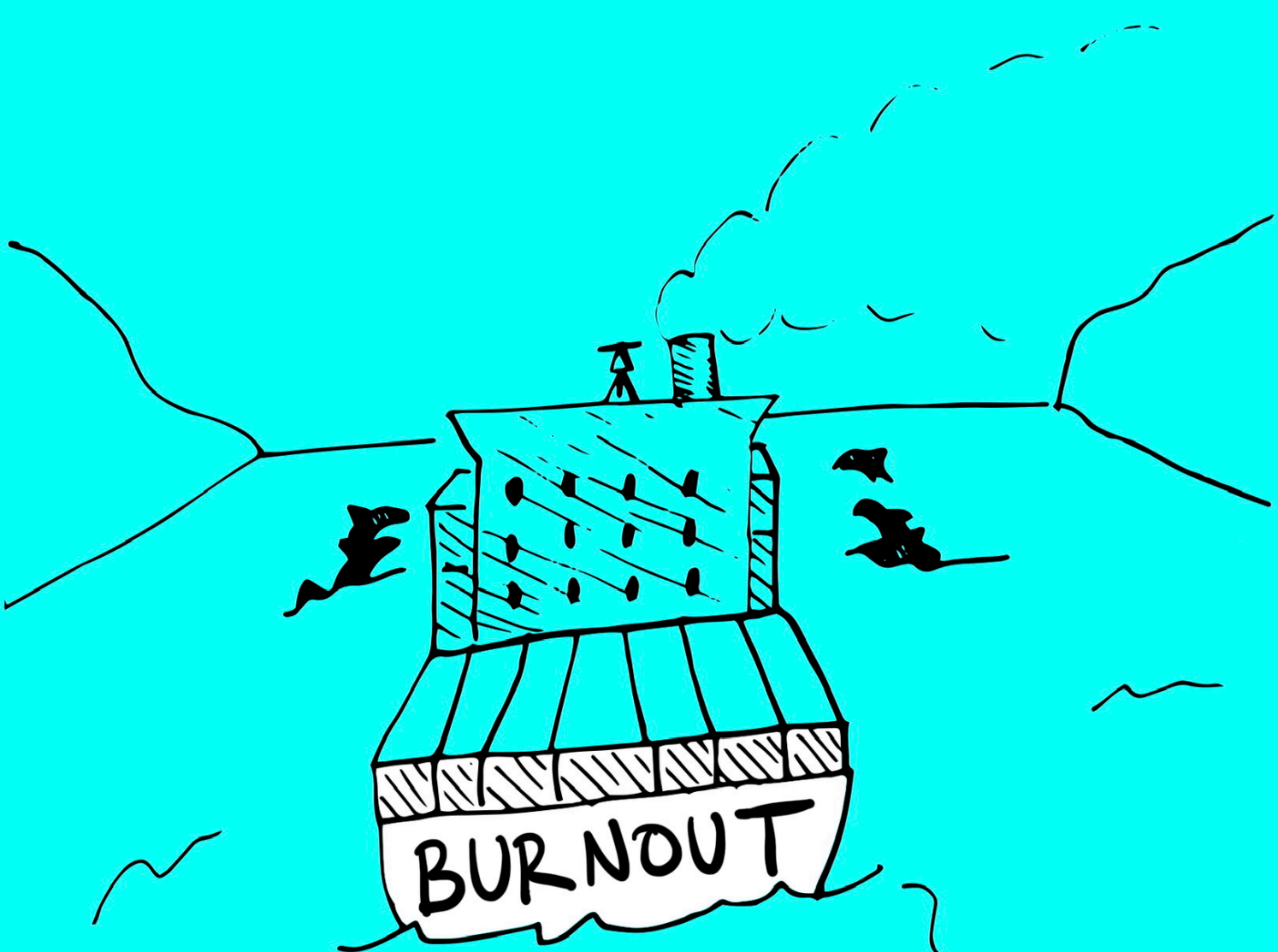

a zine about
academia, travel,
& climate change

Burnout: a zine about academia, travel, and climate change
Editors: Clara del Junco and Mathilde Gerbelli-Gauthier

Introduction

Clara del Junco

In December of 2019, I stuck a post-it note to my desktop computer: "MINIMIZE TRAVEL IN 2020". This ultimately prophetic New Year's resolution had emerged from an increasing uneasiness with the amount of travel that I, as a PhD candidate in chemistry, had been doing for the past few years. Initially thrilling for my broke, undergraduate self, the frequent flying—to visit far away family and friends, attend conferences and workshops—became physically and emotionally taxing. It also affected my ability to engage in a sustained and sustainable way with my work and community. I found myself using it as an excuse to say "no" to activities and activism—in my case, mainly graduate union organizing—to which I was deeply committed but felt incapable of setting boundaries around on my own. Finally, though I consider myself prepared to make the radical changes that will be necessary to curtail catastrophic climate change, I was engaging regularly in airplane travel, which dwarfs the rest of my activities in terms of environmental impact. In short, I came to recognize how unaligned traveling made me feel with my values. Yet I find myself in a bind. I love traveling, and I find it necessary to sustain my relationships. Having lived a delocalized academic lifestyle for a decade, my friends and family are scattered throughout Europe and North America. And despite the broad recognition that climate change is an existential threat, plane travel is still an integral and largely uninterrogated feature of academic life.

Were my peers—other overworked, internationally mobile, leftist academics—feeling the same malaise? And what were they doing about it? I discussed this at length with my friend Mathilde, a math PhD student. At the time, she was flying monthly to maintain a long-distance relationship with her partner, also an academic, who had moved from Chicago to Baltimore for a postdoc. Not satisfied with our own answers, or lack thereof, we asked friends and colleagues—and one stranger from the internet—for reflections on academia, travel, and climate change. The wide-ranging result is this collection—of manifestos on academics' role and responsibility in climate change; of reflections on the homesickness and forced assimilation that are the price of entry into western academia for many scholars; of diatribes against the excesses of conferences; of visual symbols of environmental change; of calls to action around social and geographic inequities in academia and global warming; and of attempts to reconnect with a slower pace of movement and a greater respect for distance.

The coronavirus pandemic has been a forced experiment in academia without travel. The negative consequences are clear, and unevenly distributed. But

several of the contributions in this zine explore the generative possibilities of immobility. Might we be better off staying put? Or is the issue more complicated? The zine is not comprehensive—in drawing on our networks, we have necessarily missed many perspectives. We hope it will seed conversations where more perspectives will be shared, and begin to connect people who are committed to reimagining academic institutions and keeping one another accountable to practices rooted in environmental sustainability and justice.

Clara del Junco (clara.deljunco@posteo.net) is a department-hopping scientist, currently in sociology, who is just out here trying to do her best in Chicago.

Mathilde Gerbelli-Gauthier (math.gerbelli@gmail.com) is a mathematician who is probably based in either Montreal or Princeton at the time you're reading this.

Oh Conference, Up Yours

Benjamin Balthaser

As this year is already one of the hottest on record both in the sky and on the streets, I just received what once might have struck me as a normal email: an administrative assistant making sure I was still presenting at this year's annual American Studies Association conference in Baltimore. The strange thing is, it's still a normal email. As universities are shedding faculty faster than the ice from an arctic glacier and COVID-19 makes plane travel feel like sharing a needle with a deer tick, academic journals, associations, faculty meetings, and syllabi queries go on as though little has changed.

And in a way, why should it? Students will appear this fall, at least on those campuses on which tuition dollars weigh more heavily than their med school's Hippocratic oaths. Still, work can continue at home, writing, editing, even teaching after a kind. But a conference? I mean, I get it—conferences for academics are like prom for teenagers. People put on their best clothes and strut around a conference ballroom. There are kings and queens, there are liaisons, there are weed deals, book deals.

I mean, most of the year academics are drudges, teaching 2, 3, even 4 classes a term, sitting on endless committees, writing articles, grading papers. Some academic superstars at major universities can mostly avoid this tedium, but for many of my colleagues in the tenured academic middle classes, it is the one time of the year we can shine, it is our carnival, our fiesta.

But it's over. Australia is on fire again; the permafrost is melting at an alarming rate; the oceans are acidifying. There are hurricanes in early June. Half of all carbon emissions are emitted by 10 percent of the global population, and a good deal of that excess comes from air travel. To put it more concrete terms, one trans-Atlantic flight is nearly the equivalent of giving up your car for a year. If we are serious about flattening the carbon curve, then there is no way hundreds of thousands of academics flying around the world to present papers and network can be maintained, let alone justified.

