Fear of Change can Lead to Worsening Change

John Bos

From the industrial revolution to the advent of artificial intelligence, societies have undergone fundamental changes in how people live and comprehend their place in the world.

Some transformations are widely regarded as bad, including many of those connected to our climate crisis.

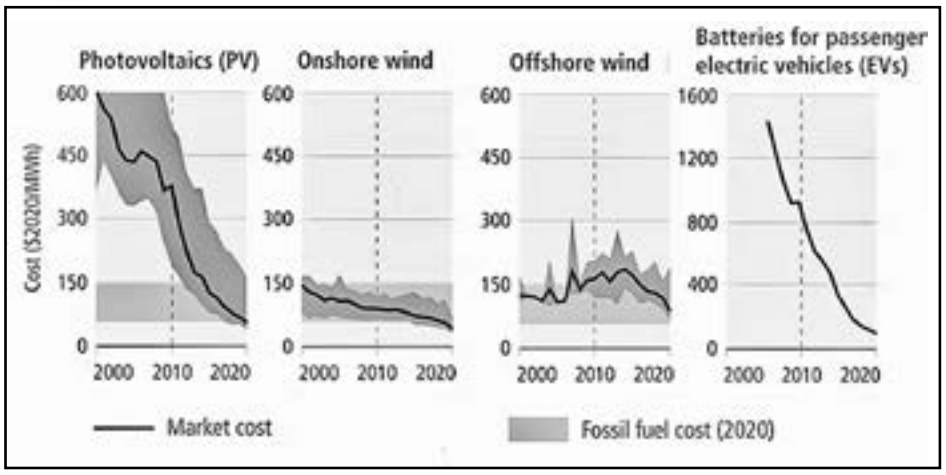
Transformations can have both good and bad effects. There is no question that the industrial revolution vastly raised standards of living for many people. It also spawned inequality, social disruption and environmental destruction.

We often resist transformation because of our fear of losing what we have. That fear is more embedded than realizing that we might gain something better. Wanting to keep the status quo explains all sorts of individual decisions, from who you vote for, to not wearing a mask even when studies have shown that doing so inhibits Covid-19 infection.

This status quo effect is much more pronounced when it comes to larger changes. Ending our reliance on fossil fuels is at the top of the list. History has shown that in the past, delaying inevitable change has led to transformations that are unnecessarily harsh. As more people are now experiencing the unavoidable impacts of climate change firsthand, they are beginning to realize that energy transformation is inevitable if they are to survive.

In the psychology of human behavior, "denialism" can be thought of as a person's choice to deny reality as a way to avoid a psychologically uncomfortable truth. In the sciences, denialism is the rejection of basic facts and concepts that are undisputed in favor of ideas that are radical, controversial, or fabricated. Blatant examples include Holocaust denial and AIDS denialism that ignore or reject the facts of these historical realities.

The fact that human activities have transformed the planet at a pace and scale unmatched in eras of the distant past is also a historical reality. Leading scientists worldwide have warned us that the world's "plans" to combat the change have been inadequate and that more aggressive actions must be taken to avert catastrophic warming.



Costs are falling for key forms of renewable energy and electric vehicle batteries. (IPCC sixth assessment report)

The report released on March 20 by the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) found that the world is likely to miss its most ambitious climate target — limiting warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) above preindustrial temperatures — within a decade. Beyond that threshold, scientists have found, climate disasters will become so extreme that people will not be able to adapt. Basic components of the Earth system will be fundamentally, irrevocably altered. Heat waves, famines and infectious diseases could claim millions of additional lives by century's end.

These unavoidable transformations are, and will continue to be, the results of too little, too late. It's easy to feel pessimistic when scientists around the world are warning that climate change has advanced so far, it's now inevitable that societies will either transform themselves or be transformed.

The latest reports from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change includes a Synthesis Report. The Synthesis Report is based on the content of the three IPCC Working Group Assessment Reports: WGI – The Physical Science Basis, WGII – Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability, WGIII – Mitigation of Climate Change, and the three Special Reports: Global Warming of 1.5°C, Climate Change and Land, The Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate.

The Working Group I report addresses the most updated physical understanding of the climate system, bringing together the latest advances in climate science and combining multiple lines of evidence from paleoclimate, observations, process understanding, global and regional climate simulations. It shows how and why climate has changed to date, and the improved understanding of human influence on a wider range of climate characteristics, including extreme events. There is a greater focus on regional information that can be used for climate risk assessments.

While this comprehensive review describes the changes facing us, it also describes how existing solutions can reduce greenhouse gas emissions and help people find ways to adjust to the unavoidable impacts of climate change. These IPCC reports make clear that the future inevitably involves more and larger climate-related transformations. The question is what the mix of good and bad will be in those transformations.

