

Eco-Bites December Editorial

Most people in Europe have no difficulty accepting the reality of climate change. Those who think otherwise are regarded as eccentrics or cranks. But is this acceptance as deep as we claim. Do we take the reality of climate change for granted in the way that we accept, for instance, that the earth is round?

Of course, there are those who make no secret of their scepticism. Such attitudes often go hand in hand with a desire to disown any shared sense of human fellowship. A distaste for people such as Donald Trump and Nigel Farage can be a powerful impulse for rejecting their views on the environment, but basing one's views on a reaction to the views of others says nothing about how you perceive those views to be true or false.



We can appeal to scientific research and surveys and measurement. We can quote eminent experts but, if we are really honest with ourselves, this world of science, while it is necessary to understand the wider story, will never quite clinch the argument. To be convinced, human beings need something in addition to science.

We are not pure intellects who process data gathered from the world about us. We are also emotional beings who respond, above all, to human situations. This is why stories are so powerful. I never doubted the scientific findings about climate change which have been presented down the years, but this awareness remained in my head.

My response was notional, but I did not really begin to change until a Jesuit friend from Uganda spoke to me one day about five rivers which he swam in as a child which are no longer there. He gave me an explanation of what happened. The rainy season has become shorter but with the same amount of rain. The effect is that the rain falls with a greater intensity and washes away the top soil. Vegetation no longer grows with the result that even more soil is eroded, and the rivers are, in effect, buried. They are still there, but they flow underground.

In the coming year of 2020 Eco-Bites is going to be looking at the need for stories in making Europeans, in particular, aware of the challenge of climate change. For us it is not real in the way that it is real for people in other parts. To make it real we need to hear human sized stories about other people in other places.

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