Žiga VODOVNIK*

POSSIBILITIES AT THE END OF THE WORLD: (RE)IMAGINING CARE AS POLITICS**

Abstract. *The article considers the thesis that today we are facing challenges that call for the invention of new principles of political, social and economic organisation. It is ever clearer that the climate crisis is not only threatening environmental and economic collapse, but above all – and it is here that the direct, yet often overlooked danger lies – our political and social collapse. The contours of the climate crisis are seen in the ongoing corrosion of the democratic political process, the erosion of political communities and the commons, and, not the least, the reliance on populist and authoritarian models to deal with the ever more dire situation. This requires a fresh look at how a new relationship can be established between life and work, production and consumption and, especially, the individual and the communal. Accordingly, in the analysis of alternatives and possibilities the article introduces a new central concept – care – as the fundamental notion and practice of the newly emerging (palliative) political and economic paradigm. We address the simple, albeit infinitely complex question: Why not use the notions of care and freedom, instead of production and consumption, as the paradigm for our new economy, which should only be a way to take care for each other?*
Keywords: *care, politics, democracy, climate change, crisis.*

* Žiga Vodovnik, PhD, Professor, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia; e-mail: ziga.vodovnik@fdv.uni-lj.si.

** Research article.

The author (2022–2023 Fulbright Scholar at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa) gratefully acknowledges support for this research from the Fulbright Program. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the author and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Fulbright Program. The author also received the following financial support for the research, authorship and/or publication of this article: the Slovenian Research Agency [grant number J5-3109].

DOI: 10.51936/tip.61.2.387

INTRODUCTION

The latest report (*State of Global Climate 2023*) by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) is another in a series of documents that warns ever more clearly that humanity is faced with an irreversible climate crisis. Despite some efforts by the international community, global warming is not stopping, which is why 2023 was a record year in terms of all key climate change indicators. WMO Secretary-General Celeste Saulo concluded her presentation of the report by starkly warning: "The WMO community is sounding the Red Alert to the world. Climate change is about much more than temperatures". According to the WMO, climate change is the greatest challenge facing humanity as global warming will and is also bringing catastrophic consequences for the food and economic security of all people on the planet (WMO, 2023). Extreme weather and climate events, i.e., heatwaves, floods, droughts, wildfires, intense tropical cyclones, ocean warming, and melting glaciers disappearing at record rates – are undermining all major Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We are approaching 2030, namely the year by which the international community is to have achieved or at least come close to achieving the SDGs, i.e., eradicating global poverty and hunger while solving other socio-economic problems. The dependence on economic growth and pursuit of the dangerous ideals of infinite production and consumption are adding new challenges to the existing ones, with the excessive rise in greenhouse gas emissions and reduction of available natural resources already displaying the signs of an existential threat.

Given the worrying forecasts, we could reach a tipping point in the near future, followed by unimaginable political, social and economic crises. Paradoxically, climate change threatens first and foremost – and it is here that its direct, yet often overlooked danger lies – our political and social collapse. Numerous authors (Oliver et al. 2023; MacGregor 2014; Wolf 2012) therefore warn that our responses to systemic risks must include a reconsideration of a good society, (new) citizenship, political community, and political practices. Their starting point is the thesis that ecological problems have their origins in deeply entrenched social problems, which is why they cannot be understood, let alone solved, without first addressing the social and political contradictions (Bookchin 2007). Previous studies on climate change generally only examined the environmental and economic impacts, while overlooking the social and political dimensions.[1] It is becoming increasingly clear that it is indeed about "much more than temperatures" and that the democratic backsliding and numerous political crises around the world should be placed in the overriding context of climate change. The consequences of the climate crisis are already seen in the ongoing corrosion of the democratic political process, the undermining of political communities

[1] The focus in those studies was the question of environmental protection, sustainable development, a low-carbon, circular economy, and the green transition, leaving the socio-political dimension of nature and climate change generally undetected and with that the question of the new social and political models needed given the magnitude of the climate challenges we face.

and the commons and, the not least, the reliance on populist and authoritarian models/modes to deal with the emergency situation (Willis 2020; Grove 2019; Featherstone 2015).

All of this calls for a new and thorough rethinking of how to establish a completely new relationship between life and work, production and consumption and, especially, the individual and the communal. It is not surprising that the academic community has recently begun to think systematically about new principles of political, economic and social organisation, often focusing on the notion and practice of care. We have thus witnessed the conceptual expansion and a repoliticisation of care, with the politics and ethics of care also being conceptualised as *mutual aid* (Spade 2020), *accompaniment* (Farmer 2013; Lynd 2012), *friendship* (May 2012; Schwarzenbach 2009), *camaraderie* (Dean 2019), *mālama* (Osorio 2021), *solidarity* (Inouye et al. 2023), conceptually linked to *ailment* (Zechner et al. 2022) or viewed as a *survival strategy* or *palliative politics* in the post-apocalyptic world (Brown and Woodly 2021; Grove 2019). However, such discussions generally do not systematically explore the role and potential held by young people, their political engagement and innovation with regard to climate change.

The first part of the article begins by considering the thesis that care/carelessness will be the key area for imagining and implementing the new political and economic models needed for our adaptation to climate change, albeit not for its resolution. Further, we point to the conceptual vagueness and policy adaptability of care. Emejulu and Bassel (in Jupp 2022, 13) thus warn of the ambivalence of care, since it is "a double-edged sword of domination and resistance. Care is a politics of becoming". In responses to crises, the mechanisms, policies, discourses, practices, institutions and technologies related to care can reinforce very different modalities of care: care for others (including self-care) as "a posture of mutual respect, responsibility and obligation" (Brown and Woodly 2021, 891) *versus* careless care or what Harris (2021) might call the 'pantomime of care' Care can namely be seen as palliative on one hand, and an investment, business opportunity or even a form of domination on the other. As the Care Collective (2020) notes, care can thus be understood as a challenge to the individualism and competitiveness of neoliberal society and also as a challenge to the paternalism of the state and its mechanism for reproducing existing political relations.[2] In the second part of the article, we discuss David Graeber's (2020) thesis on the need for a new labour theory of value that commences with social production and care work. We address Graeber's simple, albeit infinitely complex question: Why not use the ideas of care and freedom, instead of production and consumption,

