



Scientists Warning considers the Cultural Causes Of Climate Change

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This paper was inspired by Bill Ripple from the Scientists Warning organisation in 2023.
He wanted a paper about the cultural causes of climate change included in the recommended papers
<https://scientistswarning.forestry.oregonstate.edu/journal-articles-related-scientists-warning>

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Abstract

Climate breakdown is just one symptom of the broader ecosystems collapse that is underway. The psychology of supremacy facilitates extreme wealth inequality and other ecocidal behaviour patterns such as patriarchy, pronatalism, nationalism, military supremacy, colonialism, and GDP growth. This paper explores the emergent cultural shift that could equitably maximise mitigation from this predicament.

Background

In 2023, a preprint science paper [Williams,2023] envisioned how humanity might peacefully maximise mitigation from global ecosystems collapse. It described a global aspiration towards eco-equity whilst facilitating the voluntary contraction of the global economy and population. As with Jem Bendell's '*Deep Adaptation*' paper in 2018, the paper failed to pass peer review.

In 2026 much of the vision is emerging. For example, the National Emergency Briefing in the UK is calling for a nationwide awareness exercise. Furthermore, the Roadmap for Eradicating Poverty Beyond Growth [Schutter,2026] steers away from endless economic growth, focusing instead on human rights, social justice, and ecological limits.

Initiatives like the Global Justice Project [Piketty, 2026], and World Beyond War, and the pro-Palestine movement are evidence that people are beginning to question entrenched beliefs. The book, *Beyond Profit*, by Dr Victoria Hurth, describes purpose-led leadership replacing the profit-led mindset. Those who endorsed *Beyond Profit* are all challenging dominant norms.

This paper describes the emergent shift arising from growing awareness of ecosystems collapse. It quantifies Earth's *carrying capacity*. It explores the role of *limbic responses* in enabling the disconnect from this reality. It discusses the role of unequal power and wealth in dictating our direction. This leads to a discussion about Zionism and the importance of demilitarisation to mitigate global ecosystems collapse.

The paper outlines an *emotional evolution* to support wiser priorities. It overhauls Maslow's work to suggest a *Hierarchy of Needs* appropriate in escalating collapse. Various eco-equity initiatives are explored that might help unite humanity in the shared purpose to shrink the global economy and population back within Earth's limits. Eco-equity measures would facilitate Universal Basic Provision, a cap on wealth, and eco-aware healthcare.

Overall, the paper discusses the emerging socio-economic transition as perceived by the author. The image below identifies key features of that transition. The upper section shows emergent eco-friendly behaviours. The lower section outlines the cultural trap that defines the term '*business-as-usual*'. Daily life is a mix of both these behaviour patterns. We urgently need to phase out the unhelpful patterns. Readers might find this paper enables them to achieve greater clarity regarding their own role in our collective evolution.

