



Climate Collapse

How I learned to love the Decay of
Civilisation

By The Post Office

Introduction

Whether you are a revolutionary student, a satisfied liberal, or just a curious person, there is one unsinkable truth that we must confront when considering our politics. It is the doom-device so large that we can never see it in its entirety, an eldritch horror always peaking around the corner, chasing us into anxiety. Climate collapse.

The melting away of our everyday life due to an acceleration of trends such as global warming, mass disasters, crop failure, biological decay, and so on. It is the invisible truth that will determine our politics more than any other event that you or I will ever experience. Climate collapse is inevitable, and it is all encompassing.

According to even the most conservative predictions and reporting from the most institutional groups who have it in their best interest to sell us a comforting lie; from now on as each year passes, so does the chance of collapsitarian events rise exponentially. This means that more and more often we will see horrible events of civilizational and political destabilisation or collapse happen, all due to the destruction of the planet by humanity. This is not simply the ‘cold war of our times’, or the ozone hole again, or a once-in-a-lifetime Great Depression type event. When even the proper and institutional centrists say that things might get bad – then you know it’s *really* bad.

(This zine is written from a western perspective, and will therefore have an implicit focus on the climate collapse for the west).

We’re already in the Desert of the Collapse

Climate collapse is the idea that because of changes to the climate, the main institutions of the world will be threatened by collapse; the state, capitalism, civilisation, and so on. Climate collapse is unparalleled in its scope and its intensity, caused by a similarly fast-paced extreme growth of capitalism. In a hundred years, we in the west have gone from a rural population of dirty coal miners working 18 hours a day to buy bread in segregated spaces, to the paved streets of financial districts paired with luxury cars, smartphones, business suits, and liberalism. The difference between 1920 and 2020 is immense. Yet this current period (the ‘end of history’ as Fukuyama likes to call it) will have been short lived, such growth is not feasible on the Earth. And as much as we implicitly feel like we live in a stable liberal system that will at most get dented but not replaced, it is not only instable and due to be corrected by the climate collapse, but it will also historically have been extremely short lived.

The idea of the disintegration of our daily life due to the climate was radical just a few years ago, but now you ask any young person on the street and they tell it to you like it's an old joke: "Well of course we're fucked!"

Something is very wrong, mass corporations have the unprecedented power to pillage the planet, effectively killing billions of people with very few stopping them beyond waving protest signs and slogans. States are concentrating more and more power until every aspect of life is controlled – often in ways unthinkable and unacceptable just decades ago. At this point, it seems clear that whatever remains of the project of leftism has failed. Capitalism has the upper hand, and is continuing with an unprecedented and unrivalled ferocity. Where once President De Gaulle fled France due to the real threat of a student-lead countrywide communist and anarchist insurrection, today a single trashcan on fire is enough to signal the alarms of uncharted territory. We are defanged, and we have forgotten what blood tastes like. The question is then, what can we do in the face of capitalism's temporary victory, and how does climate collapse tie into that?

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The world is on fire! So leave the ashes of the old world where they lie. Do not rekindle those old dusty words such as Marxism or liberalism, class conflict or electoral politics, and their accompanying writers. Find the reasons that kept those thinkers up at night, and give their ideas new life based on what they didn't have the opportunity to know and learn. Don't focus on what was said but what was meant, learn from history, see what does or doesn't work, don't hold on to dogma. Catch the cosmic horrors that made these people desire freedom above all and leave behind the old and rusty. You want freedom? Good! It is here ripe for the taking. What weight is lifted off our shoulders due to the lessons of the past, and the knowledge of the inevitable collapse in the future. The only path to success is one paved in what we desire – freedom! So let us find freedom and live it since we know of death already, do not get bogged down in the party politics of spectres. Let us instead find the joy and freedom in the collapse.

The climate reports now state a global heating of 2.5 degrees – one degree higher than the same predictions just a few years ago. Even if all emissions magically stopped today, CO2 has a lag time of several decades which means the Earth will still break into a fever – cleansing its body of the malignant pest. The world has globalised, every small farmer somehow linked into the global chain of economy and political interest groups. With this you get the potential for a domino effect; when one part goes down it takes the rest with it. This globalised system of relatively unopposed capitalism (or neoliberalism) has only existed for a few

decades and hasn't ever faced a true crisis of this scale. Yet even in this warm blanket of the 'end of history', we find traces of weaknesses in our global systems of control. Now imagine what happens when you pair an extremely fragile and hyper-connected global system of capitalist and state power with the single most disruptive and uniquely global event of radical destabilisation ever witnessed? You get a lot of chaos and destruction, and death.

