

# finiteness in the context of sustainability

Booklet for session 3

Booklets for session 1 and 2 are available [here](#)

# Contact the workshop team

The workshop is designed by Nora Kroeger and co-led by Gwyn Jones.

Questions, praise, feedback, or comments? You can reach us via email!



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# Session 3: finiteness as a call to action – the role of sustainability practitioners

Where do we see our role in the polycrisis? What are we dealing with? Can we imagine old and new ways to make positive contributions while we are still around – in the face of, or even because of, finiteness?



# Horizon Zero Dawn

By Guerrilla  
Games,  
Netherlands,  
2017.

*Game cutscene*  
***here***



# What are we dealing with?

“Unfortunately, the climate crisis is undergirded by massive denialism. This denialism is more than us looking away as individuals. It is bankrolled by wealthy elites and fossil fuel companies in the face of inescapable climate degradation. As Bruno Latour writes in *Où atterrir?* (2017), or *Down to Earth* (2018):

[T]he elites have been so thoroughly convinced that there would be no future life for everyone that they have decided to get rid of all the burdens of solidarity as fast as possible – hence deregulation; they have decided that a sort of gilded fortress would have to be built for those (a small percentage) who would be able to make it through – hence the explosion of inequalities; and they have decided that, to conceal the crass selfishness of such a flight out of the shared world, they would have to reject ... climate change.

The super-wealthy have tightened their grip on democracy, creating politically motivated diversion tactics, such as blaming so-called ‘metropolitan elites’ (educated people) for the worsening economic circumstances of working-class people, or pointing the finger at refugees arriving in precarious boats on the shores of wealthy countries. The climate crisis lies behind nostalgic nationalist throwbacks to some imagined past, such as MAGA and Brexit.”

*Read the whole essay by HELEN DE CRUZ [here](#)*



# Please stop saying my generation will save the world

I can't tell you the number of times an older person (I'm talking Gen X all the way up to the Silent Generation) has turned to me and said: "You young folks are so educated about climate change", "Younger people's dedication to the climate crisis gives me hope", or "Gen Z will solve the climate crisis". [...]

They probably think it's encouraging. I can imagine it's a relief to see Gen Z's dedication if you come from a generation where climate change wasn't a popular topic. But it's actually incredibly demoralizing. It feels more like they're saying to me, "Yeah, I know we fucked up the planet pretty bad (unknowingly and knowingly), but I can't do anything about it now. It's your problem. Good luck!"

*Read the whole essay by ISABELLE DRURY [here](#)*

# full Bloom and the call to fruition

*“Maybe it is the time that is upon us. Maybe it calls on everyone to pull out the very best they’ve got to get through the unfolding polycrisis. Maybe now is the time for us all to bust out and give all we can.*

*Maybe its just living long enough to have seen some shit go down and the mysterious internal imperative to pass it on to soothe or feed others. The urgency of planting every seed I’ve got, of continuously emptying, refilling, and emptying my pockets.*

*I don’t want to die with anything locked in my clenched fists that I could have shared.*

*There are other instincts lingering in this fantasy of wholehearted flowering: of reaping some harvest or reaching some fruition that has always been just out of reach.*

*The wish to expand, grow, all the way to the end. The desire to spread the word that there is beauty and power living inside all of us, and every piece of the earth we dwell on, that will only reveal its bloom when we pay right attention. [...]*

*I grew, sometimes forcibly, sometimes against my will, into the only person I could possibly become.*

*Maybe this is the bloom of life, to know who you are and who you are not, and to live that out ferociously, the only priority, the most essential mandate.”*

Read the whole essay by MARTHA CRAWFORD [here](#)

# Closing meditation

*This meditation is written by Joanna Macy & Chris Johnstone from the book Active Hope*

“We belong to a planet four and a half billion years old. To make relative time periods easier to grasp, let us look at the entire history of our Earth as a single twenty-four-hour day starting at midnight. In this day of planet-time, each minute would mark the passing of more than three million years

At first, the planet was as hot as an erupting volcano. Being formed by the gravitational pulling together of materials orbiting the sun, it was continually showered by meteorites. Shortly after midnight, a chunk of matter the size of a small planet had collided with Earth, the impact causing materials to be thrown outward into space to form the moon. It took till nearly two in the morning for the planet surface to cool down enough for steam in the atmosphere to condense into rainfall. As rain fell and kept falling, the oceans were born.

Between three and four in the morning, the first forms of life appeared in warm, shallow water. There were only traces of oxygen in the atmosphere and no ozone layer to provide protection from incoming ultraviolet radiation, which was too strong to allow life to develop on land. It took till ten-thirty in the morning for photosynthesis to evolve, and from then on, those early green life-forms started producing oxygen as a waste product. All life-forms were single celled and remained so for the rest of the day, the first more complex multi-celled organisms not evolving till half past six in the evening.

By eight, worms had appeared at the bottom of shallow seas, followed an hour and twenty minutes later by the first fish. By a quarter to ten, plant life had become established on land; soon after ten, amphibians and then insects appeared.

At twenty to eleven, disaster struck in what has been described as the mother of all mass extinction events. A combination of volcanic activity, asteroid impacts, and other disasters wiped out 95 percent of life, though that left plenty of room for the dinosaurs to emerge afterward as the dominant vertebrates on land. The age of the dinosaurs lasted till twenty to midnight, when a six-mile-wide meteorite struck earth and caused a dust cloud to block out so much sunlight that the decline in plant life killed off many large animals. Mammals, who had been quietly in the background for the last hour, emerged to fill the niche of dominant vertebrates on land.

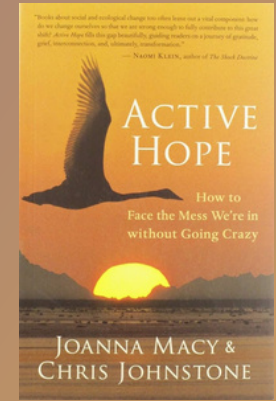
Ten minutes later, some mammals returned to the sea and slowly evolved into whales and dolphins.

At two minutes to midnight, a small ape in Africa became the last common ancestor of both humans and chimpanzees.

At just twenty seconds to midnight, apelike hominids discovered the use of fire.

The entire history of our species, from its early origins in Africa, is contained in the last five seconds before midnight.

This is the legacy that accumulated into to the present moment. What kind of contribution might we make, as our lives inhabit only the first brief millisecond of the new day?”





# "Somewhere In Between" by August Wilhelmsson



Find the song [here](#)

# Background



**'Finiteness in the context of sustainability' is inspired by the wonderful workshop **'Circling the Drain'** by Martha Crawford.**

If you want to explore the topic of mortality more in-depth, 'Circling the Drain' is the perfect workshop for that.

Follow Martha's work [here](#).

# Thank you very much for participating in this workshop

It was wonderful to spend time in community with you all.

Sending you best wishes,  
Gwyn & Nora