[2] Narayan (1995) stresses that in the past care discourses occasionally accompanied colonial projects to help support controversial imperial practices and institutions. She points to the "self-serving collaboration between elements of colonial rights discourses and care discourse" (ibid., 133) and concludes that the "care discourse runs the risk of being used to ideological ends where the 'differences' are defined in self-serving ways by the dominant and powerful" (ibid., 136).

as the paradigm for our new economy, which should only be a way to take care for each other? Finally, we will discuss the epistemological and methodological challenges of studying young people's political responses to the climate crisis. We argue that young people, who we can also label the caring generation by analogy with Graeber, organise within and against formal institutions, while their political practices are often invisible or misunderstood given their individual and particular responses to macro-political contradictions. They are often characterised by seemingly apolitical content, forms and spaces of action, even though their redefinitions of citizenship and democratic innovations are linked precisely to the limitations of representative forms of organisation, the decline of the welfare state and, increasingly, to the climate crisis itself.

CARE AS A POLITICAL IDEA AND PRACTICE

The academic community began to systematically examine the concept of care in the 1980s, with Ruddick (1980), Gilligan (1982) and Noddings (1984) often regarded as pioneering works. The concept and practice of care has usually been considered within the framework of moral philosophy and normative political theory, although the first discussions on the practice and ethics of care emerged within (second-wave) feminism and had quite different theoretical foundations and political aspirations. These discussions frequently addressed the invisibility and privatisation of care and the asymmetrical division of care work between the two sexes, while also addressing the centrality of reproductive work for contemporary capitalist systems. The expansion of capitalism is no longer conceivable without the systematic exploitation of unpaid labour and care, which neither the state nor the market are able to ensure any longer.

Discussions about care have gained additional momentum with the entrenchment of neoliberalism and significant redefinition and redistribution of the state associated with it.[3] The effects of these processes have been fatal for the welfare state and public care systems because they have led to "endemic care deficits". As the Care Collective (2020, 10) points out, the neoliberal policies of privatisation, liberalisation and fiscal discipline have been lethal to care systems (both state and private) as profit-making has been posited as the fundamental guiding principle: "While enabling certain models of market-mediated and commoditized care, neoliberalism seriously undermines all forms of care and caring that

[3] We argue that the state did not wither away as the neoliberal project emerged because it is a constitutive element of its expansion. Similarly, Brenner indicates that the expansion of neoliberalism should be seen as a complex, conflictual process that not only transcends the regulatory systems on the national scale, but simultaneously produces the new sub- and supra-national modes of accumulation and (state) control required to facilitate and coordinate this process. Moreover, the capital–state relationship is being inverted since "it is no longer capital that is to be molded into the (territorially integrated) geography of state space, but state space that is to be molded into the (territorially differentiated) geography of capital" (Brenner 2004, 14). These changes significantly impacted the main pillars of care systems: state – market – individual/family.

do not serve its agenda of profit extraction for the few". We should not forget that the economic innovations of the last four decades have actually had more important political impacts than economic ones. Graeber (2013) notes that the attack on regular forms of employment does not make workers more productive, while precarisation successfully tames and depoliticises labour. Similarly, the extension of working time, which contributes little to productivity and does much more to limit political activity, organising and, as we will see later, time for democracy and time for care.

The social dimension of care has thus been present since the earliest discussions on the care ethics with Gilligan ([1982]/2003, 62), for example, understanding care as "an activity of relationship, of seeing and responding to need, taking care of the world by sustaining the web of connections so that no one is left alone". And yet, in recent decades we have witnessed slow shifts in discussions on care, one might also say its (re)politicisation, since the focus has moved from domestic care and childcare to the new scales and structural conditions of care. According to Brown and Woodly (2021), "[t]he present moment incites a re-engagement with care as a political theory, an ethic and a political praxis that reorients people toward new ways of living, relating, and governing". In the late 1980s, Tronto (1987) also considered care in the context of the decline of the welfare state, the crisis of representation and social security systems and, in particular, the inherent contradictions of neoliberalism. But what is care anyway? Fisher and Tronto define it as "a species activity that includes everything we do to maintain, continue, and repair our 'world' so that we can live in it as well as possible. That world includes our bodies, our selves, and our environment, all of which we seek to interweave in a complex, life-sustaining web" (Fisher and Tronto 1990, 40). What is new about their reconceptualisation is the processual and holistic dimension (also overcoming anthropocentrism) of care, which identifies four analytically distinct but interconnected phases of the care process: caring about, caring for, caregiving, and care-receiving.

Tronto (2013; 2015) states that democratic and care deficits are the central challenges of Western societies. She argues that the solution lies in caring democracy, or the conceptual link between democracy and care, as they are inseparably connected and interdependent, i.e., the democratic deficit can only be solved by making democracy more caring, while the care deficit can only be solved by democratising care, care practices and care institutions. Caring democracy by no means calls for the depoliticisation of citizenship. On the contrary, it means a repoliticisation of citizenship, which in recent decades has all too often been reduced to a legal or contractual status that generally does not entail any political activity. "Caring citizenship", if we may use this term for her understanding of political membership, underscores the performative and relational dimension of citizenship and is as such constituted through and independently of the state, sometimes in opposition to it, but it always transcends the outdated forms of political and economic organisation that prevent inclusion, deliberation

and justice, i.e., solidarity and trust.[4] Ruth Lister (1998a) makes a similar argument when stating that in order to prevent the trivialisation of political membership, we should understand citizenship not simply as a legal status (citizenship-as-status) but also as a practice (citizenship-as-practice).

