

A TOOLKIT TO START YOUR  
BOOK CLUB AROUND GRETA  
THUNBERG'S *CLIMATE BOOK*



# BOOK CLUBS FOR FUTURE

# GETTING STARTED

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This toolkit is for those of us who want to do something for the climate, but do not know where to start.

A first step is to teach ourselves and help people around us learn more about the crisis we are facing.

**We are starting a book club movement.** To change hearts and minds. To catalyse the climate movement. To build a caring community.

“The first step in solving a crisis is to realize that you are in one. And we are not there yet. We are not aware of the fact that we are in a climate emergency. But that’s not the main problem. The main problem is that we are not aware of the fact *we are not aware.*”

Greta Thunberg (4.18)

# HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT

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This toolkit proposes an itinerary through Greta Thundberg's *Climate Book* in **seven meetings**. It is meant as an inspiration. Make it your own!

Each session guide starts with a **summary of the chapter**. Use it to decide what to read. You do not need to read every chapter. Select what you are most interested in!

We suggest warming up by reading an **opening quote** and taking a moment reflect on it. Take turns to read this quote at each session!

Start connecting with each other through a **check-in round**. How is everyone doing today?

Then dig in the discussion using the **conversation questions** to stimulate the exchange. Feel free to make up your own questions!

When the meeting is about to end, wrap up with a **closing round**.

# HOW TO SET UP YOUR BOOK CIRCLE

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*Creating a book club is easy. A few steps and you'll be all set!*

## **1) Find participants**

There are many ways to form a group. For example, you can start with a small group of (2-3) friends, and ask each person to invite 2-3 other friends to join. Or you can put up posters with an invite at your school or university, at your workplace, in your building, in your neighbourhood, or on social media. Aim to be 6-12. This is large enough to have a fruitful dialogue if some are absent, but small enough for everyone to have the time to contribute.

## **2) Agree on the basics**

In the first meeting, discuss the level of ambition, the expectations, the logistics and the ground rules. How much do we want to read each time? How often will we meet? Where do we meet? At what time? What are our ground rules? How will we access the book? What is our group's name? How do we keep in touch between meetings?

## **3) Rotate the facilitation and organisation**

Share the roles! Make sure everyone gets a chance to facilitate or organise the meeting (or, for example, bringing cookies and tea).

# HOW TO FACILITATE A BOOK CIRCLE

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*There are various options to facilitate your book circle. Here are three formats you can play with.*

## **The facilitator**

One person acts as facilitator. Typically, the facilitator should not intervene in the actual conversation. Rather, their role is to (1) ensure ground rules are respected, (2) make sure everybody gets roughly equal opportunities to speak, (3) dissolve negativity, conflicts, or power-dynamics if they were to appear. The facilitator should not hesitate to intervene early, gently but firmly, if there is an issue, to make sure to prevent bad dynamics.

## **The stone**

Bring with you a fun object (for example, a stone). Only the one who has the object is allowed to speak. Once a contribution is finished, pass the stone to someone else in the club. In this format, we usually do not answer (to agree or disagree) to each other's opinions, but simply share our own perspective.

## **The circle**

Allocate a time for each contribution (for example, 3 minutes). Each person is allowed to share for this amount of time. The others are listening actively. When the time has elapsed, the next person in the circle can speak. No answer to each other's contribution is given. A variation is to also take a moment to reflect in silence after each contribution.

# HOW TO PARTICIPATE IN A BOOK CIRCLE

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*In the first meeting, agree on your ground rules. Here are six principles we suggest as a foundation for your own agreement.*

*Care* We actively ensure that everyone feels well and welcome.

*Positivity* We support each other's ideas and avoid contradiction or judgement.

*Equality* We share time evenly and avoid forming hierarchies or subgroups.

*Receptivity* We listen actively and respectfully to each contribution.

*Generosity* We share our perspective, experience, and ideas openly.

