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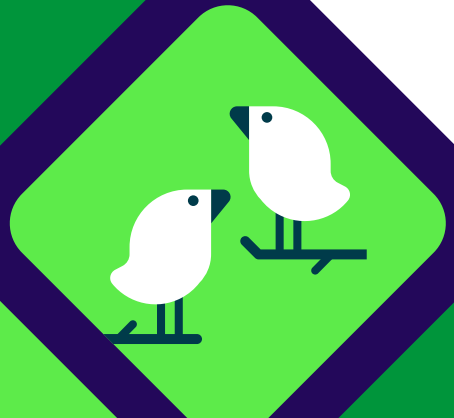
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# **Not (just) a protest: the Youth Strike for Climate as cultural exchange and collaborative text**

**Chloé Germaine Buckley  
and Benjamin Bowman**

Part of  
**The Climate  
Connection**

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# Foreword

The rapid changes currently affecting the Earth's environment amount to arguably the biggest story in human history so far – one that will affect every person on the planet.

The way we tell that story, the language we use and the people we engage will determine our success in minimising and mitigating its effects.

There is little dispute that action to avert catastrophic global heating is essential. But action does not take place in a vacuum. It is the consequence of data, calculation, reflection and the way in which concerned humans communicate.

So cultural relations, the art and practice of international communication as expressed through national cultural assets, has a vital (though largely unexamined) role to play.

As one of the contributors to this collection sums it up: 'Climate change is a crisis of culture.'

The study of cultural relations in the context of climate change – and perhaps more importantly, as a spur to action – is a young field, but one that needs to grow up fast.

This volume of essays commissioned by the British Council is an attempt to survey some of the thinking in the field. We've done this in partnership with researchers from a range of academic backgrounds and disciplines. These new and exciting voices had a brief to provoke and challenge as well as to illuminate – and their essays do just that.

The result is an excellent primer to a variety of approaches from a broad spectrum of authors – and subject matter from 'cli-fi' novels to the meaning of the climate strike movement.

The narratives of myth, religion and history fulfil our need to make sense of the world and our place in it. We urgently need to discover new ways to communicate our present predicament, but I believe all the cultural tools we need for the task are at hand.

The climate emergency has made a single interest group of all people on Earth. So, as well as being a moment of crisis and challenge, the period we are living through has the potential to be a time of unity and common purpose. In that fact, I find great hope.

Advancing as one global community to solve a challenge that is simultaneously paralysing in its enormity and impossible to imagine in its ultimate consequences, has never been attempted before. But that shouldn't stop us trying. Nothing else has ever been so important.

**Kate Ewart-Biggs OBE**  
Interim Chief Executive, *British Council*

# The Climate Connection Cultural Relations Collection Special Edition

The following essays are part of a special edition of the Cultural Relations Collection and part of the Climate Connection. You can find out more about the Climate Connection at [www.britishcouncil.org/climate-connection](http://www.britishcouncil.org/climate-connection)

You can find this special edition and other essays in the Cultural Relations Collection on our website at [www.britishcouncil.org/research-policy-insight/research-series/cultural-relations](http://www.britishcouncil.org/research-policy-insight/research-series/cultural-relations)

An obtuse triangle: the nexus between digital skills, soft power and climate change mitigation in Georgia

*Jessica Gosling*

Emergencies, emergences, engagement: cultural relations and climate action

*Carlia Figueira and Aimee Fullman*

Empowering a world without fossil fuels: a crisis of culture

*Sam McNeilly*

Making sense of climate change in the digital age

*Nina Schuller*

Not (just) a protest: the Youth Strike for Climate as cultural exchange and collaborative text

*Chloé Germaine Buckley and Benjamin Bowman*

Rethinking the unthinkable: what can educational engagements with culture offer the climate crisis?

*Charlotte Nussey*

# Introduction to The Climate Connection Cultural Relations Collection Special Edition

**Michael Mikulewicz** Glasgow Caledonian University  
**Neil JW Crawford** University of Leeds

Three years ago, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), an international body that brings together the world's leading climate scientists, published what is commonly referred to as the 1.5°C Report, in which for the first time ever the authors set an implicit deadline for decisive climate action. The report recommended reducing global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 45 per cent by the year 2030, or in other words limiting the warming of the atmosphere to 1.5°C compared to pre-industrial levels (IPCC, 2018). Beyond the 1.5°C threshold, report authors warned, lies a world marked by 'long-lasting and irreversible' risks for our ecosystems and societies alike (IPCC, p. 36). This unprecedented clarion call for action was the IPCC's attempt to underscore the seriousness of the global climate emergency and galvanise support for aggressive GHG emission reductions at the international and national levels.

Some climate activists have found hope, or at least a silver lining, in the global COVID-19 pandemic, suggesting that reduced economic activity would dramatically curtail carbon pollution (Balch, 2020). The year 2020 did see a decrease in that respect, but not by as much as was expected (Tollefson, 2021). And while calls for 'building back better' have grown in recent months, the general sentiment is that once the virus is brought under control, economic activity will rapidly rebound along with GHG emissions. Not only that, the virus is also said to have had negative effects on climate action. Travel restrictions caused by the pandemic have made it difficult for members of the global climate governance community (governments, NGOs, international organisations, business, etc.) and for activists to meet in person and work together towards more ambitious climate goals. The

postponement of COP26 in Glasgow to November 2021 is a case in point. Meanwhile, virtual meetings do not seem to be as effective as in-person gatherings (Evans & Gabbatiss, 2021).

That said, with or without a global pandemic grounding most flights and making face-to-face interactions impossible, the world's leaders have over the last three decades sought – with very mixed results – to build consensus around who should reduce their emissions, by how much, by when and at whose cost. In 2015, the Paris Agreement was hailed by some as a break to this impasse, though critics rushed to point out that the treaty had no punitive mechanisms and relied on voluntary contributions by states (called nationally determined contributions, or NDCs). Indeed, the world is currently on track to limit warming to about 2.4°C above pre-industrial levels, a far cry from the 1.5°C goal advocated by the IPPC and most environmental organisations, and that is based on national governments' pledges and targets rather than tangible progress (CAT, 2021).

It is clear that we need an unprecedented level of international co-operation to tackle the climate emergency. However, this co-operation can and should come in different iterations; effective collaboration of governments at the national level may not be sufficient to avoid the irreversible changes the IPCC warned of in the 1.5°C Report. What is needed is a global ethic of care and responsibility for the planet – a cultural change that would enable climate action in all facets of social life.

That is because climate change knows no borders and affects the world's cultures just as much as it affects our natural environments.

