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## BOOK REVIEW: HOTHOUSE EARTH

Zuzana Michalková\*

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MCGUIRE, B.: *Horúca planéta [Hothouse Earth]*. Bratislava: GRADA Slovakia s.r.o., 2023. 176 p. ISBN 978-80-8090-557-6.

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Our prior environment transforms into a greenhouse of our own invention. Hot summers, water scarcity, animal deaths, crop damage, and severe storms. Climate change affects practically all of us now. **Bill McGuire**, who is a volcanologist, climate scientist, activist, keynote speaker, and writer of popular science and speculative fiction, outlines the scientific truths underlying the climate issue and provides a grim but realistic picture of the future our children and grandkids will inherit if we do not act now. It is not too late to change the world, which, with today's heatwaves, catastrophic wildfires, terrible floods, and droughts, is simply the beginning of what may come. **McGuire** tells a sobering story of the rapid environmental changes that are already occurring, supported by actual evidence and future estimates. The book serves as both a scientific primer and a call to action, pushing complacency in dealing with one of today's most important crises. The author is known for his direct and clear style, and the book takes a pessimistic but realistic view of the future of the Earth if radical action is not taken. **McGuire** emphasizes that the climate problem is no longer in the future, but rather in the now, and urges readers to grasp the gravity of the situation and take action immediately. The book is an excellent resource for anyone who wants to understand why climate action is critical.

The central argument in *Hothouse Earth* contends that human-caused climate change has ushered in the Anthropocene era. This age is marked by tremendous changes to the planet's natural systems caused by industrial activity, deforestation, greenhouse gas emissions, and unsustainable consumption

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habits. **McGuire** emphasizes that these changes are not speculative future scenarios, but are currently manifesting in extreme weather, rising sea levels, and ecosystem impacts. The author backs up his arguments with real-life situations to give the reader a realistic understanding of the impacts of the climate crisis. For example, on the subject of extreme drought, the author refers to a specific example from June 29, 2021, when a staggering temperature of 49.6 degrees Celsius was measured in the Canadian village of Lytton in the southern province of British Columbia. This temperature was the highest ever measured north of the 50th parallel, as well as in Europe and South America. The day after the measurement, this community in Canada vanished due to one of the many natural fires caused by high temperatures.

The book focuses on the relationship between natural climatic cycles and anthropogenic impacts, demonstrating how human activity exacerbates natural swings, resulting in volatile and increasingly disastrous outcomes. **McGuire** methodically dismantles climate sceptics' claims, using a combination of historical climate data and recent scientific advances to illustrate the irrefutable relationship between human behaviour and global warming. In the book, the author also discusses potential hazards such as melting glaciers, rising sea levels, ecological threats, and an increase in the number of climate migrants. Despite the bleak outlook, the book does provide the answers, ranging from renewable energy to global cooperation to reduce emissions and ameliorate the effects of climate change.

The narrative is divided into themed chapters that each cover a different aspect of climate change. **McGuire** uses a simple and accessible writing style to make complicated scientific subjects understandable to a wide audience while maintaining academic rigor. The text contains several graphs, charts, and case studies that provide real proof to back up the author's statements. **McGuire's** tone shifts between careful scientific analysis and passionate advocacy, reflecting his twin roles as a researcher and speaker. He strikes a balance between the urgency of his message and the value of evidence-based discourse, assuring the book's credibility and persuasiveness.

The book is divided into six main chapters in which the author explains the impacts of climate change in a nice step-by-step manner. In the first chapter, **McGuire** explains the Anthropocene, a geological age marked by human influence on Earth's processes. He traces the causes of anthropogenic climate change back to the Industrial Revolution, demonstrating how technological advancements and resource consumption have transformed ecosystems, altered

atmospheric composition, and caused global warming. Human activity has emerged as the primary driver of Earth's climate change. The burning of fossil fuels is the primary cause of rising CO<sup>2</sup> levels, which have surpassed 400 ppm for the first time in human history.

In the first chapter, the author also negatively assesses the passive attitude of society towards climate change issues. He states that as early as 1856, the American scientist Eunice Foote wrote an article describing the heat-trapping capacity of carbon dioxide. This article, he says, can be regarded as the first prediction of global warming, and this prediction was made more than 150 years ago, so why has mankind steadfastly refused to act? The author argues that if world leaders had acted sooner, namely in 1990 when the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) issued its first report, the climate problem could be under control today. In the author's words, today fossil fuels would be largely phased out and renewable energy sources would predominate, and humanity would not have to deal with critical emissions issues.

One of the author's main messages after reading the book is the difficulty of making relevant predictions about how much and how fast our planet will overheat in the coming decades and centuries, and how this will affect the populations of the world's nations. In the author's words, if the worst predictions about the impact of the climate crisis were to come true, there could be really big problems. That is why the book also emphasizes the most effective lesson that the sooner world leaders act to reduce emissions, switch to renewable energy and promote other attributes of the green transformation, the less severe and devastating the impacts of the climate crisis will be on our descendants. In one of the following chapters, the author investigates ties between climate change and its socioeconomic repercussions. **McGuire** investigates how climate-related disasters, such as water scarcity and agricultural failure, disproportionately impact developing countries. He views climate change as a moral concern, emphasizing the disparities between high- and low-emitting countries.

The book also discusses some of the paradoxes of climate change implications, which the author specifically wished to highlight. One example is that emerging countries bear the brunt of climate change despite emitting the fewest greenhouse gases. Furthermore, climate change is worsening global disparities, notably in terms of access to resources and infrastructure, highlighting the importance of international cooperation in addressing climate justice. The final chapter provides solutions for combating climate change. **McGuire** promotes lowering emissions, transitioning to renewable energy, and developing adaption

strategies. He warns that time is running out to take effective action and emphasizes the importance of global policy alignment. The book's last chapter also acknowledges climate activists who are transforming society and attempting to reverse the confluence of misinformation, weak solutions, obfuscation and lies from climate change sceptics.

**McGuire** claims that the unregulated acceleration of climate change is causing an existential crisis for humanity. He offers evidence that human activity is a key source of rising global temperatures, extreme weather events, and ecological damage. The book emphasises the critical necessity for collective action that combines mitigation and adaptation techniques to avoid catastrophic effects. Finally, while the author concedes that society cannot prevent dire climate consequences, he calls attention to the methods we may employ to slow them down, at least slightly.