Beyond the rational costs involved, there is something about its potlatch nature that I can no longer stomach. The expensive shoes, the luxury hotels, the jet fuel, all construct a relationship to our work that strikes me as more about status than it is about utility, about exclusion more than community.

Like the planet, academia is in crisis. Years of casualization of the workforce, budget cuts, students with unbearable debt loads, the gutting of the liberal arts has meant that fewer and fewer academics can even afford to go, and those who

do live a life very different than many of their students, especially those at state colleges, who work minimum wage jobs just to survive. And for all my hand-wringing, it may not matter that I have qualms: at my university, the travel budget was slashed so deeply one has to apply to a separate system-wide pool and the funding is not guaranteed.

Beset by crises of all kinds one has to wonder if perhaps the gaudy spectacle of the academic prom has had its day. Maybe instead of blowing 2 grand on a luxury hotel and the carbon emissions for an entire village, we could reconsider ways our research, our work, could engage our communities.

I recently gave two talks—on Jewish left wing activists at mid-century and their critiques of Zionism. One I gave half way around the world to other academics in a hotel room, while the sound of a Caribbean beach washed over the windows. The other I gave in a community space with a roomful of activists and members of the progressive Jewish community in Chicago. I can barely remember the conference paper; I cannot forget the avid questions from left-wing Jews eager to know their history.

The low carbon world is not a world absent of luxury, but the travel is of a different kind. Rather than travel from seamless bourgeois capitalscape to seamless bourgeois capitalscape, I can travel from public to private, from university to community, from the moderated role I have to take in the classroom, to a passionate advocate in the community. As our public universities are rapidly defunded we may soon have no choice but to find other ways to make research available to young people who can no longer afford to go, and with colleagues who can not even dream of a tenured job.

So, I'm done. Seriously—I can't justify the expense, and I can't validate the work the conference does. Call it a statement or symbolic politics or whatever I'll have no more hotel bar martinis while the world, literally, burns.

Benjamin Balthaser (bbalthaser1@gmail.com) is the author of Anti-Imperialist Modernism and Dedication. *His writings have also appeared or are forthcoming in journals such as* American Quarterly, Boston Review, Jacobin, PMLA *and elsewhere. He is not going anywhere in Chicago.*

Re: Frequent Flyer Miles

Tif Shen

Filename: Frequent Flyer Miles Inquiry TEMPLATE.docx

SUBJECT: Frequent Flyer Miles

Dear ~~[UNDERPAID GRAD STUDENT]~~ [CONFERENCE ORGANIZER],

Hope you have been well in spite of, well, you know. Truly tragic that the [NUMBER]th edition of [CONFERENCE] had to be cancelled. We had such a blast last year! I know the Negroni at [THREE-STAR HOTEL] was terrible but sharing it with [FAMOUS FACULTY] was such a treat (though not sure why they invited [KNOWN ABUSER] again)!

I am sorry to be bothering you with this; I don't quite know who to ask. Do you know if I still get my frequent flyer points if I cancel my flight to [EXOTIC CONFERENCE LOCATION]?

You see I had been saving up points for quite a few years now; the miles are what makes this job worth it. This might sound absurd to you; it certainly sounds absurd to my mother. If you are anything like her, you might be wondering why I attach so much importance to those points. Why do I even care about free flights when I already travel constantly for work? Don't get me wrong: I LOVE traveling for conferences! I get to fly! I know drinks at the airport are disgustingly overpriced but at least I will be able to expense my lunch. Plus, the airport lobby is a nice place to work! No random awkward grad students showing up and interrupting me to talk about their feelings (I have lost so many hours of work to this). I highly recommend flying out of [AIRPORT TERMINAL] by the way if you are looking for a good working airport. There is this nice little restaurant that has a killer [FUSION FOOD], a view of the tarmac and, lo and behold, WORKING outlets!

I just want to be able to go to [DREAM CITY] once, on my own time, without my old advisor berating me for skipping a couple of talks to visit a museum (as if him sitting the in back row answering emails makes him better). Having those miles, even unused, means being able to dream about that trip one day. Watching the mile counter go up every conference allows me to fantasize about that adventure. These days, all I have are the two hundred applications due by [IMPENDING DEADLINES] and a collaborator who won't email me back. I am

not sure if these applications will land me any jobs (maybe the virus will free up a few positions occupied by stuffy old faculty). I am not even sure when I'll get to use those miles, now that everything is shut down. I am also not sure if I'll have health insurance this summer. But at least I'll have that trip banked up.

Thank you in advance for your help with the question! Looking forward to seeing you at [VIRTUAL PANEL] next week!

Sending you my warmest regards,

[NAME]

Formerly a Ph.D. student in math, Tif (jif.shen@gmail.com) now works as a union organizer. Based in New Haven, he likes fighting for what's just and taking photos.

Climate scientists should stop flying (easier said than done)

An essay by Dr. Mika Tosca about what she should be doing but isn't doing that well because it's hard but will be doing going forward

> My experience is that effective advocacy starts when we change our own lives. I've found it empowering to reduce my own emissions, and also surprisingly fun. I haven't found low-energy living to be a sacrifice.
>
> – *Peter Kalmus,*
> *Climate scientist at NASA JPL [noflyclimatesci.org]*

This quote from Peter Kalmus, a climate scientist, climate activist, and former colleague of mine at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory, embodies what Zoomers and Millennials might refer to as "goals". A decade ago, Dr. Kalmus realized that nearly 75% of his personal carbon emissions came from air travel, and so he stopped flying altogether in 2012. He oversees the website noflyclimatesci.org, encouraging other climate scientists to follow his lead encouraging other climate scientists to follow his lead. Dr. Kalmus rightly notes that flying in airplanes is terrible for the environment, and that long-distance travel to conferences does not correlate to academic success. Why, then, do climate scientists still fly to conferences so damn much??

As a professor of climate science myself, I always make a point to emphasize to my students that solutions to the climate crisis will have to address the systemic causes of the problem (e.g. winding down fossil fuel extraction, converting our energy grid to sustainable sources, transitioning the agricultural sector to more locally-grown alternatives, etc.). Focusing on individual actions is one way that powerful corporations and other entities can derail the conversation about how to best solve the climate crisis by displacing the onus of responsibility from themselves onto individual actors. So if we know that flying is terrible for the environment, but also know that individual behavior modifications (e.g. not flying) are a wholly inadequate (if not purely performative) response to the climate crisis if they aren't feasibly scalable –where does that leave us?

In the courses I teach, I always start the semester by following the methodology of Vining et al. (2008) and ask-ing my students to answer two questions: first, whether they, themselves, feel like they are a "part of" or "separate from"

nature, and, next, to suggest some words and things that they associate with "natural" and "unnatural" . Without fail, most students respond that they are a "part of" nature, but the words they choose to associate with "unnatural" are almost always things created by and for humans. Just as my students see themselves as both part of and separate from nature, as revealed by this exercise, we must recognize that while we are individual actors, we are also part of a society and of the institutions that are driving the climate crisis. There is evidence that personal behavior modification in response to climate change can improve mental health and make space for one to engage in more "productive" actions. But most importantly, waving off the efficacy of personal responsibility in lieu of institutional change creates what Jason Mark calls a "cynical self-absolution that divorces personal commitment from political belief".

When I first decided I was going to pursue a professional career as an academic, I was explicitly told that in-person "networking" with my peers was crucial to my success. Now, you would be excused for wondering why a field that concerns itself with studying the Earth and the many changes that human activity is inflicting on it, would emphasize the importance of engaging in long-distance travel to conferences just to "network", when said travel has been shown to be a major contributor to climate change. Since 2006, when I began my career as a climate scientist, I have flown to dozens of locations all to "help my career". And, you know what? Maybe, despite the findings in Ref. (3), this travel did help my career, in which case the field of climate science needs a major rethink. But you know what else it did? It contributed to the destruction of the environment, and therefore it made me a hypocrite.

I get it, in-person conferences are awesome. I love seeing my brilliant colleagues give talks in person. It's genuinely productive for me, as a scientist, to interact intentionally with other scientists for an extended period of time. But is it *necessary*?

