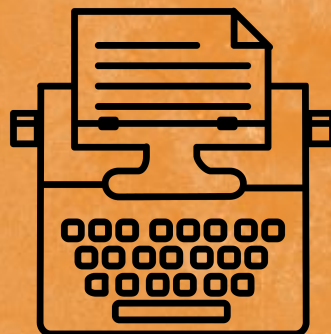


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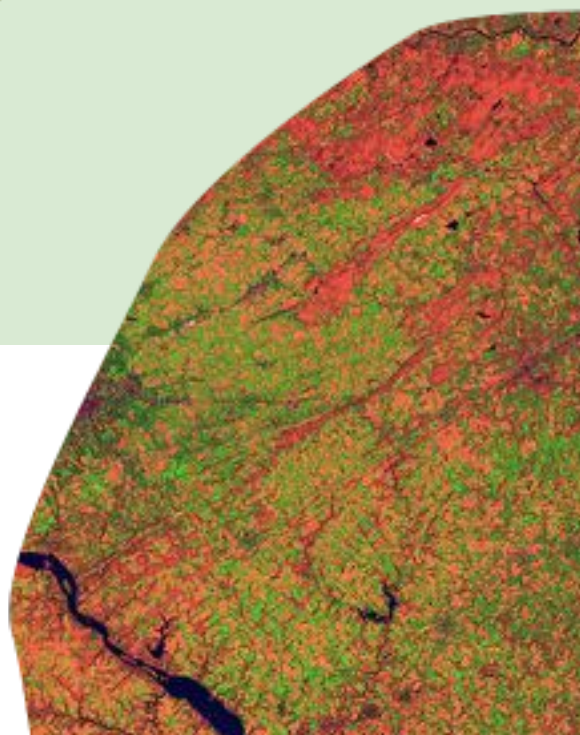
Author:

Occupy Climate Change (OCC!)

*Creative story
entry*



FORMAS



London 2200!

By Oliver Hembury-Gunn

The graphited walls of derelict Camden morph into the brutalist concrete flats enveloping the canal, almost stagnant itself, the water slithers menacingly. I smirked a little bit as Shun Ren squeaked in pleasure: “Yanukasi won four awards for this you know? Including Time’s ‘*Architect of 2200*’, apparently this year was even more competitive cos it’s the turn of the century”, I commented banally. He smiled from the corner of his mouth, throwing me off guard. I was more interested in him than the ‘*Camden 2000*’ exhibition we were wandering through. After snapping a couple of pics, I told him “Let’s hurry up a bit and get to the market, right? That’s the famous bit anyway, plus I hear there’s this ZigPop® sake that’s really good.” He obliged and we strolled on. I was enjoying the walking, though - people don’t do that as much as they did in 2000 years ago. I eyed up the canal bridge (manually operated!) and thought the simplicity of it had a sort of a charm, it didn’t need any networks, signals or data, just a good old push. It didn’t distract me for long, my eyes swung to Shun Ren, following his tattoos, neck piercings and mods which flowed down the back of this head in a rusted iron style – very cool I thought. That was my first date with him – a bit strange for a first date, but I suppose I like antique, out-of-step stuff. It went well for a while with him, but he got too distracted by his high-power job for PAX so it came to an end.

London’s got quite a lot of it, old stuff I mean. Some of the tube stations have been left like they used to be when it was built, and not transformed into the new Magnet Stations. There’s a big sculpture in Hyde Park built with the scrap metal of the HBSC tower that fell in the 2050s after one of the bigger typhoons of the period, you can float down the Thames on the original London Eye pods, I heard the fish are pretty special. There are also quite a few memorials for various peoples and species; they tend to be made with materials that can’t get refashioned back into anything useful. I find these a bit stark though, but I suppose they do work to remind people of what we came through and our mistakes of the past.

