

# Chapter 10

## Crisis or hope

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*There is another kind of power – power as empowerment of others.*  
Capra and Luigi Luisi (2019).

Maybe there is no decisive dramatic event that will wake us up to a common action. Still the IPCC reports are historical and the greatest summary of scientific publications on the climate ever made. The result cannot be more apparent and should urge all of us to make a quick change. It ought to be front-page news all over the world for more than a couple of days. It should lead to enormous changes and political action plans.

Is there any hope? Most people, including political leaders in the wealthy part of the world, hope to continue our lives without any great sacrifice. We hope that somebody else will make the sacrifices, since the future may become different but in a way still the same. We wish to continue our holiday travels, our consumption, and our food habits. Václav Havel, the great Czech playwright, author, turned dissident, persecuted by the communists, imprisoned, turned president of the Czech Republic, reminded us what hope is all about: *'Hope is definitely not the same thing as optimism. It is not the conviction that something will turn out well, but the certainty that something makes sense, regardless of how it turns out.'* We have to search for meaning in the climate work, not some unrealistic optimism without sacrifice. As the Trappist monk, writer and social activist Thomas Merton (1915–1968) wrote during the nonviolence peace movement work: *'The most important thing is not to be successful, but to be faithful'*.

Is the world aware of the risks to our global commons – life on Earth, fresh air and climate, oceans, forests, ice sheets, freshwater, and other processes that keep Earth stable and resilient?<sup>330</sup>

Leonardo Boff links global ethics and theology with the urgent challenge of ecology.<sup>331</sup> Focusing on the threatened Amazon of his native Brazil, Boff traces the ties that bind the fate of the rain forests with the fate of the Indians

and the poor of the land. We cannot see ourselves as separated from Earth; a lifeless planet made up of 92 elements that have built up all creatures. We are more than that. We are the children of the living Earth, the Earth that has been aware of itself. This insight is no less than a revolution.

An important guidebook in my studies for this book has been a book with the provocative title *The Good Ancestor*.<sup>332</sup> What did I do while the Earth was unravelling? We all the time must balance between the opposing forces of short-term and long-term thinking and our time is an age of pathological short-termism. We are witnessing the destruction of the ecological systems on which life itself depends. Our unborn children as well as our small children did not contribute to this, but they have to live with the consequences. As Pope Francis proclaimed: *'intergenerational solidarity is not optional, but a basic question of justice.'*

Lately I have met many young people while lecturing on the topics of this book. Their engagement is a true source of inspiration. Many of them truly understand how our lifestyle impacts the Earth, global resources, and global warming. They are careful what they eat, they swap clothes with friends, and they are aware of the cost of transportation.

There are several organizations playing a significant role on the fight for climate justice and a better climate future. Their engagement and competence are significant. They have important education programmes. The challenge is to educate the educators and to encourage them in their struggle. Over the years the peace movement has developed an important tradition and methodology for education and empowerment. These research-based experiences can be transferred to the climate movement, providing knowledge about climate, climate crisis, and resource utilization. The international peace movement has demonstrated how common visions of the future and empowerment can achieve not only changes but even transformation of societies.

The peace movement has developed essential experiences having strong role models like Mahatma Gandhi, and the Nobel Peace Prize winners Martin Luther King Jr, Desmond Tutu, Nelson Mandela. More recent Nobel Peace Prize winners like Wangari Maathai (Kenya), Malala Yousafzai (Pakistan), and Tawakkul Karman (Yemen) have been prominent women in their struggles for nonviolence, environment, and peacebuilding, together with so many skilled and devoted leaders and educators. And remember: the IPCC got the Nobel Peace Prize in 2007 together with Al Gore.

The peace movement not only learnt nonviolent action but also constructive programmes to demonstrate concrete alternatives. Such kind of society transformation, having unconditional respect for human rights and values, and personal responsibility, can guide people also in the struggle for a better and sustainable future.

COP26 initiated the Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE) to emphasize decisions made in Rio 1992 and in Paris 2015:<sup>333</sup> *'Parties shall cooperate in taking measures, as appropriate, to enhance climate change education, training, public awareness, public participation, and public access to information, recognizing the importance of these steps with respect to enhancing actions*

*under this Agreement* (Article 12, Paris).’ All members of society should be empowered to engage in climate action, through education, training, public awareness, public participation, public access to information, and international cooperation on these issues. All levels of government and all sectors of society, young and old people, have to collaborate. Sustainable lifestyles, including sustainable patterns of consumption and production, are fundamental to reducing greenhouse emissions and enhancing resilience to the inevitable effects of climate change.

An increasing number of companies are comparing their production and products with the UN Sustainability Development Goals. How to be clear about sustainability and how to change some operations to reach a goal?

Belonging to the generation that has enjoyed all the benefits of cheap energy, plenty of clean water, and sufficient nutritious food I feel a combination of guilt and responsibility for the young people. My own grandchildren are among them. Their generation will govern the world in 2050. When they look back as they are growing up, will they consider us good ancestors? Have we sought to make a better world? They will never forgive us if we gave up while there was still a possibility to meet the crisis. I hope they will admit that we have tried.