According to Tronto (2015), caring democracy thus reveals the fifth aspect of care – caring with, which should also be understood as a new political paradigm and an ideal of future generations. Tronto claims that the political moment of caring democracy, and thereby of caring with, is difficult to understand due to the conceptual delineation of the realm of politics and the realm of care, which in the first case is based on the idea of competition and (at least formal) equality and in the second case the idea of cooperation and the acknowledgement of inequality. A political reading of care leads to the conclusion that the problems of social security systems and the care deficit in our societies are not due to individual, personal failure, but are a political problem that calls for a radical redefinition of the democratic political process and the economic paradigm.

The existing models of care are based on the division between households, the market and the state, which are increasingly shifting care to the individual via the processes of privatisation, deregulation and liberalisation. Sevenhuijsen (2003, 141) concurs that "a political approach to care … makes it possible to perceive and address issues of power, and to adapt our judgments about care politics to the fact that power and conflict are involved in every phase of the caring process, as well as in our collective discussions about the way social institutions should care about and for human beings". Eleanor Jupp (2022, 11) describes care as "an everyday and ongoing set of practices and relationship", but it is always also part of the broader macro structures and conditions. Care practices are thus always responding and adapting to changing conditions, e.g., the crises of austerity and the COVID-19 pandemic. This means it is crucial to have the ability to recognise the reinventions and reconfigurations of power relations and thus care politics, including the 'politics of the everyday life', which Jupp would characterise as "the messy and entangled practices of local action and activism that emerge as the welfare state retreats" (ibid., 133).

We argue that caring politics should be understood as an appropriate adaptation of the notion and practice of prefiguration to the reality of the end times. As Raekstad and Gradin (2020) describe, the term "prefigurative politics" or

[4] We note that while redefining citizenship and loosening the mechanical connection between rights and duties as well as the relationship between equality and difference, as a rule the theoreticians of care referred to the idea of a differentiated citizenship (Young 1989) and a differentiated universalism (Lister 1998b). An even more suitable and care-oriented approach may be found in the notion of equal difference (Santos [2008] 2016). The meta-right of equal difference is based on two axioms that renegotiate the old relationship of equality vs. difference to create a new relationship of equality and difference in its emphasis on: 1) difference when equality would endanger our identity; and (2) equality when difference would cause inferiority and discrimination. As such, equal difference enables "democratic equality in unequal care situations" (Heier 2020, 64) and "tackles inequality and the 'care paradox'" (ibid., 70).

"prefiguration" emerged in the specific context of the paradigmatic and ideological split between the old and New Left in the 1960s and 1970s. Carl Boggs (1977a, 1977b) and Wini Breines (1989) use the term "prefigurative politics" to define the sensibility and politics of those movements whose assessment of political choices –in both tactical and strategic activity – was guided by a new logic. Whereas their activities and political choices had previously been determined only after reflecting on the effects on others, their decisions were then determined by a reflection on the effects on themselves. Boogs (1977b, 100) defines prefigurative politics as modes of organisation and movement politics that strive to realise "those forms of social relations, decision-making, culture, and human experience that are its ultimate goal".

Prefigurative politics, then, refers to an attempt at political and social organising with which we would create a future in the present, or at least to some degree anticipate and manifest the changes we seek. It means acting as we would like to act in the future or acting as if the world we would like to live in later in the future is already a reality. It is a brief attempt to delegitimise the existing system and build its alternative from below. In today's circumstances, a caring politics begins with a similar realisation: even if our expectations of a fully free and unalienated society are never realised, or can no longer be completely realised, it is still worthwhile to achieve the goals that ensure the greatest possible good and freedom to people here and now. The Care Collective (2020, 6), for example, defines care as "our individual and common ability to provide the political, social, material and emotional conditions that allow the vast majority of people and living creatures on this planet to thrive – along with the planet itself". If we consider that the word "care" derives from the Latin word *cura* and/or the Old English word *caru*, meaning care, grief, sorrow, mourning, concern and also worry, then the current conceptualisations of care actually confirm its original meaning. As a palliative politics, which in the end times, provides "care … to a patient with a serious, life-threatening, or terminal illness that is not intended to provide curative treatment, but rather to manage symptoms, relieve pain and discomfort, improve quality of life, and meet the emotional, social, and spiritual needs of the patient" (Merriam-Webster).[5]

NEW POLITICAL IDEALS

In recent years, the crisis of the hegemonic economic paradigm has led to the revival of care and care work as the very foundations of alternative political and economic models. In this regard, it is worth noting the works of Daniel Engster

[5] A precise etymological analysis of the word 'care' and its various understandings is provided in Reich (1995). Reich points out different (not merely geographical) settings of the word's development – "mythological, religious, philosophical, psychological, theological, moral, and practical". It is interesting that, in his otherwise lucid analysis, he does not discuss the political setting of care, i.e., its context and aspect. Despite this deficiency, his study is a good reminder that we cannot speak about a "unified idea of care", only a "family of notions of care".

(2005, 2007) in which he discusses the key differences between care labour and productive labour and the disastrous orientation of our economies and societies on production and growth. One author who has contributed to the revival of care, especially its (re)politicisation, is certainly David Graeber. In his works (2019; 2020), he argues that one of our main intellectual and political challenges is "to get rid of the terms production and consumption as a basis for political economy" (2020, 57), which we must replace with the notions of care and freedom. He also calls for a redefinition or, even better, a reimagination of the working class not as producers but as carers. Graeber's understanding of care is not limited to social care and healthcare institutions, but by the "caring class" he understands society as a whole.

Graeber proposes (2001; 2004; 2007; 2022; n.d.) that the practice of dialogue is at the core of caring politics as a collective attempt to reconcile disparate perspectives in a practical situation of action. His argument here is very interesting: dialogue makes it possible to start from a common commitment to action and not from a shared definition of reality, as is the case in Marxist political ontology. Consciousness, which etymologically means "knowing things together" is a consequence of doing things together. But from collective thinking and dialogic practice, we have slowly arrived at the monastic self, upheld by scholars and activists alike.[6] It is precisely for this reason that Graeber is interested in which material conditions would lead to new forms of citizenship as care or friendship and the strengthening of dialogue. Paradoxically, we answer here by asking Graeber's quite simple, yet infinitely complex question: Why not use the ideas of care and freedom as the paradigm for the new economy because, after all, the economy should be nothing more than a way that people care for one another?