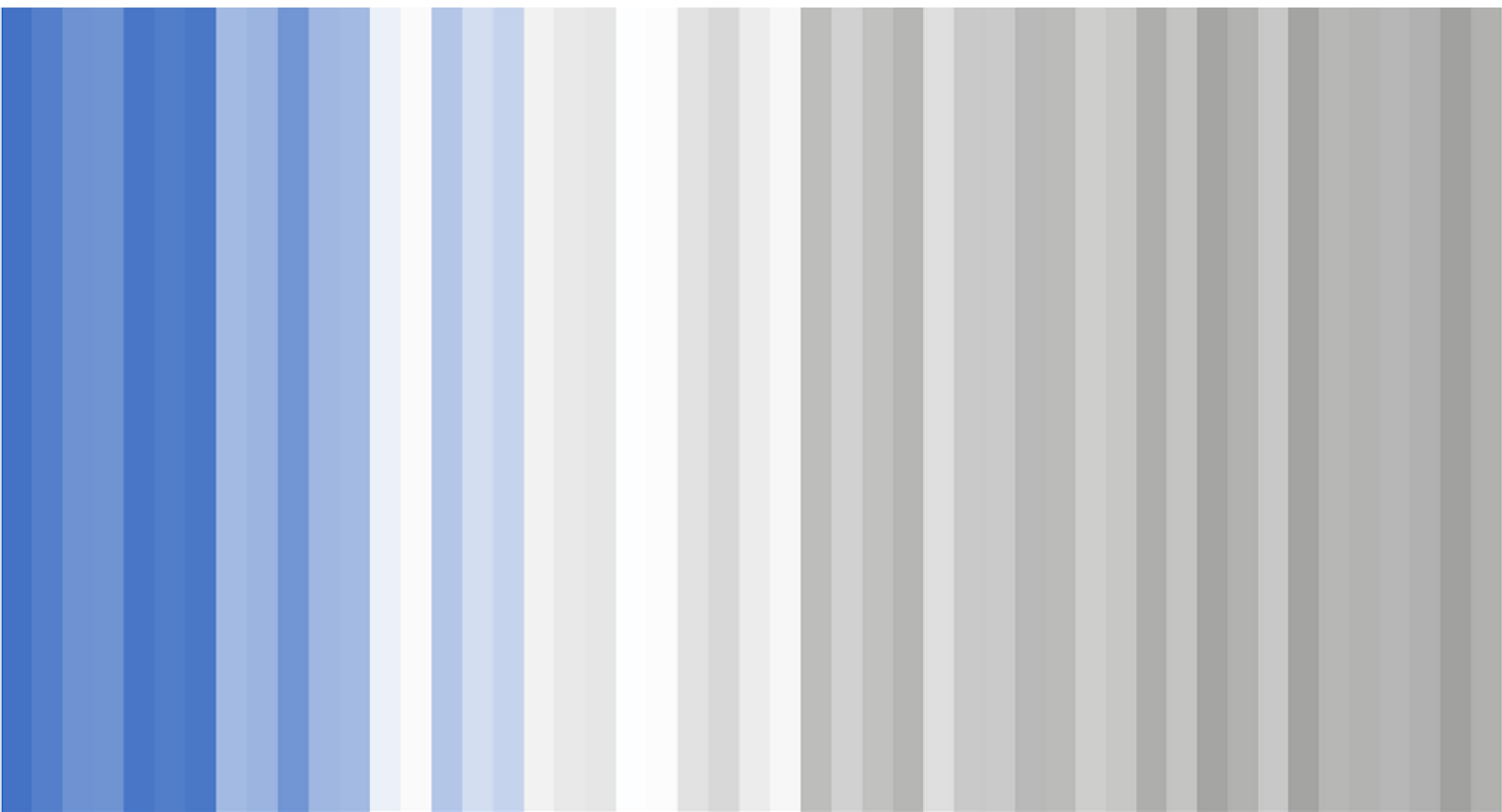
*Community* We seek to grow as individuals and as a collective.

# SESSION ONE

## HOW CLIMATE WORKS

### Opening Quote

“We have to start learning. We have to understand the basic facts. We have to learn to read between the lines. We need to teach each other to tell it like it is. There is no need for exaggeration; the story is bad enough already. There is no need for sugarcoating; we have to be adult enough to handle the truth. And there is no time for despair, it is never too late to start saving as much as we can possibly save.”  
Greta Thunberg (1.9).





## Summary

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- Never has it been so important to tell the truth than in times “where what you can say can easily outweigh what you do” (1.1).
- Our civilization destabilised the carbon cycle (1.2) and provoked multiple waves of mass extinction (1.3 and 1.4). Our history is a history of injustice, still going on (1.5).
- Despite clear scientific findings, a campaign of denial by the fossil fuel industry led to decades of climate inaction (1.6 and 1.7).
- None of these issues are isolated. The earth is a system. It can reach tipping points and feedback loops can be triggered – making climate change self-reinforcing (1.8).
- This interconnection of everything calls each and everyone of us to take action (1.9).

## Check-in round

Share your name and pronouns (if you wish). Tell who you are in a sentence. Then send it to someone else.

## Ground rules

Discuss your expectations, ambitions, and the logistics of the book circle. Discuss the six principles on page 6. Would you like to modify them? Or add some?

## Conversation questions

- What made you feel concerned by climate issues?
- What surprised you in this section?
- What is the role of morality in addressing the climate crisis?

