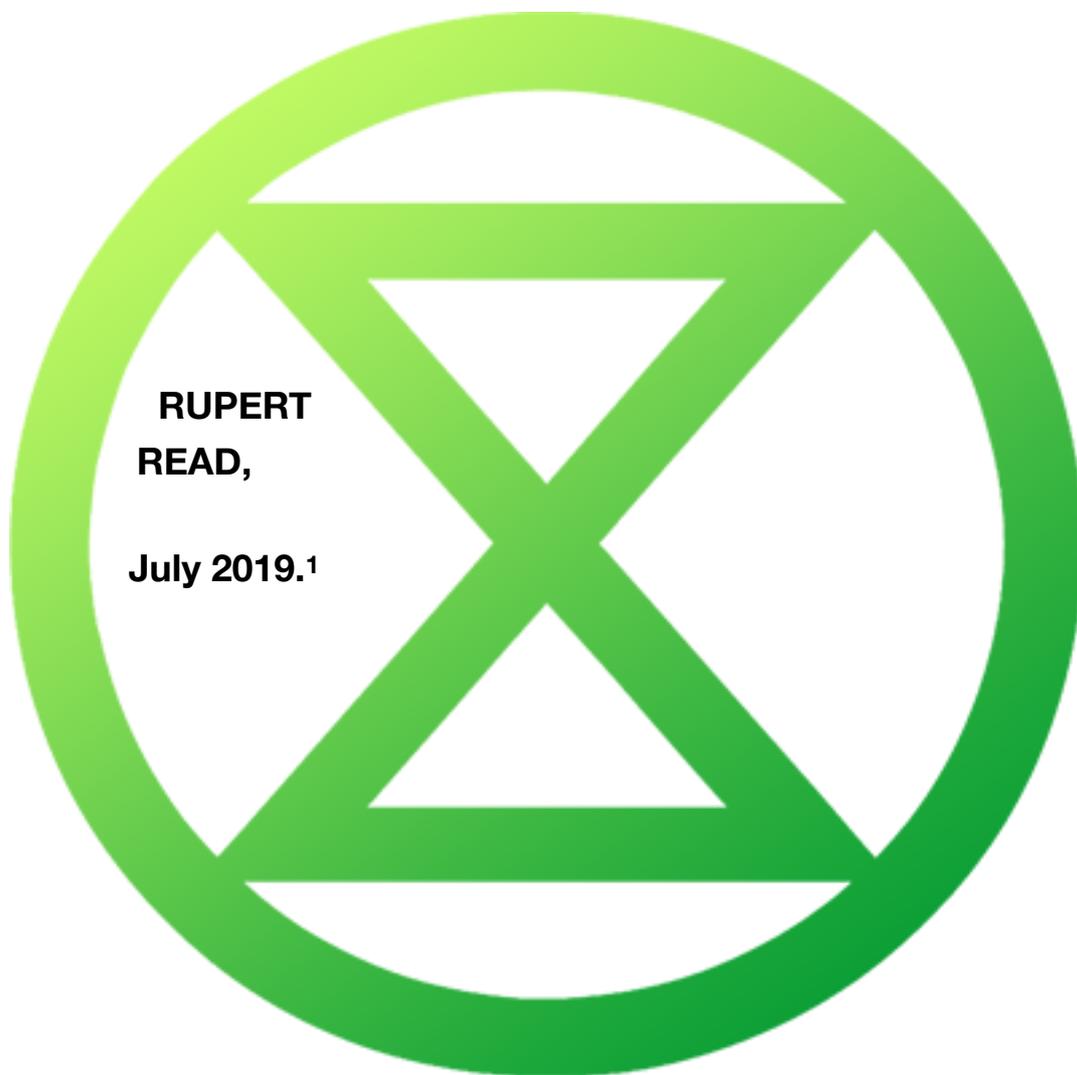


Truth and its consequences:

*a memo to fellow rebels on
smart strategy, and on soul.*



[[Disclaimer: my colleagues in the Political Circle have kindly helped in discussing [and disseminating] this document with me, but its content is *my responsibility alone*; some of my colleagues don't agree with some points in it!]]

IN LIEU OF A SUMMARY:

This pamphlet is an exercise in true-story-telling. It begins by underscoring the paramount importance of XR's Demand 1: for telling the truth underscores everything else. And telling the truth begins at home: we must tell the truth about how dire things are, hard though it is. Only if we do so might we motivate enough widespread buy-in to the truly radical changes that will be needed to prevent (or at least ameliorate) collapse. With truth-force, anything is possible. Without it, game-over.

My pamphlet aims to tell this hard truth; and others:

I argue that in order to make the hard truth about how bad things are and how much and fast everything has to change palatable, we need to ensure that the citizenry understand that the privileged are not going to get away with not transforming along with the rest of us, and in fact that they are going to have to change *more*, give up more. Only such a promise of a relatively equal handling of the pain to come, as in World War II, will be acceptable. I therefore argue that our Rebellion — as well as aiming at the commonplace, as our taking of the bridges last year and especially our taking of public space in April did — must sometimes aim squarely at the elite, at the 1%.

Furthermore, I explain why, as we move further and further into the unknown of how successful XR could become, historical precedents become less and less relevant. In particular, the so-called 3.5% 'rule' is increasingly of questionable relevance to us; to actually effect the kind of vast swift *system*-change now needed to head off collapse, we will need to take a pretty large swathe of the 99% with us.

I draw from this some practical conclusions for this Autumn's return to Rebellion:

Principally, that in September we would be far better off targeting London City Airport, which is planning to expand much more than Heathrow, and whose short runway means that it is used by small jets taken almost exclusively by businessmen and the rich, than Heathrow. (I suggest too that relying on drones risks distracting the media and the public from the way in which our action against airport expansions is non-violent action. Even if, as is planned, we succeed in keeping our any use of drones resolutely non-violent, *it is unlikely to be perceived that way.*)

And that in October we should seek to shut down organs of Government and/or organs of financial capital.

What I've written contains great darkness *and* great light; it is imho not possible to offer a *summary* of this pamphlet, because the pamphlet aims to take the reader on a *journey* through those. It offers a narrative arc of thought and experience - much as our Rebellion in April did. Or much as a novel like *War and Peace* does.

There is no substitute for reading it. Right to the end.²

(Luckily, it's a *good* bit shorter than *War and Peace*... ;-) Its main body is only about 8000 words... :-)

Telling the whole truth

XR's first demand is for Government to tell the truth about the gravity of the long ecological emergency (and specifically of the climate emergency, as the most short-term threatening-to-humans aspect of that broader emergency). I'd like us though to expand the focus of the first demand. For, telling the truth begins 'at home'. Part of the way that XR has succeeded so spectacularly so far is by way of *us*, XR, telling the truth.³ Breaking the climate silence, daring to be truthful about the imminence now of potential societal collapse as a result of ecological collapse, being willing to be emotional and not just factual about this: sharing and showing our grief, our fear, our love.⁴ (Including on national TV, etc.)

That willingness needs to continue and to grow. We need to focus rather less on prevention/mitigation (ie less on a zero carbon target⁵), and rather more on adaptation ⁶ (principally, *transformative* adaptation ⁷ and **deep adaptation**):⁸ that's part of a willingness to be truthful about how grave the crisis is. *Climate disasters are coming, inevitably, and the climate situation will worsen for at least a generation, probably far longer, whatever we do.* This is because of the time-lags built into the climate system. If we stopped all greenhouse gas emissions tomorrow, then the situation would carry on worsening, sea level carry on rising, weather systems carry on degrading, temperatures carry on rising, for a very long time to come.

What are the consequences of this? Well, they include recognising that **there is a potential tension between Demand 1 and Demands 2 and 3**, at least as those are currently worded. Demands 2 and 3, as they are currently worded, can make it sound too much as though, if XR's demands were met, then everything would be OK.

