

CECAN Webinar:

Inequality in a Context of Climate Crisis After COVID – the Role of Applied Social Science

Tuesday 24th May 2022, 13:00 – 14:00 BST

Presenter: David Byrne, Emeritus Professor of Sociology and Applied Social Science, University of Durham (hosted by Ian Christie)

Welcome to our **CECAN Webinar**.

All participants are muted. Only the Presenter & CECAN Host can speak. The webinar will start at **13:00 BST**.

David will speak for around 45 minutes and will answer questions at the end.

Please submit your questions at any point during the webinar via the Q&A box in the Zoom webinar control panel.

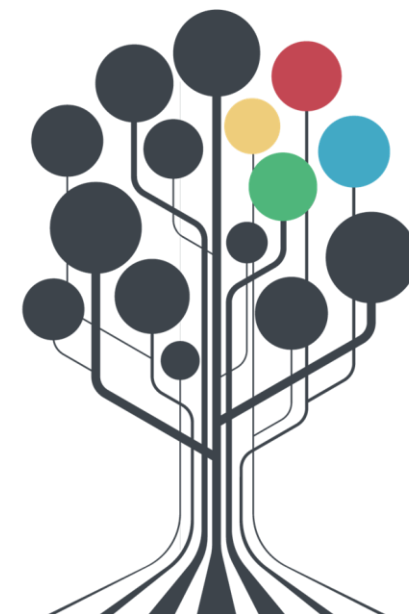
Today's webinar will be recorded and made available on the CECAN website.

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Butler – the Pox (apocalypse)

I have read that the Pox was caused by accidentally coinciding climate, economic and sociological crises. It would be more honest to say that the Pox was caused by our own refusal to deal with obvious problems in those areas. We caused the problems: then we sat and watched as they grew into crises. I have heard people deny this, but I was born in 1970. I have seen enough to know that this is true. I have watched education become more a privilege of the rich than the basic necessity it must be if civilized society is to survive. I have watched as convenience, profit and inertia excused greater and more dangerous environmental degradation. I have watched poverty, hunger and disease become inevitable for more and more people. ... Overall, the Pox has had the effect of an instalment plan World War III. (Butler 1998 8)



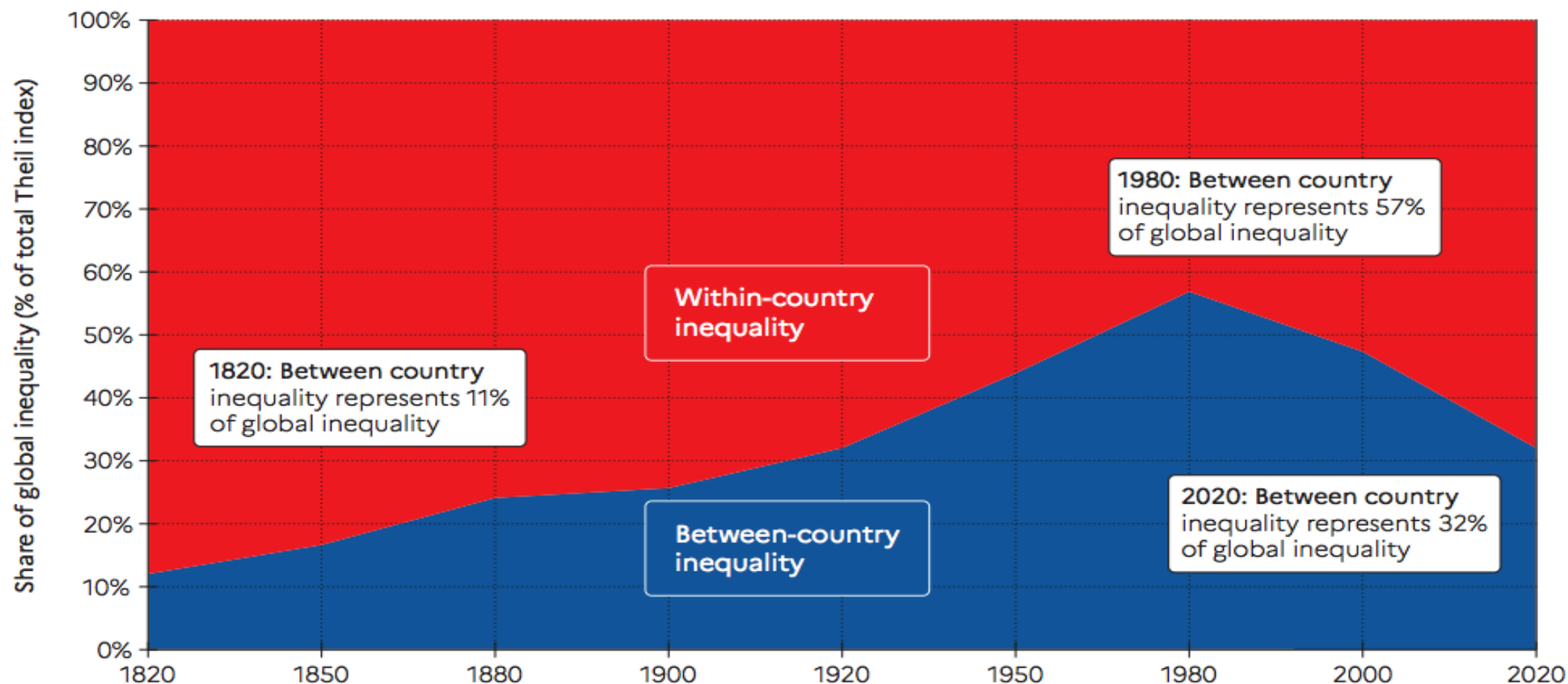
Lieven , A. (2020) *Climate Change and the Nation State*.
London : Penguin.