Now we are in the midst of a protracted pandemic which has effectively shut down travel and socializing in large groups. Conferences have been cancelled for the foreseeable future. Panels and workshops and discussions and dissertation defenses have been moved online. I've participated in a number of those virtual conferences and panels and I genuinely don't think they've been any less engaging. Do I miss in-person conferences? Hell yes. But, the dirty secret in academia is that traveling for conferences has always been part professional, *and part work-sanctioned-vacation*. We like traveling for conferences because we get to go to beautiful places and see friends and colleagues that we don't see everyday. It's a vacation that work pays for. Win-win. But—and hear me out—wouldn't it be better—for the climate, for our institutions, for our mental health—to separate work from vacation and stop traveling to conferences so much? Not only is all this unnecessary travel contributing to the climate crisis, but it also works to collapse the separation between "work" and "play" into a single, continuously

semi-productive space that is insidiously common in capitalism. Solutions to the climate crisis must involve a dismantling of capitalism and we can begin that revolutionary process by seriously curbing—or totally forgoing—conference travel in deference to an equitable and just future not just for the environment, but also for our species.

The pandemic (and subsequent move to "virtual everything") has allowed me to re-evaluate my commitment to professional travel. I'll definitely miss it, but in 2021 and beyond, I plan to emulate Dr. Kalmus and fly less. As an academic and climate scientist, I am committed to building a sustainable future. Join me in imagining a world where flying is not an accepted and integral part of being a successful academic. We have a responsibility to be role models in an age of obvious climate breakdown.

It's time to change the paradigm. It's time to stop flying.

Mika Tosca (mtosca1@saic.edu) is an Assistant Professor of Climate and Environmental Science at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

Why I'm Letting My Travel Grant Expire

Eric Potash

I'm letting my travel grant expire. According to my mother, I should be ashamed! How could I turn down a free flight? Because such a flight isn't really free: there's the hidden cost of CO_2 emissions that are dangerously warming our planet. For a long time that was the main thing driving me to avoid flying but I've since identified other benefits that have turned out to be at least as important to my decision-making.

My resistance to flying began about a decade ago when I started taking climate change seriously. I wondered what I was doing that was actively contributing to the problem. So I worked on estimating and minimizing my carbon footprint. Air travel, one of my most carbon intensive and largely unnecessary activities, was a natural place to start.

I was flying over a thousand miles between Chicago and New York City to visit family. I decided to limit the number of such trips, but I didn't want to give them up entirely so I considered alternatives to flying, namely riding the train. I estimated that a round-trip flight home added about 1 ton of CO_2 to my footprint, twice as much as the half-ton train ride. With the average US footprint at about 18 tons, this half-ton reduction seemed substantial. So I endured the 19 hour ride on the Lake Shore Limited a number of times over the years.

But I eventually wondered about the consequences of my riding the train instead of flying. How does it affect the concentration of CO_2 in the Earth's atmosphere, the thing driving climate change? In fact it seems likely that those planes and trains were going to depart with or without me. Under this assumption, my flying or riding the train (or not traveling at all) would have no effect on global CO_2! Contrast this with driving. A relatively fuel-efficient car (45 miles per gallon, say) offers the same footprint as the train. But what are its consequences? Assume that if I don't drive it the car doesn't go anywhere. Then, as opposed to flying or riding the train, the decision to drive is consequential. But this works against driving. By driving instead of flying, I would decrease my footprint while, paradoxically, increasing global CO_2. That's because, again, I'm assuming the plane is making the trip anyway.

So carbon emissions are complicated and footprints don't tell the whole story. Of course, if enough people limited their flying, airlines would eventually schedule fewer flights which would have consequences for global CO_2. But there's an even bigger issue: the resulting incremental reduction in emissions would, in and of itself, have virtually no effect on climate change. Not all problems, not even

all environmental problems, are like this. Take for example air pollution, which is known to cause serious pulmonary and respiratory problems. Reducing air pollution on just a local scale, for example by closing a single coal-fired power plant, can have beneficial consequences for local human health.

Climate change is different. Reductions in emissions on an individual, local, even national scale—again in and of themselves—won't do much to lessen climate change. (The US was the source of just 14% of global emissions in 2017, the most recent year for which these data are available.) The fact is that catastrophic changes are already underway and to preserve some semblance of the current climate will require significant and immediate emissions reductions by billions of people across many countries (breakthroughs in negative emissions technology notwithstanding). Unfortunately I can't imagine such reductions will happen without a binding international agreement, i.e. the thing that delegates to the UN Climate Change Conferences have been seeking and failing to obtain for over two decades.

This makes climate change a social and political problem, and the question of whether I should reduce my footprint a version of the age-old question of how to fit individual action into social and political change. One possibility in this case is that by reducing my footprint I signal that climate change is an important issue to me and enhance my credibility as an advocate for the changes needed to alleviate it. I might be able to make an action like letting my travel grant expire more meaningful by sharing it with others (as I am doing right now!) and convincing them to take similar actions or otherwise support political action on climate change.

On the other hand, it's entirely possible that I could more effectively bring about those political and social changes by increasing my footprint! For example, I might burn fossil fuels traveling around the country advocating for climate policy. Or perhaps people who are now unconvinced on the issue would sooner be persuaded by someone who drives an SUV than someone who rides a bike.

Unfortunately I don't know which individual actions will bring about the necessary social and political changes (and I'm skeptical of anyone who says they do). But I continue to work on reducing my carbon footprint, including minimizing travel, anyway. Why? Because I've found two reasons to do so that don't depend on consequences for climate change.

First, while consequences are important and useful for judging actions, they need not be the sole criteria. When considering taking an action, consequences are rarely known and so must be predicted. These predictions have many uncertainties, most notably the uncertainty of how other people will act. If we assume the status quo in these predictions the resulting actions tend to perpetuate it, as for example if we assume that not flying has no effect on emissions and so continue to fly. To avoid having to make such predictions and to potentially break this cycle I think it can be good to judge actions based on principles, such

as minimizing my footprint, independent of their consequences.

Of course, acting on principles comes with its own costs, like the extra time it takes to ride the train instead of flying. But that brings me to the second reason why I reduce my footprint, despite uncertain consequences for climate change: I've discovered other positive consequences. The actions I've taken over the past decade (flying less, biking and walking more, air drying clothes, eating vegan, growing and foraging food, buying second-hand, living more co-operatively etc.) fit into a broader practice of "human-scale" living that has been inherently rewarding. It's forced me to educate myself about important and fascinating subjects including transportation, agriculture, ecology, manufacturing, history, and economics. And it's helped me to strengthen my relationship with my community and to be less materialistic.

I invite you to join me in taking action to reduce our carbon footprints. I think you'll find it healthy and meaningful, as I do, to lead a more principled and human-scale life. However, I doubt these actions will, in and of themselves, make much difference in beating back climate change. For that to happen, we need to continue work on a program of social and political change which we may (or may not) connect to our individual footprints.

Eric Potash (eric@k2co3.net) is, among other things, a mathematician, statistician, and farmer.

C****n f**tp***t calculation

Clara del Junco and Mathilde Gerbelli-Gauthier

The goal of this exercise is to think about your travel in the last year, both in terms of fossil fuel emissions and its effect on your life. In the first part, you will estimate the emissions related to your plane travel in the last year. In the second part, we provide several prompts to help you reflect on the numbers you obtained from the calculation and the role of plane travel in your life.

In the process of writing this exercise, we found out that the term "carbon footprint" was popularized by BP as a way to shift responsibility for climate change from the fossil fuel industry onto individuals. We have decided to include this exercise in the zine anyway (though not using the phrase "carbon footprint") for two reasons. First, because we think that a personal reckoning with the proportion of our emissions that comes from plane travel is a way to begin reflecting on the changes that we can make to prepare ourselves for life in a future world without fossil fuel-powered travel. More importantly, we think that the results of the exercise highlight how the infrastructures and institutions that govern our lives limit both our choices as individuals, and the impact of those choices. How can we change these systems to provide ourselves with viable low-emissions ways of living? What collective action will this require?

You will need: a pen or pencil, a record of your flights in the last year, a way of calculating the distance between cities (searching 'calculate flight distance between cities' in your preferred search engine will give you plenty of options), and a calculator. If you prefer to do the calculation part of the exercise on a computer, we've created a spreadsheet that you can download. We wanted to make physical space for it so that you can do it by hand if you want, and so that you will have a tangible record.