No. **Everything is not going to be OK**. Our climate is already spiralling out of our reach; and ecosystems are already thoroughly degraded, the sixth extinction crisis - a thoroughly anthropogenic one - well under way. It will need super-human courage and brilliance, *plus* some luck, for any organised civilisation to make it through the maelstrom, the rising tide of disasters coming our way. And any civilisation that makes it through will have to change thoroughgoingly in the process.⁹

We have to be honest about this. So far, we have tended to focus more on hopeful ideas about what rapid decarbonisation could do for the future, because such relatively-conventional hope is easier to 'sell'. But XR thrives

on authenticity, which is what our time desperately asks for, what people *long* for; so we must not be harbingers of false hope. **The chances of the world achieving the rapid and deep revolution in way of life that will be needed to stop further extinctions and climate disasters (inevitable) from turning into gigadeath catastrophe for humanity cannot reasonably be reckoned to be high.** Thus our justification for being ‘unreasonable’: for rebelling. But our rebellion must be as much about trying to create the seeds for something better to come out of the likely wreckage of this civilisation as it must be about one last desperate push to change this civilisation into something ecologically-viable without suffering catastrophic collapse first. Our Rebellion is a cry from the heart, a here-I-stand-I-can-do-no-other,¹⁰ as much as it is a calculated effort to try to achieve a particular set of very bold and (in this late hour) almost impossible policy-outcomes.

We need not to shy away from truth, however hard not doing so is. If we triumph, it will be through our ‘truth-force’. And if we fail, then, *if* we have told and *manifested* the whole truth as cogently as possible along the way, at least it will not be possible to say that we didn’t truly try.

In short: XR needs always to live up to Demand 1 *ourselves*. Telling the truth, the full truth, *is our first and greatest responsibility*. (And its consequence could be what we want: it might just set us collectively free.)

In that spirit, this pamphlet seeks to tell the unvarnished truth about XR past, present and future, as I see it, and, in doing so, to confront some difficult home truths about the task that lies ahead. If we confront those truths, we may succeed in our wildest and grandest dreams. If we do not, then we certainly won’t.

Taking stock in Summer 2019: What XR has achieved so far

This is a *rebellion*. This is not a series of ‘protests’. We are in rebellion against a Government that cannot be conceived of as legitimate: because how can a Government possibly be legitimate that is committing its citizens to an unprecedented mass murder-suicide?

When the international rebellion launched, in mid-April 2019, very few people thought it would succeed. I certainly didn’t. Let me be clear: I thought it *might* succeed. And I desperately *wanted* it to succeed; that is why, as soon as I found out about Extinction Rebellion [XR] at the end of last summer

(through being one of the first to be lucky enough to watch the now-legendary video talk, “Heading for extinction and what to do about it”), I enthusiastically contacted Gail Bradbrook, had a thrilling conversation with her, and threw myself into XR. I thought: XR is exactly what we need. But I was very sceptical that we would actually get what we needed. When I went onto the streets of London on Monday April 15th and saw how few of us there were, just a few thousand across the whole city, I thought: It’s not enough, the media will be ferocious to us, and the police will be rid of us within about 3 days.

Well, the media *were* ferocious to us - for those first few days. But, as we managed to hang on (by the very skin of our teeth, on Waterloo Bridge, and through extraordinary determination in waves of rebels at Parliament Square and Oxford Circus), as the police struggled to master the situation (or sometimes seemed not really to have their hearts fully in the job of repressing rebels who proceeded joyfully with absolutely determinedly non-violent direct action in the righteous cause of saving a common future for humanity and nature¹¹), day after day, our message started to get out there: and the public mood started to shift. Swiftly. Most of the media stopped being so viciously negative, as the public mood shifted, as the public witnessed more and more of our willing sacrifice, and as our spokespeople told the truth and let their (our) emotions show, live on air. The heroes who let themselves be arrested in their hundreds (eventually of course over a thousand) midwifed an astonishing and rapid shift: on the Wednesday of the 1st week, we were still being pilloried by the media; by the Wednesday of the 2nd week, an avalanche of change had come: including such extraordinary developments as a letter in the Times from business leaders *supporting XR*, and a major *Telegraph* op-ed by William Hague warning the Conservatives that they would be buried by history unless they responded positively to the timely challenge that XR was issuing. A week later, at the start of May, as part of the XR Political Strategy team I, along with my colleagues in that team, was having useful meetings with the Mayor of London, the Shadow Chancellor, and the Environment Secretary; and a motion declaring a climate and environment emergency passed the House of Commons *unopposed*.¹² Meanwhile, opinion polls showed, unprecedentedly, a massive majority of the public suddenly believing that there is a climate emergency, declaring that they would vote differently accordingly;¹³ and polls showed ‘the environment’ shooting up the political agenda.

Mass NVDA works. We basically won. What is hugely encouraging is that we won, even without numbers nearly as large as most of us had thought was necessary, for there to be such victory.

Public consciousness of the climate and ecological emergency was *transformed*, within a fortnight. Things will never be the same again. This was exactly what XR visionary Roger Hallam had planned for and (unlike me) expected. It was what he predicted, in part on the basis of studying the success of past civil disobedience movements.

That history shows that a large-scale NVDA movement can succeed in spite of disrupting ordinary people's lives; or indeed, in part, even, *because* of this. Why is this so? How can disruption shift rapidly in public consciousness from being something wrong to being something transformative and right? I've already indicated how: by way of great organisation on the part of many thousands (including many who have been thoroughly behind the scenes), great determined willingness on the part of those arrested to make that sacrifice, and great emotional resonance - great truth-telling and story-telling - from arrestables and from spokespeople, and from our remarkable media team. The disruption helps makes the phenomenon *real*: it gets talked about; and it becomes urgent to sort. At a deeper level; people feel *involved* by the disruption. They feel as if they matter. The feeling of annoyance at being disrupted then has the opportunity to evolve into a feeling of respect for the disruptors, or at least of respect for their (our) sacrifice and heartfelt message.

This was how we won in April; combined with some luck: good weather (including a couple of unseasonably hot days that made our points for us), good timing of the Attenborough "Climate change: the facts" documentary, a widespread desire to have a chance to talk for once about something other than Brexit, and of course great Greta's visit to London and her declaration of support for us.

In the next stage, we can expect greater numbers to flock to us.

But we can also expect things to get harder. Because we will soon be at the stage where the focus starts to shift: from agreeing that there is a climate and ecological emergency, to people starting to realise that - if it is going to be meaningfully tackled on the scale and timescale that we are calling for - then this really is going to mean relatively rapid changes in their lives.

When that penny drops, we are going to have to be even super-smarter in our tactics and strategy. Because then, support for us from the wider public is no longer going to be 'cost-free' for them.

A key focus of this pamphlet is suggesting what navigating that shift must mean for us.

Our rebirthing of active hope

The success of the April Rebellion (aka the 'International Rebellion') is the first development in many years to have given me and many many others any real hope. The hope is still very slim: the odds against us are still enormous; the climate and ecological emergency still worsening, with huge time-lags built into what is hanging over us all. The need for rapid success from XR more or less *worldwide* and not just here in Britain is overwhelming and still hard to envisage.

But we have *some* real hope again. Hope that we might conceivably mitigate enough to avoid societal collapse. And hope that we might transformatively adapt, and deeply adapt, to help prevent such collapse, or at least to prepare ourselves much better for it.

Incredibly, Theresa May has legislated for a carbon-net-zero target. There was simply no chance that this would have happened as little as three months ago. Sure, the target is way too late, the Government is still not telling the truth about our responsibility for the carbon-deadly GHG-emissions that Britain causes through air and sea travel and through consumption emissions (aka embodied emissions), the scheme includes awful carbon offsets, and it contains a get-out clause if other countries do not legislate similar; but it is still a historic and substantial advance.

Again incredibly, six Parliamentary Select Committees have united to create a kind of Citizens Assembly to look at the crisis. Sure, the CA they are creating has no legislative power, will meet for too short a time, and is unlikely to be asked about hitting carbon net zero by 2025; but it is still a historic and substantial result.

We did this.

We made some progress toward demand 1 happen.

And as a result, in June some real progress occurred on demands 2 and 3.

We even have some actual changes (not just declarations) that we can already point to. For example, the Scottish Government's decision not to cut airline tax was almost certainly a result of XR (because the decision followed from that Government's recent decision, under pressure from us, to declare a climate emergency).

But let's not get carried away. Let's: tell the truth. How much progress has been made on Demand 1? Declaring a 'climate and environment emergency', as the UK Parliament has done, so far has no consequences. We need Government to declare it, and follow up that declaration with a massive truthful public information campaign, etc. .

And then *to act accordingly*:

This would mean things like moving swiftly *to not make things worse*: e.g. moving swiftly to ban coal-mining, ban fracking, slap duties on imported carbon, stop all airport expansion, and so forth. Demand 2 is obviously unattainable if we continue to move in the wrong direction as a country for much longer.

It would then mean actually implementing demands 2 and 3, rather than just doing what May and the Select Committees have done so far, which are again little more than gestures.