## Closing Round

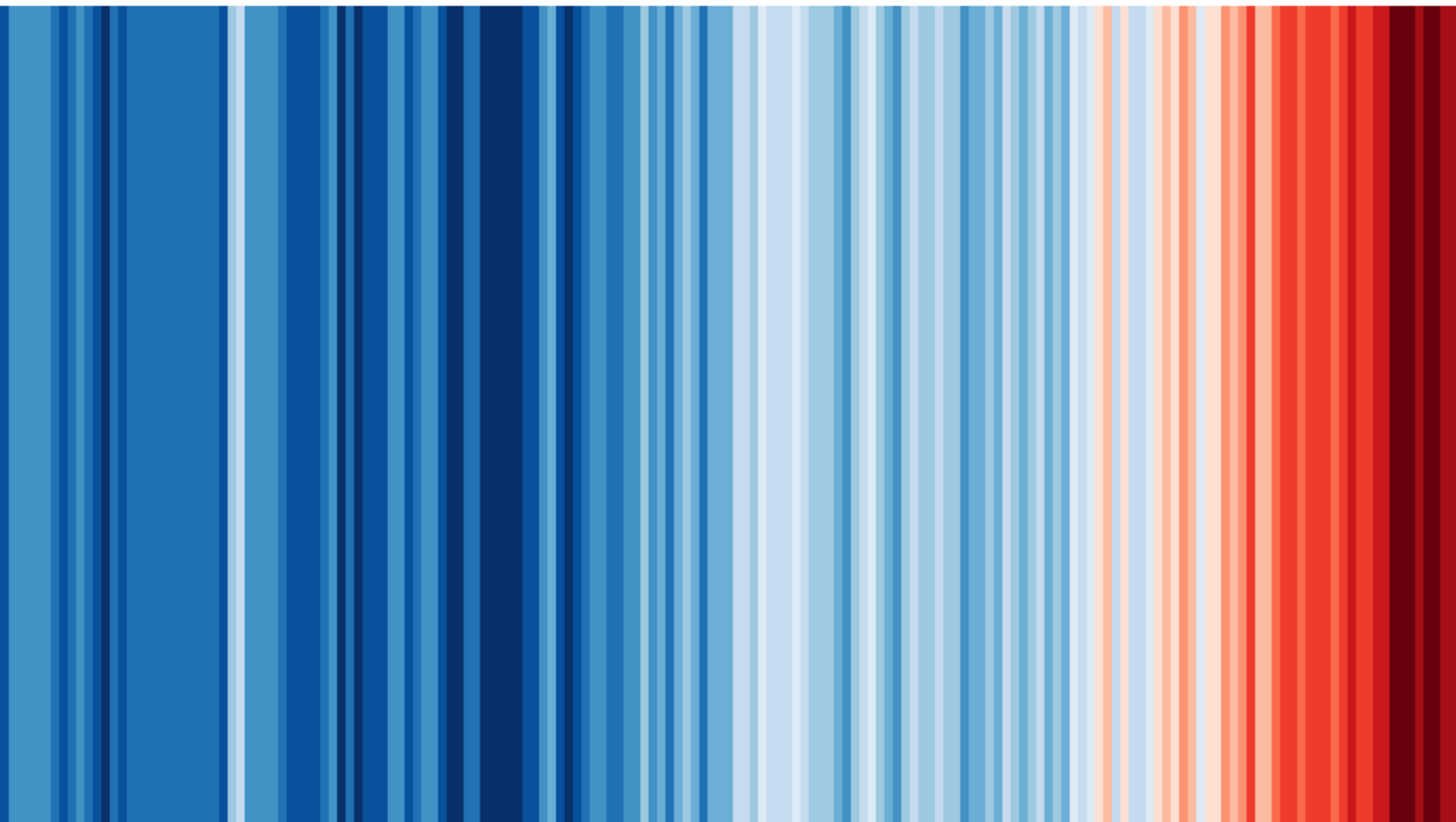
Share one thing you feel grateful for from today's discussion.

# SESSION TWO

## HOW OUR PLANET IS CHANGING

### Opening Quote

“Major changes are taking place as the climate – and the entire planet – starts to destabilise. Each one of these case studies is serious enough in itself, but since they are all interconnected we cannot ‘fix’ one problem without ‘fixing’ the others. Holistic problems require holistic solutions. Our main challenge, however, is that all these events are happening at the same time, and at maximum speed.” Greta Thunberg (2.1).



## Summary

- Despite clear science, we still fail to face this crisis as a crisis (2.1)
- Heat waves (2.2) are a sign of climate breakdown. The climate is affected by greenhouse gases (2.3), air pollution (2.4) and clouds (2.5). Raising temperatures affect the jet stream (2.6), creating extreme weather (2.7).
- We fail to recognise that "the world we used to safely inhabit no longer exists" (2.8)
- Droughts and floods (2.9), melting ice sheets (2.10), rising seas (2.11), ocean acidification (2.12), and plastic pollution (2.13) show that we need to rethink our relationship with water (2.14).
- Yet, political decision-makers deploy various strategies not to take action (2.15).
- And climate change is not the only crisis we are facing. Forests are affected by wildfires (2.16) and clearcutting (2.17, 2.18). We are in the middle of the sixth mass extinction (2.19, 2.20). The seasons are disrupted (2.21). Soils are depleted (2.22). Permafrost is thawing (2.23).
- We choose the future we will have (2.24).

## Check-in round

Share your name, pronouns (if you wish), and a fun fact about you. Then pass it to the next person.

