

# Cradling the effects of global climate change with scientific fact

**Emotionally driven discourse about the responsibilities and challenges of man-made climate change seems least likely to contribute in a positive manner to what needs to remain a serious and scientifically grounded discussion with eyes wide open**

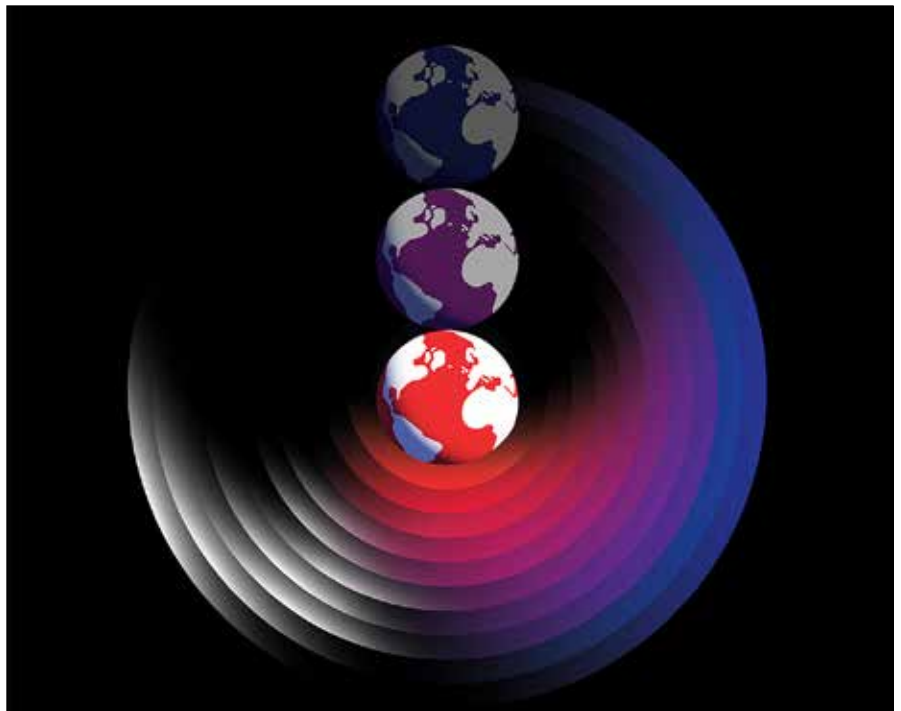
**S**eriously game-changing conversations about climate change and the myriad of issues surrounding it, cannot become the latest trendy mob democratically-shaped within social media paradigms, even as the world's entire population faces an emergency scenario many fear, some negate and others neither like nor want.

Vicious, targeted and viral dissemination of misinformation via social media is a tactic that led to some of this last decade's most surprising disruptions of democratic processes and significant scandals, stigmatized with few but memorable judgments and fines, such as those involving Cambridge Analytica and Facebook. But now even honest efforts and laudable individuals may be caught up in the snowball effect of their campaigning, where social media unleash anger and uncontrolled effects, building momentum without serious scrutiny of the real messages conveyed to the broader audience.

Even the best intentions and popularity of a teenage opinion leader and influencer who dominated the world's media channels on the subject of climate change make it difficult not to step back and consider her message without question. We can ask how much Greta Thunberg's campaigning is likely to contribute or detract from what so many of us would like to see as a global effort to work for the sake of more sustainable development.

## Climate change is a fact

We can and we must attempt to contain the issues we are faced with. But these issues are complex and require much more than



what can be reduced to an elementary talk about utopic aspirations.

Marketing environmental consciousness is one thing. Claiming that 2030 is the dead-



line by which we can still save the planet is spreading fake news. But it is something finite to work towards that can focus minds of those 'in charge' of policy, action and change.

So, is it really too late to 'save the world' in the aspirational sense of reverting for good the disruption of that imperfect, but so convenient climate balance that provided the stable conditions this planet so recently enjoyed? That balance allowed us to reap more than the essential elements for survival for such a long period of time. But now we need to prepare to live in a new world - perhaps less convenient, but still where future generations are to spend their lives. We still have time to drink our coffee before being individually affected, but a meaningful action attempting to delay or divert climate



change is something that we now realise should have happened 30 years ago to have some effect. So, some say it is too little too late.

