

From denial to disavowal.  
What does a psycho-social  
understanding bring to our  
ability to face the  
challenges of climate  
change?

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PSYCHOSOCIAL RESEARCH UNIT



# What is 'climate psychology'?

'Climate psychology is concerned with understanding the non-rational dimensions of our collective paralysis in the face of worsening climate change.'

(Hoggett and Robertson, personal communication 2016)

# Development of a psychosocial perspective

Psychoanalytically informed reflections on climate change are not new (e.g. Searles 1972), rather their general acceptance, and in particular the shift from the psychology of the laboratory, clinic and couch to a psychosocial approach, is an emergent phenomenon.

# Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)

Shift in emphasis towards the psychosocial...

(Nadine Andrews)

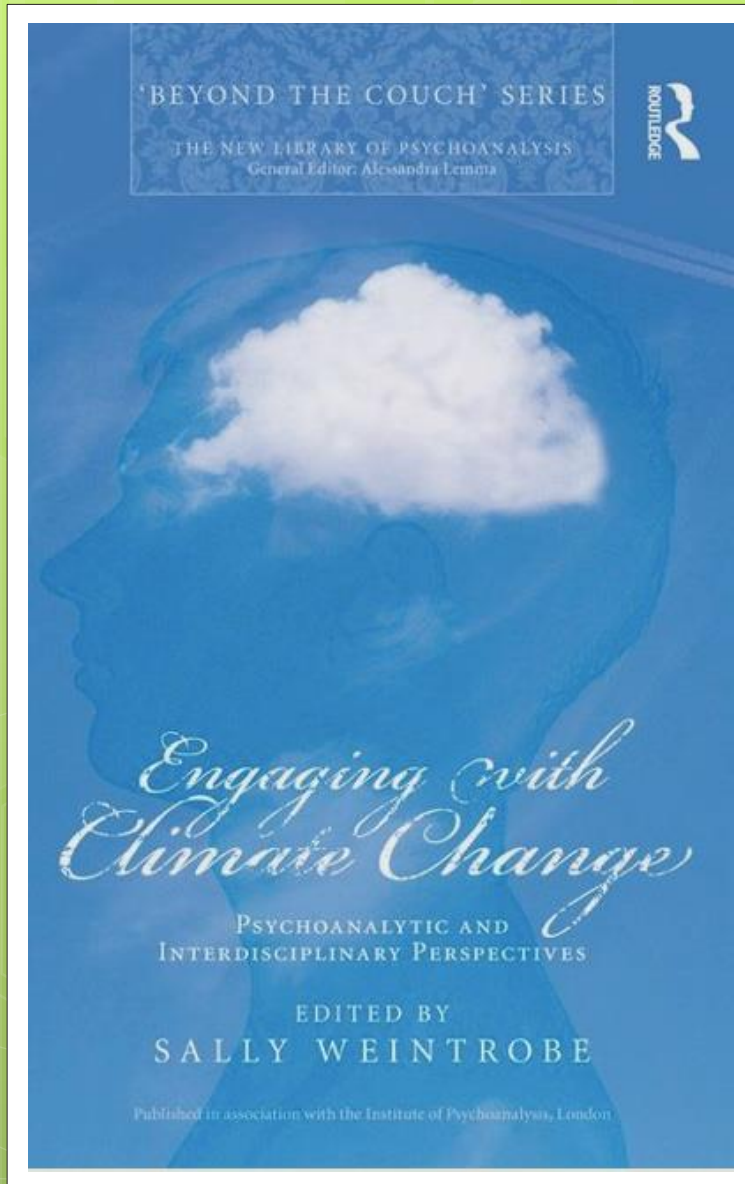
<http://www.climatepsychologyalliance.org/explorations/papers/190-psychosocial-and-climate-psychology-research-in-ipcc-reports>

# In the face of inexplicable failure...

The failure in communication of the 'hard facts' of human-induced climate change being accepted on a general scale, in the wider public and by many political leaders.