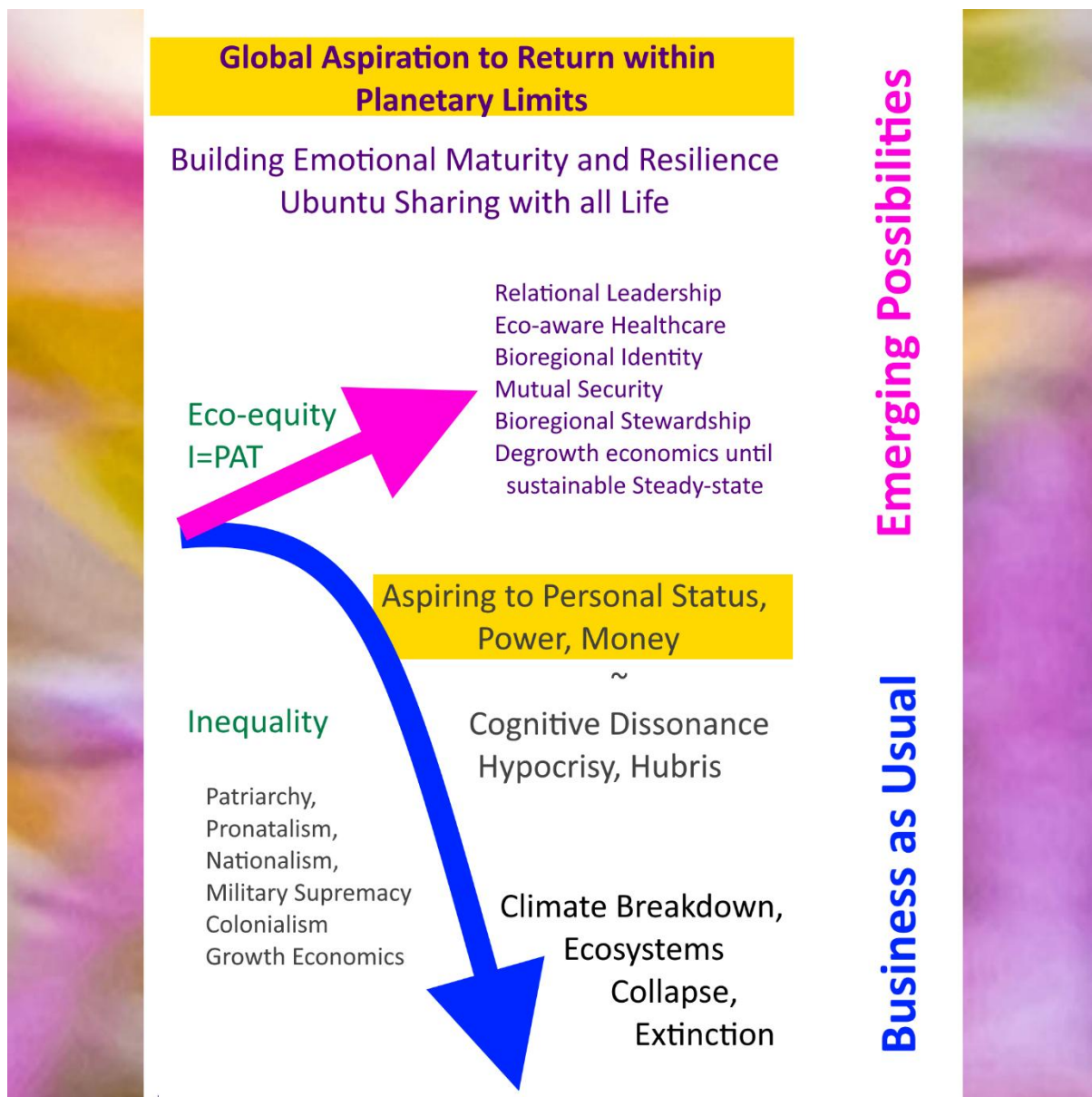


Figure 1 - Emergent culture shift would maximise mitigation from global ecosystems collapse

The Carrying Capacity of Earth

For more than fifty years humanity has operated well over the available biocapacity on Earth. Genuine sustainability cannot be achieved until this debt is repaid. The data maintained by the Global Footprint Network calculates that Earth's total biocapacity fluctuates around 12 billion global hectares. In his book, *Half Earth*, biologist E.O Wilson recommended half this biocapacity is needed to facilitate biodiversity. Using his guide to sustainable living, more than 8 billion people would need to subsist on about 6 billion global hectares. Humanity currently consumes at rate of about 20 billion gha annually. This is more three times the sustainable level recommended by E O Wilson.

[Tamburino,2021] estimated that an average of 2.14gha per capita is needed for an equitable civilisation that supports a fulfilled human life. Therefore, it should come as

no surprise that recent research estimates a sustainable global human population at about 2.5 billion [Bradshaw,2026].

This paper recommends that we accept the findings from Bradshaw. The I=PAT insights identified three key drivers to man-made environmental damage: *Population size, Affluence, and Technology*. Bradshaw coupled with the IPAT insights implies that achieving sustainability will involve peacefully and voluntarily minimising birth rates and consumption per capita globally until we return to less than a third of current levels.

Within the environmental movement there are still many who deny the implications of the IPAT insights. Everyone will be somewhere on the vast spectrum of perspectives between fiercely defending *business-as-usual* behaviour patterns and seriously considering the vast range of possibilities that could maximise mitigation.

Limbic Loopholes

The human limbic response system enables us to bypass critical thinking. In his book, *Mindshifting with Mitch*, Mitch Weisburgh describes five limbic traps: freeze, flight, fight, fluency, and follow. The fluency and follow responses apply to all the dominant socio-economic patterns that we are taught, namely: obedience to wealth and power, pronatalism, nationalism, military supremacy, colonialism, and GDP growth. All five responses are commonly deployed in the denial of ecosystems collapse and to the denial of population overshoot.

