. Even fixed incomes, pensions, and basic elements of society, such as health care, education, democracy.

This may ensure that the motivation and commitment of youngsters to the climate battle become sharper and more decisive. More willingness to surrender a lot of hedonism in exchange for safe and rapid emission reduction, less gullible about the feasibility and stability of high tech solutions, and more critical towards vague and weak plans to control emissions in the long term.

A major problem remains, however: we must show them a viable path. Not an elaborate plan, but a few basic ideas that can trigger convergence. No one dares enter a cul-de-sac. A light on the horizon works wonders. People are inventive once they're up and running together.

Conclusion: the strategic discussion within the climate movement must break the stones – the mutual contradictions, I mean – that have so far reduced their proposals to inaudible chirping. XR and FforF need to take a much clearer stance on **how** an emergency shutdown of the use of fossil fuel can be achieved by restructuring local economies in order to scale international flows and interactions down to a basal level.

See also the [recent proposal](#) by Dixon-Declève, Lovins, Schellnhuber and Raworth.

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There are also French and Dutch versions of this article.

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