# Another approach

- 'Ecopsychology' (Rust & Totton, 2012)
- 'Ecopsychoanalysis' (Dodds 2011)
- 'Ecosophy' or 'Deep Ecology' (Naess)



## Psycho-social approach S. Weintrobe

- ◆ Psychosocial concern of socially and psychologically produced anxiety in relation to climate change denial.
- ◆ How virtual realities become confabulated with actual reality and converted into meaningless targets by governments who need to believe in a simulated reality.
- ◆ 'Apathy' attributed to the general public as a 'reason' for not acting upon climate change as a form of defence and hides behind it more subtle psychosocial perspectives that might be more useful in understanding our relationship to climate change

# In time for tomorrow?

## the Carbon Conversations Handbook

Rosemary Randall and Andy Brown



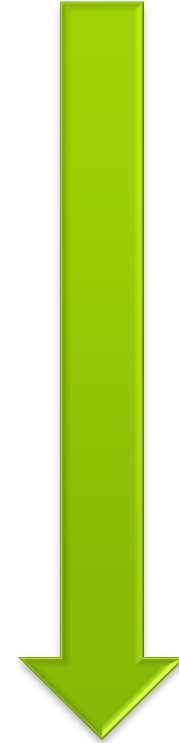
## Practical applications Randall & Brown

The 'carbon conversations' are a shift from general reflections, theory and a focus on the individual to attempting to deal with the issues of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by approaching the anxieties of climate change psychosocially, with groups of people who are able to discuss their emotions and psychological challenges when faced with trying to change their lifestyles.



# Art, climate change and psychosocial research

- Art performance (video, live poetry)
- Social Dreaming
- Post Social Dreaming discussion
- Debate
- Interview with the artists
- Researcher panel analysis





Artwork

# The Second Breath: Video extract



# Social dreaming

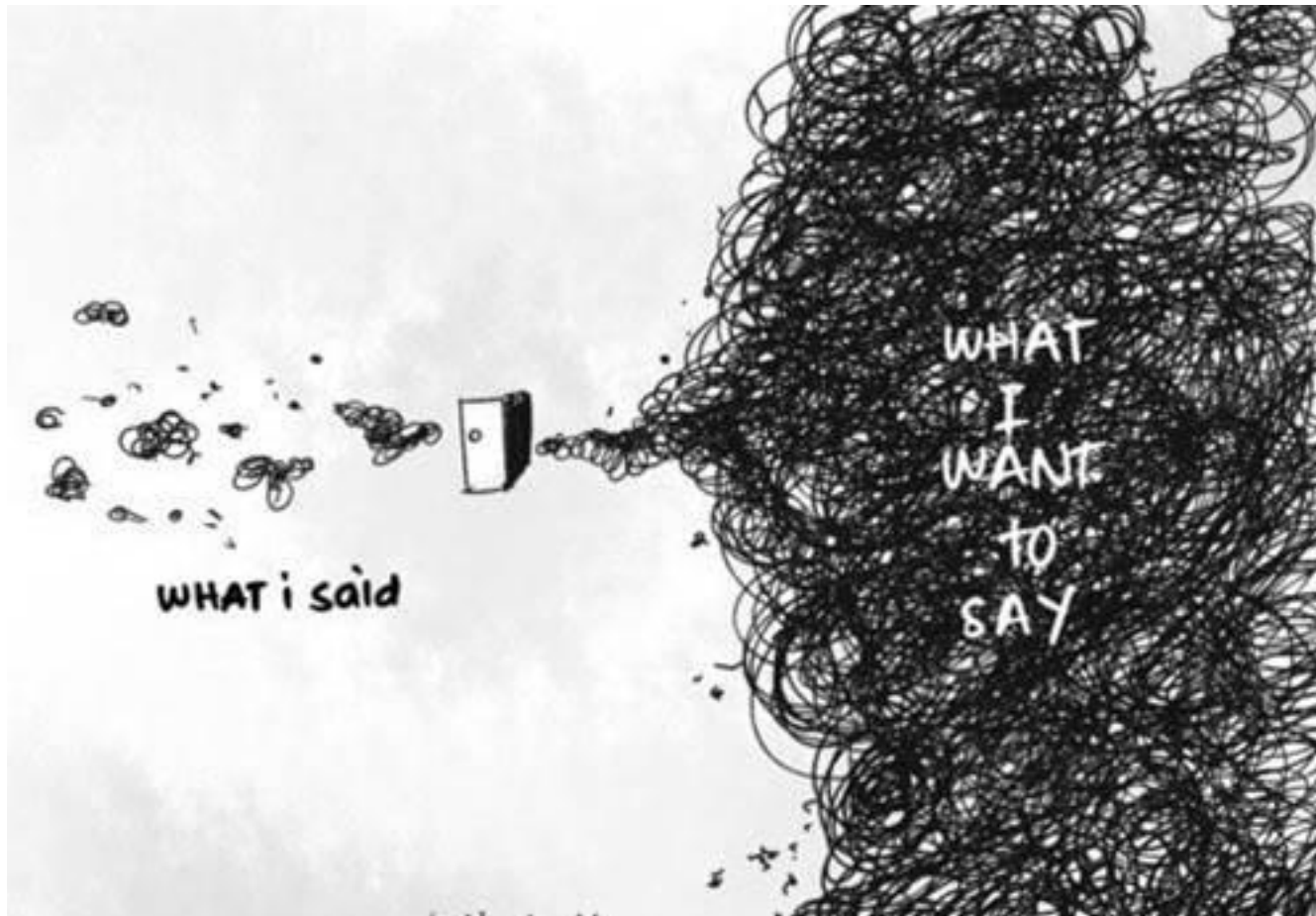


# Examples of dreams

A reading



What's happening...?



