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## *The State of Capitalism's Climate System*



Image by fikry anshor.

Three years ago, 15,000 scientists declared a climate emergency by signing onto a State of the Climate Report. That signing led to annual updates, for example, the most recent version: *The 2023 State of the Climate Report: Entering Uncharted Territory*, Bioscience, vol. 73, issue 12, December 2023, Oxford Academic (aka: “The Report”).

The initial paragraph of The Report suggests a planetary juggernaut of cascading ecosystems altering life systems: “Life on planet Earth is under siege. We are now in uncharted territory... a situation no one has ever witnessed firsthand in the history of

humanity.” Therefore, it’s fair to say nobody really knows how this uncharted territory will play out.

The Report is a compendium of all-time climate record events depicting big-time trouble, going in the wrong direction versus maintaining a healthy planet. In and of itself, the analysis in The Report, researched and authored by top notch scientists, should be enough for world policymakers to insist upon going back to COP28 in Dubai/2023, redoing the two-week UN climate conference and adopting effective solutions to replace the mealy-mouthed inadequate proposals adopted at COP28. The world deserves better.

Thirty years of UN climate conferences failing to move the needle to help Earth’s ecosystems thrive and survive, and not collapse, has unintentionally cast a dark shadow over scientists’ climate warnings within the context of a commanding capitalistic socio-economic system based upon infinite growth at center stage, humming along like “no worries” economic growth always bails us out, but what’s left behind?

The Report makes the case that under the surface, and not clearly visible to society, a monstrosity of ecosystem turmoil threatens the entire foundation of capitalistic growth. The Report’s warnings are real, not fictional, not misleading but real warnings of a premature collapsing Earth system that’s the foundation for everything. This challenging situation has progressively gotten worse by the year, but it’s now starting to burst at the seams. The year 2023 exposed an off the charts dangerous climate system broadcasts on nightly news programs reporting massive wildfires, massive flooding, massive droughts, massive atmospheric rivers, massive everything, never witnessed previously. Scientists believe it’ll get worse.

According to the scientists: “We are afraid of the uncharted territory that we have now entered. Conditions are going to get very distressing and potentially unmanageable for large regions of the world... We warn of potential collapse of natural and socioeconomic systems... Massive suffering due to climate change is already here, and we have now exceeded many safe and just Earth system boundaries, imperiling stability and life-support systems.”

The Report states that 20 of 35 vital planetary signs are now at record extremes. This means that nearly 60% of the planet is huffing and puffing to stay on track of life-sourcing support. For example, the chart of Ocean Heat Content shows a nearly vertical upward thrust. This is viewed by scientists as especially troubling because of the knockoff impacts, including loss of sea life, coral reef bleaching, and intensified tropical storms. Hidden from view, the world’s oceans are under severe stress, not to mention extremely

abusive overfishing, especially China's inordinately large distant water fishing fleet of thousands of trawlers ("world's worst abuser of sea laws" – IUU Fishing Index, US Coast Guard).

With 60% of the planet limping and few, if any, serious signs of governmental policy helping the 20 vital signs in various stages of deterioration, The Report addresses the root cause of trouble by identifying cause and effect, i.e., the ecological footprint of economic activity overwhelms any chances to heal the planet. In short, infinite economic growth and a steady state planet are like oil and water that do not mix.

According to the scientists, "economic growth, as it is conventionally pursued, is unlikely to allow us to achieve our social, climate, and biodiversity goals. The fundamental challenge lies in the difficulty of decoupling economic growth from harmful environmental impacts."

More to the point, egregious, superfluous, redundant, unneeded wealth creation is at the heart of the problem. As it happens, sixty percent (60%) of planetary ecosystems hobbling along on crutches is the result of 10% of the world population enjoying a great ride at the top of a great economic bubble expanding year by year, as this minority of people lead the best possible lifestyle in classic double or triple or quadruple, or maybe even as much as 100 to 1,000 times overshoot. The 10% global footprint tramples the lowly 90%.

