



Extinction Politik – Finding Justice at the end of the World

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For many in my generation the idea of intergenerational fairness seems like a cruel joke. Like many born in the 90s and late 80s we were instilled with the hope of a new millennia. That the future was bright and unlimited; even if we were living in hard circumstances there was an undercurrent of unabashed optimism that penetrated so much of Western culture at the time on both side of the Atlantic. By now at the end of the second decade of this century; I can tell you that spirit is dead; replaced by the spectre of extinction that rules the futures of all my peers.

I left England in 2000 and returned in 2016; in that 16-year interlude it was like time halted and decay set in. The United Kingdom a country so filled with the promise of a new century had collapsed into one where on every level of society it was breaking down. The problem with decline is that it happens in a thousand small ways that are so imperceptibly small at the beginning that you brush them off as minor annoyances. That pothole doesn't get fixed on time, the wait times for the doctor goes up a day or two, the trash pickup is reduced, etc. but these minor occurrences continue to grow and expand.

Older Millennials can remember the happy 90s before 9/11 and Iraq spilled blood over our morals; and the Great Recession broke our economic futures. But younger Millennials and Gen Z have no memories of the better times. Their world has always been this damaged place.

I, like many of my peers, hold the responsibility for this with the prior generations who have condemned us to live through radical climate change and potential extinction. The political and business elites who either through greed or cowardice chose to sit on their hands while things spiralled out of control. Who even now with mere years left to avoid extinction make weak willed attempted to placate climate activists with half measures like the Paris Accords, which while important will not save us.

My peers and I have accepted that we will never have housing, we are never going to be able to retire, that by middle age there will be weeks in the summer were it is too hazardous to go outside, and that bringing children into this world is either extremely optimistic about the future or a cruelty of such extremes to bring a child into this world where they will live in even more difficult times due to climate change.

Even my colleagues from our sister parties and organizations painfully accept that even if we got all the most ambitious socialist and social democratic policies done, we're still too late to save much of the world.

This isn't about generational fairness this is about generational justice, that those who've made this Earth have the duty and responsibility to fix it. But I have no illusions that the Boomers with power and means will magically find their morals to fix the world. I have no hope that they will reject systemic

racism, sexism or any other numerous toxic views or cultural habits from their era. No sadly they will remain and continue to drive politics for the next two decades at minimum.

What does give me hope though is that my generation and those coming next are clear-eyed about the existential threat we live under. That we're realistic about our chances and will struggle to survive under them just as we've survived under so many manmade disasters before. Things will be hard, we will have to sacrifice much of the prosperity of now, but maybe if we do the job our parents and their parents failed to do; our grandchildren maybe able to live on this planet safely.

If we fail, we're all dead anyway. So, failure isn't an option.

We wasted a generations' chasing profits instead of justice, now we must spend generations healing a broken planet and the scars of human avarice. If social democrats want to know what they can do to embolden young people; I think it begins at putting them into power. Politicians who inspire young people are few and far between; because there is always a reminder that their passion for youth could just be performative, or often transactional for that election. But young politicians don't have that; people like Alexandra Ocasio-Cortez (USA), Julia Herr (Austria), and Delara Burkhardt (Germany) show that young people across the world desperately want politicians that reflect them and the struggles we live, have lived and will live under. By withholding us from the seats of power you alienate and cripple our ability to control our own fates and continue to leave it in the hands of the generations who failed us.

So end the platitudes about how the "future belongs to us" and grant us the ability to create our own intergenerational justice. Because you had your time, and our time is rapidly running out. We're aware that the future belongs to us, the question is whether that future is a prison or one of eventual salvation.

Suggested reading:

[FEPS – SPERI Study: Intergenerational fairness in post-crisis Europe: A comparative study](#)