That is perhaps the central question Graeber poses in his works. So, what happens if we shift our lens and think about the production of people rather than on the production of things? What happens if we, when thinking about the creation of value, shift the emphasis to the mutual production of people? Is not the primary business of any society taking care of each other? What is production, actually, if not a way of producing people? And are not all economies ultimately human economies? Tronto (2013, 170) offers a clear answer: "The purpose of the economic life is to support care, not the other way around. Production is not an end in itself, it is a means to the end, of living as well as we can. And in a democratic society, this means everyone can live well, not just the few".

In his book *Bullshit Jobs* (2018), Graeber makes a convincing argument about the unfortunate and paradigmatic influence of what we might call the "factory labour theory of value", the system that postulated the male factory workers as the main economic protagonists. This masculine and productivist form of the labour theory of value, whose conceptual core is the production of things, not

[6] Since an exploration of dialogue as a fundamental part of caring politics lies beyond the scope of this article, we refer to Grubačić and Vodovnik (2021) for some preliminary elaborations of this argument.

of people, was first adopted by the industrial bourgeoisie in the 18th century but became almost universally accepted during the 19th century. In something of an ideological offensive, this new common sense of capitalism has naturalised the moralisation of work as a character-building exercise, ultimately producing unnecessary, even mindless, bullshit jobs, which exist for no reason other than to keep people working. The caring classes and caring or socially beneficial work, such as nursing or teaching, are those which are the least rewarded.

Julie Anne White (2020) agrees that we are living in an era of ruthless domination of "productive time". Because a caring democracy is based on a completely different conception of citizenship and care, it requires a new "temporal regime", which will be characterised by a shift from "productive time" to "caring time". In a time of the decline of the welfare state and austerity measures – which are always only enforced partly and discriminatorily, as the lessons learned from coping with the 2008 global financial and economic crisis or the COVID-19 pandemic show – the burdens and opportunities for democracy and care are unevenly distributed. The time for democracy and the time for care is now neoliberal time. The problem is a 'time deficit' that is by no means evenly distributed and systematically prevents people from participating in the political process and in care. Democracy is thus becoming increasingly more a matter of the few, while care is increasingly reified and subjected to market logic and thus to the financial possibilities of the individual.

People who care (or *homines curans*) not only need more time for democracy and more time for care, but above all new political, social and economic models based on a new time – caring time. That is why Graeber claims we need a new labour theory of value that begins with social production and caring labour. Factory labour is a second-order form, while education, or nursing, is part of a much broader process of mutual aid and care that supports and ultimately creates the work by which we create each other. One of our most important intellectual and political challenges is, he argues, to stop using the terms production and consumption as the basis for political economy (Graeber 2020, 57).

In his later works, including *The Dawn of Everything* (2021), Graeber made important and still neglected connections between care and freedom. Graeber's valuable contribution to this argument is his suggestion that care labour should be understood as labour directed to preserving and developing the freedom of its object. We must stress here that, in defending the concept of freedom, he tried to liberate it from the patriarchal and primarily liberal definition of freedom as individual autonomy. Graeber rehabilitates the idea that freedom and equality are not in opposition since in practice it is impossible to have one without the other. It follows that liberal freedom is essentially unjust as the market cannot be the basis for the freedom and equality of all. The second key point in Graeber's understanding of freedom is when he introduces the notion of play. To illustrate the relationship between care and freedom or the "caring relationship", Graeber points to the mother–child relationship (cf. Ruddick 1980; Held 1993; Held 2006;

Sevenhuijsen 2003). He highlights that mothers care for children so that they will grow and thrive, but adds that "in a more immediate sense, they take care of children so they can play. That's what children actually do most of the time. And play is the ultimate expression of freedom for its own sake" (2020, 58). This led him to reconceive value-creating labour as care carried out for the sake of enhancing freedom in all aspects of human existence.

We must note the objections (e.g., Tronto 1987) that problematise the mother–child relationship (or parenthood) as an adequate paradigm for imagining alternative political and economic relations. Schwarzenbach (2009, 251) emphasises that formulating new models and relations in terms of motherhood can have numerous reactionary consequences, which is why he proposes the political conception of friendship (philia) as a more appropriate model. This is because friendship has a more universal character and is a more universal category than motherhood, and it also transcends the boundaries of biological connection and extreme inequality and dependence. Friendship always includes the best moments of the parent–child relationship, while the opposite is not always the case.[7]

The core of caring relations, then, is a communistic responsibility for one another, which in itself is a foundation for all forms of social value. Influenced by Marcel Maus and Peter Kropotkin, Graeber argues that we are already living in a communist society and that capitalism is at best a bad way to organise the economy and society. The most important task is to end the old two-step strategy of traditional Marxist movements: take power from the state and then create a new (socialist) humanity. The new two-step strategy should first recognise that communistic relations are here already, everywhere around us, and then look for a mode for democratically coordinating the existing forms of communism. The vital question then is how this can be translated into a new theoretical common sense, perhaps in a similar way to how the productivist theory of labour was developed in the 19th century. This would certainly hold profound implications for how we view every aspect of what we call the economy. This would require such a fundamental change in the previous categories that it would be a revolution in itself. Indeed, it would require a reimagining and repositioning of science in search of radically different political, cultural and economic models that incorporate the practices of generosity, mutual aid, and reciprocity. Or, as Graeber suggests in *Fragments of an Anarchist Anthropology*: "One obvious role for a radical intellectual is to do precisely that: to look at those who are creating viable alternatives, try to figure out what might be the larger implications of what they are (already) doing, and then offer those ideas back, not as prescriptions, but as contributions, possibilities – as gifts" (2004, 12).

[7] Even though friendship is defined by spontaneity and universality, Schwarzenbach (2009) nevertheless highlights the significance of education for political friendship. We can also understand this as an argument for introducing care content into civic education which, like the ancient Greek paidea, would strengthen democratic and care virtues.