What is an ideology of collapse?

The question is not *if* the collapse happens but *when and how*. We must be cautious not to commit the Marxist sin of being so sure of our theories that we let history take the wheel and pat ourselves on our backs. Collapse is certain, but its effects are not. Mass death is inevitable, but creating the space for freedom is not. If we as freedom fighting individuals desire some joy out of collapse, we must carve it out of the future. There may be no paralysation due to the knowledge of this beast. Rather we can find the nihilistic desire to break shit, to be happy with fighting state and capital who bully us into submission. We already live in a dystopia so what do I have to lose? The odds of success mean nothing to me, all I desire is to fight for my freedom. This means fighting state and capital to the best of my ability. Whether or not I win is irrelevant, I am a fighter and a lover, not a gambler. If collapse is going to happen, then how can I utilize it to make sure those who caused it experience my justice? How do I navigate the collapse to bring me the most joy and freedom?

Collapse is a process – even though it's a faster one than past civilizational crises. The institutions will focus power on what's most important to them, and what's most easily defensible. This means cities. Crucial infrastructure of population centres, along with transport and communication lines are the most important sources of the state's power and control. This means that as collapse grows, the state shrinks. As mountainous peoples have survived imperialism for thousands of years, so will isolated areas become zones of freedom, too expensive with no reward for states to spend depleting resources on.

The global systems of power will have more to focus on than groups of individuals who seek freedom in the isolated woods far from the cities. It is also in this space that the option for self-sufficiency invites communities. Common farms, self-constructed shacks, life in nature, communalism, etc... become viable in these isolated areas. Small anarchistic communities can form, based around horizontality, mutual aid, equality, freedom, and joy. Death and destruction is sad and horrible, not to mention unfree, yet we can still try to find joy in it. As the structures which have oppressed peoples for thousands of years unravel, we experience a unique opportunity to find true freedom in the here

and now. If eventual climate collapse is certain for us or our kids, then we must do our best to create the good out of it, instead of distracting ourselves out of sorrow – even though no one can be blamed for that response.

This zine has one question: what role should the impending climate collapse have in our thinking, politically, socially, and philosophically? If this threat truly is so grand, then what point is there in fighting for theories created long before this threat was realised? How can we justify fighting for what are effectively breadcrumbs in the face of such massive change that awaits us? Climate collapse forces us to reconsider our priorities, it makes us see itself not as just another policy but as an all-defining process which we must focus on if we want to build the world we want. Freedom and joy, feelings which I think not many would doubt their need, can only be found once we consider the impact of climate collapse, and once we think of how to build our world during and after it.

The corona crisis and its accompanying cost of millions of deaths and trillions of dollars is an indirect consequence of climate change (indirect because the climate's scale is so large and complex). So are the 1.6 million people who die each year in India due to air pollution, or the people starving due to crop failures and shifting climate areas. And so are the rising amount of climate refugees – and god knows the political institutions of Europe won't be able to handle those refugees due to xenophobia and populism causing instability, just look at Europe's ineptitude to deal with the 2015 crisis. Not to mention adjacent issues like micro-plastics, mental health, and declining fertility rates. The disintegration due to climate change isn't some distant event, but a process that will only increase its pressure on us as time goes on. Feedback loops mean this process will only accelerate, and become more irreversible and out of our grasp.

We didn't write this zine to say "it's all fucked, nuff said", we simply feel that there is a need to confront what appears on our horizon regardless of how extreme or new it is. Climate collapse is a process that is happening right now, and it is a disaster that will only keep growing. Because of this, all of us with an image of a world we want to create, have no choice but to use it to inform our plans and ideologies. If my ideal thought appears useless in the fact of a mass destruction of stable forms of power that exist today, then I might have to reconsider my strategies. For anyone curious on a zine that focusses on what building our anarchistic communities would look like, and how to create them, we recommend the zine '*Civilisation and Collapse*' by Warzone Distro (warzonedistro.noblogs.org). The following two pages are a short cheat sheet I made to easily refer to or flip back to whenever you want some facts or perspectives on the extremity of climate collapse by scientists.

