

# THIS CHANGES EVERYTHING: CAPITALISM VS THE CLIMATE

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## BOOK REVIEW

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‘In short, we have not responded to this challenge because we are locked in—politically, physically, and culturally. Only when we identify these chains do we have a chance of breaking free.’<sup>1</sup>

When thinking about Climate Change, it is easy to think about the physical affects it will have on the planet. Yet, there is concerns about what actions we are taking part in to worsen the Earth, and what things we can do to prevent them from happening. Naomi Klein acknowledges both in her 2014 novel, *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs The Climate*. However, as the title of her book suggests, Klein focuses on the far more sinister social side of Climate Change, focusing her arguments on one simple premise: how ignorance towards the changes to our environment is profitable.

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<sup>1</sup> Naomi Klein, *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs the Climate* (London: Penguin Publishers, 2014) p. 61.

While this statement continues to be true, things will just get worse. As Klein so aptly puts it, ‘our economic system and our planetary system are now at war.’ Klein’s book explores the geopolitical issue of climate change and discusses various practices and methodologies that could have been implemented to sooner help prevent climate change and the danger it poses.

The theme of the book is to question why so little has been done regarding the damage humanity is causing on planet Earth, and Klein makes a continuous point to bring it back to politics. A more right-winged reader may not enjoy reading this work, however, for those already in line with Klein’s views, this book is a fascinating and educational read in getting to know the societal issues behind Climate Change a little better. *This Changes Everything* doesn’t focus on the science behind Climate Change, and Klein states that she’s not interested in having arguments with Climate Change Deniers, as their own solutions threaten her ideals.<sup>2</sup> With 97% of the scientific community accepting that Climate Change is real – and have many studies to show as such – she takes their word and simply focuses on the economic and political motives behind this incredible delay in doing anything at all to fix it, despite evidence showing that it is necessary.

Klein’s book is separated into three sections, making it easier to put down and pick back up again if it all gets a bit too heavy for the reader. The chapters in the

<sup>2</sup> Klein, *This Changes Everything*, p. 57.

sections are not too long, making it the type of book that is easy to engage with. Personally, I think that Part Two, named 'Magical Thinking', is probably the most interesting to read. As someone who is curious about *why* it takes moving mountains to get something done about a matter so crucial regarding the well-being on our planet, it's intriguing – and a little bit terrifying – to read about the ulterior motive: greed. Klein makes the argument that Billionaires and Philanthropists are attempting to solve the issue on their own terms; to benefit to them alone, but ignorant to those that would suffer. Klein makes sure to write on the struggles in Part Three 'Starting Again', where she touches on the impact made on Indigenous peoples, as well as how communities come together to combat local struggles.

There may be arguments towards this book's agenda. Klein has made her political opinion public and *This Changes Everything* can easily be interpreted as a way to demonise the rich and right-wing parties. Due to this, the book has been considered by some as 'propaganda'.<sup>3</sup> But for those who share similar views, this can offer a more in-depth explanation of the problems in politics, economy and the issues linked to the climate.

Overall, this is a good book for those who want to learn more about behind the scenes work when it comes to efforts in preventing catastrophes linked to Climate Change. Will it change anyone's minds? Doubtful. However, the book is not catered for those who do not agree with Klein's views. It is a

difficult read, but with those concerned about the 'why' in this scenario, this novel is a fascinating read.

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<sup>3</sup> John Bellamy Foster, 'The liberal attack on Naomi Klein and *This Changes Everything*' in *Climate and Capitalism*,

<https://climateandcapitalism.com/2015/02/01/liberal-attack-on-naomi-klein-and-this-changes-everything/> [Accessed 10 November 2022].