YOUNG PEOPLE – THE CARING GENERATION?

Arya and Henn (2023) stare that youth environmental activism is a social phenomenon that is receiving increasing academic attention. However, despite the growing body of research in this area, there is very little (qualitative) research that can give us a deeper understanding of the repertoires young people employ in their political responses to the climate emergency. Typically, research adapts to the prevailing hierarchical (often quantitative) adult-led reporting (Bowman 2019). This means that while researching young people, their political participation and their response to climate change, we should primarily ask ourselves how young people understand citizenship, environmentalism and the environmental crisis itself in the first place, and how they understand and participate in care for the environment. Therefore, in this brief excursus, we shall address the epistemological and methodological challenges of studying young people's political responses to the climate crisis.

Oinas et al. (2018, 3) state that the concept of the political itself is difficult to define when examining young people's political engagement. Since the 1960s and 1970s, we have observed a decline in conventional forms of political participation among young people, who are ever more using new, i.e., non-formal and alternative forms of political participation (Pickard 2019; O'Toole 2015; Conner 2024; Pušnik 2024). In undemocratic conditions, such an orientation is a logical consequence of political necessity, while elsewhere it may be the result of a tactical and strategic choice by young people and also their structural position. In exploring the new politics of young people, the use of James C. Scott's concept of infrapolitics proves more than appropriate, albeit with some important modifications. In Scott's terminology, infrapolitics includes "a wide variety of low-profile forms of resistance that dare not speak in their own name" (Scott 1990, 19). It is a strategic form of resistance that the subjects must adopt in conditions of peril (ibid., 199). And yet Scott adds that in more open and democratic conditions, infrapolitics can also represent the "structural underpinning of the more visible political action" (ibid., 184). In its 'micropolitical' sense, then, the concept of infrapolitics thus helps us bring to the fore the overlooked or at best marginalised aspects of young people's new politics which are, "like infrared rays, beyond the visible end of the spectrum" (ibid., 183). This is not surprising since hegemonic theories typically understand political activity only as an activity carried out through political parties and other conventional forms of collective action, while alternative political practices are disqualified as not being significant (Scott 1985, 292). This means that on the 'micropolitical' level we can use infrapolitics to elucidate the "subaltern" aspects of young people's new politics, which provide "much of the cultural and structural underpinning of the more visible political action on which our attention has generally been focused" (Scott 1990, 184). On the 'macropolitical' level, we should understand infrapolitics as the processes of producing place-based politics within the fissures of the global capitalist system. It draws attention to the attempts to disengage

from the systemic processes of state and capital and to the processes of the (self-) organisation of relatively autonomous and only partially incorporated spaces (cf. Vodovnik and Grubačić 2015; Grubačić and O'Hearn 2016). The place-based politics and projects of young people we have observed in recent years – whether they are the autonomous spaces in Ljubljana or the *ʻāina* projects of the *Kānaka Maoli* youth in Hawai'i – confirm the analytical value of Scott's approach in this respect.

In the last few years, changes in young people's political repertoires have been significantly accelerated by technological innovations, with such reorientations in young people's political practices being particularly amplified by information and communication technologies. The question of the role of digital technologies in young people's political activity is beyond the aims and scope of this article, although we agree with the suggestion that the exploration of young people's politics should include an exploration of the "electronic repertories of contention" (Rolfe 2005). Let us note at this point that research into both the organisational and the content aspects of ICT use also deserve special attention, with recent studies (Pajnik et al. 2020) showing that contemporary collectives, especially young people, act chiefly out of an urge to realise their own "distinctive imaginary". This includes alternative forms of action such as horizontality, the absence of a leader, non-representative activity, transnationalisation, engagement in the international environment and also intersectionality, i.e., the substantive connection of various topics, for example precarisation, solidarity with minorities and environmental protection. In other words, it is about ways of acting that also make the most sense in the context of the declared climate emergency.

Recently, many researchers (Van de Donk et al. 2004; Garrett 2006; Loader 2008; Staggenborg 2011; Collin 2015) have focused on the changing role of (digital) technologies in the "repertories of contention" (Tilly 2006) that social movements, and young people in particular, use to challenge authorities and organise – both *online* and *offline*. We can agree with Gerbaudo's (2012; 2017; 2018) assessment that digital technologies have an important impact on young people's political activism, but we still need to go beyond "twitter fetishism" for social media have merely complemented, not replaced, the existing forms of face-to-face meetings and communication. However, we should not overlook the fact that it is the young people on social networks who often initiate and coordinate communication on the streets, where they also establish contact with the *offline* parts of society. Moreover, the development of technology has influenced the way movements connect with each other and address social issues. Following Graeber (2013), we may claim that young people's democratic practices have prefigured the horizontal and rhizomatic mode of organisation and that digital infrastructures have been an integral part of the anti-authoritarian principles of their political activities. Young people should therefore not be reproached for being apolitical or of having no ideology, because their ways of organising are their prefigurative politics and ideology itself.

The new political practices, ideas and languages of young people are often (too) elusive for old theories, methods and epistemologies. The result is a particular "myopia of the visible" (Melucci 1989, 44), evident in studies that portray young people as passive and depoliticised. They engage only with the visible and known political subjectivities and practices, and completely ignore their novel practices and discourses, particularly caring practices and discourses, even though care is an essentially political concept as it operates within and simultaneously establishes power relations (Esquivel 2014). This means we need an alternative theoretical and methodological arsenal for exploring the new political terrain, as young people move their political projects beyond the state and its formal structures, especially when it comes to challenges like the climate crisis, which requires a global response beyond individual political communities (polities). It is precisely in this context that the discussions on new methodological approaches and/or collaborative research prove crucial since they perceive young people as an important source of information and solutions and not just as an object, a specific population group, or even a problem (Wulf-Andersen et al. 2021).