Lieven (2020) argues that it is nation- states that must act to avert climate catastrophe. For him the fundamental problem preventing meaningful action against climate catastrophe is: ‘... the lack of motivation and mobilization of elites all over the world and of voters in the West’. The level of necessary sacrifices by ordinary people that will be required, sacrifices on the scale of those imposed on the UK’s civilian population during the Second World War, can only be demanded as part of a system of national solidarity in which the rich have to pay their fair share and in which the state guarantees the basic living standards of the population as a whole through social welfare and universal health care. (2020 : xiv and xix)

A Complex Realist Approach



Figure 6 Global income inequality: Between vs. within country inequality (Theil index), 1820-2020



Interpretation: The importance of between-country inequality in overall global inequality, as measured by the Theil index, rose between 1820 and 1980 and strongly declined since then. In 2020, between-country inequality makes-up about a third of global inequality between individuals. The rest is due to inequality within countries. Income is measured per capita after pension and unemployment insurance transfers and before income and wealth taxes. **Sources and series:** wir2022.wid.world/methodology and Chancel and Piketty (2021).

My Position and Method – Complexity Framed interpretive synthesis in a context of CRISES

- Complexity Framed – the world – **natural and social** – is composed of interwoven far from equilibric complex systems with causal powers running in all direction – the Ontology.
- All this is dynamic – systems change their states but do so in terms of radical reconfiguration – change of kind.
- Interpretive synthesis – read as much as possible in academic and grey literature and synthesize what is found in a complexity frame.
- Crises are periods in the trajectory of systems which cannot continue for a long period, when establishment of a relatively stable long run system state results in radical transformation.
- We are experiencing on a global scale interwoven crises of the social and the natural which must lead to a transformation in the present form of the **CAPITLOCENE**.

CAPITALOCENE

NOT JUST ANTHROPOCENE

<https://wiki.p2pfoundation.net/Capitalocene>

<https://www.wired.com/story/capitalocene/>

<https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v39/n05/benjamin-kunkel/the-capitalocene>

Path Dependent Possibility Space

‘Possibility Space’ is a description of the range of possible conditions for the development forward of a complex system.

Path Dependency is the social scientific assertion that the future of a social (and by implication interaction of social and natural) system is limited by the historical development of that system.

So there are multiple but not infinite limited possibilities for the future development of the social system we have now

FutureS can be known – Hayek was wrong,
bad, and dangerous to use.

- Hayek and the Mount Pellerin Society's conception of complexity asserts that futures are unknowable, that the social is generated solely by micro-emergent actions of multiple actors – mainly entrepreneurs, through markets - and that planning for a desired future is bad. This is ideological nonsense.
- If we start from careful post-disciplinary consideration of the present state of our interwoven social / natural global system then we can imagine – imagination matters – possible futures – and think about what actions might produce different futures
- We can do this through careful synthesis of what we know.
- This is what is done by good near future science fiction.

The crucial importance of the interwoven systems of taxation, cash benefits and income in kind.

In some periods they [Fiscal Measures] explain practically all major events and in most periods they explain a great deal ... But even greater than the causal is the symptomatic significance of fiscal history. The spirit of a people, its cultural level, its social structure, the deeds its policy may prepare ... all this and more is written in fiscal history. He who knows how to listen to its message here discerns the thunder of world history more clearly than anywhere else. (Schumpeter *Crisis of the Tax State – an essay in fiscal sociology* 1918 101)

‘... tax systems are simply particular forms of class systems.’
(O’Connor *The Fiscal Crisis of the State* 1973, 2009 206)