To slow the environmental damage already underway, it is not new news that the world must shift how it generates and uses energy, transports people and goods, designs buildings and grows food. There is some reason for a little optimism. For example, renewable energy is now generally less expensive than fossil fuels. Therefore, a shift to clean energy can begin to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions and save money.

The IPCC chart below graphs the diminishing cost of solar and wind energy and increasing capacity of electric EV vehicles.

Transformation is inevitable. It will either result from too little action or from efforts to adapt to, and mitigate, our climate crisis. There have been substantial advances in the last five years. They are simply not sufficient to prevent the climate transformations already underway.

Doing more to disrupt the status quo with proven solutions can help smooth these transformations and create a better future in the process. The status quo includes the vast fossil fuel- industrial complex for which profit, not plants or people, is always the bottom line.

No one group alone can enact these changes. Everyone must be involved, including governments that can mandate and incentivize necessary changes. Like the incentives I have to switch to a heat pump from my propane powered heating and cooling system. It is also not new news that corporate influence controls many of the decisions about greenhouse gas emissions. We, the people, have to turn up the pressure on corporate and political leadership if we want our grandchildren to have a breathing chance for a good life.

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OP-ED

The Energy Crisis of the 1970s and Jimmy Carter's Sustainable Vision

Wes Golomb

On February 18, 2023, it was announced that former president, Jimmy Carter, age 98 is in hospice care. I am sad for his imminent loss, because I respect him more than any other president who served on my lifetime.

Several things about him have earned my respect. He was honest. He told it like it was and didn't try to fool the nations. There were no wars during his presidency, and although he is a truly religious man, which I respect, he never tried to foist his views on me, or the nation. Instead, he led, in office and since, by example.

Big issues surrounding energy consumed Carter's presidency, OPEC's oil embargo which caused the first oil crisis and runaway inflation. I remember waiting in line for hours to get gas.

Then there was the Iranian revolution, in large part a result of previous U.S. policy bit Carter in the butt. In 1953 Iran had nationalized the countries, oil, industry, and in response, the CIA fomented a coup d'état in Iran, which overthrew the legitimate government.

Prior to nationalization of the oil industry, foreign interests were reaping most of the economic benefits of Iran's oil. Think about it: how would you feel if some foreign country took over our resources and took them away giving us only pennies on the dollar for their value? This was the situation before nationalization. Foreign oil companies were benefiting while most of Iran remained impoverished, and certainly not benefiting from their own resources.

The coup replaced Mohammed Mosaddeq with the Shah. He was a brutal dictator, who, represented U.S. oil interests. Through the Shah, the U.S. effectively occupied and controlled Iran and its oil. After 27 years of brutal dictatorship, the Iranians had had enough and overthrew the Shah, and the US.

Unlike 1953 we did not try to overthrow Iran, and unlike Carter's successors, he did not take our nation to war over oil. Carter identified fossil fuels as a source of national insecurity, and a way out of that, by making the nation less dependent on oil through what we now would call sustainable measures such as conservation and solar.

During his presidency, the first energy tax credits, incentives for people to do something about our energy situation, were started.

Carter put solar hot water on the White House. This served two purposes, to save money and energy, and to act as an example for the rest of the country. This example and the economic benefits spurred many companies to get into fields related to sustainable energy.

For the first time the tax credits opened up the market for people who wanted to cut their energy costs. It was at this time that I began energy auditing, and soon after that selling solar energy gear for Sears. Some of those systems are still working today, more than 40 years later.

The election of 1980 between Carter and Reagan was a turning point, in US energy policy. There was a clear choice on our energy future a move to a sustainable future or using our might to get what we wanted.

President Carter with a sweater on, in front of a fire, talked to the nation. He talked about conservation and efficiency and new technologies for generating energy. He spoke of a flourishing country, independent of future 'oil crises' and better able to control inflation based on rising energy prices.

Then Governor Reagan spoke about energy, being our inalienable right, and offered the nation a path of power, and might as the source of our energy.

The nation chose Reagan who beat Carter in a landslide in the 1980 election. The tax credits ended and the solar panels were taken off the White House. (They ended up at Unity College).

After his 1980 election, Reagan and his successors, (remember G.W. Bush's "drill baby drill") have taken the path he charted. We've had one war after another all to protect our fossil fuel supply, Iran Iraq, Kuwait conflict in the Balkans (where World War I was sparked over oil), Afghanistan for minerals and hopes of an eastern sea port for shipping oil.

We've traveled a continued imperialistic path for the last 40 years to supply ourselves with

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