Calculation:

Calculating the fossil fuel emissions of the airplane travel of an individual is complicated. It depends on many factors: the aircraft model, length of the trip, seating configuration of the plane, etc. Shorter flights have higher emissions/mile ratios because a lot of fuel is burned at take-off and landing. Many carbon calculators also include a multiplier accounting for the fact that greenhouse gases released at high altitude have a magnified effect on global warming. Our method, which is based on the air travel section of Berkeley's Cool Climate Calculator [1] aims to be a compromise between accuracy and simplicity, and the resulting number should be treated as a ballpark figure for your year's fossil fuel emissions

[1] https://coolclimate.berkeley.edu/calculator; see the methodology for details.

due to flying, and not an exact number.

We've divided the process into three steps: brain dump, flight distances, and carbon emissions. To give you an idea of what the calculation should look like, we've included an example at the end of the exercise.

1. Brain dump: Write down all the flights you have taken in the past year. If your flight was not direct, write each leg of the trip separately: for a flight from Chicago to Montreal with a stopover in Toronto, write Chicago-Toronto and Toronto-Montreal.

2. Flight distances: Look up the distance of each flight online. List it in the appropriate table for short, medium, long, or extended flights.

3. Computing emissions: For each category, add all the kilometers/miles for that category and note it in table 3a or 3b. Multiply this number by the gCO_2 conversion factor provided in the third column and write down the result in the fourth column. Add all these numbers up. This number is in grams so it should be large. Divide it by 1 million to rewrite it in tonnes.

1. Brain Dump

2. Flight Distances

Short flights: $<$ 400 miles or 650 km

Trip	Distance
Total distance	

Medium flights: 400 - 1500 miles or 650 - 2400 km

Trip	Distance
Total distance	

Long flights: 1500 - 3000 miles or 2400 - 4800 km

Trip	Distance
Total distance	

Extended flights: > 3000 miles or 4800 km

Trip	Distance
Total distance	

3a. Calculation: Metric Units

Type	Total distance (km)	gCO_2 per km	Subtotal
Short flights		320	
Medium flights		254	
Long flights		224	
Extended flights		214	
Total gCO_2	—	—	
Tonnes CO_2	(gCO_2/1,000,000)	—	

3b. Calculation: Imperial Units

Type	Total distance (miles)	gCO_2 per mile	Subtotal
Short flights		508	
Medium flights		408	
Long flights		362	
Extended flights		344	
Total gCO_2	—	—	
Tonnes CO_2	(gCO_2/1,000,000)	—	

Example calculation:

1. Brain dump.

Oakland -> Chicago

NYC -> Chicago

Chicago -> Toronto & back

Chicago -> Paris & back.

Chicago -> Boston & back.

Chicago -> Toronto & back

Toronto -> Halifax, NS

Chicago -> Toronto & back

Chicago -> Montréal

Toronto -> Chicago

2. Flight Distances.

There are no short flights in this example.

Medium flights: 400 - 1500 miles or 650 - 2400 km

Trip	Distance
Chicago → Toronto	435 miles
Chicago → Toronto	435
Chicago → Toronto	435
Toronto → Chicago	435
Toronto → Chicago	435
Toronto → Chicago	435
Toronto → Chicago	435
NYC → Chicago	796
Boston → Chicago	950
Chicago → Boston	950
Toronto → Halifax	787
Chicago → Montreal	750
Total distance	7278 miles

Long flights: 1500 - 3000 miles or 2400 - 4800 km

Trip	Distance
Oakland → Chicago	2125 miles
Total distance	2125 miles

Extended flights: > 3000 miles or 4800 km

Trip	Distance
Chicago → Paris	4152 miles
Paris → Chicago	4152
Total distance	8304 miles

3b. Calculation: Imperial Units

Type	Total distance (miles)	gCO_2 per mile	Subtotal
Short flights	0	508	0
Medium flights	7278	408	2969424
Long flights	2125	362	769250
Extended flights	8304	344	2856576
Total gCO_2	—	—	6595250
Tonnes CO_2	(gCO_2/1,000,000)	—	**6.6**

Reflection:

Here is some data to put your number in context. The yearly per capita CO_2 emissions (not just from flying) of some of the countries mentioned in this zine are: Brazil (2.4 tonnes), France (5), Germany (9.1), India (1.9), Kenya (0.4), and USA (16.1), with a global average of 5 [2]. Of the 16.1 tons emitted by "the average person" in the USA, 1.65 come from air travel, with the rest coming from other forms of transportation, food, goods and services, heating, cooling, electricity, construction, and so forth, according to the Berkeley Cool Climate Calculator. We suggest checking it out if you are interested in further details about how fossil-fuel intensive different parts of your life are, and how your emissions compare to the national average.

Prompts for reflection:

- What is your initial reaction to this number?
- What role does travel play in your life? How does it affect your body, your moods, your research, your relationships, etc?
- Imagine flying 25% less, or 50% less. Which trips would you give up? What would be the effect of those decisions?
- Imagine professional practices that rely less on flying. What are they? How can you move towards them?
- Imagine changes in your academic institution that could address the climate crisis, such as disinvesting from the fossil fuel industry. How can you create them?

We are grateful to Jeff Johnston, Gabriel Lefebvre-Ropars, and Megan Roda for feedback on earlier versions of this exercise.

[2] https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/9d09ccd1-e0dd-11e9-9c4e-01aa75ed71a1/language-en

Plume (2013 – ongoing)

Eastern Meadowlarks, 2016
Red-headed Woodpeckers, 2016
Ten Horned Larks, 2016

Carl Fuldner and Shane DuBay

For their ongoing series *Plume*, Carl Fuldner and Shane DuBay use bird specimens to visualize changes in air pollution over the last century. This image archive functions as a usable inventory of industrial soot emissions within the Midwest that predates modern systems of air quality monitoring. Bird specimens collected decades apart offer a testimony to efforts of environmental advocates to improve the urban landscape.

Carl Fuldner (carl.fuldner@gmail.com) is an art historian and a postdoctoral fellow at The Art Institute of Chicago.

Shane DuBay (dubaysg@gmail.com) is an ecologist and environmental scientist at the University of Michigan.


FIELD MUSEUM 477600 NATURAL HISTORY
Sturnella m. magna
Illinois: Cook Co.
Chicago
10 E. Jackson
K. Dougherty
Coll: ~~S. Chapman~~
Prep. Jason D. Weckstein
Elev. 2 April 2011
FIELD MUSEUM 52719 OF NATURAL HISTORY
ILLINOIS: Will Co
Joliet
H.S.Swarth
May 15,1907


NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
Ill. Kane Co. Bradford (3 mi S.)
(Locality)
SEX: ♂
DATE 19 June 1982 COLLECTOR: M. Rosco
NIU 4232
FIELD COLUMBIAN MUSEUM, CHICAGO, ILL.
No. 13748
LOCALITY Des Plaines River, Cook Co
NAME Melanerpes erythrocephalus


FIELD COLUMBIAN MUSEUM, CHICAGO, ILL.
No 15855 DATE 29 Apr 1904 SEX ♀
LOCALITY Chicago Ill.
NAME Otocoris alp. praticola.
FIELD COLUMBIAN MUSEUM, CHICAGO, ILL.
No 21389 DATE 30 Mch 1906 SEX ♂
LOCALITY Lavergne Ill.
NAME Otocoris alpestris praticola
FIELD COLUMBIAN MUSEUM, CHICAGO, ILL.
No 21388 DATE 30 Mch 1906 SEX ♀
LOCALITY Lavergne. Cook Co. Ills
NAME Otocoris alpestris praticola
A.O.U. No 424
Collection of DR. W. S. STRODE, Lewistown, Ill., U. S. A.
Specie Otocoris a. alpestris ♂
Loc Lewistown Ill. Date Mch 21st 1914
A.O.U. No
COLLECTION OF EDW. E. ARMSTRONG, CHICAGO, ILL.
NO. 2088
DATE
FIELD MUSEUM 70516 OF NATURAL HISTORY
Chionophilus a. praticola ♂
Illinois: Stickney 22 Jan., 1916
1607
Collected for the Field-Columbian Museum
Chicago, Ill. By Geo. F. Breninger
Species Otocoris alp. insularis ♂
Locality San Clemente Island Calif
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1630
Collected for the Field-Columbian Museum
Chicago, Ill. By Geo. F. Breninger
Species Otocoris alp. insularis ♂
Locality San Clemente Island, Calif.
14419
FIELD COLUMBIAN MUSEUM, CHICAGO, ILL.
No 26018 DATE 22 Mar. 1907 SEX ♂
LOCALITY Okanagon B.C.
NAME Otocoris alp. merrilli
No 1511
COLLECTION OF LOUIS B. BISHOP.
Otocoris alpestris merrilli
Okanagan BRIT. COLUMBIA. 26 - 3 - 07
Collection of J. A. Munro
FIELD MUSEUM 70530 OF NATURAL HISTORY
Chionophilus a. merrilli ♂
BC. Okanagan Landing 14 March 1922