The Collapsitarian's Cheat Sheet



The following are bits of facts about the desperate situation climate collapse has put us in. I chose from two places where I picked out what seemed to best illustrate the point of climate collapse and how bad it really is. The first is a widely shared article by climate scientists which is a short few pages and brilliantly and directly states the urgent situation. I highly recommend it as a 20-minute read for anyone curious about climate collapse from a scientific article. For a more easy-going primer I recommend the Wikipedia page of Climate Apocalypse (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Climate_apocalypse).

From 'Underestimating the Challenges of Avoiding a Ghastly Future' (<https://doi.org/10.3389/fcosc.2020.615419>)

- We report three major and confronting environmental issues that have received little attention and require urgent action. First, we review the evidence that future environmental conditions will be far more dangerous than currently believed. The scale of the threats to the biosphere and all its lifeforms—including humanity—is in fact so great that it is difficult to grasp for even well informed experts.
- Population sizes of vertebrate species that have been monitored across years have declined by an average of 68% over the last five decades.
With such a rapid, catastrophic loss of biodiversity, the ecosystem services it provides have also declined. These include reduced carbon sequestration, reduced pollination, soil degradation, poorer water and air quality, more frequent and intense flooding, and fires, and compromised human health.
- By some estimates, 700–800 million people are starving and 1–2 billion are micronutrient-malnourished and unable to function fully, with prospects of many more food problems in the near future.
Humanity's consumption as a fraction of Earth's regenerative capacity has grown from ~73% in 1960 to 170% in 2016.
- Humanity is running an ecological Ponzi scheme in which society robs nature and future generations to pay for boosting incomes in the short term.
- Even assuming that all signatories [of the 2015 Paris Agreement] do, in fact, manage to ratify their commitments (a doubtful prospect), expected warming would still reach 2.6–3.1C by 2100.