The new politics of young people should be understood as a particular subaltern politics that has yet to be decoded (cf. Scott 2013). The democratic practices and ideas that are usually put to the test by young people – particularly in their responses to the climate crisis, which require new, often contradictory ways of acting (Banjac 2024) – are usually invisible from the perspective of hegemonic theories, appearing at best as inarticulate and self-referential posturing. Yet in relation to narratives about apathetic and careless youth, we can quickly discern another or a different reality: Young people who are not apathetic, but want to realise their political demands directly. They do not usually join political parties as they understand that the climate crisis requires different forms of action and organising, which explains why they are creating new networks, affinity groups, assemblies and projects. They do not wait for elections and politicians' decisions, but want to realise their political demands here and now. That is why they are very active politically and not just in sporadic mass mobilisations, rallies and strikes, e.g., *Fridays for Future*, *Youth Strike for Climate* or *School Strike for Climate* – as the standard narratives generally suggest.

CONCLUSION

We are belatedly starting to realise that climate change is indeed "much more than temperatures". In fact, we are living in a time of transition, where "we face modern problems for which there are no modern solutions" (Santos 2015, 44). This makes it unsurprising that the notions of a new beginning, transformation and transition are appearing more and more frequently in political discourse as well as on our research agendas. In this context, we can understand the biblical Jubilee year or Sabbath year when all debts were cancelled, slaves were set free, and land was returned to its original owners. Similarly, ancient Greek philosophy

also knew ordinary time or *chronos* on one hand and *kairos* on the other, which marked the "moment of transition" or the "right time" for the change not only of the gods but also of the fundamental presuppositions of the political and social order. We should also not forget the Aymara and Quechua notion of *patchakuti*, which refers to the restoration of the world or, rather, the "reversal of space and time".[8] Today's circumstances are certainly increasingly reminiscent of such a time of transformation.

The lack of imagination that some replace with grotesque solutions of techno-utopianism (e.g., Elon Musk's ideas about colonising Mars or Richard Branson's ideas about devices to decarbonise the planet) do not exactly arouse much optimism. The solution they offer is a technological revolution – or better still, a technological restoration – which they see as a way of defending existing socio-economic relations rather than an opportunity to overcome them. Only now are we beginning to realise that addressing the climate crisis depends at least as much on social and political innovations as on technological ones. This is also the reason that we should begin discussions about the climate emergency with considerations of politics and society and open up the social sciences to creative adaptations of our categorial and methodological arsenal. This is, after all, what the epistemological and methodological problems identified in the study of young people's political responses to the climate crisis and related socio-problems problems have shown. Last but not least, these changes compel us to a broader transformation of the very logic and role of research in the social sciences, which should be principally concerned with the question of the future.

Ahead of us lies a new and thorough reflection on how to establish a new relationship between life and work, production and consumption and, especially, the individual and the communal. To summarise, in the analysis of alternatives and possibilities the article introduced a new central concept – care – as the fundamental notion and practice of the new (palliative) political and economic paradigm. We started from the proposition that care/carelessness will be the key area for envisioning and implementing the new political and economic models needed for our adaptation to climate change, albeit not for its resolution. As our genealogy of the concept has shown, care can be explored from different perspectives and in various contexts. Therefore, it was another aim of this article to re-examine and link different debates on care as a sine qua non for the emerging models and to connect care with democracy and not least to youth and

[8] Patchakuti is manifested in the new institutions (the introduction of plurinationality, the Ministry of Cultures, Decolonisation, and Depatriarchalisation), new symbols (the Wiphala as a second national flag). Yet, the key moment is certainly the attempt to follow a new time by introducing new or better still old calendars and, last but not least, a new time. The new time that has left "the colonial, republican and neoliberal state in the past" (from the preamble of the new constitution) is best symbolised by the clock on the building or facade of the Congress in La Paz. An attentive eye cannot fail to notice that the positions of the numerals on the clock face are reversed, and the clock itself runs anticlockwise, i.e., that is how hegemonic time is seen from the other side and from below. They merely confirm David Graeber's thesis (2012; 2013) that a revolution happens when there is a transformation of common sense.

their political repertoires. To paraphrase Graeber (2011, 10), it was "our attempt – however modest, however hesitant – to start such a conversation, and most of all, to suggest that the task might not be nearly so daunting as we'd be given to imagine".

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Arya, Dena and Matt Henn. 2023. "The Impact of Economic Inequality and Educational Background in Shaping How Non-Activist "Standby" Youth in London Experience Environmental Politics." *Educational Review* 75 (1): 93–114.

Banjac, Marinko. 2024. "Youth Environmental Activism: Subversion or Confined to the Existing Order?". *Teorija in praksa* 61 (2): 363–86.

Boggs, Carl. 1977a. "Revolutionary Process, Political Strategy, and the Dilemma of Power". *Theory and Society* 4 (3): 359–93.

Boggs, Carl. 1977b. "Marxism, Prefigurative Communism, and the Problem of Workers' Control". *Radical America* 11 (6): 99–122.

Breines, Wini. 1989. *Community and Organization in the New Left, 1962–1968. The Great Refusal*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

Brenner, Neil. 2004. *New State Spaces: Urban Governance and the Rescaling of Statehood*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bookchin, Murray. 2007. *Social Ecology and Communalism*. Oakland: AK Press.

Bowman, Benjamin. 2019. "Imagining Future Worlds Alongside Young Climate Activists: A New Framework for Research". *Fennia – International Journal of Geography* 197 (2): 295–305.

Care Collective. 2020. *The Care Manifesto: The Politics of Interdependence*. London: Verso Books.

Collin, Philippa. 2015. *Young Citizens and Political Participation in a Digital Society: Addressing the Democratic Disconnect*. New York: Springer.

Conner, Jerusha (ed.). 2024. *Handbook on Youth Activism*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing.

Dean, Jodi. 2019. *Comrade: An Essay on Political Belonging*. London: Verso Books.