In a faux complexity of hopefulness, many GDP models assume that growth can be decoupled from emissions and from consumption-oriented environmental impacts and all will be hunky-dory, e.g., carbon capture will bail us out of the global warming imbroglio. However, The Report makes special mention of such assumptions as not realistic: "Negative emissions technologies are in an early stage of development, posing uncertainties regarding their effectiveness, scalability, and environmental and societal impacts. As such, we should not rely on unproven carbon removal techniques."

In the final analysis, the hard truth is fossil fuel emissions must be halted at the source as soon as possible or future state of the planet reports will show surrealistic evidence of a sickly planet. At some point in time this image of a sickly planet will become unbearable, and the masses will turn extremely restless, similar to unwelcomed disruptions, as well as threats of disruptions, already becoming evident throughout the globe. Under the circumstances, this type of behavior is not at all surprising. After all, it's only too obvious that nearly two-thirds of the planet's vital signs are flashing code red, not code yellow. It's too late for caution when immediate action is required.

According to the scientific evidence, the underlying message is clear: Do something different. The current trajectory is not working. What could policymakers of the world do differently to put the planet back to a steady state so that it doesn't flame out near term? Climate change, like a wild roller coaster ride, is full of surprising turns and sudden rapid descent.

The Report contains ideas to hopefully shake off what looks like an inevitability of more and more failing ecosystems: "The fundamental challenge lies in the difficulty of decoupling economic growth from harmful environmental impacts. Although technological advancements and efficiency improvements can contribute to some degree of decoupling, they often fall short in mitigating the overall ecological footprint of economic activities. The impacts vary greatly by wealth; in 2019, the top 10% of emitters were responsible for 48% of global emissions, whereas the bottom 50% were responsible for just 12%. We therefore need to change our economy to a system that supports meeting basic needs for all people instead of excessive consumption by the wealthy."

Frankly, that sounds like some version of socialism, but in America socialism is equated to Mephistopheles. But what if that's not really true? What if socialism benefits everybody, except for the one percent?

Broadly speaking, The Report recommends: "Efforts must be directed toward eliminating emissions from fossil fuels and land-use change and increasing carbon sequestration with nature-based climate solutions." All of which is doable., but honestly, that's an often-repeated prescription that never seems to stick, never gains traction. If otherwise, if it gained traction, over time The State of the Climate Reports would fade into the sunset without anything to write about.

Nevertheless, the ecological overshoot of human demands on natural resources, or overexploitation, is seemingly an insurmountable issue that points a finger at endless growth and its sidekick overconsumption by rich countries and wealthy individuals. And since socialism is out of the running to fix ecological overshoot, one way forward is a circular economy. Instead of a throw-away economic system, learn to recirculate across the board, like British economist Kate Raworth's Doughnut Economics designed to avoid ecological overshoot.

In the final analysis, The Report is more relevant now than ever before simply because nearly 2/3rds of the planet's vital signs are screaming for help, but none is forthcoming. Therefore, and unfortunately, The Report is destined to grow and grow as ecosystems fail

one by one, until one day Eureka! The State of the Climate Report will become sought after and studied and discussed by policymakers standing knee-deep in water.

Realistically, the issues described within this article about the state of the climate system do not get as much attention as warranted by policymakers or by the public. Assuming this article is read, the gist of it, alas, may be tossed aside as easily and quickly as our disposable-oriented society tosses aside paper wrappers, plastic containers, and pretty much everything, including nuclear waste, but where to?

Meanwhile, of special interest, the co-founder of Extinction Rebellion (XR) Roger Hallam has decided to accept the inevitability of collapsing ecosystems. He is turning his focus away from climate demonstrations and disruptions of society, gluing people to buildings, roadways, and airplanes to the discovery of a new type of civilization. He'll be conducting a worldwide zoom session January 14<sup>th</sup> at 8:00 AM Pacific Coast time. It'll be a rare opportunity to learn about and/or join a new world order that's not sinister. To register for the zoom meeting: [Here's the link](#).

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