The Way Home

Eduardo Leão

As the pandemic hit earlier this year and I found myself stranded in Nashville, Tennessee—neither in Brazil nor back in Illinois—I thought a lot about what home means in times like these. It had taken me a year to feel like Chicago was it for me. It was 2017, the summer after my first year as a grad student at the University of Chicago, and I was coming back from a trip to Europe (where I had met my parents because they hadn't wanted to go through the ordeal of getting a tourist visa to the United States). As the car took the exit from the highway and we entered Hyde Park, I had that feeling of relief and familiarity that you only get when you're heading to your own place. I saw the first apartment building I had lived in and I saw the white and maroon UChicago shuttle buses that in the previous summer had saved me from carrying an AC unit by myself for ten blocks. Those had become the beloved corners of a neighborhood populated with snippets of inconsequential memories.

In his 2013 novel *The Way Out*, Argentine novelist Ricardo Piglia, drawing on his experience teaching in Princeton and Harvard, gives us some insights about life as a South American on a US campus in the 1990s. The protagonist is a keen observer of the secluded life of a college campus, the outside world almost like a rumor, so much unlike the post-grad experience in South America. He takes notice, for instance, of the new generation of boomer academics becoming faculty, the spirit of camaraderie and competition among grad students, and that barely polite ignorance of his colleagues of all things south of the Mexican border.

Beyond this new academic life, now that Chicago is home, I like to think of my hometown of Manaus, Brazil, as home home. And there's still nothing like going back to it every Christmas. Our famous opera house is still there, my parents still live in the same apartment building, and the Negro river still meets the Amazon. That doesn't mean that there isn't a little bit of estrangement as well, though. More than once I have suggested that my friends and I go to a bar where we used to hang out and more than once they have told me that the place has been closed for a couple of years, wearing that benevolent look that says "poor thing, he doesn't know any better."

But there's also something deeper than that. What my friends' condescending looks betray is something I had been fighting hard not to accept: that there is a big gap between my perceived participation in Brazilian social life from afar and actually lived experience in situ. After all, I wasn't there when Jair Bolsonaro was elected president and the country's polarization made sociability almost

impossible; I was in Chicago, sipping tea and furiously scrolling down Twitter. And more recently, I wasn't there when the pandemic hit, hospitals were filled to capacity and the funerary system collapsed; I was in Nashville, attending conferences via Zoom and relatively safe because the university had allowed me to work from home. Even though I'd lived there for twenty-five years, there's a temporality to the city that I just can't get around. The Manaus I have imprinted in my mind is basically its 2016 version.

This feeling of becoming, and also being seen as, a tourist in my own hometown only intensifies as I watch these defining moments take place when I'm thousands of miles away. Last year, fires raged across the Amazon and made international headlines. Even though they happen every year, 2019 was especially serious because much of it was due to our new president's environmental policy (or lack thereof). People slashed and burned huge swaths of land in the hopes that cattle ranching and agribusiness, encouraged by the president, would expand even farther into the rainforest.

Yet, beyond the paralyzing helplessness that events such as these can elicit, being away from the eye of the storm has also had long-term effects on my academic practice. My research focuses on the Apocalypse in contemporary Latin American culture and, despite engaging in ecocriticism through my work, the Amazon hadn't really been part of my corpus. But how could it not be? How can I talk about representations of the end of the world without touching on a region that has everything to lose with the current climate emergency? In a sense, being away from it, becoming a tourist in my own home, was what allowed me to look at it through a new lens. Now, finally incorporating it to my research not only has assuaged this "expat guilt" of mine but has also shown me that there are different ways of participating in public discourse.

And that's where the more social aspect of post-grad studies on a US campus shows the perks that Piglia mentions in his novel. I was lucky enough to end up in a department made up of Latin Americans, Europeans and US Americans where we can share our cultures in a weird heterogeneous bubble that wouldn't really have been possible in other contexts. As the protagonist of *The Way Out* notes, via Robert Croll's translation, "the students here are almost entirely cloistered and move within a closed-off circle, living together—like the survivors of a shipwreck—with their professors. They know that no one in the outside world is particularly interested in literature, that they're the essential curators of a glorious tradition in crisis." It's a bubble suspended in place and time (hopefully six years) that feels very real for those of us living in it, and that, by extension, makes our own native countries feel more real even from afar. At the end of the day, it's what makes it possible for me to embrace this city as a home, to eat rice and beans on Thanksgiving, to dance the cumbia on the 4th of July.

Eduardo Leão (eduardo.rleao@gmail.com) is a PhD candidate at the University of

Chicago, where he studies representations of the end of the world in contemporary Latin American literature. His interests also include world literature, ecocriticism and Amazonian cultures.

"Who are you and what do you want?" Of Home and Exile

Gourav Khullar

Last December, I visited the Canary Islands for work on a telescope. I was expecting a long drive up the mountain. I was not expecting the hit of nostalgia.

Folks go down memory lane via pictures, texts, books, recollection of conversations. For me, it is music. There's this Hindi movie from 2010, Tum Mile, with a soundtrack that is out of this world. I have vivid memories of listening to the songs, especially one gem "Dil Ibaadat" ("Worship of the Heart" in Urdu). In the hills of Banff. The drive from Mumbai to Pune. Santiago. Rural Pennsylvania. Helsinki. Cambridge. At the telescope in the Canary Islands, taking pictures of galaxies.

I was born in Firozepur, a small town in Punjab, India, a few miles from the imaginary line that separated my country from Pakistan. My father was in the Army, duty-bound to a new city every couple of years, and off went the family with him. I'd like to believe that young me believed in no borders, acceptance of multiple cultures, and an international community, but I'd be lying to myself. I was taught by my people—Army kids like me and families like mine—to be as proud of my upper caste Hindu and Indian 'heritage' as possible. I carried that toxic nationalistic version of India within me into my college years, without much critical reflection.

In his exceptional and erudite novel *In the Light of What We Know*, built on the theme of exile, Zia Haider Rahman writes through a character:

> I had a friend at Princeton[...] He had a cute message on his answering machine, delivered in his thick Russian accent: *Who are you and what do you want? Some people spend a lifetime trying to answer these questions. You, however, have thirty seconds* [...] My point is that you could think of the people you meet in your life as questions, there to help you figure out who you are, what you're made of, and what you want. In life, as in our new version of the game, you start off not knowing the answer. It's only when the particles rub against each other that we figure out their properties.

My best friend from college recommended me Rahman's book. He saw flashes of Zafar, the protagonist, in me, via his journey of a self-chosen and often brave exile. I found myself romanticizing Zafar's path. These days, I see proud nomads in my social media feeds, all about the globetrotter lifestyle; the '21-year-old travel-hungry astronomer-in-training' me salutes you. My fearlessness of moving

away from family did allow me to move to Chicago for an astrophysics degree, but I don't want to give it too much credit.

"Where have you lived?" I am overwhelmed by this question. Geographically, it takes me down memory lane to ten Indian cities and six countries across four continents, including my new notional home, the US. My inner critic is yelling at me to stop boasting. But I assure it, and you, the reader, that I am not. Because emotionally, I often wonder—have I ever really lived in these places? Or just sleep-walked through them? I thought my friends did better with the constant move from school to school in the Army, or from degree to degree abroad. To put it mildly, moving makes a mess of me. Airports make me sad. Visa offices make me nervous.

I think it is a nostalgic pain that makes the mess. The pain of leaving a part of you behind in the last place you lived. The pain of finding and building a new community, and then seeing it in the rear view mirror just a few years later. The pain of seeing family only once a year. Of not knowing when you will be able to share chai (tea) with your best friend next. Of forgetting words in Hindi. I find myself comparing this to reopening a barely-healed wound. This cycle—extremely draining—impacts your vision of 'home'.

I have tried to build homes. Many, in fact. Each school I studied in, each country I lived in, I found my people, and forged both personal and professional connections with empathy and trust. I found myself not wanting to leave the place I had just begun to know, whose secrets I had just begun to unravel. It was as if the speakeasy had just opened its doors to me, but alas!—it was time to move on. I miss my college Astronomy Club, my high school band, and my graduate union friends who have moved on.