Yeah, it got bad here in London, but you probably want the whole picture. You see the scientists had been warning of these tipping points for a while, which could be triggered at any point. They were ignored, of course, that’s how it went back then, but even they didn’t quite get the scale of it. Not to be too negative though, humanity was getting better; after a while the COPs, carbon taxes, and global pleas for change meant that global emissions were falling, in 2050 they were about half of what they were in 2020 if I remember correctly. That was already far too slow for many, of course, but most of the rich countries would have no more than a few hundred thousand deaths. They knew they hadn’t had the worst of it, global temperatures were still shooting up at unprecedentedly rates from pollution churned out

30 years or so before. But when Thwaites glacier cracked, pretty much split clean in half, it gave everyone a horrible surprise. While everyone had been *talking* about preparing better for the extreme weather throughout the previous 30 years of ever bigger wildfires and typhoons, none of the rich countries really believed the tsunamis and droughts would get too serious for them, and the global south was already so downtrodden by the stream of climate disasters and endless neo-colonial exploitation that they could have barley been looking further than tomorrow. Anyway, when Thwaites cracked it brought half of the West Antarctic ice shelf with it and suddenly there was more ice drifting in the ocean than there had ever been. That kicked started it all.

Global sea level increased 1.5m almost immediately, displacing over a billion people and didn't stop increasing here. The lack of heat reflection from the ice shelves meant the dark sea absorbed heat quicker, further speeding up temperature rises and the Amazon rainforest, already chainsawed to a measly forty percent of pre-industrial levels, was decimated by wildfire: it's the Amazon savannah now. The boreal forests in North America and Eurasia went the same way. The huge clouds of black gases released from the combustion unsurprisingly further polluted the atmosphere and the worlds' lungs. Suddenly, there were a lot fewer trees to produce oxygen. Of course, with this all going, the East Antarctic ice shelf came to join the party along with a load of Greenland and Arctic circle permafrost. Sea levels shot up quicker than any prediction, and climate disasters started queuing up. The 2061 Lisbon tsunami shook Europe into believing they too were vulnerable. The 2065 equatorial heatwave lasted three years. Winter became hotter than spring used to be and summer became a whole new season in the space of less than a decade. Areas once with Mediterranean climates turned into monsoon climates. Somewhere about this point, a chemical leak wiped out half of Beijing, suspectedly sparked by a particularly intense lightning storm – that changed global politics I can tell you. It was chaos, global crisis, climate refugees, war...

The 2092 super-virus killed more than all the climate disasters. It took us 6 years to find a vaccine, that's said to be the worst period, perhaps the blackest in all of history. In the UK, domestic, racist and sexist violence surpassed pre-2019 COVID pandemic levels, that's hard to imagine now. There was an anti-immigration group with 10 million members called *4UK* whose slogan was nothing more inventive than "Us First". Parliament managed to outlaw them and ordered the social media giants to disable any member of *4UK*'s internet, which worked a treat – about the best thing the British Parliament ever did if you ask me. It's shocking, that was all only a few generations ago. But the UK was lucky comparatively. The Fiji Islands were disappeared under 5m waves, other countries were too preoccupied with the pandemic to send any help, only about half the population got out in time. Countless indigenous communities were wiped out, caught between the inhabitable places and a pandemic they had no immunity to. A few militia groups roamed Africa and eastern Europe ravaging any food and women they could find before the UN either negotiated with them or sent in the drone strikes. We now call these dark times the Wastocene Crisis.

But humanity responded. Within a few years, almost every country caved in to international pressure to let in unprecedented numbers of refugees (there may have been World War 3 if they hadn't). People shared houses with refugees from all over, lived with less and struggled on. We had some things up our sleeve. Food supplies never completely failed due to our advanced genetic engineering techniques, neither did water due to advanced infrastructure systems, and we'd built robots for most manual tasks that worked much better in the extreme weather than humans did.

It wasn't as bad as it could have been. The numbers of deaths were in the hundreds of millions, not billions. By then the PAX had been established and was already succeeding the corrupt UN as a global force for good. This time vaccine distribution was a lot more egalitarian and better planned than it had been in previous pandemics, so we dragged ourselves out of that one. The world was almost carbon negative before Twaites, so it was only a matter of time to survive the damage of pollutions a few decades ago. Things got slowly better.

Worth saying that in this whole period of turbulence no nuclear bombs were dropped which can be considered a real success all nuclear countries agreed in the Pyongyang Treaty of 2041 to slowly decommission their stashes. Admittedly, there's a possibility that Venezuela dropped a hydrogen bomb on one of the Colombian armies at its border in the mid-2070s, but that's unconfirmed, and South America really is a different story. By 2120 sea levels were at 2050 levels. Moreover, a series of accords continuing into the 2100s made far more peaceful and committed agreements than we could have imagined pre-crisis. We established global councils with deeply reformed governing and legislative structures full of correct process and anti-abuse measures. These governing structures weren't universally adopted immediately, of course, but worked their way into most countries governing structures by the second half of the century. PAX countries, that's all of them excluding South American ones, are now "triple carbon positive" as the ads love to tell us, although carbon emissions aren't an accepted measure of climate risks now – it's a too narrow measure.