There is no single human or non-human on Earth that will be unaffected by the changing climate in one way or another. There is certainly some awareness that 'we're all in this together' among global leaders. After all, the Paris Agreement did away with categorising nations into those historically responsible for GHG emissions and the rest (Annex-I and non-Annex-I countries). Even the motto of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – 'leave no one behind' – has an unequivocally cosmopolitan ring to it.

That said, even though we may well all be in this together, we certainly are not equal. Different people will experience climate impacts based on where or who they are – seen from this perspective, climate change is a major socio-economic and political disruptor that can exacerbate global and local inequalities, deep as they already are. This is one of the main concerns of climate justice scholars and activists, who argue that, among other things, we need to refocus the climate debate and action towards those on its frontlines – historically marginalised communities and individuals, and countries that are disproportionately exposed or vulnerable to climate impacts despite having done little to cause it.

This is where the role of cultural relations becomes crucial. While there is no universally supported definition, cultural relations can be said to refer to 'interventions in foreign cultural arenas with the aim of enhancing intercultural dialogue and bringing about mutual benefits connected to security, stability and prosperity' (Gillespie et al., 2018, p. 5). Writing during the height of Cold War tensions, JM Mitchell (1986, p. 1) argued that cultural relations possessed great potential for fostering global stability and that 'alternative

forms of international relations' lay beyond traditional diplomacy. Three decades on from the end of the Cold War, the importance of cultural relations in managing and mitigating global issues is more important than ever. It is difficult to imagine developing a global ethic of planetary care without intercultural dialogue and shared environmental and social values among the world's powerful.

However, cultural relations involves a range of actors and institutions beyond just governments, which has always set it apart from cultural diplomacy (Mitchell, 1986, p. 2). Recently, cultural relations has been harnessed in relation to a range of different issues and fields of study. There has been a 'cultural turn' in international development (Singh, 2019), English language assessment has been approached through the lens of cultural relations (O'Sullivan & Patel, 2019), and the continuing global COVID-19 pandemic has raised debate as to the implications of a shift from physical to digital cultural relations (Kerr, 2021). Despite the noted need to consider the role of culture and creative approaches to addressing climate change (Gabrys & Yusoff, 2012), efforts to address the climate emergency have seldom been considered from the vantage of cultural relations.

These emerging perspectives suggest that cultural relations has the potential to foster mutual understanding, trust and co-operation in the field of climate action. Whether rooted in exchanging global citizens' lived experiences of climate change or promoting cross-cultural co-operation in raising climate awareness and ambitions, cultural relations offers many ways to positively contribute to our planet-wide struggle to contain climate change and its impacts. However, precisely because climate change is riddled with international and

sub-national inequalities in terms of who caused it and who will be affected by its impacts, cultural relations must remain an explicitly reciprocal activity between equal partners (Gillespie et al., 2018). Cultural relations is different in this regard from soft power or cultural diplomacy, the pursuit of which can be problematic, and accused of evincing neo-colonial undertones. A cultural relations approach that is guided by principles of trust, reciprocity and equity – an approach embodied by climate justice – can act as a vehicle for sharing knowledge and experiences of climate impacts and injustices.

The six essays to follow exemplify how this can be achieved and reflect on the role cultural relations has had in shaping climate change discourse, activism and praxis. We now turn to these insightful contributions.

## Overview of essays

In their essay on cultural relations and climate action, Carla Figueira and Aimee Fullman argue for the need to avoid distant, apocalyptic visions of climate change. Instead, they suggest telling 'better stories' about where we want to go and the sort of world we want to live in. They argue that cultural relations, and cultural relations organisations, can play a vital role in shaping this new framing of climate change. Figueira and Fullman discuss emerging ecosystems of care, bolstered since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, and how a caring paradigm can be linked to cultural relations, with its focus on expanding shared knowledge, understanding and trust. Further, their essay argues that cultural engagement serves as a useful point of participation in climate action, focusing on the greening of cultural relations organisations, diversifying cultural engagement interventions, elevating programme evaluations and learning by

design. They argue that cultural relations is an underutilised resource in addressing the climate emergency, and cultural relations organisations have an important part to play.

Charlotte Nussey considers the ways in which educational engagement with cultural relations offers lessons for the climate emergency, including new ideas and ways of talking and listening. Like other essays in the collection, Nussey argues that the climate emergency cannot be addressed by technical responses and innovations alone, but requires a socio-cultural response, inclusive of culture and education. The essay suggests three important connections and shifts in knowledge that are needed in (higher) education relating to the climate emergency. These are:

1. the need to break down hierarchies of knowledge and ways of knowing
2. the need to create deeper, transformative and non-extractive relationships between higher education institutions globally
3. new links between higher education institutions and the societies they are part of, ensuring that the former learn from the latter.

To better make these connections, Nussey proposes four interconnected mechanisms, drawing on intercultural engagement: art as anticipatory memory, language matters, protest as pedagogy and just participation. The essay spotlights the work of the Transforming Universities for a Changing Climate (Climate U) project, which shows the important ways that higher education institutions in the Global South contribute to tackling the causes and impacts of climate change. This example highlights the important intersections that are taking place between activism and scholarship, and touch on culture, education and climate justice.

Chloé Germaine Buckley and Benjamin Bowman discuss the School Strike for Climate, the global movement initiated by Greta Thunberg in August 2018. Rather than consider the strikes as a protest movement for a large-scale shift in climate policy, they suggest viewing them as a form of global cultural exchange. They highlight the role of three themes to make this case:

1. the role of young people's positionalities in building relationships and global solidarities
2. young people's repertoire beyond attempting to shift climate policy into wider civic activity such as intergenerational care or mental health support
3. the functioning of the strikes as a polyphonic 'text' that invites dialogue, incorporating a multitude of voices in a variety of forms.

In their essay, Buckley and Bowman interpret the efforts of young people not only as a protest against the world as it is today, but as a process that envisions the world as it could be, with all the struggles that come with bringing this view into being. The authors draw on a range of materials produced by young people, from informal protest signs to songs.

Sam McNeilly argues that climate change cannot be overcome by technological developments or engineering advances alone, because it is in fact a crisis of culture. McNeilly addresses the relative failure of communicating climate change and roots his work in the 'energy humanities' – an emergent field of scholarship concerned with the impact of the dominant forms of energy on a given society. He argues that effectively communicating the climate emergency requires increased attention to what drives it: the culture of fossil fuels. McNeilly argues

against a simple replacement of fossil fuels with renewables, in favour of an ethical energy transition that involves also understanding and transforming existing cultural practices. Cultural relations can serve to ensure justice is central to shifts away from fossil fuels, and in making this point, McNeilly draws on a variety of cultural outputs, including American naturalist novels, the diary of environmental activist Ken Saro-Wiwa, and the photography and documentary work of Edward Burtynsky. As a post-fossil fuel world still exists in the realm of the imaginary, McNeilly posits that cultural and artistic forms offer opportunities to imagine routes to a just transition and a different kind of world.