I study galaxy clusters. A group—community even—of galaxies, fifty to a thousand members, locked in a chaotic and beautiful dance of gravity. I study how they come together and how the community members evolve across cosmic time. In my work, I look for deep-rooted resilient communities (of galaxies); should I be surprised that I seek them wherever I go? Is there something poetic, even intentional, about my choice of fields—or simply a happy coincidence?

Despite this quest to find a home, it would be insincere to not acknowledge the immense privilege I write these words with, as a graduate student with a stable job and a roof over his head during this global pandemic. I write this as someone who had the resources to move to the US, and despite that, was able to detach from and start unlearning the nationalist and isolationist worldviews in both my "homes". My community here in Chicago keeps me grounded, and continues to help me build my home here.

Often though, that song comes on Spotify, and takes me back to that car, somewhere between Mumbai and Pune.

Gourav Khullar (gkhullar04@gmail.com) is an astrophysicist at The University of Chicago, and studies how galaxies form and transform in the Universe *we live in. Currently, he is trying to figure out how to make an impact in* this *world, along with getting through the first few pages of* Dune.

How far is "Away"?

Camille Readman Prud'homme

Some people come to fall with the impulse to focus on their work, some reach January with the drive to exercise outdoors and I arrive at spring with the urge to escape. As the daylight extends, people become cheerful and I become tired; as the consensual joy around the end of the snow and the rebirth of nature gains place, what strikes me is not this expected cheerfulness, but a certain repulsion for the conformity of feelings. For this reason, I somehow need to be apart, as if distance could secure a difference, or as if traveling could display the gaps that exist between an individual and a society, as if for once, rather than blending in, the movement could allow travelers to face their singularity. Over the springs (and over the urges to leave), I realized that what led me to travel was the desire to encounter new ways of living, but also the possibility of becoming a stranger. Away, I became someone whose life had not been witnessed – I became "pastless" – but I also was no longer surrounded by a community to which I was expected to "belong".

As a French speaker in North America, and moreover, as literature student, I thought for quite some time that in order to maintain coherence with my objects of study, I had to remain within the land of my language: I had to stay in Quebec. Although my master's thesis conveyed the work of French and American authors, an important part of my corpus was Quebecois. For reasons of availability (as the literary production does not spread so much outside its territory), but also to defend a certain idea of "resistance" (as staying was a way to participate in a culture that, towards North America and France, is minoritarian), it appeared not only normal but necessary to pursue my studies there. Yet as I approached my doctoral studies, my opinion started to change. In the idea of going away, I saw the possibility of reaching a new standpoint, where by contrast and by distance, characteristics of Quebec's contemporary literature could be alternatively revealed. I also saw in being abroad the chance to find a distance that would allow me to forget my disjunction.

During my bachelor's and master's degree, I loved to live at a walking distance from my university, but always appreciated being farther from the part-time jobs I had. In some neighborhoods I was a waitress, but in mine I was a student. I was someone who read and wrote, and as such I was given back the head I somehow lost at work. Even though I have reached a point where I need to go farther to be away, I am frequently surprised to notice how short a movement can be and still provide the feeling of being displaced. It seems that "elsewhere" begins where we start losing our name. It begins where the people we see are people

we do not know of. But what possibility does it offer? Detachment? Lightness (a certain kind of freedom)? Disorientation (as new codes prevail)? The more I think about it, the more I tend to believe that the movement we enact as we move to get to the different places in our lives (home, school, work, gathering places) somehow allows us to embrace movement in our own identities. As if being "unrevealed" or "partly revealed" could enable us not to be captive of the ways others depict us, or could, by the multiplication of the portraits that are made of us, balance their importance.

If the possibility of a close "away" exists, it seems that the more common conception of being "away" has to do with the idea of exoticism. As if, more than relying on perceptual impulses, becoming a stranger could be testified and measured by an objective distance. In order to be clearly "away", it appears that we somehow have to cross borders and be immersed in foreign languages: as if we had to undertake a significant travel so the objective situation would correspond to the feeling. Consequently, even if getting "away" can occur by walking – just as "elsewhere" can be as close as the parallel street –, it does not seem to be the first mode of transport that comes to mind when elaborating on the idea of getting away. Planes, which set a new scale of distance (as a few minutes of flight equals a few hours of walking), then appear to be the vehicle of escape.

If airplanes changed the perspective of traveling – as they allowed individuals to go to places that were previously almost inaccessible, but also enabled trips to be shorter –, how did they affect the feeling of displacement? As we gain time with this convenience, what do we lose in the meantime? Surely, we lose a feeling of innocence (as it is hard not be aware of the environmental damage flying creates), but we also lose something intangible yet crucial: the measure of distance. If walking, cycling or even driving make transportation into a physical experience – as the repetition of steps, the rotations of pedals or even the visual awareness cause us some fatigue – how do we experience a flight? Even though we tend to be tired after it, it seems like each flight is somehow reduced to the sole passage of the hours. Don't we say: "it's a four-hour flight", "it's a twelve-hour flight", as if it was not really an experience, but a length (which in a mysterious way, provided an ellipse). Between take-off and landing, things melt in a waiting time punctuated by attempts to sleep, movies watched a bit carelessly, beverage services, food service (a high point), observation of the clouds and of the surrounding people.

If flying provides a distance significant enough to be away, it does not accomplish the experience of it. The kilometers wandered testify to one's displacement, but do not necessarily and instantly create the feeling of change of scene. But it seems that we often forget that this correspondence is not automatic. Inversely, don't we often presume that the people staying in their homeland feel familiar to it, as if the lasting relation to a place incidentally resulted in a closeness?

In that manner, the prospect of going abroad for a PhD somehow is an attempt to lessen the hold of the presumption of concordance (or transform it into a presumption of otherness). Creating an objective distance that could legitimate the feeling of distance therefore becomes a strategy, as moving sets new parameters that allow and recognize the experience of inadequation. In that way, if staying was an attempt to belong and to experience the constraints that somehow bond the inhabitants of a same place, the idea of going away, driven by the urge not to be contained, is an attempt to create a setting where the experience of unbelonging is acceptable. As if taking a plane could in a very odd way make perceptible for others what was felt but unsuspected. I just wish we could see the alterity on a smaller scale: I just wish we could see the "awayness" more easily.

Camille Readman Prud'homme (camille.readman.prudhomme@gmail.com) completed a master's degree in creative writing. Her collection of poetry entitled Pendant se taire *will be published in 2021 by L'Oie de Cravan.*

passages

Woo Chan Lee

"I was washing off the dirts of the Old World that was dead, as in my country people did before they set out on a Buddhist pilgrimage. Now I had washed everything. Everything but the inside.

If I could, I would have washed that as thoroughly, I suppose, and left a shell."

Younghill Kang, *East Goes West: The Making of an Oriental Yankee* (1937)

when i was younger, i had this image, that flight was an illusion: once u get on the airplane, and encase yrself in its metal hull, the world around u disappears, the earth the sky the buildings fold in on each other and vanish with a dry snap. then, with a whoosh the gallery of American life swoops in. over the next twelve hours the new world heals in over the cracked ruins of the old. looking back, i'm struck by the counter-cosmopolitan argument of the child vision: that there is not space enough in a person's life for all the disparate worlds to coexist, that travel by flight is an annihilation event.

* * *

we all know that, in natural conditions, the soul travels lighter and faster than the body. but i don't know if we fully appreciate the soul's own spatial and temporal limitations. alongside the body, the soul has evolved to the pace of a walk, a crawl, a saunter, a leap, a dashing clamber. we know it can comfortably keep pace with a bicycle, a horse, a car respecting the speed limit on a local road, a ship on water. but when the body travels at above a certain speed, the soul cannot keep up. it gets left behind. a tenacious thread stretches between soul and body like an invisible rubber band. we are told by experts that the body adjusts one timezone a day, according to which we may surmise that the soul traverses this thread at between 700-1000 miles a day depending on longitude, at about 30 to 40 miles an hour, in a desperate nonstop hurtle towards the body. what a sad, existential steeplechase. the ocean floor is littered with battered bits and pieces of traveling souls. in time, they will join ocean currents and rise to the surface, where they will form shimmering islands. they float and flutter mutely, embrittled by the harsh pacific sun. they stare up at glinting aircraft that cut the sky, souls miles behind in tow.