There are five significant stressors; pressure, fatigue, irritation, distraction and complacency which impact our ability to use our pre-frontal cortex and thereby add limbic risk into our behaviour [Wentzel,2019]. Our limbic responses serve to perpetuate any deeply entrenched behaviour patterns. The global financial system is increasingly reliant on a limbic response that relies on business-as-usual. Economists like Prof Steve Keen, Richard Murphy, Gary Stevenson, and Yannis Varoufakis are amongst those who have navigated beyond the limbic response and are aware that global financial collapse is unfolding. Financial collapse arises from ecological collapse as money becomes increasingly powerless to save us.

Many still believe that technology can rescue us, but the IPAT insights and research like [McLaren,2020] imply otherwise. Challenging business-as-usual requires moral courage and a willingness to go against the flow. The people involved in the helpful initiatives mentioned in this paper are showing that courage.

Patriarchy defined as Inequality and Arrogance

In this paper, the term 'patriarchy' refers to the wealth and power hierarchy. The author recommends that we consider anthropocentric arrogance, racial arrogance, and gender arrogance as contributing factors that created the wealth and power pyramid that exists today. We have adopted a logic that rewards the most aggressive, competitive, and greedy amongst us and we have enabled them to navigate to the top of the current wealth and power hierarchy. This unhelpful logic of competitive supremacy represents a danger to humanity. To collaborate peacefully in the urgent downsizing exercise the logic of supremacy that has defined our past must be confronted and the resultant hierarchy dismantled. [Naidu,2026].

The IPAT insights reveal that wealth inequality will mirror climate and ecological inequality. People with more wealth or more reliance on technology will inevitably use a larger ecological footprint.

The economist Gary Stevenson, author of *The Trading Game*, survived the 'get rich' process without losing his inner moral compass. Experiences from his impoverished youth instilled a profound grasp of the inequities in our world. His book reveals that the tactics used by management at Citibank are much like those used by the drug dealers he encountered during his young life. After the 2008 financial crash, he recognised that the global financial market would never recover. His colleagues preferred to make a financial profit from this fact rather than consider strategies to steer humanity into a wiser direction. He has since inspired millions to join in the battle to introduce wealth taxes globally. Stevenson endures mental anguish from knowing that collapse is unfolding. It is like being trapped in a car with a maniac driver.

Stevenson explains that our economic algorithms take no account of wealth distribution, they only consider the average GDP per capita. Economics offers no established method to cap wealth nor to ensure that wealth is evenly distributed. The book '*Limitarianism*', by Ingrid Robeyns, challenges the ecological ethics of extreme wealth inequality. Robeyns recommends a global wealth cap around ten million USD.

The stresses of global ecosystems collapse are now causing a polarisation to emerge between the extremely wealthy people who are deeply in denial and are powerful enough to control politicians and the mainstream media. There are far more of us than them, but we have all been taught to obey the wealth and power hierarchy. We just need to break through that conditioning. We cannot afford to let the Epstein elite control our collective destiny.

The mindset for collective ecocide is like that for genocide. Hannah Arendt observed the banality behind the evils that were executed during World War II. Stanley Milgram's obedience experiments confirmed that most people are inclined to trust authority and to follow orders without challenging authoritative figures. Modern education is designed to reinforce our obedience to the wealth and power hierarchy. There is little recognition that we rely on healthy ecosystems to survive. Instead, many people believe that we rely on wealth and power to survive. This common belief is increasingly unhelpful in escalating ecosystems collapse.

Zionism, Militarism, and Ecological Limits

The Zionist ideology was born from four social paradigms that are becoming increasingly ecocidal: Nationalism, Colonialism, Pronatalism and Militarism. From the outset, it was never ecologically feasible to sustainably support the entire Jewish diaspora within the area that we now call Israel. In 2017, Alon Tal, an Israeli environmentalist and former Knesset politician, published a book about this predicament called *The Land is Full*.

The brutal ethnic cleansing of Palestinians offers a stark analogy to the daily ecocide that arises from business-as-usual. The ecological debt for Israel is as bad as that for an oil-rich arid country. Israel provides an extreme example of the complacency and misunderstanding that enables ordinary people to endorse both ecocidal and genocidal behaviour.