And there's something else even beyond that, implicit in what I said earlier. It would mean also the Prime Minister addressing the British people to tell them that the truth is that things will still carry on getting worse for a long time to come;¹⁴ that a long Blitz spirit and 'wartime mobilisation' will be needed to cope with this; and that massive resources need to be devoted to adaptation, as insurance in case of failure. Specifically: it would mean fessing up longingly and in increasing detail to the likelihood of food shortages in years to come (partly as a result of the likelihood of dire water shortages and dire weather disasters of all kinds - not to mention the possibility of other kinds of unprecedented dire epidemics etc.). Britain cannot feed itself; our food-position is chronically unwise and precarious, as we move into the era of global climate disasters and worsening over-heat. Grain supplies only exist for a few months. We are not far from famine. To give a small example: last summer, many crops in Britain were baked by the long heatwave, and lost up to 40% of their yields. We would have had serious food shortages if the hot summer had gone into into August and September - as it might easily do, next year. Now imagine that happening — all over the world. Britain, which is chronically unable to feed itself, could be one of the worst hit countries of all, in such a scenario.

All this, there must be a whole new honesty about. Such honesty, such truth-telling, will be required to make it possible for the vast changes that are needed to be real-ised: only if people come to see the true magnitude of the crisis might they be willing to pull together to get through it.

But part of such honesty is to be clear that even such changes may not be enough to head off catastrophe.

Only once all this honesty is flooding our society can we realistically hope to actually triumph in the implementation of our demands.

The situation described above, and the scale of the needful response to it, is *without precedent*. (It is like the Second World War and the Marshall Plan rolled into one; but without an end in sight, and with every country in the world struggling (and so no secure USA to bankroll and backstop the problems).)

Our coming leap into the unknown

The magnificent success of our Spring Rebellion might incline one to think that we can simply carry on following the tried and tested pattern of how past mass NVDAs, non-violent revolutions etc succeeded; and that is what the 'Heading for Extinction and what to do about it' video appears, reassuringly, to imply, when it seeks to model XR on past NVDA movements that have won. But one of the main burdens of this pamphlet is to suggest that that would be a serious mistake. For a number of reasons, we cannot assume that the future will be like the past.

One such reason is that, in human affairs, it never is: for we *make* our future. And we make it partly on the basis of *learning* from the past. What to do the same; and what to do different. (And: our opponents learn, too, as I will explore briefly in the next section.)

But there is a more specific reason why, as each phase of the Rebellion occurs, it becomes harder and harder to see what is coming next. And that reason is what I outlined above: that the task we, XR, are engaged in, is truly historically unique, *unprecedented* in scale and timescale. It is not a struggle to enfranchise some part of the people that has been unjustly kept disenfranchised - as the Suffragettes, the civil rights movement and the Indian independence movement all were. It is not an attempt to eject a dictator and replace him with someone or something better - as many revolutions have been. It is an attempt *rapidly to change the entire economic, social and political system*. In this sense, our task is far more difficult than those who we look to as precedents. The vested interests opposing us are

vast, as are the ideologies that have to be overcome or transformed. And the sheer inertia of the current system.

We need to be honest with ourselves about this, or we will fall flat when things start getting tougher, as they will.

Here's my key point: women and black people could be accommodated into the existing system; in this way, the task of the Suffragettes and of the Civil Rights Movement, while hard, was doable. But we want - need - to transform *the whole existing system*, not merely to allow an excluded class access to it. And we must do it within years, not decades.

Such transformation will mean that many economic interests get challenged or indeed ended. It will affect everyone's lives; it will mean things like less (or no) flights for most or all of those who take them.

So far, the Rebellion has worked - and worked it has, brilliantly - mainly at the level of discourse and consciousness, the level of imparting new overall objectives. **When it starts to impact people's lives for more than a few days' worth of disruption - when it affects jobs, what foods and products people are able to buy, long journeys - then we will have to go to a whole new level in order to win the argument.**

We want our three demands to become law.¹⁵ We want an at least-partially legislatively-empowered Citizens Assembly¹⁶ to start deliberating on how to change everything. If we win, this autumn, or this winter, or next spring - and it is pointless to rebel, unless you are serious about at least trying to win¹⁷ - then we will expect people's lives to start being impacted within months of that, by democratically-agreed major changes. That isn't going to happen, **unless people see us as being 'on their side'**. In other words: we won't get a CA with real power, unless we are perceived as moving to level the playing field. Without rancor or guilting - but with clarity. (And, even if we did get such a CA, people would/will resist its recommendations, unless they were/become at least in the ballpark of the truth, and unless they felt that they would be treated fair.)

We are all in this together. We are all equal in this. But are some of us, as it were, 'more equal than others'?...

...What am I saying? I am saying that, in the next phase of the Rebellion, we must tell the truth even more rigorously. This is going to be hard. But it is essential.

What are the (hard) truths that need telling?:

> That we cannot guarantee against collapse, even if our objectives are achieved. That massive effort and resource needs to be given to ‘adaptation’ — to preparation for the coming disasters, to protection against them (through building resilience, etc.) — because the climate situation is bound to worsen for a long time to come. That our current system is desperately fragile, and needs replacing by one that is far more resilient, far less reliant on long supply-lines, etc. *If THESE truths are told,¹⁸ then CAs and the populace at large may be willing for the kind of shared sacrifice (of our current way of life: the way of life that replaces will of course be better in many ways: more secure, more based on place, more community-oriented, more conducive to physical health, less polluting, etc.) that is needed.*

> But they will only be so if a real sense is generated that we ARE all in this together; and that means that *gross inequality must be tackled*, as part of what we do. For the stats are very clear: it is overwhelmingly the rich who are driving us over the ecological and climate cliffs.

The Spring Rebellion impacted on the ground on ordinary people as much as on the elite. A successful ante-upping Autumn Rebellion, as people start to twig that we might actually win our demands, must not be perceived as hitting ordinary people - let alone the poor - hard. If it does, then it will spawn a ‘Gilet Jaunes’ -style response: and, in a way, rightly so. **(We will likely be perceived as part of an ‘elite’, unless we direct more of our power against the elites.)**

This has crucial implications for our strategy and tactics.

We cannot read those off past history. For we are now, increasingly, leaping into the unknown. ‘Social science’ can tell us relatively little, from now on. For example, we in XR like to cite Erica Chenoweth’s research about how NVDA can bring about regime-change with the active support of only 3.5% of populations. But it should be borne firmly in mind that this has *never* occurred in a Western industrial democracy, let alone with the issues of climate and ecology taking centre-stage.¹⁹

We are moving into the unknown. And the further we move into it, the *less* relevant the ‘social science’ / history research that has inspired us gets. Where relevant, we need to learn from history (e.g. the war effort in World War Two succeeded partly because Britain became a more equal society during it, due to rationing etc.). But above all, we need to rely more on our creative power, and on (our) philosophy.

We need to generate a whole new level of emotional resonance and of will to transform, through truth-force, and *through directing more of our actions from now on against the elite(s)*.

How much of our action(s) should be directed against the elite, and how much should be more general disruption? That is an interesting open debate which we should be having. My intuition is: about half and half. My reason for that intuition being: after you have caught everyone's attention and begun the big consciousness change - which is what we did in April - *then* you have to focus minds around the elite needing to change more - which is what we should do this Autumn. And only *after that* will the public be ready for the next phase of truth-telling about what everyone will have to 'give up'.

I.e. given that the Spring Rebellion this year was one which pretty much inconvenienced everyone equally, I want to make the claim that the Autumn Rebellion ought to be focussed primarily against the elite...

There is an absolutely crucial point around *sequencing* here. If you think that we are already in a fully revolutionary moment, and that we can win completely - fulfil our demands in full this Autumn, initiate the transformation of everything, undermine the vested interests completely - then it makes sense to go for broke now. But if you think that we still have a hell of a long way to go in everyone really living up to demand 1, let alone being ready for the massive shift inherent in implementing in full demands 2 and 3; if you think that a significant plurality at least of the populace still needs to understand that the threat really is existential, that this is about food on our tables in the next few years or not and not 'only' (sic(k)) about our children or about Bangladesh and the Maldives or about rhinos and coral; if you think that without such understandings then we are not yet in position to carry enough people with us to change our entire systems ... then it makes sense *not* to hit ordinary people again (yet), but to give people the sense that we really are the 99% (which we are). And once we've done *that*, then (possibly next Spring?) we may be in a position to actually win.

