

Note

1. Bureau of Labour Statistics <https://www.bls.gov/>.

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The Madhouse Effect: how climate change denial is threatening our planet, destroying our politics, and driving us crazy, by Michael E. Mann and Tom Toles, New York, Columbia University Press, 2018, 208 pp, \$18.95 (pbk), ISBN: 9780231177870

‘Human beings currently emit more than 30 gigatons (30 billion tons) of CO₂ pollution a year. That number is difficult to fathom, so try this instead: Take all the elephants in the world. Although poaching has sadly led to a substantial decline in their numbers, about 500,000 of them are still left. Combining juveniles and adults, let’s assume an average weight of 4 tons per elephant. That gives a total of 2 million tons. So the amount of CO₂ we emit per year is equivalent in weight to the total sum of the worlds’ elephants multiplied by 15,000. You get it – we emit a lot of CO₂’ (p. 131f). This is the tone of *The Madhouse Effect*. Engaging with humanity’s perhaps most serious problem today – climate change – the scientist Michael E. Mann and the Pulitzer-Prize-winning cartoonist Tom Toles with the help of simple examples attempt to reach a wider audience to explain the dangerous politics of denying climate change.

Political and media manipulation of audiences worldwide has been an effective tool to distract individuals and even populations from the current environmental decline. From the U.S. to Russia, governments or specific politicians have been using the policy of denialism only to earn more money and sustain the capitalist system that gives one abundant comforts yet dramatically reduces the possibility of the future to take place. Heavily relying on fossil fuels – first, coal, and later, oil – we have created the world that is progressive in all senses yet environmentally degrading. While this has finally become clear to many, there are still those who either through lack of knowledge truly believe that climate change is a myth or for various other selfish reasons might think otherwise yet preach climate change denialism as some obsessive religion. Exploring the grave threat of denialism in the questions related to climate change, Mann and Toles demonstrate how manipulation has indeed been widely (ab)used and denialism has become a dangerous part of the climate change discourse that we must fight against.

The authors formulate the goals for *The Madhouse Effect* as follows: ‘We explore the reasons why we all *should* care about climate change, and we draw attention to the absurd efforts by special interests and partisan political figures to confuse the public, attack the science and the scientists themselves, and deny that a problem even exists’ (xii; italics in original). Through a very accessible language and **entertaining images** that accompany the book making it look like a scientific comics on the problem of climate change denialism, the authors demonstrate that climate change is the issue that we all should think of and try to minimise now, as well as provide more specific examples regarding its impact on our lives, drawing on such matters as security, food, water, energy production and consumption, land, health, ecosystems, economy, and ethics (pp. 32–51).

Perhaps the most useful approach that Mann and Toles adopt to tackle climate change denialism is their discussion of such a criminal act as ‘the war on science’ (p. 69), which is not a recent or exclusively climate-change-related phenomenon, but has indeed become characteristic of the current climate change debates. The authors illustrate their ideas with a number of examples, the most eloquent of which is perhaps President Donald Trump himself. They devote a full chapter to explore how the most recent presidential election in the U.S. has become deadly, among other issues, in the questions of the environment and ecology, and show that Trump’s populism is dangerous *also* because of his climate change denialism. Mann and Toles talk about the degrading effects that the election of such a political leader as Trump has through the prism of climate change, using a powerful metaphor to describe the dramatic changes that the 2016 election has caused: ‘We became characters in a dystopian novel’ (p.153). They successfully uncover the real truth behind the speeches of climate-change deniers, Trump included: ‘The climate-change denial industry has adopted the strategy of obscuring the basic concepts through a torrent of typically misleading arguments about technical details and minutiae. But all of that never has and never will change **the basic fact that more CO₂ in the atmosphere traps more heat and warms Earth’s surface**’ (p.15).

The Madhouse Effect is a timely book that must be read by everyone who doubts that climate change is real. Because of its rather simple language and references to at times obvious issues, it is not likely to tell anything new to scholars and academics who work in environmental studies, yet it will be of interest to students in the field. The general public will certainly constitute the market for *The Madhouse Effect*, too. The book is a valuable contribution. Its approach to combine accessible scientific facts with political-satirical cartoons to explain the absurdity and danger of denying climate change is unique and will be welcomed by the reader. ‘Despite the late hour and the monumental challenge, we believe there is still time and still hope’ (xii), write the authors, hoping that humanity can still find a way out of the current environmental crisis. Certainly *The Madhouse Effect* is one of the tools through which this can be done, spreading climate change awareness, turning deniers into believers, and triggering action.

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Routledge handbook of water law and policy, edited by Alistair Rieu-Clarke, Andrew Allan and Sarah Hendry, London and New York, Routledge, 2019, xvii + 416 pp., £41.99 (paperback), ISBN 978-0-367-23106-4

The book provides tools to manage a ‘finite and vulnerable resource’ for the world’s fast-growing population which is threatened by climate change. Law aims to resolve conflicts, although its enforcement may not always be possible (pp. 1–3). The book has 28 chapters in three parts by 37 authors. Part I reviews various legal issues and policies related to water governance at the national level. Part II concerns questions related to the transboundary waters in aquifers, lakes or rivers. Part III covers some cross-cutting issues including global water governance and international investment law.