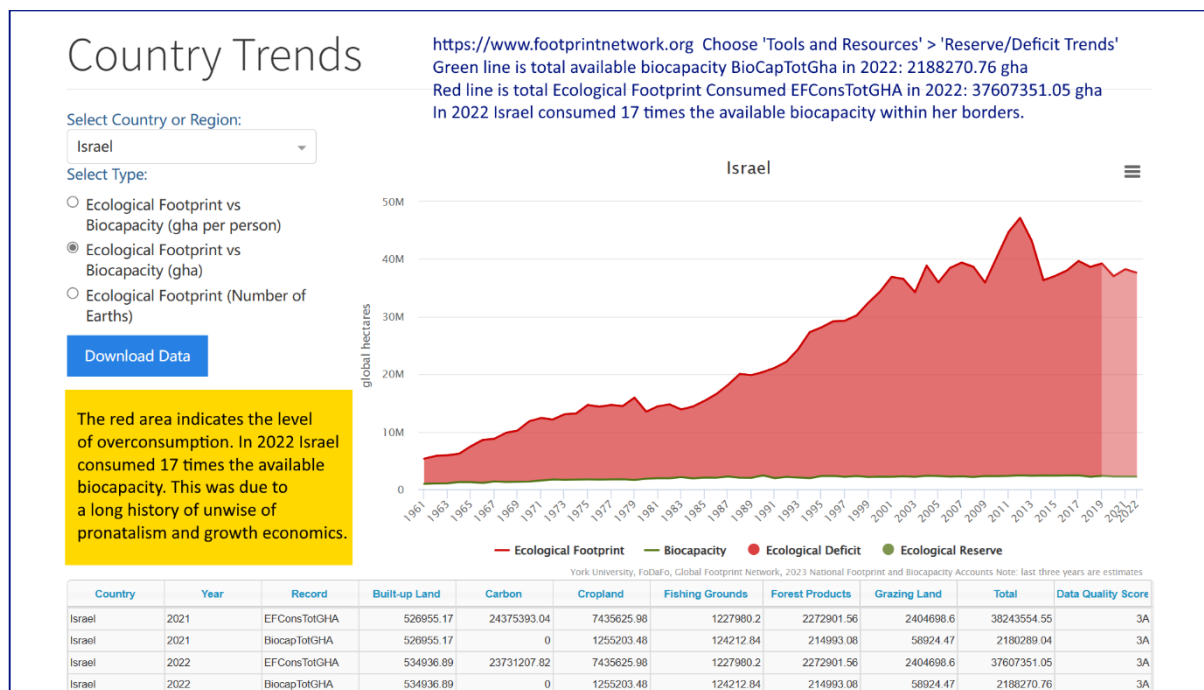


Figure 2 - Israel's ecological profile from the Global Footprint Network

The ongoing defence of Israel's behaviour patterns reveals the entrenched Machiavellian style of 'divide and rule' leadership that persists amongst the wealthy elite who profit from military and security enterprises. Many can now see that this is immature and inappropriate behaviour; but the rich and powerful own our mainstream media and some social media like X; they still steer much of the collective mindset.

A UK Employment Appeal Tribunal recently upheld a landmark ruling in favour of Professor David Miller who spoke out against Zionism. The case concluded that anti-Zionist views are a protected philosophical belief under the Equality Act 2010 [Faragher,2026]. The IHRA definition of antisemitism is increasingly resisted by various institutions, civil groups, and the Supreme Court for New South Wales in Australia. Also in Australia, 'The Royal Commission into Antisemitism and Social Cohesion' heard eloquent and persuasive testimony from the Jewish pro-Palestine activist Yasmine Johnson [Johnson,2026]. All of this helps open the door to global demilitarisation.

The weapons and security industry is very lucrative in financial terms, and very expensive from the ecological angle. We cannot afford any wars during global ecosystems collapse. Therefore, we need to overcome the mindset that persuades us to fear each other. Every war is essentially a battle over resources. The enormous global military expenditure could be redirected to deliver universal basic provision. If everyone is provided for, and if we can globally evolve to a greater level of emotional maturity, the clamour to fight would soon evaporate.