* * *

the mind travels even slower, slower than a barge, slower even than the body's

traversal of the pacific floor. at the ambitious pace of 15 miles a day (that's five hours of walking at an andante pace EVERY DAY), allowing two days off per week for rest and recovery, and adding a few months' leeway for charting a course that avoids the highest peaks and deepest trenches, that would take a little over two years. but the travel of the mind takes place over a lifetime. the body marches steadily onward, plants its feet in foreign soil: the mind inches forward, years behind the body. in many instances the mind does not complete the course set out by the body. the tongue, though willing, never fully absorbs the foreign twists and turns of a new language, and the imagination remains mired in the textures and scents of the old land.

how to bypass the backwards, oriental inertia? the following solution is adapted from the postwar comprador handbook for the efficient assembly of flexible transnational knowledge workers aka international students. from the formative years of childhood, the mind is immersed in the foreign linguistic and cultural matrix, simulating a state of perpetual travel. if lucky, this method is combined with a period of well-timed "study abroad" during adolescence, preferably leading up to as well as during the college years. by this time the mind is either fried or undertaking a nonstop breakneck sprint across the pacific. no longer the existential dawdling of homesick misfits—engrish no more! only the sleek aerodynamic curvatures of an impossible fluency attained by your early or mid twenties, at which point you should have earned entry into the academy or equivalent imperial anglophone profession, and crossed the final threshold towards pure, unfettered planetarity.

but of course you haven't. the fact of the matter is, u continually wake up to find yourself sluggish in a foreign land, a foreign landscape, playing white professor drag in a language that u speak so smoothly it surprises u sometimes. the classroom, the seminar, the conference is all a vessel for this unending drawn out travel of the world. on good days it can feel like tourism, oh wow look at all these cool experiences i'm getting to have! on bad days u r struck with the knowledge of your complicity in your own exile and alienation. i've heard people in the humanities say, "i want to write a dissertation that my parents and family can understand!" phrased in anti-intellectual reaction to the esoteric language of sharp texts, there is nonetheless a wish for genuine communication there, a wish that i find admirable and out of reach. for many travelers the project is not possible, it is not possible to devise a dissertation that is capable of traversing the distance between your star-spangled discourse and the ears of your parents, or really whoever has not also been fitted with your international modifications.

the final indication of the successful academic passage of the mind is when it begins to dream in english. then, you may write and deliver papers in the language of your dreams, while foreign ghosts haunt mutely at the borders.

* * *

in the future, there will be no soul-bending travel for the sake of profit or survival,

no laborious lifelong transpacific traversal of the mind, no bed of procrustes for misshapen tongues. there will be no technologically-mediated disappearing act of former homes and people. there will be, instead, lightly overlapping worlds, brought together by the slow and gentle tread of feet, of the rolling wheels of bicycles and fusion-powered wheelchairs, of horse-drawn carriages and slow- moving electric automobiles. a student rides an ox to a conference, where they meet others who have spent months together on a sailing ship. they sit at circular table exchanging papers in various languages they can, with considerable effort, appreciate, but which they will never fully understand.

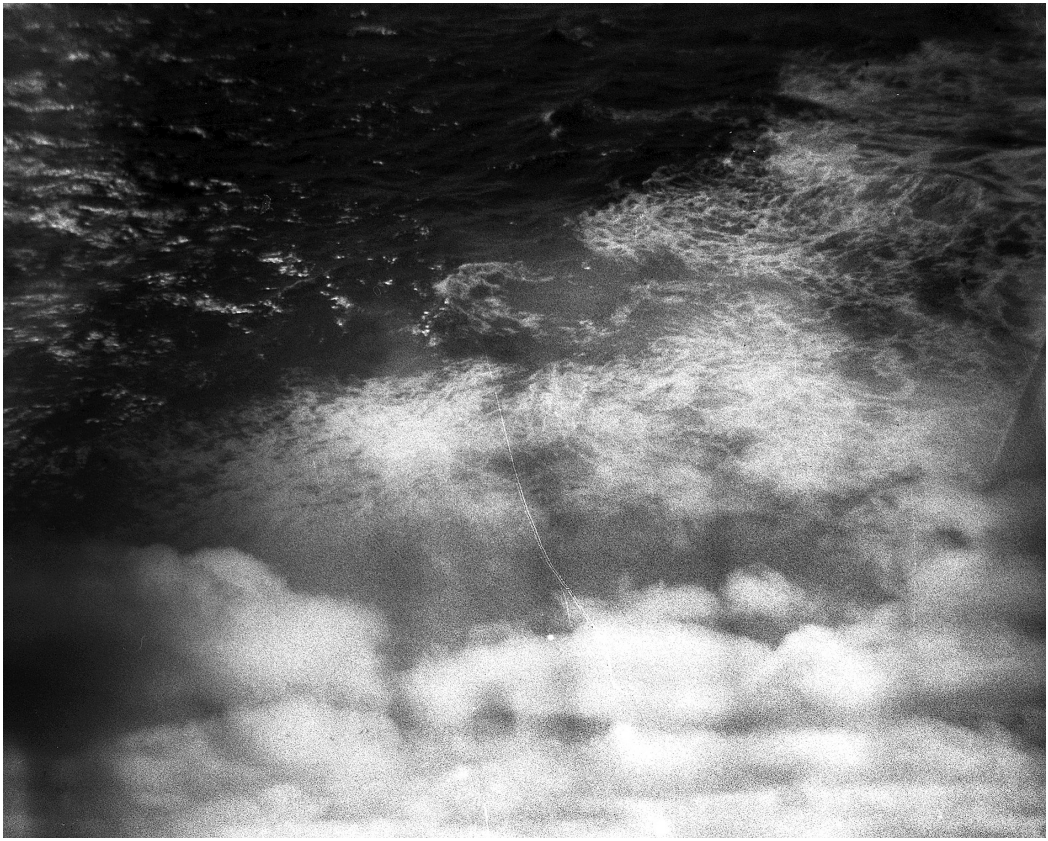
Woo Chan Lee aka Chaz (seaface@gmail.com) is a nth year grad student, organizer, writer, and musician. He currently resides in Central New York where he is working on a scifi novel and actually finishing his dissertation.

Depuis le rivage

Dominique Rivard

Depuis le rivage (From the shore) is an analog photographic project made during walks near the seashore. Juxtapositions of parts of a landscape were made directly on the camera film with the use of a cache system. To create an image, two photographs were taken: one for the upper part of the image, then one for the lower part. The result of these experimentations constitutes surrealist visual poems echoing to a motion through an imaginary landscape.

Dominique Rivard (rivard.dominique@gmail.com) (born in Brossard, Québec, Canada) is a visual artist and author whose practice bears witness to poetic self-fiction narration from the experience of displacement. In last years, she has lived between the island of Montréal and several cities of Québec North Shore (Natashquan, Baie-Comeau, Fermont, Anticosti Island). She is presently a Master's Candidate at the Glasgow School of Art (Scotland, United Kingdom).



night as a melted sea on the clouds

spruce trees sprouted from among the waves

bodies of water wandered between lakes and puddles

On Being a Domestic Goddess

Ella Wilhelm

I often wonder whether, as a grad student, I spend more time longingly staring out my front windows than I do actually working. Every day, I sit at my desk in front of three windows that look out onto 52nd Street in Hyde Park, Chicago—I gaze across at the postal depot and the dubious sex shop advertising a perpetual "Vibe Sale"/"50% off sale," and struggle to put words on a page. As the seasons change, the light and foliage change, the animals, plants, and people change their habits; I adjust my hours of writing accordingly, seeking always the best light and most peaceful hours. Behind the desk is the rest of my apartment, also a mindfully cultivated space. When not looking out the window, I procrastinate by cleaning and decorating my apartment, by cooking and baking, brewing kombucha, playing with my cat, and tending to my plants. Everything in and around my workspace is orchestrated to conform to an aesthetic sensibility of DIY comfort, something my roommate refers to jokingly as my "cottagecore" lifestyle.

This is a romantic image of my own working and living environment, which is also full of disturbances, distractions, and discomforts. But I, like many other grad students living similar, hyper-aesthetic work-from-home lives, remain attached to the idea of domesticity as a support for my work, and pour endless time and energy into cultivating it. Where does this sensibility come from? Why is my academic work so tied to the aesthetic of my home?