Engster, Daniel. 2007. *The Heart of Justice: A Political Theory of Caring*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Engster, Daniel. 2015. *Justice, Care, and the Welfare State*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Farmer, Paul. 2013. *To Repair the World: Paul Farmer Speaks to the Next Generation (Vol. 29)*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Fisher, Berenice and Joan C. Tronto 1990. "Toward a Feminist Theory of Caring". In *Circles of Care: Work and Identity in Women's Lives*, edited by Emily K. Abel and Margaret K. Nelson, 35–62. Albany: SUNY Press.

Featherstone, David. 2013. "The Contested Politics of Climate Change and the Crisis of Neo-Liberalism". *ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographies* 12 (1): 44–64.

Garrett, R. Kelly. 2006. "Protest in an Information Society: A Review of Literature on Social Movements and New ICTs". *Information, Communication and Society* 9 (2): 202–24.

Gerbaudo, Paolo. 2012. *Tweets and the Streets: Social Media and Contemporary Activism*. London: Pluto Press.

Gerbaudo, Paolo. 2017. *The Mask and the Flag: Populism, Citizenism, and Global Protest*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Gerbaudo, Paolo. 2019. *The Digital Party: Political Organisation and Online Democracy*. London: Pluto Press.

Gilligan, Carol. 1982/2003. *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Graeber, David. 2001. MMM *Toward an Anthropological Theory of Value: The False Coin of Our Own Dreams*. New York: Palgrave.

Graeber, David. 2004. *Fragments of an Anarchist Anthropology*. Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press.

Graeber, David. 2007. *Possibilities: Essays on Hierarchy, Rebellion, and Desire*. Oakland: AK Press.

Graeber, David. 2011. *Revolutions in Reverse: Essays on Violence, Art, and Imagination*. Brooklyn: Autonomedia.

Graeber, David. 2012. "Revolution at the Level of Common Sense". In *What We Are Fighting For: A Radical Collective Manifesto*, edited by Federico Campagna and Emanuele Campiglio, 165–75. London: Pluto Press.

Graeber, David. 2013. *The Democracy Project: A History, a Crisis, a Movement*. London: Random House.

Graeber, David. 2015. *The Utopia of Rules: On Technology, Stupidity, and the Secret Joys of Bureaucracy*. Brooklyn: Melville House.

Graeber, David. 2018. *Bullshit Jobs: A Theory*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Graeber, David. 2020. *Anarchy – In a manner of speaking. Conversations with Mehdi Belhaj Kacem, Nika Dubrovsky, and Assia Turquier-Zauberman*. Zurich/Berlin: Diaphanes.

Graeber, David. n.d. "Beyond the Monastic Self: Joint Mind and the Partial Illusion of Individuation". https://davidgraeber.org/unpublished/letter/.

Graeber, David and David Wengrow. 2021. *The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Grove, Jairus Victor. 2019. *Savage Ecology: War and Geopolitics at the End of the World*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Grubačić, Andrej and Žiga Vodovnik. 2015. "Towards a Dialogical Anthropology: For David Graeber". *Anthropological Notebooks* 27 (3): 1–17.

Grubačić, Andrej and Dennis O'Hearn. 2016. *Living at the Edges of Capitalism: Studies in Exile and Mutual Aid*. Oakland, CA: University of California Press.

Esquivel, Valeria. 2014. "What is a Transformative Approach to Care, and Why Do We Need It?". *Gender & Development* 22 (3): 423–39.

Harris, Christopher Paul 2021. "(Caring for) the World that Must be Undone". *Contemporary Political Theory*, 20 (4): 904–10.

Heier, Jorma. 2020. "Democratic Inclusion Through Caring Together with Others". In *Care Ethics, Democratic Citizenship and the State*, edited by Petr Urban and Lizzie Ward, 53–76. Cham: Springer International Publishing.

Held, Virginia. 1993. *Feminist Morality*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Held, Virginia. 2006. *The Ethics of Care: Personal, Political, and Global*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Inouye, Mie et al. 2023. *On Solidarity*. Chicago: Heymarket Books/Boston Review.

Jupp, Eleanor. 2022. *Care, Crisis and Activism: The Politics of Everyday Life*. Bristol: Policy Press.

Lister, Ruth. 1998a. *Citizenship: Feminist Perspectives*. New York: New York University Press.
Lister, Ruth. 1998b. "Citizenship and Difference: Towards a Differentiated Universalism". *European Journal of Social Theory* 1 (1): 71–90.
Loader, Brian D. 2008. "Social Movements and New Media". *Sociology Compass* 2 (6): 1920–33.
Lynd, Staughton 2012. *Accompanying: Pathways to Social Change*. Berkeley: PM Press.
MacGregor, Sherilyn. 2014. "Only Resist: Feminist Ecological Citizenship and the Post–politics of Climate Change". *Hypatia* 29 (3): 617–33.
May, Todd. 2012. *Friendship in an Age of Economics: Resisting the Forces of Neoliberalism*. Lanham: Lexington Books.
Melucci, Alberto. 1989. *Nomads of the Present: Social Movements and Individual Needs in Contemporary Society.* London: Hutchinson Radius.
Narayan, Uma. 1995. "Colonialism and Its Others: Considerations on Rights and Care Discourses". *Hypatia* 10 (2): 133–40.
Noddings, Nel. 1984. *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
Oinas, Elina, Henri Onodera and Suurpää, Leena. 2017. *What Politics?: Youth and Political Engagement in Africa*. Boston: Brill.
Oliver, Tom H., Prosper Bazaanah, Jeff Da Costa, Nabajyoti Deka, Andre Z. Dornelles, Matthew P. Greenwell, Magesh Nagarajan et al. 2023. "Empowering Citizen-led Adaptation to Systemic Climate Change Risks". *Nature Climate Change* 13 (7): 671–78.
Osorio, Jamaica Heolimeleikalani. 2021. *Remembering Our Intimacies: Mo'olelo, Aloha 'Āina, and Ea*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
O'Toole, Therese. 2016. "Beyond Crisis Narratives: Changing Modes and Repertoires of Political Participation Among Young People". In *Politics, Citizenship and Rights*, edited by Kirsi Pauliina Kallio, Sarah Mills and Tracey Skelton, 225–42. Singapore: Springer Singapore.
Pajnik, Mojca, Žiga Vodovnik, Živa Humer and Boris Mance. 2020. "The Shape of Feminism to Come: The Networked Politics of Feminist and LGBT Movements in Slovenia". *Southeastern Europe* 44 (3): 343–65.
Pickard, Sarah. 2019. *Politics, Protest and Young People: Political Participation and Dissent in 21st Century Britain*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
Pušnik, Tomaž. 2024. "Institutionalisation of Youth Political Participation in the EU: A Neoliberal Attempt to Castrate the Political Engagement of Young People Outside the Ballot Box". *Teorija in praksa* 61 (2): 341–62.
Raekstad, Paul and Sofa Saio Gradin. 2020. *Prefigurative Politics: Building Tomorrow Today*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
Reich, Warren T. 1995. "History of the Notion of Care". *Encyclopedia of Bioethics*, 5. New York: Simon & Schuster Macmillan.
Rolfe, Brett. 2005. "Building an Electronic Repertoire of Contention". *Social Movement Studies* 4 (1): 65–74.
Ruddick, Sara. 1980. "Maternal Thinking". *Feminist Studies* 6 (2): 342–67.
de Sousa Santos, Boaventura (ed.). 2008. *Another Knowledge is Possible: Beyond Northern Epistemologies*. London: Verso.
de Sousa Santos, Boaventura 2015. *Epistemologies of the South: Justice Against Epistemicide*. New York: Routledge.
Sassen, Saskia. 2012. "Cities: A Window into Larger and Smaller Worlds". *European Educational Research Journal* 11 (1): 1–10.