Emotional Evolution

A higher level of emotional maturity is needed to maximise mitigation during the collapse. Accepting that our world is no longer a safe place to bring a newborn is a challenging reality to acknowledge. Minimal birth rates will help to minimise suffering for both parents and children in the unfolding global ecosystems collapse. This

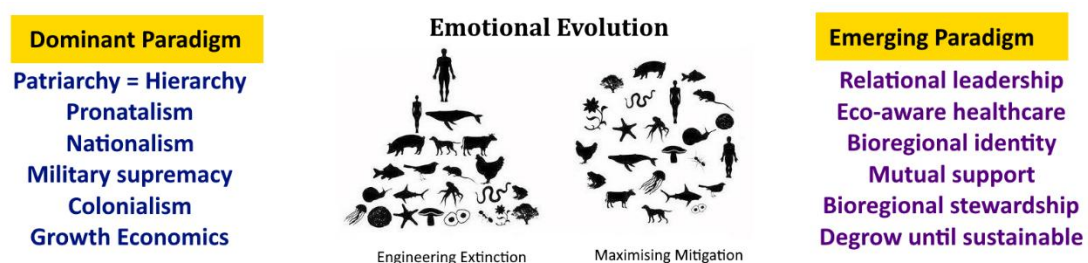
mitigation factor can be achieved with a global campaign to encourage and facilitate eco-aware family planning. The subsequent demographic challenges will need to be met with resolve and personal sacrifice.

It is also important that we recognise the role of death in allowing new life to flourish. A debate about the ecological cost of modern healthcare is initiated in chapters 7, 8, and 10 of the book: *Saving Us From Ourselves – Can we recover from over 50 years of ecological overshoot?* [Williams,2021].

Getting everyone involved in the process of reassessing our joint responsibilities and shared purpose will trigger the emotional evolution to provide the emotional resilience going forwards. The 1000 Founding Voices initiative launched by Gemma Herbertson of Neuro Frontiers might serve as a stepping-stone from local to global discussions.

Stories navigating harsh realities can help us. The book '*Antoinette and her friends resist*' by Stephanie C Fox defends the need for abortion.

The image below details some important aspects of the emotional evolution required to complete the emergent mindset shift.



Our historic trust in hierarchic structures has been corrupted by an unwise set of incentives: Status, Power, and Money (SPAM). We can no longer trust those in power.

- **Arrogance** can evolve into **Humility** once we accept the reality of ecological collapse, recognising the injustice for future generations, and those already unable to subsist
- **Self-interest** can evolve into **Extended Ubuntu** as we accept the need for a mindset that recognises our interconnectedness with all of life on Earth, and respects the global commons
- **Anxiety** can evolve into **Resolve** to act wisely and collectively
- **Anger** can evolve into **Empowerment** if a suitable mode of expression can be found
- **Hate** can evolve into **Respect and Understanding** given a suitable relearning process
- **Guilt** can evolve into **Reparation** if a route for reparation can be identified
- **Blame** can evolve into **Forgiveness** if reparation is offered, and forgiveness is sought
- **Judgement** can evolve into **Trust** in each other, given enough collective discussion and collaboration; altered behaviours from leaders, will be key to inspiring trust
- **Fear** can evolve into **Courage** to face the gravity of our predicament

Figure 3 - Emotional Evolution is needed to accept the reality of man-made global ecosystems collapse

There are many voices that can help us to navigate through the emotional development described above. The Substack author *Gut Check Guy* is building a developmental framework for understanding consciousness, human development, and civilization. The author Sinan Si Alhir is soon publishing a book 'Primal Patterning'. The two approaches will complement each other; The GutCheckGuy is interactive and Alhir is more theoretical.

The business philosopher Alaka Oluwatobi has a plethora of unpublished work on SSRN. His ideas are pushing the boundaries with regards to post-sovereignty, co-authorship and democracy. He pulls in ideas from his own cultural heritage with concepts like Afrobuntocracy. He represents the type of voice that deserves amplification. Mabel Mauritz is developing the concept of Relational Systems. The authors George Tsakraklides, Bart Flos, and Acharya Prashant are all being honest about our predicament. Writers like these are helping others to accept the harsh existential realities.

The more diverse and imaginative our source of ideas, the greater the possibilities going forwards; but only if the need operate within Earth's carrying capacity is acknowledged.

An Appropriate Hierarchy of Needs

Humanity is the key driver in the Sixth Mass Extinction and the ongoing ecosystems collapse. Maslow's *Hierarchy of Needs* did not face this reality. The graphic below suggests more appropriate priorities.

