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## **The internal and external exclusion zones when assembly is banned: Extinction Rebellion and the experience of climate change**

The experience of climate activism during Extinction Rebellion's (XR) October Rebellion in London 2019 included the creation and dismantling of internal and external home-like spaces, barriers, and walls. This interactive workshop will offer a space for reflecting together on this experience, as a route to engagement with the dynamics at play around our psychological and social responses to the changing climate. It explores the conference theme by looking at how one social change movement, which aims to work in a sense 'without walls', openly and inclusively, experienced the impact of the loss of private space – and how this loss may relate to the losses associated with climate change, as proposed by climate psychologists (e.g. Randall 2009).

XR is a movement that sets out to use nonviolent civil disobedience as a means to achieve government action in response to its three demands: 'tell the truth' about the climate crisis which threatens the collapse of civilisations; 'act now' to reduce carbon emissions to net zero by 2030; and 'beyond politics', handing over the authority for deciding on the necessary steps to citizens' assemblies. (Extinction Rebellion 2019.) In the UK, XR has held what it calls Rebellions every few months since November 2018, mostly focusing on centres of power in the UK capital.

During the October Rebellion in 2019, the Metropolitan Police imposed a city-wide ban on assembly of two people or more, applicable to anyone involved with XR. When intervening in protests, they first dismantled the physical structures that had been created to enable protestors to have a sense of a home base, and then moved people off the sites.

My personal experience of being an activist in these circumstances, during a very wet October, included a sense of neglect, an unexpected determination to protect the 'home-like' spaces, the subsequent loss of psychic shelter along with the physical shelter, and the experience of policing and a police cell as both oppression and security, with parallel confusion over the nature and identity of 'the other'. Echoes of the Met's policing of association were evident in my internal landscape, which featured moments of primitive paranoia and silence. I will explore this experience through images and vignettes, and invite participants to reflect on their own response to both climate change and protest.

Discussion of the XR experience will draw on the systems-psychodynamic understandings (Nestor 2019) emerging from my doctoral research, for which I convened an action-research group of people whose work involves public engagement on climate change. This provides a case study on the organisational experience of climate change, which we may find has some echoes with the activist experience.

The proposal could function as a PDW or a paper. If a PDW it would run for half a day and its structure would include a talk on psychoanalytically-informed climate psychology, experiential work on climate change, and an account of the XR experience described above.

### **References**

Extinction Rebellion home page, <https://rebellion.earth>. Accessed 30.11.2019.

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Randall, R. (2009). Loss and climate change: the cost of parallel narratives. *Ecopsychology*, 1, 118-129.

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**Rebecca Nestor** is a climate activist and a member of the board of the Climate Psychology Alliance. She is a UK-based facilitator and leadership developer, a graduate of the Tavistock Centre masters in consultation and the organisation, and a doctoral researcher at the Tavistock on leadership in organisations that engage the public on climate change. She has been a member of the ISPSO since 2016 and is on the organising committee for the 2020 European Regional Meeting in Krakow.

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