In her essay on climate knowledge in the digital age, Nina Schuller invites the reader into the world of the web. As she argues, new communication technologies may be a double-edged sword – stretching outwards and bringing people closer together or being used as a vehicle for promoting certain interpretations and imaginings of the world over others. Schuller explains how digital encyclopaedic knowledge is created and moderated, using Wikipedia as a case study. She notes how our knowledge of climate change is subjected to the politics of translation on the web, with certain interests holding more influence by virtue of digital access and colonial legacies. In this context, Schuller discusses how non-Western knowledges often give way to Eurocentric epistemologies, despite some efforts by media giants like Google and Wikimedia itself to rectify this inequity. The politics of climate knowledge production on the web (and the cultural relations embedded in and shaping this process), Schuller argues, have important implications for global climate action. If generated in a top-down manner, climate knowledges and discourses can contribute to

‘disinterest, disengagement and disaffection’ at the local level, complicating our prospects for mitigating and adapting to the impacts of climate change.

In her essay, Jessica Gosling discusses the ‘obtuse triangle’ of unusual suspects: climate change mitigation, soft power and digital skills, using the nation of Georgia as a case study. She argues that digital skills, which she sees as ‘vital instruments of soft power’, are of crucial importance for building a low-carbon economy and prosperity in the south Caucasian country. Gosling argues that given that climate change is a global emergency, the exchange of information and technology between different cultures and regions of the world becomes crucial for climate mitigation. More specifically, she notes that combatting climate change will require solutions and connectivity afforded by digital and entrepreneurial skills which may not be sufficiently funded and developed in some regions of the world. A related concern here is the unequal access to digital education which limits opportunities for some people to effectively participate in the rapidly digitalising economy and benefit from the wealth that it generates, not to mention being able to engage in discussions on desirable climate change mitigation strategies. Gosling discusses these linkages based on interviews conducted with Georgian experts with regard to the creative industry in the country.

Taken together, the authors of the essays in this collection demonstrate how cultural relations can contribute to the goal of more equitable, intercultural climate action. They offer insights into diverse facets of society, economy and culture and how they can be mobilised for our common good. Our contributors represent different career stages – PhD students, postdoctoral researchers, lecturers and professionals – and different academic and professional disciplines, embodying the diversity of perspectives needed to combat the climate emergency, and do so before the deadline set by the scientists at IPCC.

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# Not (just) a protest: the Youth Strike for Climate as cultural exchange and collaborative text

Chloé Germaine Buckley and Benjamin Bowman  
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## Introduction

In August 2018, the Swedish teenager Greta Thunberg began her campaign of School Strikes for Climate (Swedish: Skolstrejk för klimatet). Thunberg's school strikes are credited for inspiring the current wave of school strikes across the globe, commonly called the Fridays for Future (FFF) or Youth Strike for Climate movement. The global climate strike movement led by young people involves over 14 million people across all continents, with strike action occurring in 7,500 cities worldwide (Fridays for Future, 2021). The year 2018 has been described as a 'watershed' year for action on climate change that marks a sea change in humanity's approach to the climate crisis (Pickard et al., 2020, p. 251). To a large extent, this watershed moment in human history can be credited to the global movement of young people for action on climate change. The continued wave of school strikes across the globe is a prominent part of young people's action.

In this essay, we focus on the climate strike movement as an example of how young people are changing the world. We argue that this movement is more than a protest movement that demands environmental policies for a sustainable world. It is also, vitally, a global cultural exchange, in which young people and others exchange ideas, sentiments and solidarities. The climate strikes, we argue, are a movement in which young people and their allies share transformative visions for a new and better world. In this essay, we explore the practices of this remarkable movement.

The movement of young people for action on climate change is not new, and today's young activists build on a long history of

environmental activism among young people, especially in the Global South, where young people 'are the worst affected victims of resource degradation and environmental pollution' (Bajracharya, 1994, p. 41) and where environmentalism forms part of a wider activism 'to bring about a new ethos, a better kind of society and social relations in which unity may coexist with diversity' (Fals Borda, 1992, p. 311). It is the latter connection between young people's environmentalism and their hopes for a better kind of society that we think goes missing when the climate strikes are considered merely a protest movement. Young people are not just protesting the world we have. They are working together to imagine a better one.

## Moving beyond the 'engagement approach'

Our reading of the strikes as cultural exchange is a departure from the standard approach in studies of young activism. Benjamin Bowman has described the hegemonic framing of young activism as an engagement approach that perceives 'young people as subjects of political engagement more than agents of change' (2019, p. 299). In a commentary on this research, Bronwyn Wood adds that this engagement approach 'celebrate[s] agency and view[s] youth as isolated, bounded, individual subjects' (Wood, 2020, p. 219). The engagement approach tends to shape studies of young people's activism, such as that carried out by Darrick Evensen, which acknowledges young people who 'admirably display civic engagement' (2019, p. 428). Shakuntala Banaji describes this as a 'pro-social and conformist' concept of young citizenship (2008, p. 543). Since studies of young activism tend to foreground, and

celebrate, activism as a process of engagement with adult-centred institutional politics, we consider that young people as activists inhabit 'a restricted imaginary, that has been constrained [and] that constrains young people in their ability to think or act' when it comes to intersecting crises of ecology, environment and climate (Germaine Buckley, quoted in Bowman, 2020, p. 9).

The engagement approach, in other words, is the traditional way to see young people's politics. This approach means looking for evidence that young people are engaging with processes like elections, and then assessing how effective or ineffective young people's engagement has been to change what adults in power are doing. We do not limit our study to the mere measurement of engagement with adult institutions, and we contend that the climate strike movement has broader practices than merely pleading adults to act. We also resist the way that the engagement approach establishes arbitrary and unhelpful definitions of what is political and what is not, including what Bowman calls 'dichotomies of political instrumentality versus self-expression' (2019, p. 302). Young people, like the rest of us, express their hopes for a better future through traditionally political means such as voting and protest placards, but also through emotions, storytelling, care for others, artwork and all manner of other practices. We resist the unnecessary pressure on young people to 'engage' or else be judged disengaged, apolitical or even apathetic.

## Positionality, repertoire and polyphony: a new approach to the climate strikes

Instead of adopting an engagement approach, we examine the climate strike movement as a transnational cultural exchange and, in so doing, we emphasise the ways that young people's politics are related to their self-expression, and we recognise the diversity of their speech and action. We define this concept of the climate strikes as comprising three elements.