## Ground rules

Return to the ground rules discussed last time. Did they function well last time? Are any changes needed?

## Conversation questions

- How did reading this section make you feel?
- How can we deal with emotions in the climate crisis?
- What is the role of science in addressing the climate crisis?

## Closing round

Share one thing that you will keep meditating after today's discussion.

# SESSION THREE

## HOW IT AFFECTS US

### Opening Quote

“People from the parts of the world that are most responsible for this crisis must realize that other perspectives do exist and that they have to start listening to them. Because when it comes to the climate and ecological crisis – just like most other issues – many people living in rich economies still act as if they rule the world. They may have left many colonies to govern themselves, but instead they are colonizing the atmosphere and tightening their grip on those who are most affected and least responsible”  
Greta Thunberg (3.8).



## Summary

- The planetary crisis is a story of greed and exploitation that backfires (3.1), affecting our health (3.2) through illnesses (3.3), air pollution (3.4), vector borne diseases (3.5), antibiotic resistance (3.6), and malnutrition (3.7).
- The mainstream discourse about hope justifies inaction and hides enduring colonial domination (3.8). While western governments refuse to talk about “loss and damage” (3.9), environmental racism persists (3.10), notably against climate refugees (3.11).
- Those most affected are often those least responsible, for example small islands (3.12), the Sahel (3.13), or Sápmi (3.14). Indigenous people are not only victims, they are also the best defenders of the earth, protecting the forest and sharing their spiritual heritage (3.15).
- Climate change also threatens our most valuable tool to fight it, democracy (3.16). It will increase inequalities (3.17), water shortages and floodings (3.18), violent conflicts (3.19) and result in important economic costs (3.20).

## Check-in round

Share a word that describes how you feel today. Then pass it to the next person.

## Conversation questions

- What was new to you in this section?
- How did reading this section challenge your thinking about our part of the world’s relationship with Southern & Indigenous People?
- What would it take for the Global North to play a more positive role in the world?

## Closing round

Share a word that describes how you feel after this meeting. Was there any change with the word you started with?