The context: In the run-up to the autumn Rebellion

The police will almost certainly be tougher on us this time around, in autumn. They will have learnt from last time; and they will be anxious to avoid the criticism that fell on them last time (from Conservatives). We must continue to seek to win them over, in the ways that were, it seems, remarkably

successful in April (though it shouldn't surprise us *too* much: after all, as I've often noted on air, the police have kids too²⁰). But we must be ready for harder responses from them, too. They, goaded by the media and politicians, may well clamp down on us in new ways, if we give them excuses for doing so.

There were almost some very serious mistakes in the Spring Rebellion. I think the mooted shutting down of the tube network (the heart of London's public transport) - trapping people underground ²¹- would have been such a mistake; the success of the Rebellion probably hung by a thread, while it was under discussion. As it was, shutting down one line for a few hours (with no-one trapped underground) was much easier to defend: the disruption we caused was only a token of the permanent total-disruption that sea-level rise will bring, if and when it floods the underground...

We can't risk such near-mistakes next time. Because there is a risk that anything we do or even threaten may be used as an excuse to pillory us, and maybe even to round us up on conspiracy charges.

We need a laser-like focus on the kinds of actions most likely to generate active support *and* wider sympathy.

In what then should the autumn Rebellion consist?

We need overall to strike a balance between non-violent disruption that is noticed by all - and resolutely non-violent disruption that falls, justly, more heavily on the rich and powerful. Such disruption can, I am suggesting, help to deliver us the wide sympathy that we will need, to carry forward our struggle successfully into real change on the ground.

Many political revolutions (e.g. the American Revolution) have been relatively easy to win because they didn't much affect the interests of those who fought in them (e.g. George Washington was the richest man in the USA, both before and after the Revolution²²). Similarly, as I noted earlier, the examples most often cited by XR as 'precedents' - the Suffragettes, the Civil Rights Movement, the Indian Independence Movement - 'fought' non-violently primarily for access to the existing system, not for transformation of that system. Gandhi and MLK are great precedents for us insofar as they establish the vital role of *truth-force*, soul-force. I have urged in fact that we need to take that even more seriously: we need to apply Demand 1 rigorously *to ourselves*; and ultimately the transformation, the new paradigm

that we are trying to create and instantiate, has philosophical and indeed spiritual dimensions.²³ BUT these precedents (from Gandhi and MLK) will nevertheless become of only limited relevance to us *when it becomes clear to people that what they think their interests are are most definitely threatened*. And that's (hopefully) soon. There will then be a clash between the truth on the one side and stung denialist self-interest on the other. This has already happened in the form of outright climate-change denialism. It will happen again, probably in subtler guises (E.g. the familiar litany of "It's too late"; "But what about China?"; "Technology will fix it all", etc.).

We cannot rely on truth, even the full truth, about the crisis, to set us free. *Unless* that truth includes the differentiated responsibilities of poor and rich. (And this goes for the international/global scale, too. There simply is no remaining carbon budget for the 'development' of the 'developing' (sic) world envisaged by Modi, China, etc. But that message will be completely unreceivable, unless rich countries lead from the front, by rapidly reversing their ecological footprint. I.e. by 'degrowing'. This is the real meaning now of 'climate justice':²⁴ contraction and convergence.²⁵)

We need *by our actions* to convey to the public the sense that we are on their side; that, while everyone will have to change now/soon, the greater burden of the changes will fall upon those more able to bear that burden; that we are them (the people, the citizens, the 99%) and they are us. The XR 'theory of change' is incomplete if it does not include this, because *the 'theory of change' which succeeded so well in April, will almost certainly not carry on working in the same way once it isn't just a matter of saying 'Yes there's a climate emergency' in an opinion poll, but actually being willing to back system-change that will 'constrain' one's way of life.*

What in concrete terms does all this mean?: that ***the Autumn Rebellion should target primarily the rich and powerful:***²⁶

Suggestions accordingly:

Re targetting airports:

>Target London City Airport, rather than Heathrow, in September. If we are going to draw powerful attention to XR prior to the October rebellion, through targeting air travel, then many rebels favour this. For City Airport is used almost exclusively by businesspeople and the super-rich (because it

has a short runway only suitable for small jets to use). Just like Heathrow, it is planning for drastic expansion ²⁷ - in the case of City Airport, a *doubling* of flights - within the next 15 years. (In fact, proportionally, the planned expansion at London City Airport is much *greater* than that at Heathrow.) It is utterly and obviously irreconcilable with Demand 2. If we were to stop London City Airport from operating successfully,²⁸ it would be a perfect opportunity to land the message that, while we all have a responsibility to prevent ecocide together, it is big business, the super-rich and *the City* that bears the heaviest responsibility.

Before we do Heathrow, we need people to understand that this is about whether there is food on the table in the next several summers or not. They don't understand that yet, with few exceptions. But targeting City Airport will enable them to understand very clearly that the rich need to change the most. And will provide a precedent for the idea that it might be legitimate to shut down an airport... London City can be the thin end of our large wedge. Whereas going straight for Heathrow badly risks us falling flat on our faces. There will furthermore be far less likelihood of generating stories such as the recent very difficult story in Bristol about a man who was kept by XR from attending his father's deathbed, if we shut down London City rather than Heathrow. Because London City is overwhelmingly used by businesspeople and the rich, and offers very little benefit to the local community. London City would shift the narrative away from "You rebels want to stop ordinary folk from flying!" to "Ooh look at how ridiculously often the elite fly, on small carbon-guzzling planes"... The level of sympathy for them having their flights cancelled will be low indeed.

>If we *do* target Heathrow, then devote central Media and Messaging resource to helping people understand that it is mainly the better-off who fly: 70 per cent of flights are taken by just 15% of the population.²⁹ (This won't work very well; the media will highlight stories of ordinary people using Heathrow; but will be significantly better than nothing.) If only part of Heathrow can be successfully 'arrested' for a significant period, then choose a part used more by private jets.

>**Be very wary of using drones.** Their use will distract from the crucial points I've been making — it will submerge us in sensationalist arguments about whether we are 'terrorists' or not —, and genuinely is somewhat challenging to square with non-violence and truth-force as our non-negotiable basis, as I'll explain. Drones risk distracting the media and the public from the essential element of sacrifice in our actions,³⁰ that was

crucial to our success in April (We then have to focus on those charged/ imprisoned, and we re-win the element of sacrifice that way. But that is a slower process; we might in the meantime have lost the argument and much of the goodwill we currently have.). We should only use drones if we are confident that their use will not distract from awareness of our targetting of our action against the rich minority who fly, and if we are confident furthermore that we can guarantee absolute non-violence. The problem on the latter count is that the use of drones would not *work* for long, if coupled with an absolute guarantee of non-violence that we must provide: because of course we should have to ground drones instantly if any plane were actually seek to take off; while the mere flying of drones at head-height etc. (as currently planned) probably wouldn't last for long as an action; Government / the airport would probably try swiftly to change the rules so that only drones that were actually dangerous would cause flights to be stopped.³¹ And we cannot — we absolutely must not — fly drones in any ways that are actually dangerous.

There is a systematic tension between using drones in a way that will actually stop planes reliably and ongoingly, and non-violence - let alone (our) sacrifice - being at the centre of the narrative.

Re targets in the October Rebellion:

>**Target Parliament / Government itself.** By targetting Parliament Square in April, we indirectly made a point about this; but how much more powerful our action will be, if we actually bring some of the business of Government to a halt through NVDA. For days, or even weeks. E.g. If we were to stop Parliament enacting a Budget that wasn't a climate and ecological emergency budget. Or if we were to stop a Ministry from functioning at a time when it (e.g. the Treasury) were seeking to enact some dubious new rules or subsidies.³²

Of course, a potential danger of such an approach is that a Government starts acting more dictatorially in response. For that reason, we need to target *economic* elites too, to put elite material interests in the balance, and to make clear that reducing democracy would not stop us from being efficacious:

>**Target a major target or targets in the City.** Imagine shutting down the Stock Exchange. Actually stoping it from operating, for a significant period of time, stopping its profit-engine-of-destruction. Or imagine shutting down Goldman Sachs, or indeed a bunch of merchant banks. Imagine perhaps

occupying and shutting the Green Investment Bank, which the Government privatised and neutered / made half-bereft of purpose. Or shutting down Canary Wharf, which is very geographically vulnerable due to limited access roads.