First, we identify the climate strikes as a transnational cultural exchange because they are a process of sharing, building and negotiating solidarity based on positionalities. As Pulido and Peña write, positionality is a 'person's location within a larger social formation' and 'is key to how people experience, articulate, and respond to environmental issues (1998, p. 33). The climate strike movement, we claim, is a movement in which young people explore their individual and collective positionality within larger social relationships. These relationships include global inequalities in the experience of the effects of climate change, as well as structural racism, economic inequality and the legacy of colonialism. The strikes demonstrate dispositions and competencies that Richard Slimbach (2005) identifies as 'transculturalism' in their negotiation of these relationships. Indeed, the climate strikes exemplify transculturalism as a 'quest to define shared interests and common values across cultural and national borders' (Slimbach, 2005, p. 204).

Second, as a transnational and transcultural exchange, the movement of young people's climate strikes expands the repertoire of



activists beyond protest and into wider practices of civic activity. These include protest as advocacy for climate-friendly policy change, but also for mutual aid, solidarity among young people amid intersecting economic and social crises, support with mental health issues, democratic horizontalism and intergenerational care for others. That is, the strikes are as much about forging solidarity between groups and individuals as they are about making political demands.

Third, our reading of the strikes as cultural exchange and collaboration deliberately names the movement as a 'text' because it is comprised of many voices, discourses and dialogues. We argue that the strikes are a polyphonic text. That is, they are inclusive of a multitude of voices and utterances, some spoken, some written, some expressed visually in signs or in memes, others through music. Throughout the essay we identify examples of this polyphony not only by pointing to the diversity of practices and people involved in the movement, but by reading specific utterances as evocative of polyphony and as invitations to further dialogue rather than imperatives to action.

These three elements are the defining characteristics we perceive in the climate strike movement. They are positionality, repertoire and polyphony. That is to say, the climate strike movement is characterised first by the ways in which young people explore their positionality in larger social formations, second by the wide and varied repertoires of action that young people use in the movement, and third by the polyphony of the movement, which is characterised by a multitude of voices and by the invitation to add new voices and build dialogue.

Intersecting relations: how young people recognise the systems of oppression that contribute to climate change

As we write this essay, the climate strike movement continues to grow and evolve, despite the significant barriers to organisation and participation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The strikes demonstrate significant grassroots youth leadership as young people engage in activities and modes of communication that seek to empower one another and forge solidarity across national and geographical borders. This empowerment is taking place largely outside of official institutions, civic structures and educational contexts. As many have noted, the youth-led strikes are intended as a disruption to such official contexts, deliberately drawing attention to the ways in which young people are marginalised in discussions of climate change and climate action even though it will affect them over time more significantly than adults. As researchers in youth studies, with a focus on youth literatures and youth politics respectively, our reading of the climate strike movement concerns this marginalisation and seeks ways to support young people's action. This essay is one such intervention because it advocates for a richer understanding of the climate strikes than those offered by adult-focused narratives about the strike that tend to circulate in mainstream politics, news media and culture, especially in the Global North.

Youth-led action on the climate cultivates and negotiates complex and intersecting relations between generations and cultures. The strikers are making a raft of specific demands on climate action addressed to governments and global organisations, including a call to the European Union to scrap the common agricultural policy, a request for governments

to honour the Paris Agreement and fight for a 1.5°C rise, and, more broadly for politicians to 'listen to the science', which is a common refrain at protests and in speeches made by young people across the globe. Though these demands are integral to the movement, the framing of young people's action on the climate crisis as protest simplifies the complex negotiations and creative interventions that characterise the strikes. As well as making concrete political demands, young people in the strike movement communicate principles of climate justice, as defined by the Mary Robinson Foundation (2011), which insist on a civil and human rights framing of the climate crisis and pay attention to its uneven effects. This has led some people, such as Catherine Walker (2020), to identify youth-led climate strikes as a site of uneven solidarity, as more privileged young people in the Global North strike on behalf of young people who do not have access to such action, or for whom being out of school is more dangerous, and for those whose action on the climate has not been recognised by politicians and the media worldwide in the same way.

Our recognition of the climate strikes' negotiation of these complex relationships draws on the framework of intersectionality and, in so doing, follows the young people themselves for whom intersectionality has become an important concept. Intersectionality is an analytical framework that understands how social and political identities interact and intersect in the production of discrimination and privilege. Coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) to identify the ways sex and race interacted in the experience of, and discrimination against, Black women, the term has proliferated to include many categories of identity and is in common usage among young people involved

in the climate strikes to understand their own positionalities. Zanagee Artis, one of the founders of Zero Hour, a youth-led organisation in the USA, defines the movement as being organised 'around the intersectionalities between systems of oppression that continue to cause climate change' (2019). Artis claims that young people have 'reimagined and recreated what climate justice organizing should look like' by emphasising intersectionality and highlighting the role of colonialism, racism and patriarchy in the crisis. Targeting the misconception that the climate crisis is an issue about the future, Artis shows how intersectionality reveals that climate change is happening here and now, and that environmental groups must 'act with more solidarity' with those on the frontlines of climate change.

The other complex negotiation taking place through the strikes is the generational positioning of the young people involved and the way in which their action has been understood through an intergenerational lens that tends to position them as students who ought to be in school, or as objects of parental care. As Bowman has argued, young people's calls to action are intergenerational in nature because they position themselves both as young people in the present and as future parents and grandparents, conceiving of time, inheritance and their action in complex ways (2020, p. 7). The concept of uneven solidarity is at work in such temporal negotiations, too, because young people recognise their own marginalisation and that their political action requires the support of adults to have any impact. Artis (2019) identifies just this difficulty and notes that intergenerational support for youth organising tends to be limited to adults who have been part of the environmental movement for their whole lives. Thus, young

people are not only calling upon adults who have political power to take action, they are also reaching out to other adults to join in dialogue about the crisis and to help them build the forms of solidarity that are necessary to tackling it. Following these calls, this essay interrogates the transcultural and intergenerational relations that are integral to young people's action on the climate, reading the global strikes as a text composed of diverse, creative practices that aim to foster co-operation and mutual understanding.

### More than protest: reading the climate strikes as a global conversation

As discussed in the introduction, this essay wants to move away from thinking of the climate strikes only as a protest because this homogenises youth action on the crisis and ignores the ways in which young people are learning from and promoting transcultural exchanges. These include the remarkable global conversations about environmental justice, solidarity and dissent shared by young people in the movement. The dominant reading of young people's action on the climate as protest also tends to focus on young people in the Global North, whose action is the most visible, and reads their actions in that context, failing to recognise that young people from all over the world initiated the movement and are communicating with one another.

