

Plan X

Many commentators have sympathy for the actions of Extinction Rebellion but criticize their apparent lack of alternatives. [Hervé Kempf](#) states: “They don’t say anything about *how*.” [Luttikhuis](#) (of Dutch newspaper NRC) thinks their radicalism is void of substance.

I myself would say that, formally, they have a point: on paper, there is no future plan. However, those in the know are aware that a basic plan – plan X, if you will – is definitely forming within XR. On the one hand, there are ideas of central figures such as [Bradbrook](#), [Hallam](#), Raworth, [Monbiot](#), and, more to the background, the views of 350.org, Postcarbon.org, Zerowaste, [Alternatiba](#), FF, [TT](#), [Klimaatstaking](#), [Staygrounded](#), etc. On the other hand, there is XR behavior. It is not without reason that Gretha traveled to America by sailboat in ordinary clothes. It is not without reason that most young people reject air travel, want to cut down on meat consumption, criticize product supply from distant countries, and shop at second-hand and organic stores. Hey, Hervé, something wrong with your eyes? What you are looking for is inside their thoughts. It wanders through their dreams and takes shape in their communications and slogans (“The wrong Amazon is burning”, “Systems change”, “Birds, not Boeings”). It takes time for those ideas to crystallize into public wisdom. Allow them that time. However, I think that the basic elements of their plan are out in the open. Let me explain.

The basic elements of plan X

XR urgently demands that “within a few years, greenhouse gas emissions be reduced to net-zero.”

The movement notes – and this is their fundamental criticism – that, despite all promises, it is becoming increasingly clear that it is technically and socially impossible to convert within a very short time-frame the entire global interaction circus from the current, entirely fossil fuel-based power supply to a zero-emission energy supply.

In doing so, XR pierces the Achilles’ heel of the established order, shatters that dream, and demands a fundamental change in thinking – a full-blown economic **reorganization**, you could say – in order not to be eradicated, not to have to die.

Which reorganization ideas are out there?

- We have to cut back enormously and revert to the production of the bare essentials: food, water, clothing, and shelter, plus some resources to make and consume the aforementioned products.
- This means minimizing the rest – such as travel, culture, internet, and transport. Back to basics! Retour à l’essentiel! Restricting our lifestyle to the basic necessities of life. In one word: **simplicity**.
- Such a social exercise is technically and socially feasible only if everyone is given a level playing field. Social justice is a must, because once you start tightening people’s belts through government policy, you simply cannot maintain positions that have the potential to loosen those belts indefinitely.
- All right, but a level playing field in what sense? If it is ‘in terms of costs and benefits’, this would trigger an immediate and inevitable confrontation with the expansion and apathy of the welfare state. No, instead, it is about the way in which everyone in his or her life is primarily positioned relative to the means of existence available on Earth. It is about the accessibility to resources, which has to be spread fairly evenly over people and be allocated according to the life phase people are in

in order to get them to move optimally and to coexist with shared values. In one word: **accessibility**.

- In order to keep that accessibility fairly even, you have to make sure it cannot be obtained by others.
- Zero-emission production of the bare essentials is only possible if production takes place as closely as possible to the inputs (raw materials, deliveries/supply, sources) and users (consumers, subsequent processes). This means production cycles that are as short as possible and, consequently, local. In short: **circularity**.

Ultimately, this brings you closer to the idea of rural communities that are self-sustaining and that jointly initiate and implement a number of basic services and tool productions while at the same time minimizing cross-border import and export.

Is this ideal? No, not at all, but an emergency solution like this is 100% effective as a short-term prevention of a fatal derailment of the climate.

Quite a good plan, then!

Then where is the rub?

Considering the current social debate on the three basic elements of this plan, the discussion on **circularity** and **simplicity** seems to be making progress, but the subject of **accessibility** is being avoided. The idea that people will have to connect more directly and, therefore, more laboriously to the available local resources such as land and matter, triggers tremendous mental resistance. For civilians, it is the idea of *having to take care* of basic processes that troubles them because they thought they would never have to deal with that again. For farmers, managers, and the have-a-lots, the idea of *having to relinquish* their control over land, resources, large-scale processes, and large reserves is virtually unthinkable. They see their future falling apart. It is just as unimaginable for citizens to go and live on the land as it is for farmers to make room for others and adapt their methods – something out of a movie, more like. Everyone has an empire of their own, which they have only just started to expand, forcing away the other even further. To have to switch from a radiant, ever-expanding cerebral future to local intensive care for, and maintenance of, basic processes – such defeat! One shudders at the thought. However, XR is neither intensely bourgeois nor averse to basic solutions, and their approach is starting to become more focused. They are looking at people who have already taken steps and realized solutions in that direction – [cooperative](#) solutions as well as [distributive](#), [collective](#), and [individual](#) ones.

The pressure of circumstances

Meanwhile, the clock is ticking. The climate is kicking around our resources at an increasing rate. We should therefore hurry and hand over the care for our current means of existence to **each other** ere they be lost to us forever.

In other words: we should develop this plan locally and take decisive action! Meanwhile, we need to rise up to those who think they can ride out the climate disruptions – the better-off, I mean – and force them to cooperate. As [Tim Hollo](#) put it, “Our most important task right now is to build social cohesion while learning to live within natural limits.”

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