The UK still exists, and London is definition still its capital, but country distinctions mean a lot less than they did two hundred years ago when Camden 2000 wasn't an exhibit but part of the concrete block of London. Nowadays, the UK's governing bodies are a series of specialised councils who give representatives to join a wider PAX general council – although it's been recognised for a long while that local decision making is much more effective when possible. It's not perfect. Take last week, for example, *Zux*, the biggest nanochip manufacturing company got fined 5000* for fabricating the inefficiency cost of its transport container recycle and reproduction.¹ It seems corruption at some level is pretty hard to get rid of. Indeed, every now and again some state or mega-hacker group claim they are being hard done by and that they should not have to oblige to the strict circular economy regulations

¹* or 'stars' are now a globally accepted currency, but not the only currency (complicated - I know) and are based on squarechain technology - blockchain's much smarter grandkid.

when the climate crisis is over. But so far those haven't got far and never got much popular support. People seem more content with this lifestyle. Yes, it's still capitalist, technically, there's a lot of belief in innovation coming from individual motivation, which I'm not completely convinced by. But it's not that capitalism that marked the post WW2 to Wastocene crisis. We also really like personal abilities. This is our concept of freedom, that people should be free from social, societal and economic constraints to self-expression and anything that isn't harming others. I think that's pretty cool.

It's not quite the same across all of PAX, many people in the lucky countries were pretty hesitant to pay for investing in the worse affected countries – this alone almost divided and finished PAX in its early days. But PAX persevered; my take would be that we realised capital growth didn't matter in the same way when only cooperation could ensure we didn't do this to ourselves again, although perhaps I'm a bit too optimistic. From that point that it was slow regrowth and relearning. Learning from places and peoples we'd neglected and harmed in the past. For example, it was a West Papua tribe who demonstrated how creating mangrove barriers gives soil stability and drainage systems to allow better agriculture as well as acting as an effective carbon sink.

Come to think about it, life hasn't been too tough at all in my lifetime, I'm 28 now. No wars, life expectancy as high as it's been and hate crimes few and far between. It wasn't a straight road to get there though, my grandma told me about the nuclear muck-up. She said it was over the news when eventually scientists had solved nuclear fission after 150 years of trying – only for the first nuclear station in Bruges to go up in the biggest explosion in human history after 3 days in operation. There were cases of radiation poisoning as far as Ethiopia, and medical tech wasn't as good as it was today. So we gave up on nuclear fission, tide and ocean currents provide most of our energy now, topped up by sun, wind, and a few alternative power sources. Gran did get to dive in one of the last living reefs though. I'm a little jealous about that, they are all just white now, bare and lifeless, a harrowing memorial for the consequences of humanity's mistakes. Although I read an article where the department of genetic reconstruction claimed they'd be able to regrow those underwater ecospheres within my lifetime, that would be a sight.

That's probably enough meandering through the past for now. Let me tell you about myself.

I'm an artist, a photographer really but I like to consider myself an artist. I'm only four years into my career, education is free up in the whole of PAX so I decided I'd had enough aged 24. Let me tell you the sort of projects I do. Remember I mentioned the Bruges nuclear disaster? After that everywhere within 600km of the plant was turned into a 'rewilding park', it was the biggest of 148 parks that created across PAX in an attempt to sink enough carbon to pull temperatures back down. Also to create breeding environments for the species that were almost all wiped out. I spent the last three months out there filming the first wild lemurs outside of Madagascar, where their habitat is only a fraction of what it used to be. I was also part of a wider team putting together a report of how relocated species respond to new

predators. No lemur had ever interacted with wolves or the Eurasian birds of prey before for example. I got some great shots. In one a baby lemur is clinging to the back of a baboon, part of a colony that migrated from South Africa. The lemur was being raised amongst baboons, which was a bit of a shock to the team but nature can do that sometimes, go a bit different to what anyone expects, it's part of what makes it wonderful – programs don't work that way. I also got snaps of the last wild fossa, the lemurs' traditional predators which were relocated from Madagascar at the same time. That's a sad story, although not an uncommon one. The fossa were suddenly wiped out by a disease we still have no idea where it came from and within a single breeding season, they were gone from the wild. That's just the way it goes with our reintroduction or environment creation programs, no matter how many geographical surveys and planning we do they sometimes go wrong.