We think that a framing of youth action on the climate as protest confounds the intergenerational exchanges occurring as part of the movement, reducing it to a conflict between young and old. This is especially apparent in news media discourse about, and

representations of, Greta Thunberg. Thunberg herself leans on the rhetorical strategy of intergenerational conflict in some of her speeches. Addressing business leaders, bankers and politicians at Davos, for example, Thunberg tells them you will 'have to explain to your children you are giving up on the 1.5 degree target', urging them to 'panic, and to act as if you loved your children above all else' (2020). Admonishing the adults in the room for giving up without a fight, Thunberg states that her generation will not do so. Her rhetorical strategy is rife with tensions. On one hand, Thunberg contrasts adults with children, since the latter act where the former give up. On the other hand, in asking the adults to take seriously responsibilities to the 1.5°C target on behalf of children, Thunberg evokes notions of parental care that position children not as agents but as objects. In service of a young woman speaking at Davos, this rhetorical strategy is useful. Thunberg draws attention to the fact of her own marginalisation in a context in which adults frame her words and actions for their own purposes as she addresses a group of adults who have power to act and make concrete changes, while she has much more limited capacity in this respect. Thunberg also seeks to disrupt the ways in which her presence at such events as Davos is harnessed by adults to absolve themselves of responsibility for action, famously telling the United Nations they ought to be ashamed of coming to young people for hope (2019). Drawing on the language of intergenerational conflict unsettles the relationships and power dynamics at work in these settings.

However, the intergenerational conflict frame is taken up in the media and in other forms of representation in less useful ways, erecting barriers to collaboration and solidarity, and, in

some cases, delegitimising the youth movement. As Bergmann and Ossewaarde (2020) argue, using examples of coverage in German newspapers, young people are frequently described as 'pupils', 'absentees' and 'dreamers' who ought to be in school. This construction of the strikers suggests their youth means they have much to learn from adults. More egregious examples of this discourse abound in the UK newspaper media, with one columnist calling the children 'narcissists' who have been overindulged by parents, stating their 'adolescent hectoring' ought to be silenced (Sandbrook, 2020). The framing of the strike movement as a protest encourages these conflictual responses, ignoring the ways in which the strikes are also a way of forging solidarity between generations.

As discussed in the introduction to this essay, an emphasis on protest also reconfigures young people's politics as a limited and constrained process of engagement along a 'pro-social and conformist' concept of young citizenship (Banaji, 2008, p. 543). Some of the young people in this movement are protesting for those in power to change their policies, but this is far from the only goal of the climate strike movement. Moreover, because the policy demands of the climate strike movement are connected to broader, transformative calls for climate justice and 'systems change', framing the movement as only a protest movement tends to lead to well meaning, but limited, interpretations that young climate activists 'generated powerful narratives calling for immediate action ... [but] fell short of offering concrete solutions' (Han & Ahn, 2020, p. 7). On the contrary, the climate strike movement does offer concrete solutions; these solutions are bound up in powerful transformative narratives because

this movement seeks transformative change, not piecemeal adjustments to what Thunberg called, in a speech to the UN Climate Action Summit, "business as usual" and some technical solutions' (2019). It is not a protest movement asking politicians to implement adjustments. It is a transcultural collaboration for imagining, and creating, a new world.

### Moving beyond conflict: how young people promote solidarity

Framing the strikes as a protest emphasises the conflicts that have emerged as a result of the climate crisis. Primarily, these conflicts are those that occur between nations and generations over the uneven effects of climate change, the need for climate justice and, of course, who has responsibility for addressing these problems. Our reading is not that such conflicts don't exist, but that they are not the determining forces behind the strikes. Here we briefly examine the conflicts that have emerged in recent discussions and analysis of the climate crisis, offering our own analysis of the ways in which young people's actions seek to move beyond conflict to the creation of new narratives that emphasise collaboration.

Conflictual framings of young people's action on the climate crisis are perhaps unsurprising given the scale of the crisis. It is a radical rupture in geophysical, historical and social terms, which confounds our understanding of the world. Clive Hamilton uses the word 'rupture' to describe the ways in which anthropogenic climate change disrupts the functioning of the earth-system as a whole (2017, p. 17). More than this, it is a 'rupture' of our social as well as physical world (Hamilton, 2017, p. 30), challenging received ideas about social organisation and demanding new

theories. One of the confounding aspects of the climate crisis is unevenness. As young people have recognised, not everyone is equally responsible for climate change, nor can everyone act equally to mitigate its effects, and those effects do not occur evenly across the globe. These disruptions have economic and political consequences, and while there have been numerous attempts to forge transnational agreements, such as the Paris Agreement, there has also been a surge in populist and nationalist politics across the globe. The philosopher Bruno Latour identifies this as a new 'affinity for borders', which has erupted in the wake of the climate crisis and hampered transnational action (2018, p. 4).

Young people's action responds to this political context by reaching out across borders to foster solidarity that recognises the injustices of the climate crisis and its uneven effects. Speaking to the UK newspaper the *Guardian*, young activist Daze Aghaji emphasised that young people in Extinction Rebellion, a movement criticised for having a 'race problem', were focused on issues of diversity and intersectionality (Gayle, 2019). She states:

*XR Youth is really based on talking about indigenous communities, and the global south is our centering of what we talk about and how we express ourselves. And the way we connect to the climate emergency is very much in the line of more climate justice than the main XR.*

Aghaji quoted in Gayle, 2019

Although action such as the climate strikes and Extinction Rebellion occurs unevenly across the globe, with more access in the 'affluent Global North' (Walker, 2020, p. 2), young people in these places are concerned

with climate justice. The Lausanne Climate Declaration – a joint statement from 400 young activists from 38 countries – states that its second demand is to 'ensure climate justice and equity' (Fridays for Future, 2019, p. 3). This sense of climate justice is not simply codified as a political demand, however, but central to the modes of communication developed in the strikes. As Aghaji states, self-expression is not self-involved, but about recognising the experience of others as central. Thus, we align the climate strikes with the concept of transculturalism. We argue that young people involved in climate action demonstrate the competencies of transculturalism in their thinking 'outside the box of one's motherland' and their aims to see 'many sides of every question without abandoning conviction' (Slimbach, 2005, p. 211). Young people such as Aghaji demonstrate in their words and actions what Slimbach calls 'global awareness: a basic awareness of transnational conditions and systems, ideologies and institutions, affecting the quality of life of human and non-human populations' (2005, p. 206).