Doing any of that/those would be hugely popular with a citizenry still enraged by how the banksters got away with it ever since 2007-8.³³ And it would concentrate the minds of the elites greatly. As we know... Power has never conceded anything without a powerful demand that threatens it; it never has and it never will. One can see the concessions which Parliament, May and the Select Committees have made to us over (respectively) demands 1, 2 and 3 as that process in action; what they have tried to do is to neutralise us by seeming to concede toward our demands. We need in the autumn to concentrate the minds of power further. By taking NVDA directly into the paths of the elite, so as to prevent business as usual. At London City Airport; at Westminster; and/or in the City, etc. .

If we do this, we potentially bring the citizenry en masse onside in such a way as to ready them to make some changes in their own way of life, too. If we 'hit' the rich and powerful, and still more so if we get them to start making some real concessions and changes (e.g. No expansion at London City Airport; a climate and ecological emergency budget; a massive change in the priorities of capital), then we stand a chance of winning the wider changes we need, too, if we are to actually do enough to prevent catastrophe.

Those changes need to be democratically agreed. Enter, Citizens Assemblies...

Citizens Assemblies: how to make them real

We want Citizens Assemblies³⁴ that have real decision-making power, to decide how to act sufficiently to rise to the challenge of the unprecedented long emergencies we face. Governments are likely to try to fob us off with purely advisory CAs - as the Select Committees' initiative already does. Too many 'CAs' across the planet have been talking-shops, ultimately ignored by Governments.

We need to be ready for the likelihood that, if the Autumn Rebellion (or at least the next phase after that) succeeds like the Spring Rebellion did, and catapults us to the next stage forward in our aims, then *we can realistically*

expect, within months, to be 'negotiating' ³⁵ with the Government to bring in real Citizens Assemblies.

What would a real Citizens Assembly be? It will be sortitionally-based, a part of democracy (much like juries already are). And it must have *real decision-making power*: it will be tasked with figuring out, with expert advice, how to put together the drastic package of changes, the as-wartime mobilisation, now needed.

But why would politicians give away some quasi-legislative power to the CA? Giving away power is one thing politicians/governments are typically not at all good at, to put it mildly.

One possible way of enabling politicians not to lose more control than they are willing to is to *include some of them in the CA*. This is what was done in Ireland, in the Constitutional Convention several years ago which helped move forward public discourse and action in relation to such vexed matters there as gay rights, abortion - and climate policy. Ireland's has been the most successful of CAs across the world in recent times, measured by leading to actual changes of policy. The Constitutional Convention and the other CAs that followed it led, in particular, to a remarkable shift culminating in the legalisation of abortion and of gay marriage in Ireland. It turned out that including politicians in a powerful CA, far from (as some had feared) leading it either to inertia/gridlock or to domination by those elected politicians (who were a third of the Constitutional Convention), helped legitimise it in the eyes of the Irish Parliament, and helped enable (some of) its recommendations to come to pass.

The option of agreeing to a CA(s) with elected politicians among its members is therefore one with a powerful positive precedent, and it is an option that XR should actively retain.

However, once again, let's remember that we are in an unprecedented situation here.³⁶ Public consciousness is changing with extraordinary rapidity; the public spirit is rising up to start finally to face the awesome horror of the reality that our species has created, perhaps before that reality spins out of our control. Politicians smart enough to recognise this as both an ecological truth and increasingly a *political* one, a matter of the truth-force of XR and of public opinion, may already be willing to be considerably bolder than Ireland was. They may, this autumn or thereafter, under pressure from rebels - hopefully, in roughly the way I have suggested above, a way calculated to bring and keep a majority of Britons broadly onside, and to get the active support of 20% or so (*as well as* getting the activist support of

3.5% or so. Part of my point so far has been that just getting 3.5% strongly onside *will not be enough*, if one is seeking to transform, unprecedentedly, an entire system. Even if a Citizens Assembly representative of the citizenry were, deliberating after expert advice, to come up with radical enough plans that we'd be able to lay down our Rebellion for good, we cannot expect those plans to be implemented if they appear to the majority of citizens to be hostile to their interests. **There is a tension between the figure of 3.5% that we often hear and the need to redesign a whole system of life.**³⁷

There is a tension between the claim sometimes made by some figures in XR that we only need a small percentage of the population to come on board with us to win, and the broadly democratic need for buy-in if one is asking for (what are by the current system's standards³⁸) real 'sacrifices' to be made by everyone.).

How might politicians recognise the potential attractiveness of CAs as a way out of our common predicament?

The crucial point here, a point already ably recognised by Macron in his creation of a CA of sorts in France to sort out the post-Gilets-Jaunes situation *vis a vis* energy and climate there, is that CAs can take something out of the 'too-difficult box' into a zone where something real - enough - can be done. *Politicians can offload onto the public who are picked to deliberate in the CA the difficult responsibility of acting for the benefit of the future.*

But remember: We are only likely to *get* a real CA in the first place if the citizenry see us as having a keen eye on how it is the elites above all who must change. Yes, everything has to change; but, in this process of transformation, some are, as one might put it, actually *less* equal than others... i.e. Those whose way of life is the most drastically unsustainable. And those who have 'led' us into the incipient worldwide catastrophe we are trying to survive and alter.

And also remember: any CA will almost certainly not be radical enough in what it calls for unless citizens *get* that the biggest 'sacrifices' will be made by the rich, by elites. We need to signal that to them now, and not be easily scapegoatable as a middle class imposing hardship on the working class.

Let us now combine what this section has argued with the moral of the previous section:

To win a CA with real power from the autumn rebellion or thereafter, we need to strike a balance between (i) Giving politicians the sense that we can *help* them out of a hole; this is the smart way in which a CA can get issues out of the too-difficult box, allowing politicians and governments to say, truthfully,

that they are following democratic will, (ii) Giving everyone the sense that everything really does have to change, and that it's time to get serious about making that change, *and* (iii) Giving everyone the sense that in that process some - roughly, the 1% - have to change a lot more than others. Our main actions so far could be perceived to be disrupting everyone. So once again, we see the case for my main practical conclusion: *The autumn rebellion ought to be more focussed on the elites*. Seriously disrupting them, such that they want the disruption to end - and such that everyone else sees decisively that we are not primarily about inconveniencing the man or woman in the street.

Thus point (iii) actually needs to come *first*.

The key take-away is this: *We need **by our actions** to give folk the sense that the CA will be just and seek justice*. The next thing we need to do - the way we ought to design our actions in September and October - is to make manifest in these actions that we are calling now for the elites to face the truth, to face the music - and to change. We cannot expect India to change, if we don't lead the way in changing. *Likewise*, we cannot expect the ordinary woman on the street to change, if the rich aren't going to change. Let's design the autumn rebellion *to bring that point home*.

Let's agree to target primarily the elites; and then we can potentially win a real CA, and one that will be primed to act with sufficient boldness. When citizens understand that the rich are the ones who need to cut back the most *and that this is going to happen*, then we become the popular ones, *and, crucially, we pre-empt a 'populist' reaction against us*. When citizens understand that XR is calling for everyone to change *from the elites 'down'*, then we have a real chance both to win a real CA and for that CA to insist on the full truth being told it, and thus to insist on stringent targets for biodiversity-repair and for carbon-net-zero. For adaptation including for food sovereignty. For changes that will impact on everyone's lives; for we will have manifested how *there will be no real action on the climate and ecological emergency without climate justice*.

The crucial role of our children ³⁹

So far in this pamphlet, I have focussed laser-like on XR. But there is one more critically-important element to the picture, one more element without which success in the autumn remains improbable. Namely, our children,

those whose blood will be spilt the most if catastrophe is what plays out, those who face the starkest injustice of all.

The climate school strikers have called for a general - adult - strike on Fri 20/27 September. So it is absolutely crucial that we show massive solidarity with this, and help it *work*. For our children and their plaintive call to “Save our world!” are our most powerful instance of emotional resonance; their struggle has touched the world. Moreover, Greta Thunberg is (in my opinion) a world-historical figure on a par with MLK or Gandhi.

We are the ones above all who must and will heed the kids’ brave call.

And then they may hear our call...

Imagine an October with tens of thousands of children and students on the streets of London engaging in NVDA. Rebellious.

That is how a crucial stage in the Civil Rights Movement was won, in Birmingham Alabama. With over a thousand minors in the prison cells. It was a step not taken at all lightly by the Civil Rights leadership. But it worked.

It could work here too.

Our Rebellion, dated October 7th onwards, follows swift on the heels of the 20-27 September period. It must seek to reach out to *involve* people of all ages, and especially those children.

When there are arrests and imprisonments of children alongside adults, the game will have changed, and the authorities will be placed by our dilemma-actions in ever more difficult action-dilemmas: whatever action they take will look very bad.