Rewilding can get pretty political too. It's hard to allocate funding to wildlife reintroduction when entire forest strips need to be created in order to stop desertification, or instead of crisis relief if our prediction instruments are a bit off and a hurricane is stronger than expected. Or instead of investing in some of the areas where most of the population had to relocate during the XXX still don't have the kind of infrastructure and quality of life that most of us do. It's a tough balance. Whatever you look at it life is still unfair like it's always been throughout all human and earth history. Money and inequality are still what causes most conflict, perhaps that won't change or perhaps we just need a bit longer.

I love wildlife photography, it's what I always loved. I live in Welwyn, it's a town just north of London. The magnet-rail takes 12 minutes to central London, maxing at a cool 330 km/h, though that's nothing on the cross-national lines. In the other direction, it's 23 minutes from the new Chiltern Park where giant sloths have been introduced successfully and under an hour to the Lake District and Snowdonia as well. So I spent a fair amount of my childhood with my mum in the parks snapping away on my *One*. Oh yeah, that's the name for the device we have. A *One* can do pretty much anything you can think of for a digital device and even more again in the *Metasphere* too – I've had the same one since I was a kid, only now it's made up of completely different parts that I've exchanged for the old ones over the years.

So we camped out in the wild which is still a pretty common thing to do, and I never really considered doing anything other than photography. A lot of my projects have been part of a bigger movement to showcase the natural world as part of the human world, to show us as interconnected and inter-reliant. I've felt fulfilled with this but sometimes all I do is organise camera drones and teach a computer program how I want it to edit the photos which I suppose isn't all that surprising. At least I get to be out there in the thick of it once in a while.

My next project is pretty different. I'm going to South America and I've been prepping for the past few weeks. I'm going on a shoot for a clothing brand, *Matticks*, who plan to give out some of their new clothing line and take pictures of some South Americans with some *Matticks* models from all over PAX.

It's a brave campaign, to say the least, the idea is to depict Matticks as a cross-border brand and as a serious supporter of the Together World.² I'll be honest, the main reason I took was that it paid more than I've got from any of my shoots. That's because there weren't that many people willing to take the job. You see, South America went a bit differently...

It had been hit really hard but climate disaster through the late Wastocene period and while Argentina and a few other countries were more prepared, most were not. The Venezuelan-Colombian war had ravaged the north of the continent. It had been a proxy war where the Russia-China alliance piled weapons and resources into Venezuela, and the USA and its allies did the same into Colombia. Some of the photos, videos and holograms that came from then make me feel sick. Then when all the flooding and climate disasters came chased by the pandemic you can imagine the chaos.

South America's solution went a bit of a different path. After the foreign exploitation of the war, they understandably refused foreign intervention. A decade or so of fighting for resources eventually exhausted them out and suddenly all the South American nations signed a pact forming with a centralised government for the continent, a bit like PAX I suppose but radically more left-wing. Their mascot was Che Guevara, a revolutionary murdered 100 years before.

The United States didn't take this too well with their long history against communism and didn't pause a second to heed PAX's calls for non-violence. The White House launched a cyber-attack so big it took out all communication networks across the continent for almost a year. They even prepped troops for a physical invasion, but the US east coast floodings and economic pressure from PAX made them give it up. Following that, South America ignored all our communications and refused imports or exports for the next fifty years. It's rumoured many starved in the transition period but by the time the climate was stabilising satellite images showed a functioning and entirely self-reliant economy. They officially opened the borders to diplomats and rich tourists forty years ago, but not many get to visit.

I think what makes me most nervous is being a foreigner; that's a concept that doesn't really exist anymore in PAX. I'm going to be seen as an alien and as a threat. I've been taught my whole life that I'm a citizen of the world, not the UK or even of PAX, but in South America, I won't be seen that way. The idea of encountering other human beings who distrust me is sad. Also, what if they are right? Sure, they aren't as rich or as educated and don't have half the tech we do but that does mean our way of doing things is better? Just look at what happened with colonialism.

I don't want to make prejudgments. I am keeping my mind open as I venture for the first time into the unknown.

² This is the movement supported by individuals and organisations in both PAX and South America to encourage South America to join PAX, but it's never got official support from either side.