The world is not only experiencing political failures around transnational co-operation in the face of the rupture of the climate crisis. The writer Amitav Ghosh contends that a broad imaginative and cultural failure lies at the heart of the climate crisis: we do not lack information about what it is or what action needs to be taken (2016, p. 17). Rather, we have failed to find stories and narratives to help us comprehend these facts. This imaginative failure is another reason for the emphasis on conflict in dominant understandings of the climate crisis and young people's action. It stems from the other feature of the rupture: unpredictability. As Christopher Groves suggests, dominant responses to the crisis, which include such

concepts as sustainability, only go so far, since they remain 'within the limitations of modernist ways of thinking, in which the future is imagined solely in terms of the continuation of present projects, which are then projected into the future in a way that colonises future possibilities' (2019, p. 915). Young people's action is too often understood within the confines of such concepts as sustainability, which maintains that they are protesting the loss of a once-green world, or fighting to ensure adults maintain what is left. This emphasises intergenerational conflict, as discussed, but also positions young people in a linear history where the future is continuous with the present. Considering the narratives about climate change and young people that circulate in fiction, Adeline Johns-Putra argues that the crisis makes the future radically 'unknowable' but that this is foreclosed by dominant ethical and moral frameworks that hinge on posterity, that is on conserving the present for future generations (2019, pp. 34, 167). She notes that such narratives collapse complex webs of obligations between people, species and ecosystems into a single strand of time shaped by biological inheritance and normative human family dynamics (2019, p. 4). Posterity narratives further objectivise young people, erasing their agency in shaping the future, because they use young people as guarantors of a future that is continuous with the present. Young people are clear that such continuity is a fantasy, so their action is disruptive to normative framings of the crisis.

Children do not want to preserve the world as it was; that world has already gone. The literary critic Alice Curry points to Octavia Butler's dystopian novel *The Parable of the Sower* (1993) as expressing an idea that is pervasive in adult culture: that children and young people guarantee continuity with the

past. In the novel, a young protagonist notes that the adults are:

*still anchored in the past, waiting for the good old days to come back. But things have changed a lot, and they'll change more ... People have changed the climate of the world. Now they're waiting for the old days to come back.*

Butler quoted in Curry, 2013, p. 5

The climate strikes have, of course, made it clear that young people have no interest in the 'old days'. The way they communicate this varies, but one striking example is that of a young person who dressed as Death at a climate march in Manchester in 2019. The figure, in a black hooded robe, holding a plastic scythe and a home-made sign that read 'Reapers 4 Climate Change', spoke to Benjamin Bowman, in character, about their hopes for a 'post-life economy' and the 'grim reaping lobby group'. Through their mask, Death encouraged governments to 'keep burning your fossil fuels, keep destroying your planet and I'll see you real soon' (quoted in Bowman, 2020, p. 8). Death communicates in the language of parody, disclosing through their jargonistic language their criticism of a global, corporate capitalism responsible for the rapid destruction of life-sustaining habitats. Moreover, dressed as Death, this young climate striker draws attention to the destruction wrought by the current system and, so, the need for radical break with that system. Just as Death does not make any concrete political demands, nor do they advocate for environmental preservation or sustainability. Rather Death figures as what the eco-critics Claire Colebrook and Jami Weinstein name the 'posthumous', which is the challenge of trying to carve out a 'something

else' that has not yet been, and may not be, identified (Colebrook & Weinstein, 2017, p. 13). As a figuration, death gestures obliquely to new, as yet not articulated, ways of being.

### Polyphony: reading the strikes as an invitation to dialogue

The figure of Death at the Manchester march is one example of the complex ways in which young people use speech and language in the strikes. The voice of Death uses what the philosopher and literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin identifies as 'double-voiced discourse', which is a form of speech that uses the language of parody to exhibit distaste or disagreement with a particular set of ideas or norms. In this example, the young person dressed as Death evokes the language, or jargon, of neoliberal growth economics ('post-life economy'), and expresses, though a hidden polemic, a criticism of the ethical failures of those economic norms, failures that the jargon of growth economics would seek to conceal.

Death imitates someone in favour of climate change, holding a sign marked 'Reapers 4 Climate Change'; this joke is a parody of the economics that this climate striker thinks needs to be changed. In his complex parody, Death demonstrates Bakhtin's theory of language and text as dialogic and polyphonic, that is multi-voiced and open to participation. He exaggerates what he finds objectionable in contemporary language around the economy, and his performance invites the listener to take part in a 'potential dialogue' because they are required to interpret the parody and to respond (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 324). In other words, Death's sign and statements are not just a protest. They are an example of one

characteristic we see time and again at the climate strikes, that young climate strikers use a complex, polyphonic voice to invite dialogue on broad systemic issues.

The climate strikes are a polyphonic text, which is to say that they constantly engage with multiple voices and types of language, sometimes informed by those languages, but also contesting them, not to have the final say, nor to close the conversation about the climate crisis, but to invite further dialogue. This dialogue is made possible in part through the range of signifying practices and through the different voices included in the strike, which emerge in different geographical and cultural locations at different times. This is why we argue that the strikes are not only a protest, but a collaborative, cross-cultural, cross-generational form of storytelling about the loss of a world that was, and the possibilities of a world that could be.

Young people's speech and performances in the climate strikes and in other forms of activism often attempt forms of generational boundary crossing, collaboration and solidarity, such as those communicated in 'Speak for the Trees' (2014), a song written by then-14-year-old Xiuhtezcatl Martinez, a youth leader with the non-governmental group Earth Guardians. The song opens with the singer identifying as a young person, using 'I' and 'my generation' as he laments the destruction of the natural world by 'machines' and 'plunder'. In the second verse, the address shifts to include the listener, interpolated as 'you'. 'You' may be the adult listener since they are asked to 'look into the eyes of the children' as they consider scenes of environmental degradation. There are some demands made to this adult listener, including the straightforward 'don't cut down my trees'.

However, as the singer identifies more and more with the trees themselves, not only speaking for them but letting them surround and infuse him, the boundary between the young speaker (I) and the adult listener (you) disintegrates. Both come to be identified with the trees themselves: 'You are the Baobab, Redwood, & Pine: You are the future in present time [...] Feel your roots like a living history.' Here the conflictual dialogue of the opening of the song gives way to other kinds of relationships, which aim for solidarity between generations and species. The singer continues, 'so we say to you and me: one billion rise for the tree & the seeds!' Here, the introduction of the inclusive pronoun 'we' brings together the initially distanced speaker and listener to act on behalf of the trees. The song, then, is not only about a young person addressing adults in protesting deforestation, but about communicating the 'unstoppable' life force of the trees, which reaches out across the borders separating generations and even species.

