

## WeChangeForLife

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While climate change is often discussed in strictly scientific, economic, or technical terms, it also raises profound questions of meaning, value, and justice, as it unsettles taken-for-granted ways of viewing and inhabiting the world. Climate change challenges the imagination, shakes the very idea of what it means to be human, and forces us to re-frame our relationship to the planet and to each other. My current research and teaching explore how literature and culture more generally are struggling to adequately represent this major environmental threat. Recent years have seen the emergence of a wave of literary texts and other artistic works telling innovative stories that seek to facilitate the perspective shifts and

the new ways of thinking and feeling that climate change imperatively demands. Fact-finding obviously matters when it comes to climate change, but so does gaining insight into storytelling. After all, facts don't change people's minds, but stories do.

My work on the human imaginative engagement with climate change has driven home to me the daunting magnitude and complexity of the crisis we are facing, which defies familiar forms of narrative. While I have only one child, my diet is largely vegetarian, I use public transport as much as possible, and there are solar panels on the roof of my house, I am hardly a climate saint—for one thing, I still fly far too much for work to be able to claim that title. However, sadly enough, none of this makes much of a difference anyway in the grand scheme of things.

Indeed, if my research has taught me anything, it is to be sceptical about the dominant framing of the climate issue as a matter of individual responsibility. Focusing on individual lifestyle choices, which can be more or less virtuous from an environmental point of view, risks distracting from the policy debates that we really should be having. The problem is so immense that only a massive collective effort to combat climate change has a remotely realistic chance of success. That's why, over and beyond trying to do the right thing on a personal level, I let environmental concerns guide my voting behaviour, I stand in solidarity with the students who are striking for climate action, and I participate in climate marches myself.