If we can forge a close alliance with the school-Climate-strikers this autumn, then the unprecedented historic change that I have been outlining in this pamphlet could come to pass. It ain’t over til it’s over; perhaps humanity’s darkest hour really will become its - our - finest hour...

CONCLUSIONS

History will judge us very kindly. Why am I so confident of that? Because there are basically three possibilities:

- 1) We succeed. And then, just like the Suffragettes and Gandhians before us, we will be judged by history as heroes, not criminals.
- 2) We are ‘glorious failures’. Paving the way for something better and more successful coming after us.

3) [We fail completely. In which case there won't be very many more history books...]

I have argued here that (1) (or at least (2)) is something that, as we have *demonstrated* in April, is now possible, something that one can justify hoping for. And the stakes are incredibly high: for the world is watching us. XR activists in the USA for instance are already seeking to model their plans on what we have done - and will do.⁴⁰

In this pamphlet, I've therefore outlined to you a story along the following lines:

>I began by suggesting that **we need to apply Demand 1 more rigorously to ourselves**. Honestly doing so necessitates admitting how incredibly tough our task still remains, even after April:

Our task as humans is to change our whole way of life, rapidly, in an unprecedented manner;

Our task as XR is to enable that to happen, in an unprecedented NVDA-midwived 'revolution'. It is because our task as humanity is unprecedented that there is a strict limit to how much we can claim to learn from the precedents of previous NVDA successes. Our task in XR is harder than Gandhi's even. Tbh, much harder.

>Furthermore, in order to have any chance of succeeding in this task, we are going to have to tell the truth about how desperate things are more bluntly and fully than we have so far. We have to midwife a wide and deep understanding of how far off the precipice we already are. And that understanding needs to be underwritten by the state (or the state replaced⁴¹). And our truth, our feeling needs then to catch fire ⁴² across most of the world (because China or America alone could now sink the world's future, if they were determined not to change).

>I then argued that, once people wake up to this, there is a chance that they will be ready to do enough but that **what is likely to get in the way of that is their realisation of just how much they will have to change**. And I suggested strongly that **that truth will only be manageable for people if they understand that those who have the most resources will change the most**, and that the burden of change will be eased on the worse off (that green choices will be made cheaper and easier, etc.).

>I drew from that **a concrete conclusion about the nature of the autumn rebellion: that it ought to focus much more than we've done so far on the elites.**

>I gave concrete examples of this:

London City Airport; Parliament and Whitehall; the City of London as the epicentre of our future-eating economy.

>**This suggested approach is perfect for the movement of movements orientation planned for the Autumn rebellion.** Imagine working with affinity groups etc. organised around War on Want, Greenpeace, Labour, the Green Party, etc.; various actions against various parts of the elite could be undertaken by those movements most interested in those parts / their specific activities.

>...If broadly this approach is taken, then we have a real chance of focussing the minds of citizens upon those who are likely to be even worse-placed, in this crisis, than the poor or the geographically-vulnerable, today: namely, the earthlings of tomorrow. It is our children and (even more so) their children who are going to have to face a worsening future for some time to come, *even if we succeed in our wildest dreams.*

>I therefore ended with a plea for us to work hand in glove with the climate school strikers, including in terms of their timetable. We need to ensure that their movement flourishes (Whereas if it takes a knock in September, the consequences for our common future are grave). And, if we ensure this, then we are well-placed to get them involved in our Rebellion. If children and young people start being willing to be arrested in droves for XR, it pulls the rug out from under those who would resist the force of our truth.

If the power of youth is added to the power of truth, then that equals potential transformation of the kind that is required.⁴³

We may then have succeeded in rebelling against collapse and possible extinction. There can no greater prize.⁴⁴

Let's keep our eyes on it.

Rebel for life,
Rupert Read.

¹ Huge thanks to those many with whom conversations over many months have made possible this pamphlet: including Gail Bradbrook, Skeena Rathor, Tim Crosland, Jem Bendell, John Foster, John Stewart, Samuel Alexander, Juliette Harkin, my colleagues in the XR Political Strategy team, and (especially) Marc Lopatin, Roger Hallam, Robert Possnett and Adam Woodhall.

² Though *don't feel obliged to read these extensive endnotes*, which reference what I am saying and expand on it. The main thread is contained within the main text.

³ AFAIAC, Extinction Rebellion differs from antecedents in that we don't shy away from how dire the situation is. And our invitation is to join together in summoning the courage that lies buried deep within our collective body, and thus, in this long moment of darkness that our species has caused, freeing ourselves to what it will take to change course.
By any non-violent means necessary.

⁴ Grief is in a way a kind of refusal to accept a rend in the world. This is deeply true of grief over (say) species-loss, the anthropogenic mass extinction event(s). But of course grief is simultaneously a kind of acceptance: we wouldn't actually be grieving, if we were merely in denial. Grief accepts the terrible reality by in a way protesting against it. The key is not to let grief degenerate into merely denial, or into only depression. Grief is beautiful because it fully acknowledges the loss. *Grief is utterly based in love.*

⁵ Don't get me wrong: I love Demand 2. In particular, XR's demand for the UK to go carbon-neutral by 2025 is an 'impossible demand'. It is completely politically 'unrealistic'. That, to me, is its great *virtue*. (For: **XR exists to make the 'politically unrealistic' realistic - through a massive shift of consciousness and of will.**) This demand evinces starkly the extreme gravity and rapidity of the societal change we have to make, the complete unfit-for-purpose-ness of the current system, the need for much of our eco-calamitous economic system to be simply shut down. But: do we in XR think this demand of ours *likely* to be achieved? No; it would be a very, very brave activist who would bet on it being achieved! And even if it *were*, incredibly, achieved it might well not be enough; the situation is no longer properly in our hands as humans. And what *that* of course implies is: we have to start taking seriously the need to try to *adapt* to the worsening ecological situation that we and our children are almost certainly going to inherit *even if we win*.

⁶ Standard shallow adaptation is dangerous because it perpetuates the illusion that we can go on roughly as we are, *and* because it is often carbon-heavy and eco-damaging. Now is the hour, rather, for *transformative* adaptation: see below.

⁷ On which, see especially Green House's book, *Facing up to climate reality*: <https://www.greenhousethinktank.org/fucr-book.html>. Transformative adaptation is adaptation to climate-damage (damage done and being done) which doesn't pretend, as conventional shallow adaptation *does*, that our way of life can be continued as is. Transformative adaptation, as the name suggests, invites us to transform our societies in response to the ecological crisis that is upon us. Transformative adaptation means adaptation that also seeks to reduce (or indeed draw down) carbon-emissions and to restore biodiversity. Examples include restoring wetlands and mangroves, rather than building sea walls.

⁸ A key example of deep adaptation is the shutting down and making safe of nuclear reactors / nuclear waste, most of which is located in vulnerable coastal locales, and which could burn highly-toxic waste into our atmosphere for decades, if organised society in future becomes unable to look after it.

⁹ I.e. *This civilisation is finished*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uzCxFPzdO0Y&feature=youtu.be&a>. It will either be transformed radically and rapidly into something utterly different that can thrive and flourish, or it will collapse.

¹⁰ In this sense, our rebellion accords with the branches of ethics known as ‘deontology’ and ‘virtue ethics’. It is about doing the right thing, it is about right conduct; being dignified and courageous in the face of adversity — no matter what the consequences. We are not (as the Buddhists would put it) *attached* to outcomes; we cannot afford to be, because things are so desperate now that there is simply no way that we can honestly reassure ourselves that we are going to come through this crisis without our ecology/society collapsing.

The trick is not to be *attached* to getting the right outcome *while* working determinedly and as intelligently as possible *for* the right outcome. What I seek to do in this pamphlet is to work out the consequences of a non-attached approach to the next phase of our Rebellion which seeks nevertheless to maximise the chances that we succeed. For it would be a terrible historic error to not give ourselves the best shot at success, given that the future quite depends upon us.

¹¹ A useful account of some of the extraordinary resonance with the police that we achieved in April can be found in Jay Griffiths’s “Courting arrest”, in [This is not a drill: an extinction rebellion handbook](#) (Penguin, 2019).

¹² And the passage of that motion is of course a real gesture toward our demand 1.

¹³ A possible rough proxy for rising electoral support for XR-style aims might be found in the best-ever elections results for the Green Party which ensued in May: The Greens quite unexpectedly *more than doubled* their number of Council seats and then of MEPs.