The strikes are a polyphonic text that invite dialogue and collaboration, and which aim to foster solidarity between voices, positionalities and experiences. As Pickard, Bowman and Arya contend, young people's demands for change go hand in hand with 'their choice to use peaceful non-violent forms of direct action to protest within a collective horizontal movement' (2020, p. 253). This collective, horizontal movement of the strikes allows for collaboration and solidarity, albeit with a recognition of the unevenness of young people's experiences of the climate crisis and their access to strike action (Walker, 2020). In the emerging field of research that listens to young people at the climate strikes, young people themselves recognise and remark on the diversity of their movement and the need

to support others in kindness, sharing and mutual care. Pickard, Bowman and Arya quote one young Extinction Rebellion protester camping out in Trafalgar Square, who says: 'We are radical in our kindness. We are breaking social norms. We are a radical community' (Skylab, 19, XR activist, quoted in Pickard et al., 2020, p. 253). Their analysis of young people's action identifies 'joyful solidarity: positive emotions arising from collective action, shared spaces, and activities' (2020, p. 272).

The visual signifiers developed in the strikes through protest signs provide examples of such positive emotions and solidarity. Bowman discusses one such sign designed by a young climate striker in the Manchester march in 2019, which depicted rows of waves drawn as hands reaching upward, with the slogan 'waves of support'. The striker said that the sign 'spreads the message that everyone needs to get involved' and that it 'shows unity, that everyone's involved, and everyone has a say in what's happening'. Bowman argues that such signs, which are coded as 'solidarity', work thematically to support the 'imperatives' of the strike that articulate more concrete demands (2020, p. 6). Bowman further identifies an 'orientation towards mutual sharing and inclusion' in the strikes as 'strikers positioned themselves in relation to each other as a group trying to seek mutual involvement and uphold each other' (2020, p. 7). Here, we show that the dialogic and polyphonic communication of the strike, here rendered visually as a multitude of hands, is what enables this solidarity.

## Conclusion

In this essay, we have argued that the climate strikes are a transcultural exchange and a collaborative text, and we have offered this reading as challenge to dominant framings and representations of young people's action on the climate. These dominant framings tend to marginalise and objectify young people. This way of conceptualising young people produces a constrained imaginary that limits our understanding of their words and actions on the climate crisis, and that encourages misinterpretation of what they are saying to adults and to each other. To reconstruct this constrained imaginary, we have drawn on a range of young people's voices. Our data has included instances of action led by young people in which the personal, including self-expression, is indivisible from the political demands they are making. These actions form a collaborative text and include utterances which are spoken and written, as well as formal op-eds and declarations, informal protest signs and songs. These diverse signifying practices seek to build transcultural and intergenerational relationships, alliances and other forms of solidarity that recognise the unevenness and unpredictability of climate change. In the climate strike movement, we recognise that young people develop a global dialogue, and an invitation to join this dialogue, which imagines a new world rather than conserves or restores the old.

It is standard practice at the end of an essay such as ours to ask: 'What should happen next?' Here, then, we reflect on the impact of considering the climate strike movement as a cultural exchange characterised by multiple positionalities, varied repertoires and polyphonic voice. It is a movement that invites young people to listen to each other, share in

each other's experiences and uphold each other's voices. What should happen next, we feel, is for people, including adults in power, to accept the invitation to dialogue and to support young people in the blossoming of their imaginaries.

We encourage readers of this essay to view the youth-led climate strikes as an invitation to engage in dialogue with young people's ideas about the need for systemic change, to examine the systems of oppression that contribute to climate change, and to take seriously their imaginings about a future world beyond the climate crisis. This involves a step-change in the way we conceive young people in society and requires a more generous view of their role in shaping the future beyond models of civic engagement. Such changes will be difficult to bring about and we point to the practices of young people as exemplary in initiating such changes. Young people's action in the climate strike movement is characterised by love, care and kindness. We must uphold young people and each other as we seek to imagine a better world.

Young people and others, through the climate strike movement, do not tell us what should happen next. They do not merely demand certain policies or aim to vote for certain candidates. They do not know what world they wish to inhabit; that is why theirs is an invitation to collaborate. The climate strike movement places us at a turning point in human history where young people are beginning to share and explore visions of what *could* happen next. As climate activist and musician Xiuhtezcatl Roske-Martinez argues in his song, 'Speak for the Trees', 'you are the future in present time'.

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# Concluding remarks to The Climate Connection Cultural Relations Collection Special Edition

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The 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26) will take place in Glasgow, the 'second city' of the British Empire, and be hosted by the UK, the birthplace of the modern fossil economy. This moment therefore provides pause for looking back at the historical roots of the current global climate emergency. Since 1995, with the notable exception of 2020, the COP has provided a vital opportunity for global leaders and decision makers to meet and deliberate on how to jointly govern our common atmosphere. Yet the COP is much more than just a gathering of high-profile figures. The deliberations and decisions made at the COP are a result of and testament to the commitment of thousands of people – scientists, public servants, administrators and others – who are hard at work behind the scenes in between the annual COP meeting. After all, there is only so much progress that can be achieved during the two weeks that the COP tends to last. The biannual Subsidiary Bodies meetings and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) process are perhaps the clearest examples of these crucial interactions constantly taking place in the background. These backroom meetings, conversations and exchanges of information between state delegations, international organisations and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Secretariat all depend on mutual trust, understanding and observance of certain rules. In essence, they are cultural relations.

Similarly, it is not only public officials and diplomats that gather at the COP. The global climate is too important to be left to state governments and international bodies alone. That is why each COP invariably spurs a blossoming of civil society activity both in the

run-up to and during the conference itself. Marches, workshops, meetings, sit-ins and 'die-ins', speeches and many other forms of civic engagement (and sometimes disobedience) are offered during various side events and alternative summits organised by the likes of the Climate Action Network, 350.org, the Indigenous Climate Network, the Climate Justice Alliance and Extinction Rebellion. These bring together activists, academics, policymakers, business leaders and other members of the public, often with the explicit goal to further the principles of climate justice and human rights. These, too, are cultural relations.

What this means is that global climate governance is actually underpinned by cultural relations. If we want to address the planetary emergency of our atmosphere, we will need to rely on cross-cultural exchanges to foster mutual trust and understanding – not just during COP meetings, but throughout the next decade or so, which according to the IPCC will be absolutely crucial in determining the extent of irreversible changes to the Earth's climate system. In other words, we argue that the climate emergency is, in many ways, also a cultural emergency. It is a common misconception that the deployment of technology, funding and science will do the trick to solve the climate conundrum. In reality, these are just tools at our disposal – cultural relations can help us use them both more effectively and equitably.