## Advancing technology

Having said that, transformative innovations and the application of new ways of reducing the effects of climate change are finally coming to the fore. Nils Rokke, Director of Sustainability at SINTEF and the new Chairman of the European Energy Research Alliance (EERA) is one of Europe's leading experts in emerging low-carbon energy technologies. He champions some of the most promising low-carbon technology developments of the coming years. EERA is an association of more than 250 public research centres and universities working on low-carbon energy research, made up of about 50,000 researchers across 30 European countries.

This is just one example of how people and organizations, especially environmental experts and governments, worried about the effects of pollution and climate change, are planning the use of modern technologies such as AI, blockchain, and IoT to at least reduce the impact.

We see the emergence of electric vehicles, renewable energy and the introduction of new transport systems that keep the world as we know it turning in a better and more sustainable way than, for example, motorways clogged with cargo and personal vehicles. Other solutions see tech companies offering IoT environmental sensors

as a service to various other organizations and smart cities. Thus, the high tech sector can help create a nationwide or global environmental sensor network using IoT to combat climate change. The global network can store vital data on pollution and carbon emissions. Using this network, governments and non-profit organizations can monitor the causes of climate change on a global level and create strategies to eliminate the responsible factors.

## Global warming

In a political sense, democracy does not work for science and climate change because the right thing to do is not a matter of preference and negotiation. US President Donald Trump's opposition to the idea of global warming and criticism of movements is a case in point of not facing facts: an engineer of sustainable development cannot negotiate because he deals with nature. Right and wrong – as we attempt to define with our collective decisions are irrelevant when it comes to the complexity, scale and especially the underlying rules of how the planet is changing and will continue to change.

Some say the digital tech sector is the wild card in fossil-fuel escape plans. Disruption of the global economy is on the way through AI, Internet of Things, big data, biotech, and more. But it is far from clear whether this will drive greenhouse gas emissions up or slash them in half. The climate conversation between tech entrepreneurs and world leaders can have a disruptive effect.

BigTech giants are arguably on course towards carbon neutrality. Apple has committed to adopting a 100 percent circular economy throughout its supply chain. Alphabet claims it is now the world's largest corporate purchaser of renewable energy, while both Microsoft and Facebook say they are investing a billion dollars in clean energy solutions.



## Consumer interface

A significant observation is that the biggest influence the tech sector can have is not on its own emissions or even those of its suppliers – it is, after all, just 2-2.5 percent of global emissions. Tech companies are the interface with global consumers and citizens. On a daily basis, Alphabet, Amazon, Apple, Facebook, and Microsoft influence the behavior of billions of people – the world's tech-savvy and digitally enabled, plus the world's businesses.

We think individualism is something to celebrate, but is that still the case? As with religious movements and the masonic-type clubs and societies of the past, we are now being reorganized in different ways: through high tech, computers, cellphones, digital services and social media. Today, the all-assisted experience of those living in the digital society see AI even 'thinking' for you, to an extent that we finally have become inclined to increased skepticism of our own information and decision-making processes.

## Herd mentality

So, returning to the threat the planet faces, the mass movement and digital media-driven initiative to address climate change cannot remain blind to the fact that emotions of the day can result in a collective herd mentality that sparked devastating revolutions and wars in past centuries. Care should be taken that the many perceived geo-political, business, financial or natural emergencies we are surrounded do not induce irrational spending of time and resources, unnecessary strikes and commotion that none can defend as an effective result of any laudable effort.

On the bright side we are looking at a planet that is likely to change at a speed that will still allow us the time to have many more coffees before we suffer the direst consequences some envisage. If we focus and strive to make things better for us, we could still just be able to hold onto the joke: "Doctor Help! I have five minutes to live..." Answer: "Well, I can boil you an egg, is the only sensible answer" – rather than make it a reality.

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