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graph TD; Dreams --- Meaning; Meaning --- Association; Meaning --- Amplification;
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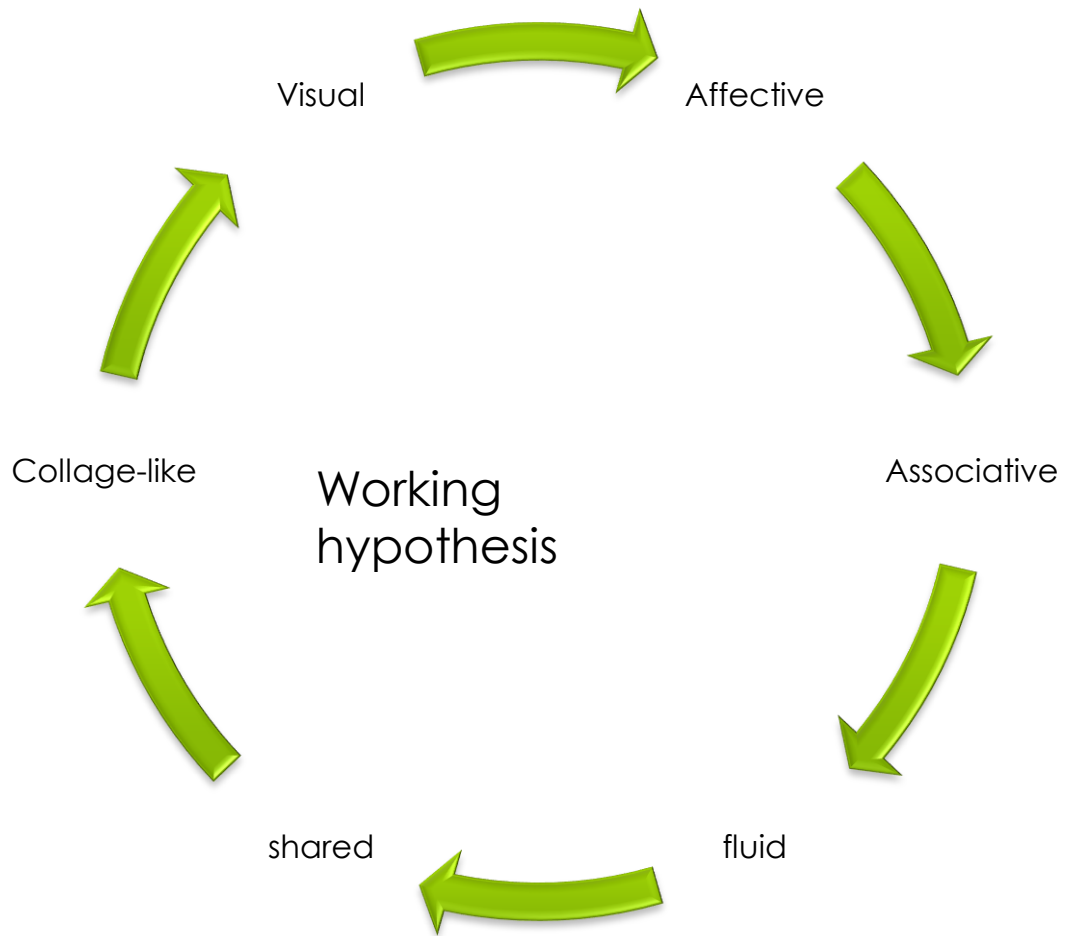
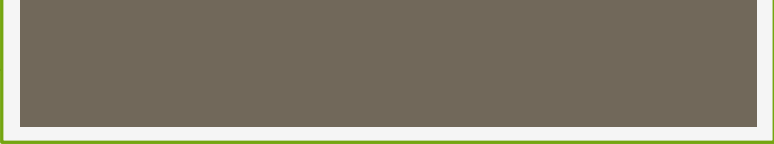
Dreams

Meaning

Association

Amplification





# A collage of images





Final word



'There is a painting by Klee called Angelus Novus. An angel is depicted there who looks as though he were about to distance himself from something which he is staring at. His eyes are opened wide, his mouth stands open and his wings are outstretched. The Angel of History must look just so. His face is turned towards the past. Where we see the appearance of a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe, which unceasingly piles rubble on top of rubble and hurls it before his feet... a storm is blowing from Paradise, it has caught itself up in his wings and is so strong that the Angel can no longer close them. The storm drives him irresistibly into the future, to which his back is turned, while the rubble-heap before him grows sky-high. That which we call progress, is *this* storm.'

