

CLIMATE CHANGE AND ART  
A LEXICON IN PROGRESS

**WICKED PROBLEMS** are social issues in which the people involved struggle to agree on the definition of the problem, let alone reach a solution. A Wicked Problem is wicked in the sense of being obstinate, unique, not because it is related to evil. Every projected solution leads to further problems, as Wicked Problems are symptomatic of systemic ills.

There are also Super Wicked Problems. They have following characteristics: (1) Time is running out; (2) There is no central authority; (3) Those identifying the problem are also causing it; (4) Existing policies irrationally discount the future. Climate change is a Super Wicked Problem. See also: Messes and Social Messes.

**INTERGENERATIONAL JUSTICE** is the notion that people governing now should do so keeping in mind their responsibility to future generations. Intergenerational justice is problematised by the difficulty of calculating equivalence between time periods. Also known as 'intergenerational equity', it has significant implications for the economic evaluation of climate change mitigation. Specifically, it calls into question the methodology known as 'discounting', as applied to decision-making over extended time periods. Used in economic analysis, discounting is meant to accurately weigh costs and benefits which occur in the future against those which occur today. A belief in intergenerational justice necessitates an objection to the predominance of high discount rates in the economic field. A discount rate that is close to zero, where the future is given (close to) equivalent weight to the present, is the only way to value future people's interests properly.

**SCIENTIFIC RISK BIAS** Science is fundamentally skeptical. New findings are subjected to a 'burden of proof' analysis, and often accepted on the basis of a 95% confidence limit: there must be no more than a 5% possibility of the event happening by chance. As the risk bias in science is conservative, the task of establishing proof is always placed on the person making a claim for something new. But there's another risk inherent in the high threshold for proof: that scientists under-predict the seriousness of something new, or are slow in disseminating details of complex problems.

**THE GREAT TRANSITION** A reframing of 'managed degrowth'. The Great Transition is a scenario for the transformation of the current development paradigm towards a more socially, culturally and ecologically balanced alternative. Developed by the Global Scenario Group (GSG), an interdisciplinary group of academics and activists, whose website states: 'This possibility rests on the ascent of a constellation of values – human solidarity, quality of life, and ecological sensibility – to moderate the conventional triad of individualism, consumerism, and domination of culture.' See also: The Uncivilization Manifesto; First World Emissions.

**ANNUAL EXCEEDANCE PROBABILITY** is the probability, expressed as a percentage, that a flood of a given magnitude will be equalled or exceeded in any one year. The term has replaced terms such as '1-in-100-year-flood' which are now seen as outdated and unhelpful because of the perception that the phrase reflects chronological forecasting rather than statistical probability. Semenov and Bengtsson (2002) predict changes to rainfall distributions in the Auckland region of New Zealand due to climate change. In a worst case scenario for Auckland, a flood that is rated with an Annual Exceedance Probability of 0.02 (a 1-in-50-year-flood) under the current climate will have an Annual Exceedance Probability of less than 0.10 (1-in-10-year flood) by 2100.

**VITAL MATERIALISM** A belief in the liveliness of non-human things. Jane Bennett, author of *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*, writes, 'By "vitality" I mean the capacity of things – edibles, commodities, storms, metals – not only to impede or block the will or designs of humans but also to act as quasi agents or forces with trajectories, propensities, or tendencies of their own'. Useful in arguments against human exceptionalism. See also: Thing Power; Weak Panpsychism (Val Plumwood); Ecosophy.

**HYPEROBJECTS** Phenomena which vastly extend our understanding of time and space – like climate change, radioactive materials, black holes. They do this by being so widely or lastingly distributed that they defy localisation and immediate human experience. The word was invented by Timothy Morton, who defines the hyperobject as: viscous (they stick to anything they touch); molten (their scale defies the idea of space-time as fixed or concrete); non-local; phased (existing in a higher than three-dimensional space ie. full perception would require the viewer to have a multidimensional view); and inter-objective (formed by interactions with other objects).