¹⁴ And this should be undergirded by the main CA *itself* hopefully doing much the same, after it hears the unalloyed truth about how bad things are. As Roger Hallam puts it at p.22 of his important pamphlet, “Common sense for the 21st century: Only nonviolent rebellion can now stop climate breakdown and social collapse”, “Citizens assemblies reveal their dramatic political power through the profound effect on ordinary people of seeing people like them (as opposed to activists) declaring a climate emergency to the world, and making it clear how accepting this reality has led them to more radical action. This is the central reframing challenge of the whole rebellion, which will be necessary to attract mass public support and acceptance from the undecided.”

¹⁵ So we are putting a Three Demands bill to Parliament. But there is no chance of such a bill being passed without it being gutted - *unless* the Autumn Rebellion transforms the political weather far further.

¹⁶ To be precise: the XR Citizens Assembly Working Group are demanding that the Govt publicly commits to addressing the Assembly to tell them exactly what will be done with their recommendations/decisions. We're demanding that **the Government publicly commits furthermore to implement in full the Assembly's recommendations that receive over 80% support when voted on by the Assembly** (this is a working model in Poland).

¹⁷ Of course, we know that it is going to be hard to win; in some sense it is very unlikely. (Although, thrillingly, the matter is in a very real sense in our hands. There is no objective probability that we will lose; because, in human affairs, objective probability calculations are always moot.) Thus our stance is in one sense fundamentally ‘virtue-ethical’ (cf. n.10, above); we rise up just because it is *right*. It would be undignified not to, inhuman. It would be indecent not to give our all for the sake of a decent future. *But* a puristic desire never to compromise at all, a desire (tacitly) to lose and to be a ‘righteous’ one standing against the ‘unrighteous’ majority, is no part of XR’s purpose. We really do believe that we are all in this together, and we want as many of us as possible to get through it, together. We try earnestly to succeed, for everyone’s sake.

¹⁸ And the whistle-blower platform that XR is now starting to build will probably be a vital part of that truth-telling.

¹⁹ See <https://peacenews.info/node/9359/xr-35-percent-rule> .

Furthermore, I gather than Chenoweth has recently elaborated on the alleged 3.5% rule to suggest that it is unlikely to apply in a situation where massive system-change is needed; that a much higher percentage will be needed. Exactly what I am arguing.

²⁰ And I would go so far as to expand on this point. I believe that the reason why the authorities, especially the police, let us disrupt as much as we do is because, deep down, they know that we are right.

This is the force of truth...

²¹ And people surely *would* have been trapped underground even under the modified tube action plan, which aimed to stop trains moving ‘only’ at the end of lines. Because on some lines it is not possible to take all the trains from underground (indeed, several lines *end* under ground). Tubes would have been delayed and stoped right down the lines - i.e. in many cases underground.

²² A similar point arguably applies to the anti-slavery movement; arguably, it did not succeed until the economic case for slavery had become weak. If that is true, as I believe to be the case, then once more it shows how our task is much tougher than that of the anti-slavery movement. We need to be honest about this with ourselves, or we will burn out, give up when we don’t quickly succeed.

²³ This pamphlet is not the place to go into those dimensions in detail; I will do so in a future pamphlet. But briefly to give you an idea of what I mean:

If we can look climate reality in the eye, if we can bear to face the extinction crisis that we have engendered, and if we can respond to these with *open-ended* flexibility and adaptability and courage, then perhaps a new hope arises. Like many XR colleagues, I am confident that our purpose is not just political but psycho-spiritual. Our deepest purpose is to manifest the spirit of transformation, whether or not we succeed in our goals. WE FACE REALITY, the darkness of our future, AND THEN WE RISE UP TO MEET IT – and to change it.

We open ourselves with courage to see and feel the true terrible state of this beautiful world, how badly we have damaged it and especially our other-than-human animal kin and our descendants. When we really do this, there is no alternative but to rebel. In this sense, our ecological *perception*, our psycho-spiritual *awakening* and our socio-political *uprising* are all different aspects of the *same* whole, the same process. (They are, in the parlance of philosophy, ‘internally related’. They cannot be teased apart.)

²⁴ This pamphlet obviously places climate justice in a position of central importance in our movement, more central than it has been to date, at least to judge by our *actions*. But it’s equally important not to go up the blind alley of turning the quest for ecological and climate sanity into a general campaign to correct all the ills in the world; XR needs to stay focussed on its mission! (Some versions of the ‘Green New Deal’ appear to turn into general laundrylists of ‘progressive’ (sic) policies across the board; nothing could be better calculated than that to undermine the chances of us achieving broad buy-in for system-change). AND it is equally important not to get distracted by the quest for ideological purity, as found in much contemporary ‘identity politics’, which in practice *divides* us from one another, and in the quest for complete ‘inclusivity’ (sic) in some pockets of our movement, and the concomitant excessive obsession in some quarters with checking ‘privilege’. Roger Hallam, at pp.50-1 of his pamphlet, is very good on this: “Radical direct action is by definition an exclusive act — not everyone is willing to do it. But it is also the only way that structural change happens — that is how we stop terrible things from actually happening. We need to make this argument to our “radical left” critics and not allow ourselves to be pulled into the ghetto of excluding “inclusivity”. We should be speaking a new universalist language, using Martin Luther King’s speeches as a prime example of how to reclaim the framings of national pride to build a broad mass civil disobedience coalition which will win.” I aspire in this pamphlet to be in service of such universalism, uniting rather than dividing us — universalism which takes seriously our common plight in the face of the existential threat hanging over us, the especially savage plight facing future generations, and the need to make this sense of commonality real by way of reducing the inequality of climate- & eco-damage. I.e. The need for climate and ecological justice, the need for the economically privileged 1% to ‘lead’ in drastically reducing their footprint - & the need for *us* to target their profligacy until they start doing so.

²⁵ Of course, globally we *are* the elite, in terms of the use of carbon etc etc. We Britons therefore are pretty-much all complicit. Challenges to the carbon-elite — those who Dario Kenner calls ‘the polluter elite’ (<https://whygreeneconomy.org/the-polluter-elite-database/>) — require balancing with actions against the entire system that allows even the less-well-off in this country to be mostly members of the global elite. (My thinking - and wording - here is directly influenced by Robert Posnett.)

But my case is that we have already provided that balancing. We have already made very clear, in the actions we took in the Spring Rebellion, that we are not letting ordinary people off the hook. What we need to do, I submit, is *re-balance*. I.e. Make targeting the elite central to the Autumn Rebellion...

²⁶ Please make no mistake: it is imperative that our actions remain *respectful* to our opposition, whether that be the police or Downing Street or merchant bankers. We should empathise with the difficult role assigned by the authorities to the police; we should let politicians know that they believe their hands to be tied by voters (and funders) - on which point, see my discussion of why CAs can be to politicians’ advantage, below; and we should make clear that it is the abysmal financial *system* that we are seeking to bring down, not the individuals staffing it.

²⁷ It aims to facilitate a big expansion in what it calls “premium leisure passengers”! It will not service more ordinary people. See <https://hacan.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/London-City-Airport-Master-Plan-article.pdf> . (My thinking hereabouts has been checked out in detail with John Stewart, director of HACAN, and the author of this piece. John’s firm belief is that the fight to stop London City Airport expansion is much more easily winnable than the fight to stop Heathrow expansion. If we stopped London City Airport expansion, we could then move onto Heathrow afterward. (Cf. n.29, below.))

²⁸ Which would of course be easier than stopping Heathrow - especially, if we can’t use drones, on which see below. London City is small, suitable for a prequel to the main rebellion. Whereas Heathrow risks distracting us from the main rebellion - and splitting the movement, in the process. If we go ahead with Heathrow now, then we run a very serious risk of some local XR groups (such as Oxford) disaffiliating.

There is much disquiet among local groups about Heathrow/drones, and the consultation exercise we did shows that there is no majority among XR supporters for the proposed action. If local groups feel unheard, that will be very bad for XR.

²⁹ It will be said in objection that Heathrow disrupts the public and thus aids mobilisation and thus transformative change - that London City airport would be viewed as a specific political action not a national emergency action and thus “nothing to do with us [ordinary folks]”. Perhaps; but: part of what I am saying is: it is dangerous for us always to valorise disrupting the public. Sometimes, we should disrupt elites specifically.