(Walter Benjamin)



# CPA: More information & becoming a member

Website

[www.climatepsychologyalliance.org](http://www.climatepsychologyalliance.org)


# BECOME A MEMBER


## Becoming a member of CPA - the benefits

Individual or organizational membership of £24.00 a year brings you our newsletter, entitles you to vote at our AGM, stand for our executive or advisory committees, initiate activities and help shape the organization. You also get a 20% discount on the price of all events. We welcome active involvement and would love to hear from you about what you would like to contribute. We never share your details. [Privacy](#)



Membership application Your details:-

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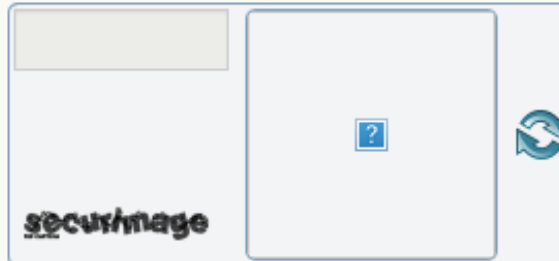
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Please type the characters shown

A security verification box containing a small image of the characters 'secun/mage' and a larger image of a question mark. A refresh icon is located on the right side of the box.

secun/mage

Send



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# References

Benjamin, Walter (2009). *On the Concept of History*.

Dodds, J. (2011) *Psychoanalysis and ecology at the edge of chaos: complexity theory, Deleuze/Guattari, and psychoanalysis for a climate in crisis*. London: Routledge.

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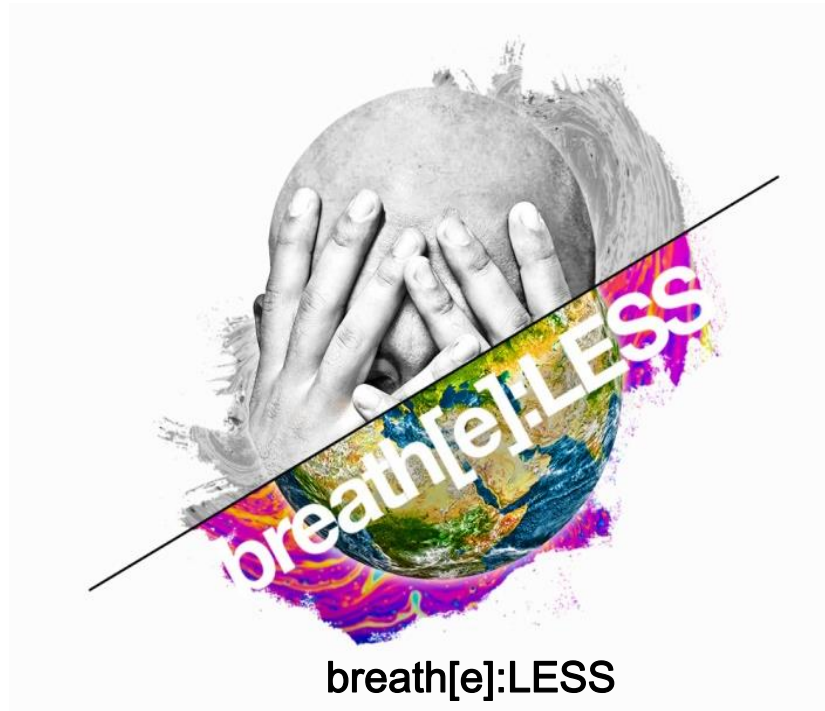
Randall, R. and Brown, A. (2015). *In time for tomorrow? The carbon conversations handbook*. Surefoot Effect.

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breath[e]:LESS  
is a spoken word and music live set  
about denial, water, staying alive.  
The city, sunsets, hope and threat.  
It's about our hearts and heads, battling to survive  
global changes. Its about anger, love and death.  
Oh ... and Terry and Julie. Don't hold your breath.  
Three poets, one DJ. A crowd.  
Words, beats, stories. Dancing is allowed.