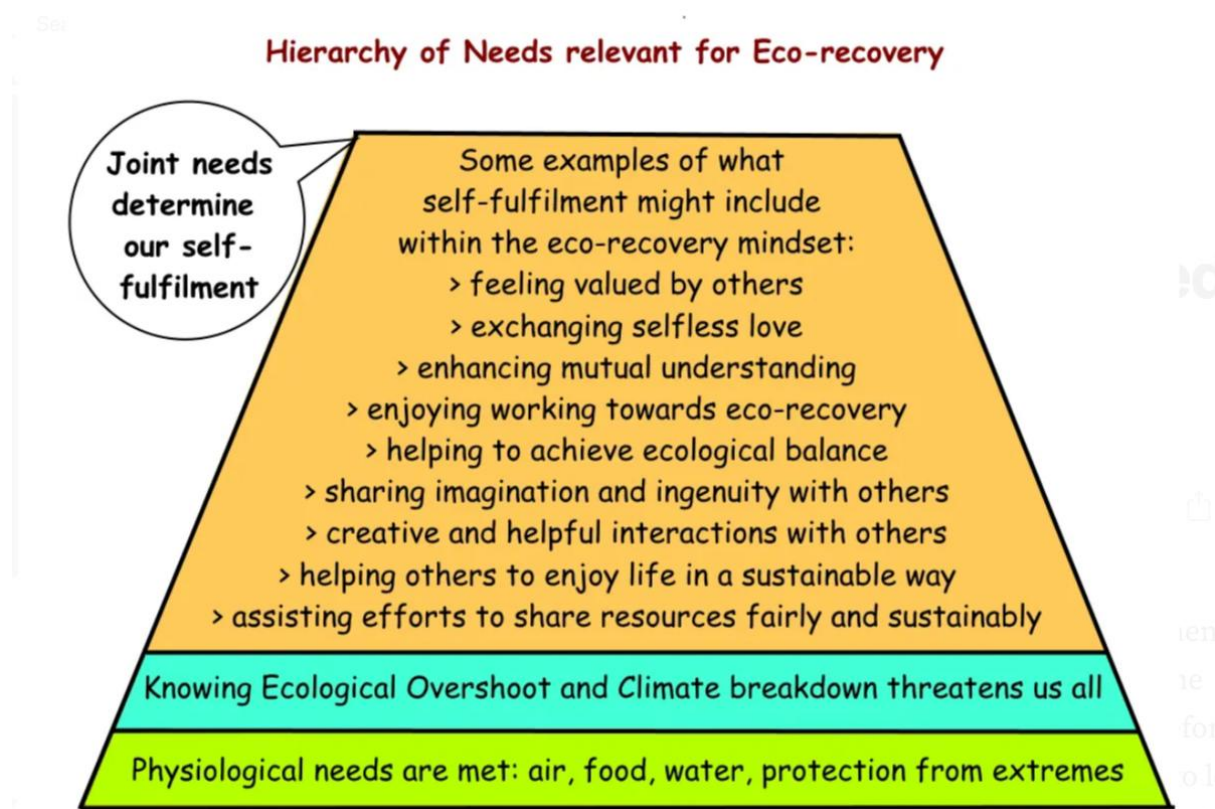


Figure 4 – An example of a Hierarchy of Needs that is appropriate for ecosystems collapse

At the base of the pyramid, we still need to meet our physiological needs. The next level is a firm understanding of the escalating ecosystems collapse and the speed and scale of what is now happening. Encouraging our young adults to climb up the wealth hierarchy and have children is unhelpful in the current reality.

Universal Basic Provision would free people from ecocidal business-as-usual enterprises. It would also free-up time, energy, and ingenuity. A voluntary birth pause

frees agile young minds to focus on prioritising basic provision and mutual emotional support during the painful process of coping with the reality of global ecosystems collapse.

Aspirations for Eco-equity

Within the [Poems for Parliament,2023] submission to the 2023 Global Stocktake for the Paris Climate agreement, there is a proposal for a UN Charter for Ecological Justice. It urges us to equitably and voluntarily return within the carrying capacity of our planet. The Declaration of Human Rights ignored the need to operate within the limits of Earth. The Charter for Ecological Justice, if ratified, would address this flaw. If adopted as a global aspiration, it would help to steer humanity into a wiser direction.

Other eco-equity initiatives are coming from the World Federlist Movement, the Common Home of Humanity, and the Degrowth movement.

