

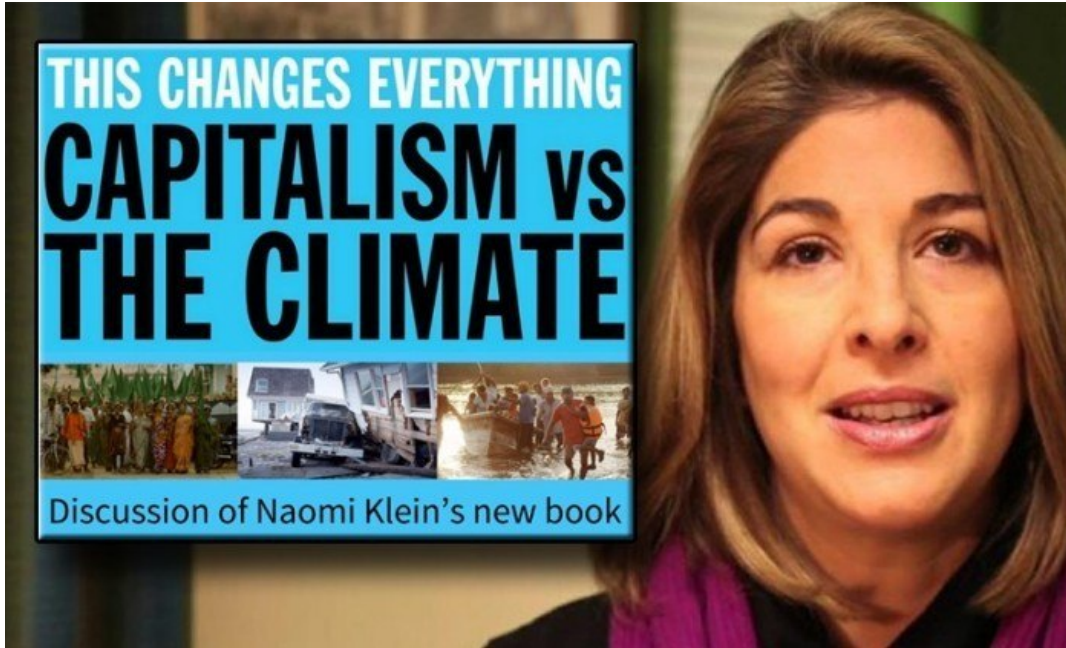
Health & Science

# This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate by Naomi Klein

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by [John J. Berger](#) - Jan 15, 2015

*A Broad Movement is the Magic Sauce in Naomi Klein's This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate*



*This Changes Everything - Capitalism vs Climate by Naomi Klein*

1 2 Next >

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**BERKELEY, CA**—January 13, 2015 – Naomi Klein’s remarkable book *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate* (Simon & Schuster, 2014) takes on new relevance for everyone yearning for solutions to the climate crisis.

The book is a deeply insightful and unflinching look at the global threats posed by climate change, environmental devastation, and economic injustice. Klein is an extraordinarily gifted writer and visionary.

The solutions she poses, however, seem honed for the U.S. and other advanced economies and don’t seem to grapple with the problems of burgeoning global population, oil-producing Middle Eastern dictatorships, volatile impoverished nations like Pakistan, and rapidly developing, coal-reliant economic powerhouses like India and China.



*COP20, The UN global climate talks that recently concluded in Lima, Peru.*

Characterizing the formidable economic and climate challenges facing us today as “the climate moment,” Klein proposes seizing it as a unique opportunity to implement sweeping new economic and environmental policies for reorienting humanity’s relationship to the natural resources that sustain life on Earth.

*This Changes Everything* is at its core as much about the redistribution of wealth and power on a planetary scale as well as about the ecocide we’re committing in assailing the climate.

In essence, Klein’s solution is that we must make a revolutionary shift from an unsustainable economic model based on resource extraction and the exploitation of people to a relationship of interconnection and reciprocity with the natural world.

To bring this about, we have to build a broad social movement, Klein declares. It needs to be founded on basic moral values and ecological principles rather than those of unfettered free enterprise, profit maximization, and perpetual economic growth. The steps on the path to creating this movement, however, are never very clearly laid out.

### **False Ideology and The Policies It Vindicates**

The current climate impasse, according to Klein, stems from acceding to false ideology. The fundamentalist free-market capitalism paradigm is rife with deep contradictions, she asserts. It rests upon a counterfactual belief in infinite growth and on the tenets of minimalist passive governance, hostility to regulation, and aversion to public sector investment. It is a worldview, she believes, that has brought us over the edge of disaster to the brink of catastrophic climate change.

Commonsense responses to the climate crisis have been blocked, she tells us, by multinational corporations and other vested interests, especially large energy corporations. So, a core battle of ideas must be fought and won to delegitimize them and their policies before effective massive action to take on global warming can succeed.

Saving the climate is thus in one sense a “hearts and minds” battle that requires supplanting the free-market paradigm of resource extraction and perpetual growth with a more sustainable model based on resource stewardship and regeneration.

Her sophisticated articulation of that preferred paradigm is an important contribution to the growing climate movement. However, she also counsels that the Progressive movement and the political left must take a page from the Conservative’s playbook and build the climate movement around “the pressing need to protect growth and jobs. . . .”

This appears a little at odds with her call for “degrowth,” but her deft solution is to advocate expanding low-carbon sectors of the economy while contracting high-carbon sectors.

In the end, Klein demonstrates how the agenda of big, powerful corporations—privatization, deregulation, low taxes, liberalization of trade and investment policy, globalization of agriculture, and reinforcing the industrial agricultural paradigm—effectively precludes the solutions needed to address the climate crisis. Needless to say, all of those policies rest on that ideological scaffold of free-market fundamentalism she decries.

Klein is also effective in calling attention to the political alignment of the fossil fuel industry, super-wealthy individuals, powerful corporations with their lobbyists, all wedded to business-as-usual energy policies and the self-seeking politicians who enable them.

The fundamental solutions to climate change are clear, Klein says (evidently with the US and Canada in mind), but to implement them, we must take corporate money out of politics. That would pave the way for rechanneling wealth from the fossil-fuel sector to transform the energy sector from fossil to renewable energy, long a dream of the environmental movement.

California under Governor Jerry Brown is actually doing that now in funneling a revenue stream from its carbon cap and trade auctions into renewable energy and high speed rail development.

Some electoral and lobbying reforms can no doubt be accomplished by executive action, but some, Klein concedes, requires Congressional action, a big problem today when free- market Republicans control Congress.

Because of the dominance of free-market ideology in much of the world today, Klein admits that the full set of ideas and policies she spells out to fix the climate may seem outlandish. The role of her book, however, is to show why those ideas are necessary and to make them feasible.

Few will dispute that she has accomplished the first part of her agenda.

End of Part 1 – Part 2 [here](#)