# SESSION FOUR

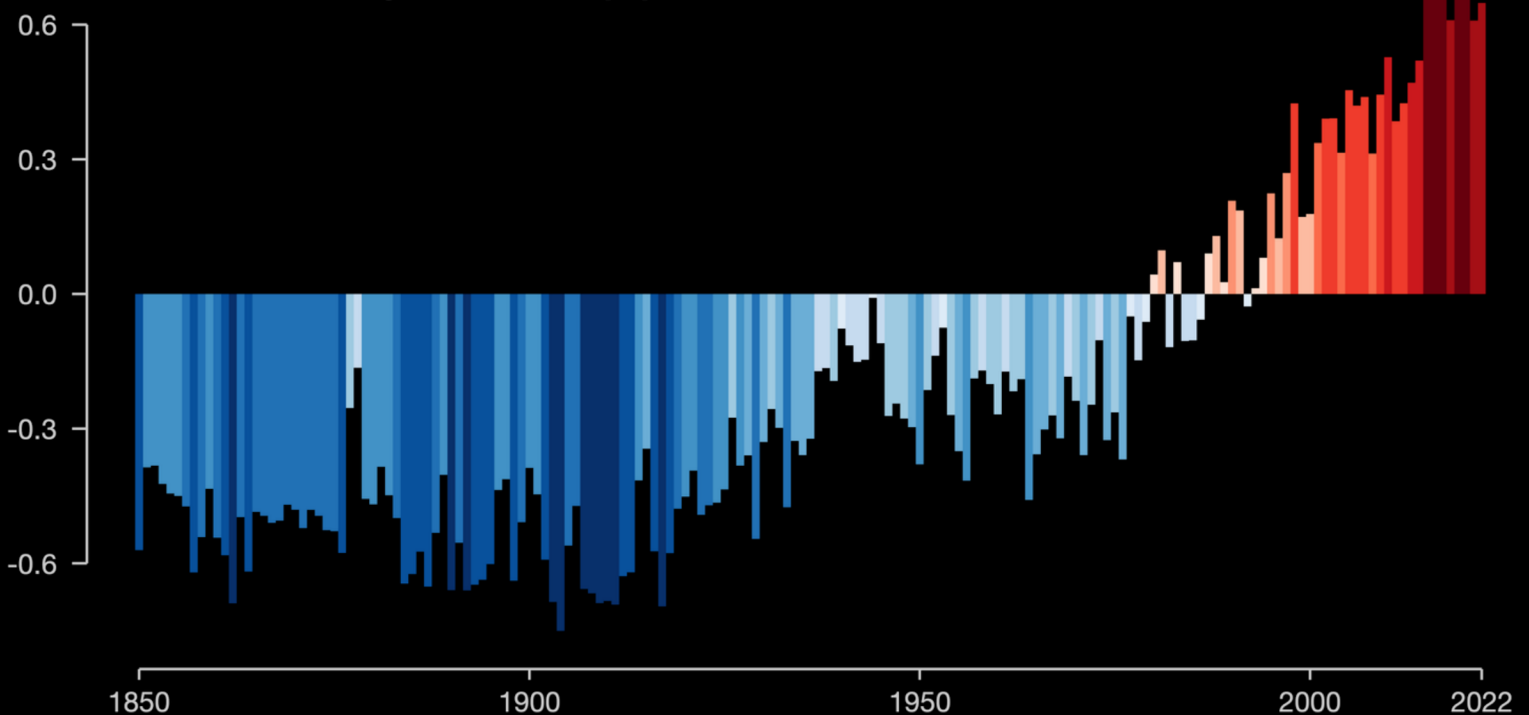
## WHAT WE'VE DONE ABOUT IT

### Opening Quote

“We have been told that our entire civilization is threatened unless we take immediate, unprecedented action. But when we have been told, those same people who have told us just continue as if nothing is wrong. As long as they keep saying one thing while doing another, people will not believe them. As long as they keep living like there is no tomorrow, the vast majority of us will aspire to do exactly the same.”  
Greta Thunberg (4.18).

### Global temperature change

Relative to average of 1971-2000 [°C]



## Summary

- We do all we can to avoid facing the climate emergency (4.1): selling “negative emissions” as a miracle solution (4.2) or excluding emissions from official accounts (4.3).
- Our actions are far from real solutions (4.4). Vested interests maintain our dependency to oil (4.5). Renewables' potential is not fully realised (4.6). We cling to doubtful solutions such as planting trees (4.7), geoengineering (4.8), or drawdown technologies (4.9).
- We must change our way of life (4.10): transform our agriculture (4.11, 4.12, 4.13), and decrease demand in steel, chemicals and cement (4.14, 4.15), air & sea transportation (4.16), and cars (4.17).
- System change is needed (4.18). We should buy less (4.19, 4.20) and transition to a circular economy (4.21) that does not over-rely on recycling (4.22).
- Saying this transition can happen without efforts is a lie (4.23). We need degrowth (4.24, 4.26). Western countries must support the transition in the Global South (4.25), but also lead by example by adopting new lifestyles (4.27).

## Check-in round

Share your name, pronouns (if you wish), and one thing that made you smile today. Then pass it to the next person.

## Ground rules

Return to the ground rules. Are we still ok with them and the group dynamic? Are any changes needed?

## Conversation questions

- What frightens you in the transition to an ecological society? And how could these fears be addressed?
- What could make our governments, corporations, and societies take the necessary actions?
- How do you want to be of use to building collective power for change?

## Closing round

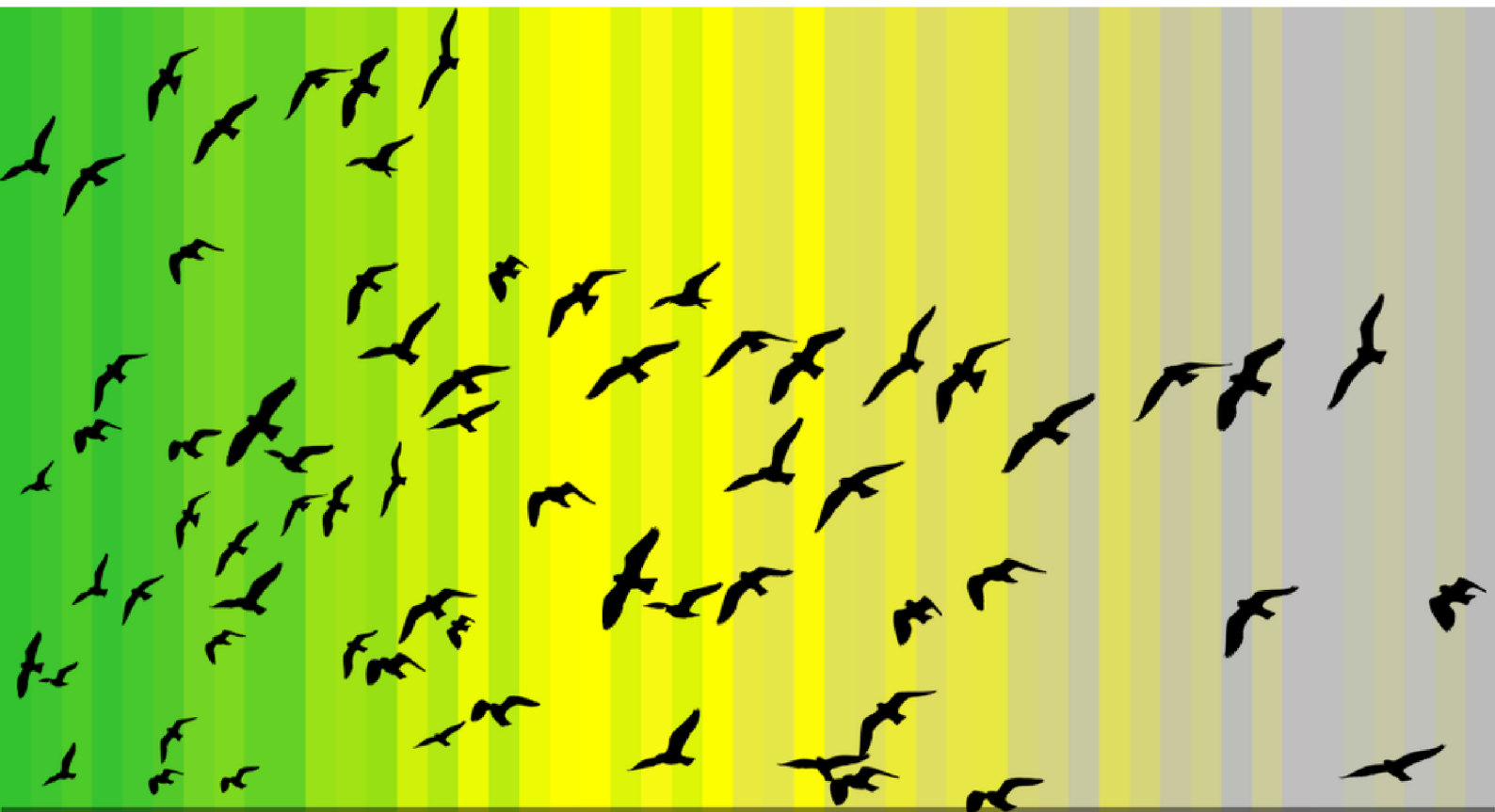
Share one thing that made you smile in today's conversation.

