



GRACE WONG

A HOT TOPIC

our future on a warmer planet

Climate change expert Mark Lynas walks readers through disastrous scenarios which might happen if the world continues to heat up in his latest award-winning book *Six Degrees: Our Future on a Hotter Planet*.

With projections based on scientific papers, data and research, the book describes, from one to six degrees Celsius, the impact with each degree of rise in the world's average temperature. The book won last year's Royal Science Society Book Prize, one of the most prestigious publishing events in the United Kingdom.

The journalist-cum-environmental activist said he wanted to bring all available scientific information in the academic field to the public.

Mr Lynas has been a journalist for over 20 years, and has worked for almost a decade as a specialist on climate change. He said journalists are more influential than politicians "in shaping agenda", directing peoples' attention towards certain issues.

"There are lots of specialist-journals which make projections for our future with global warming and I wanted ordinary readers to be able to understand what the scientists know

but are often too scared to tell us," Mr Lynas said.

The book tells readers the changes and implications that the world may witness if global warming is not stopped. A single degree warmer will lead Arctic ice caps to further melt; two will see the marine ecosystem severely devastated with most of the world's tropical coral reefs to die off.

If it reaches six degrees Celsius, the global population may experience disasters beyond imagination. In the worst case scenario, the collapse of human civilisation.

"The degree-by-degree approach just seemed like a clear narrative structure," Mr Lynas said. He describes his book "a bit like a novel", in the sense that predictions become more and more catastrophic as readers progress through the book.

The book gained yet more publicity when it was produced into a television documentary last year by the National Geographic (NG) Channel, entitled *Six Degrees Could Change the World*.

The NG crew travelled over five continents, and with the help from climate experts, photographers and farm owners, the program visualised

the possible climatic trends as mentioned in the book to audiences using computer graphics.

"The documentary was a great way to showcase some of the science to a mass audience. Obviously there are ways in which it simplifies what is a very complicated picture, but it has to do that probably to get the basic message across," Mr Lynas said.

He added that the programme has been successful, with an audience of tens of millions worldwide.

Mr Lynas said that the ultimate message of his book is to call for action to stop global warming. "The overall message is simple," he said, "reducing greenhouse gas emissions is the most urgent and compelling task of humanity if we want to protect the integrity of this planet in any meaningful way."

"If we are happy to gamble with our future and the future of life on earth, then all we have to do is continue as we are – burning coal and oil, and cutting down the rainforests," he said.

Six Degrees: Our Future on a Hotter Planet is available at major bookstores. For more information on the documentary, visit NGC's website at <http://environment.nationalgeographic.com>.

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