**RESILIENCE RHETORIC** Matthew Allen writes about the widespread use of the word 'resilience' in post-disaster scenarios in Australia. Adopted by the media, by government agencies, community groups and NGOs, it is often associated with national character: being 'tough', 'hardy', 'batters', 'pragmatic', 'plucky' etc. In the context of increasingly extreme and frequent natural disasters, the idea of resilience may be instrumentalised by policy makers to offload responsibility for mitigating the causes and consequences of such disasters onto individuals within the affected communities themselves.

BP Disaster

**RE-COMMUNALISATION** The reversal of the neoliberal policies of the past decades that led to widespread privatisation of state controlled assets. Also called 're-municipalisation', driven by the desire on the part of communities for local power. A locally controlled energy system would be concerned with public interest not profits. Re-communalisation allows for greater local agency in decision-making about what to invest in; this is typically used as a means to invest in renewable energy.

**THE CULTURAL COST OF CARBON** An extension of the social cost of carbon, the calculation used to estimate the economic damages associated with a small increase in carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions, conventionally one metric ton, over the gas's lifetime. This dollar figure also represents the value of damages avoided by not emitting the gas in the first place. The estimated social cost of carbon used by the United States government is USD\$21. However, that figure has been recently suggested to actually be as high as over \$200. Recognising a cultural cost of carbon acknowledges the financial impacts on cultural assets – such as the preservation of sites of historical significance, the production of art and other cultural forms, and the value of the relationship of people to place. When calculating the social cost of carbon, less tangible things are often overlooked, for example the cultural value of a homeland such as a pacific island threatened by climate change.

**HEALTH GOTH** A way of dressing and a lifestyle where you take care of yourself and exercise and wear exercise gear – but ultimately you believe that the world we live in is coming to an end. For a Health Goth, taking care of your body is the only way to do any good in an apocalyptic world. Embedded within it is the narrative of a world that is unsustainable, wearing black workout gear is a fittingly anti-nostalgic, chic and dystopic response. Health Goth has been described as 'that feeling of sadness, but also of sportiness.'

**HABITAT NOSTALGIA** Nostalgia for a place you're in, grieving its 'inevitable loss'. Related to what Naomi Klein (author of *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate*) calls 'a morbid habit of "pre-loss", a variation on the "pre-crimes" committed in the movie *Minority Report*'. See also: Ecological Despair; Ecocide.

**CAPITLOCENE** A way of framing the era we're living in, as shaped by the accumulation of capital and by structures which prioritise this. Donna Haraway speaks about the need to rethink the more commonly used term, Anthropocene, arguing that it is not humans per se that cause definitive contemporary problems such as climate change; it is the relentless capitalisation of resources. She proposes instead terms which acknowledge the connection between economy and ecology. See also: Chthulucene.

**ENERGY SOVEREIGNTY** is the right of conscious individuals, communities and peoples to make their own decisions on energy generation, distribution and consumption. An example: Residents of Te Urewera, Marnie and Rowena Te Aroa built their home using local clay mixed with paper pulp. A micro-hydro turbine in a creek running a dozen metres from their back door provides electricity, and a solar heating unit meets the family's hotwater needs. For Rowena, choosing such energy and construction solutions is 'a way of honouring Tūhoe values of goodstewardship and aroha for the environment...'; and for Marnie, '...self-determination includes not relying on the national grid for electricity or hot water.' (See Tūhoe: Portrait of a Nation, 2014, by Kennedy Warne and Peter Quinn). See also: Re-communalisation; Re-municipalisation; Local Power.

**GREEN FASCISM** A pejorative term used by those anxious that environmental policies are overemphasised, and will be used to 'destroy the free market' on the pretext of a pending ecological crisis so extreme that it justifies state intervention. Frequently called upon by individuals politically and economically invested in maintaining a system unregulated by ecological concerns.

**SMALL AGENCIES** It's 1881 and Darwin is writing about earthworms, which he and his family have been observing at sites including Stonehenge, St. Catherine's Hill, Winchester, and a medieval pavement at Beaulieu. Worms make the earth hospitable to human life by processing the vegetable mould needed for the growth of plants. They also demonstrate a degree of agency, making different and unpredictable choices according to their environmental conditions. Small agency is distributed, generative; it may require the expansion of what we call 'system', of what we call 'public', of what we call 'dependence'. It's the accumulated effects of such small agencies that make the earth possible, habitable. See also: Actants (Bruno Latour).

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