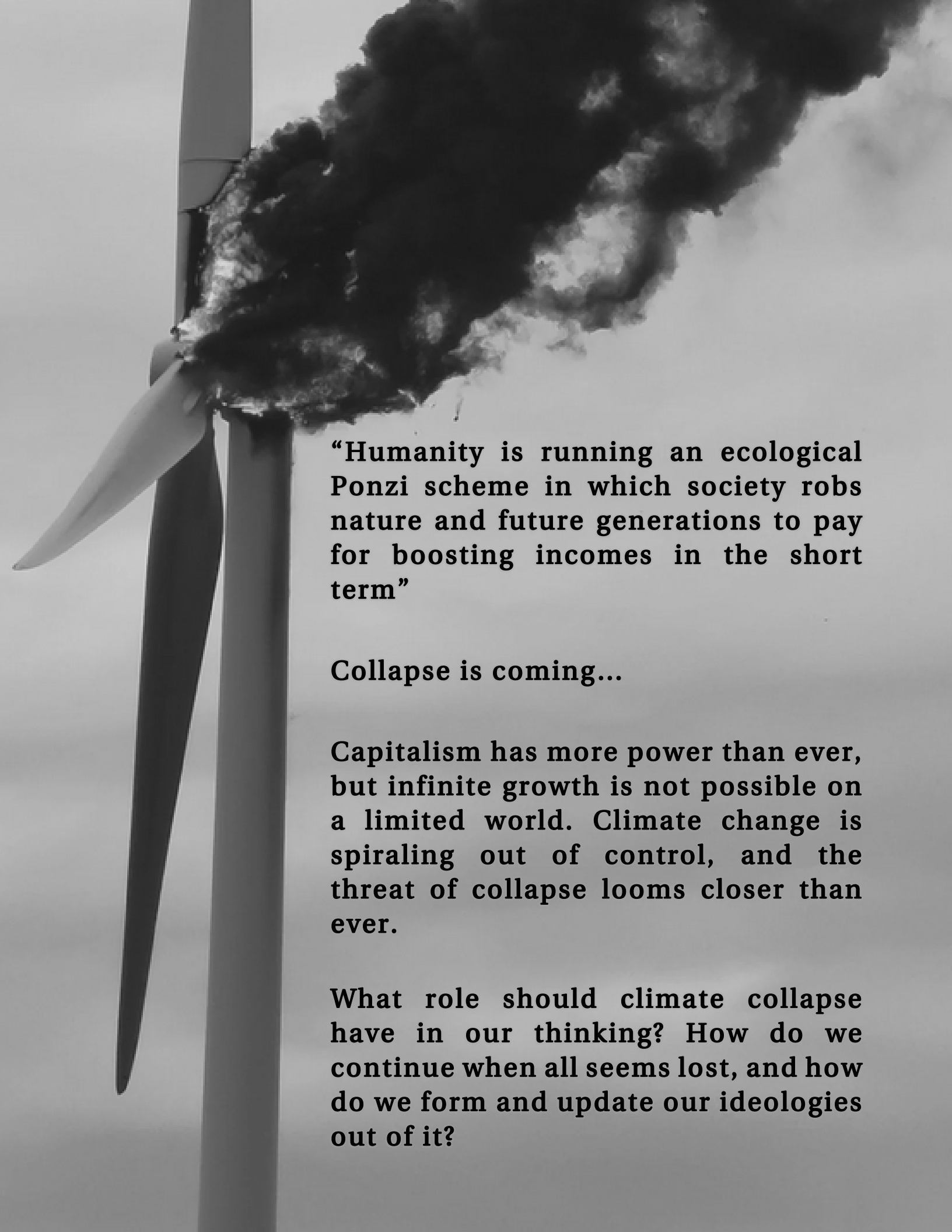
- Today's greenhouse-gas concentration is >500 ppm CO₂-e, while according to the IPCC, 450 ppm CO₂-e would give Earth a mere 66% chance of not exceeding a 2C warming (IPCC, 2014). Greenhouse-gas concentration will continue to increase (via positive feedbacks such as melting permafrost and the release of stored methane), resulting in further delay of temperature-reducing responses even if humanity stops using fossil fuels entirely well before 2030.
- The predominant paradigm is still one of pegging “environment” against “economy”; yet in reality, the choice is between exiting overshoot by design or disaster—because exiting overshoot is inevitable one way or another.
- Climate change and other environmental pressures will trigger more mass migration over the coming decades, with an estimated 25 million to 1 billion environmental migrants expected by 2050.

From the 6th IPCC Assessment report

(<https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/>)

- In Southern Europe, more than a third of the population will be exposed to water scarcity at 2°C GWL; under 3°C GWL, this risk will double. For Western Central and Southern Europe, and for many cities, the risk of water scarcity will increase strongly under 3°C GWL. Coastal flood damage is projected to increase at least tenfold by the end of the 21st century, and even more or earlier with current adaptation and mitigation.
- The average global temperature is likely to reach or cross the 1.5°C warming threshold within 20 years. The pledges to cut emissions made so far are nowhere near enough to start reducing level of greenhouse gases.
- Humans have already pushed the average global temperature up 1.1C from its pre-industrial average - and would have raised it 0.5C further without the tempering effect of pollution in the atmosphere. That means that, even as societies move away from fossil fuels, temperatures will be pushed up again by the loss of the airborne pollutants that come with them and currently reflect away some of the sun's heat.
- A rise of 1.5C is generally seen as the most that humanity could cope with without suffering widespread economic and social upheaval.
- Some changes are already "locked in". Greenland's sheet of land-ice is "virtually certain" to continue melting, and raising the sea level, which will continue to rise for centuries to come as the oceans warm and expand.
- It could get even worse, if warming triggers feedback loops that release even more climate-warming carbon emissions -- such as the melting of Arctic permafrost or the dieback of global forests.





“Humanity is running an ecological Ponzi scheme in which society robs nature and future generations to pay for boosting incomes in the short term”

Collapse is coming...

Capitalism has more power than ever, but infinite growth is not possible on a limited world. Climate change is spiraling out of control, and the threat of collapse looms closer than ever.

What role should climate collapse have in our thinking? How do we continue when all seems lost, and how do we form and update our ideologies out of it?