# SESSION FIVE

## SYSTEM CHANGE

### Opening Quote

“Societal changes are the results of our collective efforts and actions. So instead of asking others if there is still hope, ask yourself, are you prepared to change? Are you prepared to step outside your comfort zone and become part of a movement that will bring about the necessary systemic transformations?” Greta Thunberg (5.1).





## Summary

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- The ocean is amongst the first victims of climate change, but it also carries a variety of climate solutions (5.6). Another nature-based solution is rewilding, the restoration of ecosystems (5.7).
- A mobilisation comparable to that for WWII (5.13) or the covid-19 pandemic (5.14) is needed to tackle the climate and ecological crisis.
- Our times are ridden by overlapping emergencies, they must all be addressed at the same time to build a culture of care-taking (5.16).
- Empowering women is essential (5.18). And the transition should redistribute wealth to lower economic inequalities (5.19).
- Most importantly, reparations are needed to erase colonial inequalities (5.20).

## Check-in round

Share your name, pronouns (if you wish), and one thing that made you feel empowered recently. Then pass it to the next person.

## Conversation questions

- Which solutions in this section made you the most enthusiastic, and why?
- How should we transform our relationships to Southern countries and indigenous people, to the earth, and to each other tackle the climate crisis?
- How do you imagine a regenerative future?

## Closing round

Read this quote as a closing.