Good scenario near future science fiction

- Butler, O. *Parable of the Sower* (1993) New York: Four Walls, Eight Windows
- Butler, O. *Parable of the Talents* (1998) New York: Seven Stories Press
- Doctorow, C. (2008) *Little Brother* New York: Tor Books
- Doctorow, C. (2013) *Homeland* New York: Tor Books
- Doctorow, C. (2017) *Walkaway* New York: Tor Books
- Doctorow, C. (2020) *Attack Surface* New York: Tor Books
- Robinson, K.S. (2004) *Forty Signs of Rain* London: Harper Collins
- Robinson, K.S. (2005) *Fifty Degrees Below* London: Harper Collins
- Robinson, K.S. (2007) *Sixty Days and Counting* London: Harper Collins
- Robinson, K.S. (2017) *New York 2140* New York: Orbit
- Robinson, K.S. (2020) *The Ministry for the Future* New York: Orbit

Themes

- Butler – social collapse and community based reconstruction – emphasis on dispossessed minorities but on joint working to move forward *possibly!*
- Robinson
 - Real Science led confrontation of global warming coupled with innovative political leadership
 - Post warming community confrontation with real estate capitalism
- Doctorow
 - State and capitalist surveillance
 - Post work production – ‘communist party’
 - Bottom up social uprising and consequent transformation

Action Research Implementation as the Necessary Mode of Governance

What is required is democratic planning at every level but working in a frame of subsidiarity.

See: Devine, P. (1988) *Democracy and Economic Planning: The Political Economy of a Self-Governing Society* Cambridge: Polity

The mode of governance should be participatory and dialogical – note dialogue gives expertise its proper status.

We need something like Structure Plans at a City Region basis in the UK (and equivalent elsewhere) alongside National and Devolved Governance equivalents.

What we in the Community Development Projects of the 1970s called feedback action research is a crucial part of this process.

Structure Plans

What is required in policy development is the preparation of an extended version of the Structure Plans of the 1970s which took the form of a 'written statement, illustrated diagrammatically, of the local planning authority's policies and main proposals for change on a large scale' (Ministry of Housing and Local Government, 1970, para 1.10)' The key phrase is ‘change on a large scale’.

‘Structure Plans were to be essentially written statements, accompanied by a key diagram, that set out broad issues and policies concerning all aspects of the development of a local area over the next 15 years or so . The subjects to be covered by this integrated plan included population, employment, housing, shopping, leisure, transport and the environment. The scope of the plan was intended to include the relevant activities of all agencies in the area, including private companies, nationalised industries, central government and households, as well as those of the local authority itself. The general proposals in the plan had to be supported by analysis and reasoned justification, and had to take account of the likely future availability of resources.’ (Barras, R. and Broadbent, T. A. (1979) ‘The Analysis in English Structure Plans’ *Urban Studies* 16 1 -18 1)

UK2070
Commission

UK 2070: An Inquiry into Regional Inequality
Towards a Programme for Action

Make No Little Plans

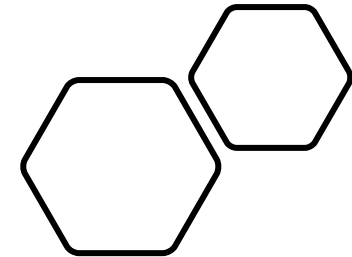
**ACTING AT SCALE FOR
A FAIRER AND STRONGER FUTURE**

FINAL REPORT OF THE UK2070 COMMISSION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

FEBRUARY 2020

UK2070
COMMISSION



UK 2070 Commission Final Report February 2020

Make no little Plans They have no magic to stir the
blood and probably themselves will not be realised.

Make big Plans Aim high, great ideas will never die, but
live long with ever-growing urgency.

(Adapted from Daniel Burnham – epigraph to the
Report)

The role of Intellectual Knowledge in Praxis

Freire (1972, p. 52) described praxis as “reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it”. He argued that it was not enough for people to study the world, they also had a responsibility to act to create a more just world. For Freire, praxis was “a central defining feature of human life and a necessary condition of freedom” and he argued that “human nature is expressed through intentional, reflective, meaningful activity situated within dynamic historical and cultural contexts that shape and set limits on that activity” (Glass, 2001, p.16).

- Freire, P. (1972). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Penguin.
- Glass, R. D. (2001, 2001/03/01). On Paulo Freire’s Philosophy of Praxis and the Foundations of Liberation Education. *Educational Researcher*, 30(2), 15-25. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X030002015>

From Graeme Stuart “What is Praxis?”

<https://sustainingcommunity.wordpress.com/2020/03/12/what-is-praxis/>



That is YOU people – so what to do?

- Not easy given the nature of contemporary governance and the short term character of political processes.
- Not easy given the dominance of neo-liberalism in political attitudes by elites
- Not easy given that New Public Sector Management is not yet dead
- BUT we are in a state of interlinked CRISES
- Crisis – the state of a system which cannot continue as is but must be transformed into a new state.
- “Never waste a good crisis”. Milton Friedman
- ‘[t]he crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum a great variety of morbid symptoms appear’. Antonio Gramsci
- Pessimism of the intellect but also optimism of the will: Gramsci again.