Indeed, the sticking points of global climate negotiations – beyond the usual and more technical bickering over access to funding and technology – have long been about the historical responsibility of certain countries for emitting the bulk of greenhouse gases. These countries, like the UK, are

predominantly in the Global North, meaning that international debates often descend into arguments over the compensatory or corrective measures these countries should take given the disproportionate effects of climate change impacts on countries in the Global South. The right to development of many countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Pacific is seen as a *sine qua non* for their governments, while leaders from the Global North insist that this development must be rooted in sustainability rather than focused on economic growth alone (which is not to say they do not often pursue this latter strategy, themselves). From this complicated dynamic emerges a picture of global inequality, not simply as part of a North–South divide, but also within regions and countries. With these inequalities, climate justice emerges as an important goal for making international climate governance more legitimate and effective.

The question this collection of essays has tried to answer is: how could cultural relations contribute to solving the seemingly unsolvable impasse when it comes to addressing the climate emergency? If, as we argue here, the success of the UNFCCC at least partially depends on the extent to which cultural relations can foster a climate [sic] of trust and mutual understanding, thus helping to resolve the issues of global climate injustice, then the arguments found in this collection's six essays can point us in the right direction towards resolving the thorny question of climate inequity and injustice. Below, we tease out how each of them does so.

Carla Figueira and Aimee Fullman's contribution approaches issues of justice in at least two different ways. First, they argue for cultural relations and co-operation that are

'fair, inclusive and diverse', recognising that national cultural institutes often carry colonial or imperialist baggage that needs to be openly recognised and addressed. This does not only refer to issues of climate change. The authors invoke the global COVID-19 response as an example that lays bare the long-standing inequities between wealthy and poorer nations when it comes to access to financial, technological and cultural resources. Seen in this way, the pandemic offers a lesson on how not to address a planetary crisis. Second, Figueira and Fullman touch on the issues of intergenerational (climate) justice, observing that much of the climate change programming in the West is aimed predominantly at young people, whose lives are bound to be most impacted by climate change in the long term. However, they caution against a limited, unidimensional strategy of this kind and instead argue for a holistic approach reflected in diverse audiences, geographies, types of engagement, and programme and partnering models (Fullman, 2012).

Nina Schuller stresses both the importance and the potential of digital technologies for promoting equal participation in creating our 'shared imaginings' of a sustainable world. More specifically, she places emphasis on the issue of knowledge making and translation as it relates to climate discourse, trust, knowledge and action. Similar to the insights by Figueira and Fullman, Schuller recognises the importance of building trust upon which, as suggested by a number of studies, the acceptance and use of climate knowledge is predicated. Yet, the author also points to the unequal politics of translation and knowledge production, with corporations based in the Global North, like Wikimedia, as well as some national governments holding disproportionate control over what kind of

climate knowledge is accessible on the web, and how it is translated. This kind of digital or data colonialism reduces epistemic diversity and undermines the intercultural trust necessary for effective global climate action.

Closely related to these insights, Jessica Gosling underscores the value of digital skills in mitigating climate change. It is hard to imagine a global co-operative effort to address the climate crisis without different parties being able to use communication technologies in an equitable manner. However, Gosling observes that digital competencies and access to new technologies are far from evenly distributed among nations. This is particularly problematic for developing or rapidly industrialising countries, where these skills and resources are not only vital for enabling their meaningful participation in global climate governance, but also act as one of the foundations for building economic and social prosperity. Gosling also notes that a climate-just future requires all citizens to be able to 'have more of a voice to articulate their wants and needs' – an ability for which, in this day and age, digital skills are of crucial importance. Thus, she concludes by emphasising the vitality of education, including digital education, entrepreneurship and soft skill development, for realising the commitments enshrined in the Paris Agreement in an equitable manner.

Charlotte Nussey highlights the important connections between climate justice, culture and education. 'Culture' can be used to exclude or oppress when not understood in terms of multiple forms of knowledge, while cultural expressions of climate change that centre historically excluded and marginalised voices can serve to increase our collective knowledge, flatten hierarchies and challenge taken-for-granted categories. Nussey highlights the way in which cultural and artists' acts of protest, from the work of artist-poet

Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner to the Kenyan Green Belt Movement, help embed climate change within communities and highlight often-intersecting forms of inequality and exclusion. This echoes the work on intersectional climate justice and argues that climate justice is also a matter of racial justice, gender justice and others.

The essay by Chloé Germaine Buckley and Benjamin Bowman speaks directly to issues of climate justice given its focus on the Youth Strikes for Climate. As others' essays have highlighted, climate justice as presented here and by young people is intersectional, drawing links between the climate emergency and racism, colonialism and patriarchy. For Buckley and Bowman, the climate strikes are a global conversation, and this conversation is concerned with dissent, solidarity and justice. The climate strikes, read as cultural exchange, allow young people to listen to one another, share experiences and uphold each other's voices. As for what is next, Buckley and Bowman argue that people, including adults in power, should engage in dialogue with youth, who will ensure that justice is at the centre of efforts to address the climate emergency.

In his essay on the emergent energy humanities, Sam McNeilly convincingly argues that cultural relations can help ensure that individuals, communities and institutions place justice at the centre of global efforts to transition away from fossil fuels. Much of the work that McNeilly draws on, such as the writing of Ken Saro-Wiwa, speaks to, or actively calls for, environmental or climate justice. In the essay McNeilly suggests possible ways to move towards a future free of fossil fuels, but cautions that the shift to renewable energy is itself not inherently just, rather it must be won. Like other essays in the collection, McNeilly stresses the importance of education, in this case in the democratic, and just, energy transition.

As we have shown above, questions of equity and justice in cultural relations are interwoven into all the essays in this collection. Authors have pointed to issues of intergenerational justice, the intersection of culture, politics, education and technology, different levels of access to education and other resources among and within nations, and the unequal nature of climate knowledge production itself. What emerges from these contributions is an extremely complex picture of what we know, how we think about and how we co-operate to solve the climate emergency. There may be many challenges ahead, but the authors and editors of this collection share the hope that cultural relations, if done the right way, can help foster a global ethics of care for the planet and all its people.

While the G7 Summit held in the UK in June 2021 saw reaffirming goals of reducing global warming, it also failed to reach climate finance targets needed by countries in the Global South, those at the sharp end of climate change's impacts. COP26 will be an occasion to do better than that. Regardless of what happens behind the closed doors of COP negotiation rooms, we can be certain that the vibrant cultural exchanges between different people and cultures held in Glasgow this November will continue to foster the inclusive and diverse cultural relations we need to address the global climate emergency.





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