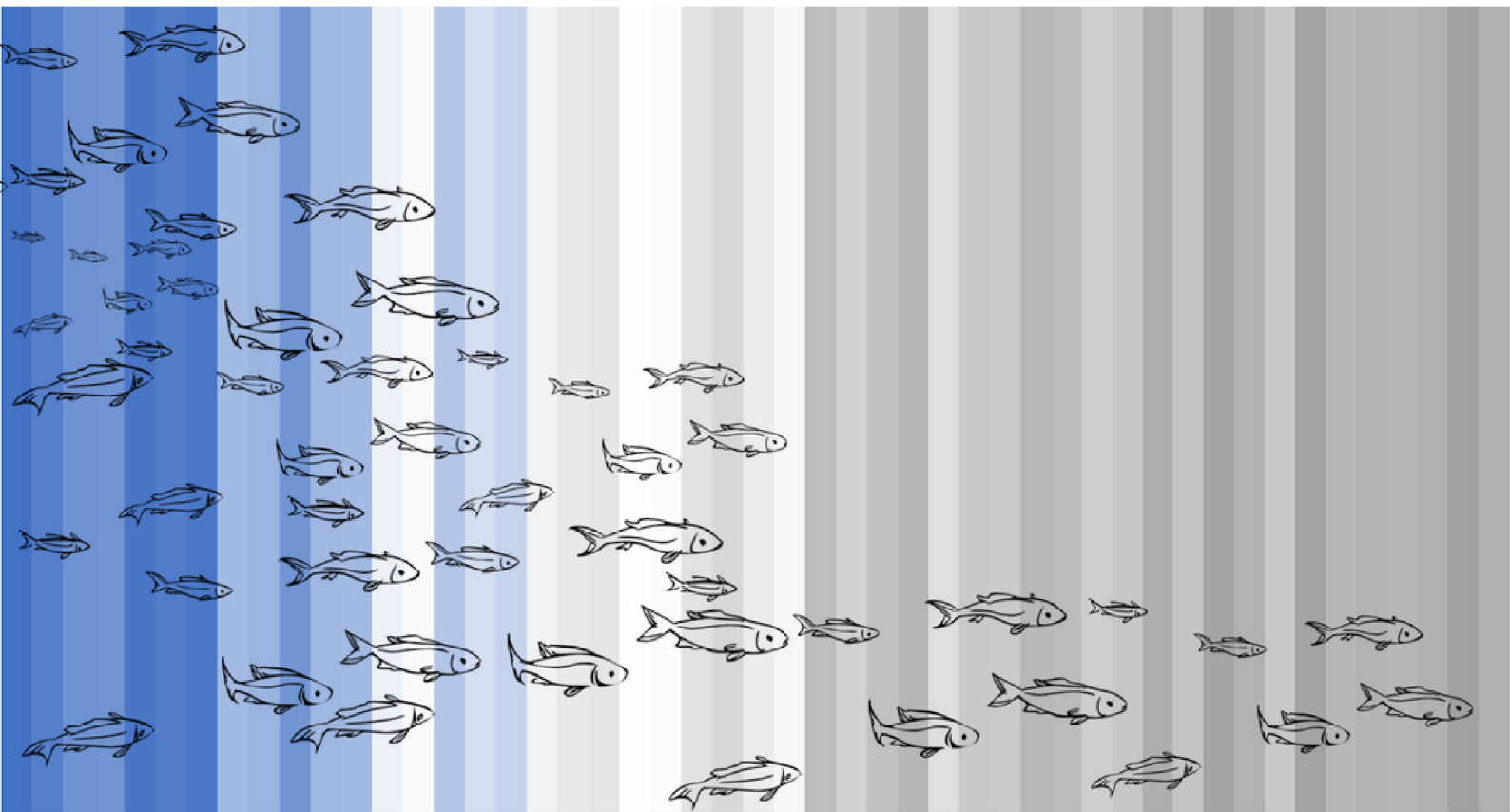
*“We need a politics of love: we need people to pick each other first.  
We need a world where we cannot put a price on the rice we eat,  
the trees that give us oxygen, the oceans we swim in and the  
land that gives us our finite and feeting resources”  
Disha A. Ravi (5.17)*

# SESSION SIX

## CULTURE CHANGE

### Opening Quote

“All this is ultimately a symptom of a much larger crisis. A crisis arising from the idea that some people are worth more than others and therefore have the right to exploit and steal other people’s land and natural assets – as well as the right to use up the planet’s finite resources at an infinitely higher rate than others. A crisis shaped by a mindset that still infects our societies today. A crisis that everyone would benefit from dealing with.” Greta Thunberg (5.1).



Freshwater biodiversity. 83% decline 1970 – 2018

From biodiversitystrips.info Data: LPI 2022. Living Planet Index <http://stats.livingplanetindex.org/>

## Summary

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- The vision of ourselves as primarily "consumers" was created by the industry and can be countered by governments and individuals (5.3).
- Today, many people are apathetic when they hear about climate change, but a new messaging can help activate them (5.4). Practical utopias can awaken the necessary willpower for change (5.9).
- The media carries a heavy responsibility in changing its messaging to tell the truth as it is (5.11). We must resist the "new climate denialism" and its "discourses of delay" (5.12).
- The climate crisis results from a colonial way of thinking that is still predominant, even in Sweden – this needs to change to address this crisis (5.15).
- In this process, traditional indigenous knowledge might be our best guide to regenerate our relationship with the earth and with each other (5.21).

## Check-in round

Share your name, pronouns (if you wish), and something that changed in your life since you started this book club. Then pass it to the next person.

## Conversation questions

- How did texts in this section make you think of yourself and your relationship to the world differently?
- How does our perspective change if we approach the climate crisis from the lens of justice rather than technology?
- What are examples of positive interactions between humans and nature?
- What are practical ways to change the culture towards climate justice?

## Closing round

Read this quote as a closing.