If we did City Airport first and then Heathrow later I’d be happier... As already noted, I don’t think the public are ready for Heathrow yet. They’ll be readier for it once we have had more chance to communicate that this really is an emergency — and that, while that implicates us all, it implicates some of us more than others. If there’s carbon rationing - or indeed food rationing - the rich will/ should have to line up just like everyone else. I.e. They will have to change the most. And that will make the change that the rest of us have to make, as society becomes more equal, easier to accept.

To put the point more generally: we need to think very carefully about the *sequencing* of our big actions. I think we need to gradually, *not* too quickly, ramp them up; and I think we need very roughly to ‘alternate’ between elite-targeting and everyone-targeting actions.

³⁰ In this connection, Roger Hallam's words at p.33 of his pamphlet are very well-taken: "Sacrificial action is the key mechanism by which to create sympathy from supporters (leading to more recruitment) and grudging respect from critical onlookers — "I don't like their tactics, but I give them this — they stand by their beliefs". **This is a key argument then to stop using lock-ons and other physical equipment from blockades and just use our bodies.** // This demonstrates a greater sense of vulnerability (triggering a more intense emotional response). **The message is "I am just using my body, and I am putting myself in harm's way."** It is hard indeed to square this sentiment with putting drones at centre-stage, and so I was surprised when I heard that Roger was in favour of doing so, in the proposed Heathrow action that he helped design. Drones would move us away from a pure/direct 'sacrifice' model. That's simply fact, obvious truth.

³¹ What would the Government have to do, to tweak the regulations on flying drones so that (e.g.) flying a drone at headheight within the 5 mile exclusion zone for drones around Heathrow wasn't a problem?:

The government is currently in the process of drafting a new drones bill, it remains unclear what that will include or when it will come into force. It is also consulting on regulating drones more tightly.

So: *the government could potentially include tweaks in these new regulations that it's drafting at the moment.* [Here is an article summarising drone laws as they stand: <https://www.trustedreviews.com/news/uk-drone-laws-2019-3146402>]. My bet is this may do this pro-actively and pre-emptively, within the limits imposed by international law/regs. This might be difficult; but I'd add that a Government / an airport faced otherwise with a lengthy shutdown will move fast, and will press hard against and possibly beyond the letter of international aviation regs which would seem to constrain them to shut the airport the moment a drone lifts off. My worry then is that it looks a little as if the Heathrow action has been designed in a vacuum: As if there will be no creative response from the State/Airport authorities. I predict that there would be: and then, if we tried to pivot in response, we would either have to abandon drones or (if we then flew the drones higher or whatever) to start to look dangerously close to being violent.

³² I co-designed an action for Norwich XR that had this form: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-norfolk-47201406> . We occupied the Norfolk County Council chamber for several hours, holding up their budget meeting at which they were about to fund a dreadful new road-building project. Since then, the County Council has tried to start waking up to the climate and ecological emergency.

Our action was against a new road-building scheme (i.e. something that will affect nearly everyone, for good or ill); but it took the form of targeting a barely-democratic elite who are seeking to initiate this road.

It is vital to win the argument around road-building; it is a necessary condition for the success of XR. Because we can't have more traffic (apart from cycling) of any description. The resource implications of (say) retaining in effect business as usual through switching to everyone having electric vehicle are devastating due to increased loss of biodiversity through resource extraction, increased short-term carbon emissions in manufacturing and transporting etc etc. So, if traffic cannot increase, what is the point of new roads? The anti-roads argument allows us to seamlessly link carbon emissions with the loss of biodiversity, to highlight that there is no technological fix, to show that we are virtually all complicit, and ultimately to emphasise that the only way forward is for us to change the way we live as a society. (I owe much of this paragraph to Robert Posnett.) This is one way how we can 'dialectically' combine an anti-elite challenge with a transformative challenge for us all.

³³ As Roger Hallam remarks, at p.19 of his pamphlet, "the belief in the political system from those on both the left and the right has withered since the financial crisis, as evidenced by the rapid growth of radical political groups which use anti system rhetoric. There is growing rage at the injustice of extreme inequality and unaccountable global elites and now the emergence into public consciousness that not only have these people been robbing us for 30 years, but they are now going to take us to our deaths."

³⁴ The plural is crucial. We want Citizens Assemblies, not just for the four nations of the UK, but for localities across those nations, too. Local Government just as much as national government needs to be revived and democratised; that is what CAs in the plural will make real. XR targets the capital city above all because that is where, literally above all, political power lies (...and because we want to force it to tell the truth...). But the future we want will be a far *more* decentralised, relocalised future.

³⁵ The scare-quotes are deliberate. The XR Political Liaison group (a subgroup of the Political Strategy team), which I am part of, is tasked with engaging with the Government and others to seek to bring about implementation of XR's demands. But ultimately decisions about whether enough has been granted - e.g. a decision over whether to accept (say) a Government offer to bring in a CA tasked with getting us all to Net Zero by 2028, rather than by 2025 - will of course have to be consulted upon with the wider movement, ie. both with other key groups/Circles/Teams within XR, and with rebels at large (electronically, and through People's Assemblies). A small group would never be in a position to 'sell out' XR to the Government. Even if it wanted to! (Which, imho, we most certainly and obviously don't!)

³⁶ And also that trust in politicians is not exactly high! XR's Citizens Assemblies Working Group therefore disfavours the Irish model.

³⁷ It is probably impossible in the long term, nowadays, to run societies in ways that do not have *some* degree of democratic buy-in. The persistent dictatorships in the Middle East were thought to be counter-examples to this point; but the Arab Spring gave the lie to that thought. It showed that even regimes which political scientists considered long-term-stable under authoritarianism were not. (This also explains why eco-authoritarianism, even if it were desirable (!), is almost certainly not an option. You will not succeed in a policy- - and paradigm- - shift as profound in its implications as ecology, without most of the citizenry being willing to go along with you.)

³⁸ I.e. I am hinting here at the very important point that actually much of life would be way BETTER if we radically relocalised, rebuilt community, became less hyper-mobile, energy-descended, etc.

³⁹ There is also a very important role for other NGOs etc.: It is really encouraging to see Greenpeace (and Amnesty International and others) starting to embrace the radical mass NVDA of XR. If we are to succeed, to actually win, that objective will probably require real help also from the likes of Avaaz, 38 degrees, War on want, and other such potentially-radical groups. This will be the 'movement of movements'; which I've noted is a marriage made in heaven to the strategy approach outlined in this pamphlet. But no group is so crucial as the climate school strikers, for the reason I give here.

⁴⁰ And of course it is only right that XR started *here*: for we started the Industrial Revolution, we started the course of events that has led to the very edge of humanity's ecocide-suicide. We need to learn (especially from indigenous and peasants peoples) how to return to life and to humility; but we need to show some willingness to lead, in turning from hubristic growthism and its catastrophic destructivism. We need to demonstrate some willingness to lead in changing everything. After all, as I argued at the end of the previous section, we have no credibility in calling on other ('developing') nations not to follow our catastrophic path, if we are not willing to turn back from it ourselves.

⁴¹ If the state refuses to move beyond the gestures it has already made into a phase of really drawing the consequences of those gestures, then there must be serious consequences. For we live in the age of consequences: the age of anthropogenic climate breakdown and mass extinction. If the state blocks real action into 2020, then that confirms our condition of rebellion against it as legitimate; and then the people will justly want the downfall of the regime. Because *the people want to live*; they (we) want to not perish and not extinguish most of nature. (cf. n.33, above.)

⁴² This then is like the spark lit by Katniss Everdeen, the protagonist of *The Hunger Games*, a spark that caught fire in an imagined time and a place that ours starts increasingly perhaps to resemble, where what was called for was not the tacitly-denialist siren call of 'optimism' but, rather, deep courage. The courage to see what is, the courage to stop playing by the ordinary rules of so-called 'liberal democracy', the courage to accept that the odds are never in our favour. The courage to stop fantasising that we can 'mitigate' climate-dangerous emissions enough to find some form of safe continuity of the status quo. The caring bravery to become the transformation we want to see in the world: to rise up beyond what we thought was possible, for us to be.

The courage to rebel, realising that the main thing that we have left to lose is our self-respect, if we do *not* rebel.

⁴³ Transformative adaptation begins in the hope that we are 'big' enough, if we face what is (thus the absolute importance of taking Demand 1 to heart for ourselves), and are our most authentic deepest selves, to match and overcome any evil. We rise up to meet it. *Truly understanding the scope of the climate and ecological emergency confronting us requires that we be far bigger than we ever have been before.*

⁴⁴ It is in this sense a great privilege, albeit also a dark and painful one, to be alive at this fateful moment in history.