Sevenhuijsen, Selma. 2003. *Citizenship and the Ethics of Care: Feminist Considerations on Justice, Morality and Politics*. New York: Routledge.

Schwarzenbach, Sibyl A. 2009. *On Civic Friendship: Including Women in the State*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Scott, James C. 1985. *Weapons of the Weak, Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Scott, James C. 1990. *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcript*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Scott, James C. 2013. *Decoding Subaltern Politics: Ideology, Disguise, and Resistance in Agrarian Politics*. New York: Routledge.

Spade, Dean. 2020. *Mutual Aid: Building Solidarity during this Crisis (and the Next)*. London: Verso Books.

Staggenborg, Suzanne. 2011. *Social Movements*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Tilly, Charles. 2006. *Regimes and Repertoires*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Tronto, Joan C. 1987. "Beyond Gender Difference to a Theory of Care". *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 12 (4): 644–63.

Tronto, Joan C. 2013. *Caring Democracy: Markets, Equality, and Justice*. New York: NYU Press.

Tronto, Joan C. 2015. *Who Cares? How to Reshape a Democratic Politics*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Van de Donk, Wim et al. 2004. *Cyberprotest: New Media, Citizens and Social Movements*. New York: Routledge.

Vodovnik, Žiga and Andrej Grubacic. 2015. "Yes, we Camp!": Democracy in the Age of Occupy. *Lex Localis* 13 (3): 537–57.

White, Julie Anne. 2020. "Time for Caring Democracy: Resisting the Temporal Regimes of Neoliberalism". In *Care Ethics, Democratic Citizenship and the State*, edited by Petr Urban and Lizzie Ward, 161–77. Cham: Springer International Publishing.

Willis, Rebecca. 2020. *Too Hot to Handle? The Democratic Challenge of Climate Change*. Bristol: Bristol University Press.

WMO. 2023. "State of the Global Climate 2023". WMO-No. 1347. *World Metereological Organization*. https://library.wmo.int/records/item/68835-state-of-the-global-climate-2023.

Woodly, Deva and Rachel H. Brown (eds.). 2021. "The Politics of Care". *Contemporary Political Theory* 20 (4): 890–925.

Wolf, Johanna. 2012. "Ecological Citizenship as Public Engagement with Climate Change". In *Engaging the Public with Climate Change*, Lorraine Whitmarsh, edited by Irene Lorenzoni and Saffron O'Neill, 120–37. New York: Routledge.

Wulf-Andersen, Trine, Follesø, Reidun, Olsen, Terje (eds.). 2021. *Involving Methods in Youth Research—Reflections on Participation and Power*, 1–15. London: Palgrave.

Zechner, Minna et al. 2022. *The Politics of Ailment: A New Approach to Care*. Bristol: Policy Press.

MOŽNOSTI OB KONCU SVETA: ZAMIŠLJANJE SKRBI KOT POLITIKE

Povzetek. *Članek izhaja iz teze, da se srečujemo z izzivi, za katere je treba iznajti nova načela političnega, družbenega in ekonomskega organiziranja. Čedalje bolj očitno namreč postaja, da podnebna kriza ne grozi le okoljskemu in gospodarskemu propadu, saj v prvi vrsti grozi – in v tem je tudi njena neposredna, a pogosto spregledana nevarnost – našemu političnemu in družbenemu propadu. Obrisi podnebne krize se izrisujejo v vztrajni inhibiciji demokratičnega političnega procesa, spodkopavanju političnih skupnosti in skupnega ter nenazadnje v zatekanju v populistične in avtoritarne modele soočanja s kriznimi razmerami. To od nas terja vnovičen premislek o tem, kako vzpostaviti nov odnos med življenjem in delom, ustvarjanjem in potrošnjo ter nenazadnje individualnim in skupnostnim. Članek zato v analizo alternativ in možnosti intervenira z novim središčnim konceptom – skrbjo – kot temeljno idejo in prakso nove (paliativne) politične in ekonomske paradigme. Naslovili bomo preprosto a hkrati neskončno zapleteno vprašanje: zakaj ideje skrbi in svobode ne bi uporabili kot novo ekonomsko paradigmo, saj bi gospodarstvo navsezadnje moralo biti zgolj in samo sredstvo, s katerim ljudje skrbimo drug za drugega?*

Ključni pojmi: *skrb, politika, demokracija, podnebne spremembe, kriza.*