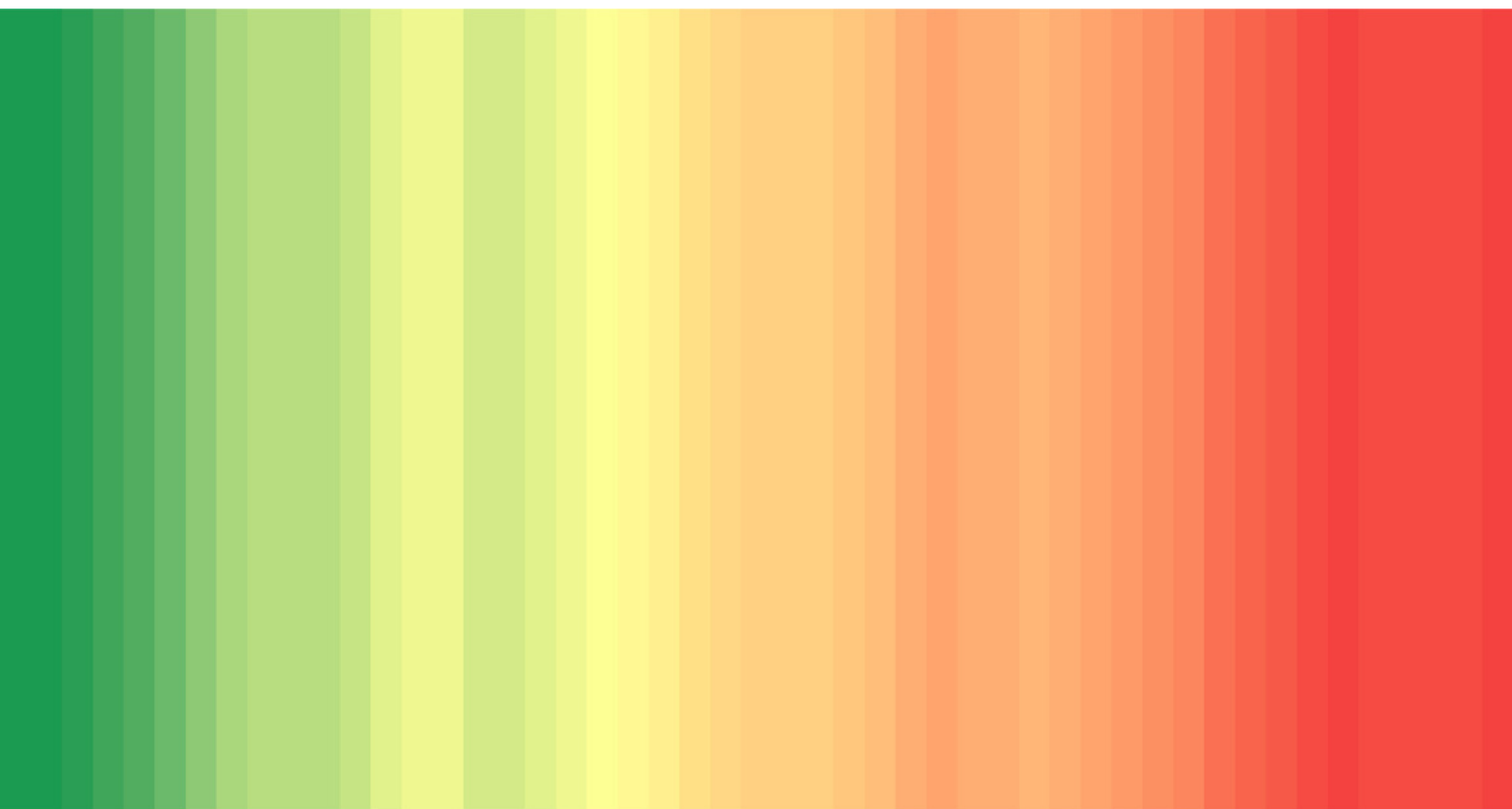
*"We need to change our thinking. We must learn from the people who are still alive after power and greed tried to kill them over and over again. We must learn that gentleness and harmony are not weaknesses; these are the traits of our mothers. These are the things that kept us alive"*  
*Ayisha Siddiqi (5.17)*

# SESSION SEVEN

## ACTIVISM

### Opening Quote

“To me, hope is not something that is given to you, it is something you have to earn, to create. It cannot be gained passively, through standing by and waiting for someone else to do something. Hope is taking action.” Greta Thunberg (5.22).



Change in population abundance of species that rely on forests. 79% average decline 1970-2018.

Data: ZSL/WWF (2022) Forest Specialist Index, 1970 to 2018 ([livingplanetindex.org/fsi/](https://livingplanetindex.org/fsi/))

Forest stripes, created by Prof. Ed Hawking (University of Reading), <https://biodiversitystripes.info/forestspecies>

## Summary

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- Individual action is a form of activism (5.1) that can induce cultural change and trigger social tipping points (5.2).
- Changing our diet is crucial (5.5).
- Engaging in the grassroots climate movement is key to get out of this mess, and is thus a moral responsibility (5.8).
- Massive and sustained collective action can push governments to take action (5.10).
- Seven young activists reflect on what equity means in this context (5.17).
- Hope is something we have to work for by taking action (5.22).

## Check-in round

Share your name and your favourite vegan food. Then pass it to the next person.

## Conversation questions

- What is the role of hope in addressing or failing to address the climate crisis?
- How can we talk about climate change to uninterested or apathetic people?
- What should be the next step for our group? How could we, as a group, take action to create hope?

## A list of actions you could take to go further:

- Read another book with the same book club
- Each person starts a new climate book club
- Inform yourself on environmental issues in your area
- Bring your friends to a climate protest
- Join a local climate movement
- Start a local climate action group if it does not exist yet

## Closing round

Read this quote as a closing.

*“I am certain that to achieve climate justice we must work together, creating safe spaces where diversity is the foundation and decoloniality the path we tread.”*

*Lura Verónica Muñoz (5.17)*



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