The peer-reviewed book: *Justice as a Fair Start in Life* by Carter Dillard, argues that equitable political authority and wealth entitlements rest on whether societies fund the empowerment of new arrivals at birth. When systems fail to support newborns equitably from a zero baseline, they generate illegitimate power and unearned privileges. The Fair Start Movement and the Truth Alliance have set up FalseClaimsChecker.org. This facilitates the Constitutional Challenge Campaign [Fair Start Movement,2026] which is challenging the birth inequities that exist today and the institutions that are perpetuating these inequalities. For example, there is an article about the false equity claims made by the University of Denver [Mwesigye, 2026]

In a world where there is already more than three times the sustainable population, high birth rates will diminish the capacity for long-term survival within any community.

Delivering Universal Basic Provision

The '*Roadmap to Eradicate Poverty*' [Shutter,2026] mentioned at the outset, steers in a helpful direction. However, it does not deliver maximum mitigation from ecosystems collapse. Poverty is not the main challenge in ecosystems collapse. The challenge is to deliver essentials to everyone, and to improve our chances of survival, whilst incurring minimal further ecological damage. Currently, we serve the wealth and power hierarchy, focusing on military supremacy, GDP growth, and a net-zero transition that ignores the Jevons paradox and the need to repay our ecological debts.

Francis Taylor, founder of Consilium Dignitatis suggests a new social contract that would ensure nobody goes without basic provision. Jean Christophe Duval, founder of Debunk'onomy is proposing an eco-friendly monetary model, NEMO IMS, that could run alongside the ecocidal debt-based model. These ideas augment the proposals in Shutter's roadmap and push us to consider an even deeper level of social change.

The image below warns of the negative feedback loop if we deliver Universal Basic Provision without simultaneously encouraging a global birth pause and minimal ecological footprint per capita.

Warning!

Negative Feedback Loop

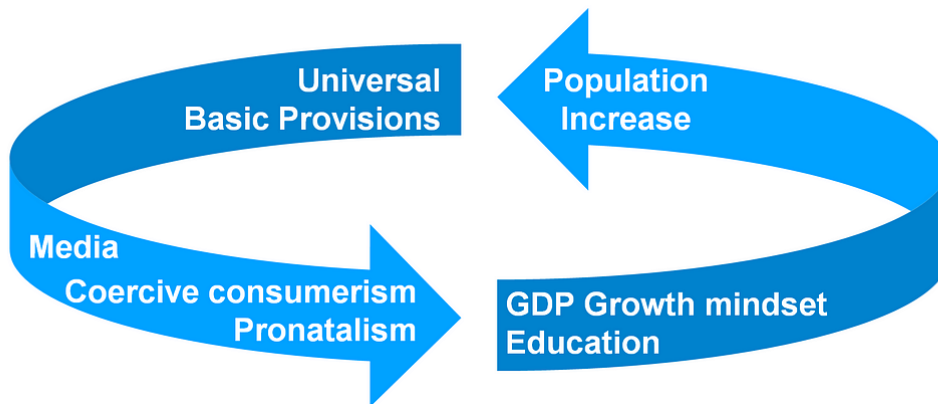


Figure 5 - Negative feedback loop if Universal Basic Provision is delivered within business-as-usual

Conclusion

There is still much ignorance about the scale of the predicament that we face. Edward Darling is the founder of the Life Map Foundation. Once established, the Life Map database will reveal the speed at which biodiversity is haemorrhaging at the local level. Maximum mitigation involves voluntarily minimising consumption per capita and birth rates at every level. This takes the moral courage to admit that the world is not safe to bring a newborn right now. Right now, we do not have a civilisation that can operate in a sustainable dynamic balance with Earth's ecosystems.

Our young could help us; but not if we continue teaching entrenched ecocidal behaviours. Innate creativity gets extinguished if a child is disconnected from Nature. Schooling takes place within concrete walls and electronic distractions exacerbate that disconnect. We encourage children to give us grandchildren. Climate breakdown went beyond solvable some years back; it creates a predicament that requires peaceful global collaboration to survive the rapidly unfolding collapse. It might yet bring out the best in us all.

Many have lost touch with the natural and the spiritual world that binds us. Until we steer into a wiser direction, we cannot fully reconnect. With a shared aspiration to return within Earth's ecological limits, we shall begin to engage in the exciting process of reinventing ourselves into an era of peaceful, voluntary, global, equitable downsizing. An era that could become famous for noble sacrifices and global consideration for others.

INVOCATION [Williams, 2020]

*Perhaps this paper can inspire
A culture change to light a fire
In every heart and every mind*

*Letting a new truth unwind
Once everybody feels the same
Hope is shared, as well as blame*

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