One influence for me is the long tradition of thought that values private, interior space as an extension and mirror of the self. Since at least the 19th century in Europe and North America, the private home has been construed as one of the paradigmatic sites of the imaginative production of bourgeois identity. I have fantasized to no end about Walter Benjamin's very suggestive writing on the 19th century Parisian bourgeois intérieur. In Benjamin's rendering of this new conception of private space, the home is elevated from its status as a mere living space, becoming a self-enclosed universe, a casing for and a reflection of bourgeois identity. In its most idealized form, the desk at the window at which I write is a function of the all-encompassing bourgeois domestic interior; it is an island of quiet, illusorily separate from the material struggles of life under capitalism, where I have the privilege to reflect on the deeper questions of life as the goddess of my domesticated world-in-miniature.

The desk at the window still remains one of the many abstract sites of productivity in contemporary globalized, financialized academia: we all have our little

desk islands, and travel from island to island as we attend conferences or move from city to city in search of adequately paid employment. But while the fantasy of the home as a subjective universe containing our whole intellectual life persists, the increasing precarity of academic labor erodes its material foundations. The specific characteristics of the home workspace fade into the background, and all I am left with is the abstract image of a desk in front of a window, a symbol of the life of the mind with no proper place, no room of its own.

The precarity of academic labor haunts me, makes me wonder how long I have left in this place and whether I should really invest in making new friends or getting to know people outside the academy while I live here. The desire to "nest," and to continue to aestheticize my own desk and window, is a pathological melancholic resistance to the increasing precarity of academic labor in the 21st century: it is an attempt to be bourgeois. I resist the horizon of loss that awaits me after I get my doctorate; I try to stave it off by attending to my home, optimizing my workspace, dwelling on this view and its particularities. Although I've managed to reconstruct a space of relative comfort and stability for myself here in Chicago, I still mourn the places I've had to leave—I did not want to leave them. I insist on the specificity of my current Hyde Park view and apartment because I know that the image of a desk at a window, shorn of details, is not real and does not represent the life I want to live.

Nonetheless, staring longingly out my window or watering my houseplants isn't politics—it just puts the problem on display. A private, bourgeois life of letters is already a life that knows no public sphere or community, that knows no collective empowerment. It is simply melancholic. It is a life and a way of working that, for all its emphasis on sensory embodiment, fetishizes intellectual labor rather than interrogating its material conditions and fighting to better them.

Looking out the window and reflecting on these problems reminds me that despite the pandemic, I do not only live inside and for myself. I am a neighbor and a friend to the people around me, not just a passive observer or theorizer of what's happening on the street. Apart from my work, I live through activism and connection with others. But the viability of community connection and a life outside or beside academic work also requires us to organize as workers within academia, to collectively demand better wages and benefits, longer contracts, more job security, and overall fairer labor practices. More than that, we must hold our institutions accountable for the violence they perpetrate in the communities around them through policing and real estate speculation. The problem is not the desk, or the window, or even the apartment: it is the sacrifice of everything else for the maintenance of an idealized space of intellectual productivity. The impulse to make a home is not a wrong one, but it is imperative that we think beyond our own experiences, the walls of our own homes, and beyond the parameters set for us by our institutions.

Ella Wilhelm (ellawilhelm1@gmail.com) is a student of German literature at the University of Chicago. If that fails, she will pivot to forestry.

Some Reflections on Academic Mobilities & the Climate Crisis

Riley Linebaugh

'history' was the word the English used for the record of every time a white man encountered something he had never seen and promptly claimed it as his own, renaming it for good measure. – Namwali Serpell, 2019

In March 2019, I boarded a fully funded short haul flight from Frankfurt to London (**88.8kg CO_2**) en route to Oxford for a two-day graduate student workshop, *European History Across Boundaries*. I arrived via Heathrow and as a US-passport holder I joined the non-EU line to wait my turn for questioning. What is the purpose of your stay? When do you plan to leave the UK? I had on hand a folder containing bank statements, notarized documents confirming my status as a PhD student, the invitation to the workshop, and tickets related to my itinerary. I am a white, cis female from the USA with German university affiliation. I enjoy so much global mobility and geographic privilege that the slightest challenge to that, via customs questioning, sends me into anxious over-preparation. The agent stamped my passport and I entered the UK.

I arrived a day early to meet another PhD student whose work also deals with European colonialism. We had met the year before at another workshop in Italy (to which I flew to and from Entebbe on a fully funded ticket–**902kg CO_2**). In our free afternoon, we toured the Pitt Rivers museum, which displays the University of Oxford's anthropological collection. In this case, 'anthropological collection' is the Anglo euphemism for objects obtained in colonial encounters under various degrees of duress. We talked about the museum's coloniality over ale in one of Oxford's student pubs, on the campus designed originally to segregate townspeople and students to maintain difference between the common and elite. The next day I received comments on my paper about how British colonial governments evacuated archival documents from colonies on the brink of independence into secret storage in London. The workshop consisted of junior scholars from UK/European/US-American academic institutions. There was no acknowledgement of either our geographic composition or of our whiteness; nor was there recognition of how the spaces we inhabited and our practices within them were implicated in our workshop's theme.

After the workshop, I got on another plane to Nairobi (**366.3kg CO_2**). In contrast to my over preparation for UK-customs, I had failed to realize I needed a certain amount of US dollars or British pounds in cash to pay for my visa

to enter Kenya. With neither in my wallet, I appealed to a French traveler, promising instantaneous reimbursement via electronic banking. It wasn't until later, when my panic receded and my brain resumed, that I realized that I hadn't even bothered to double check the procedure for entering; that on some decisive subconscious level I felt a different kind of entitlement to enter Kenya than I did the UK. I spent several months in Nairobi conducting research at the national archives. I stayed at a guest house run by a research institute and shared lodging with other visiting scholars, largely white and European. Though our conversations often raised questions of privilege, segregation, and the geopolitical economy of knowledge, the fact remained that as we worked on our various research projects we retired at the end of day into comforts paid for by European funds fully aware of the divide between academic authorship on Africa and academic authorship by Africans.

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It is no surprise...that foreigners can write the history of Kenya sitting back in their own countries using Kenya's acquired records in their institutions while the indigenous Kenya African can hardly write about his country since he is devoid of all research materials. – Paul Maina, 1978

In June 2019, I boarded a plane in Nairobi bound for London (**366.3kg CO_2**) paid for by another academic grant. At this stage in the mess of Brexit, I no longer had to wait in the non-EU line but could proceed directly to a machine that read my passport and automatically granted me entrance to the UK. Travelers from Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the USA and Japan could newly join those from the European Economic Area in easy entrance. This change exacerbated the visibility of the UK's racialized border regime. Britain's national archives hold the most important documents for my research, those which describe how and why archives were discretely evacuated from 37 countries before they gained independence from British rule. This removal process impacted nearly one fifth of the globe. They comprise one form of colonial extraction. Many of Britain's museums, universities, and other cultural institutions hold other looted objects: the Benin bronzes, the Koh-i-Noor diamond, and the Parthenon marbles are amongst the most notorious examples. The dislocation of these objects not only removes meaningful context and divorces them from their original communities, it also reifies asymmetrical geographies of academic knowledge production. Their location positions Britain and other former colonial powers as destinations for scholars. They facilitate ease of access for people based in those areas, they generate research, attention, and events in the areas in which they sit. They are symbolic of the unequal consolidation of wealth and resources resulting from colonialism. Their location stands in stark contrast to the restrictions on mobility that European states enforce onto peoples from other lands, many of which were

former colonies. Holding onto these objects of research, such as archives and artefacts, while restricting access by scholars from the global South, privileges European interpretative power, perpetuating their authority to define the 'other'.

European and by extension Anglo-American knowledge production was/is intricately entangled with imperial domination. Race science, or eugenics, was instrumental in dressing up the fiction of white supremacy as fact. Eugenics is the basis for modern-day genetics. Psychology was used as a diagnostic tool to explain the "madness" of anticolonial resistance. Geography legitimated the borders erected to make clear territorial claims. Economic philosophers justified expropriation of peoples from their lands without compensation based on what constituted rational claims to private property. These epistemologies led to certain kinds of actions and structures such as enslavement, corporal punishment, limiting freedom of movement, wage dependency, and racialized exclusions in academic structures. However, scholarship that provides alternative ways of thinking and modes of acting has always emanated from outside the Euro-imperial worldview.

I ended my research trip in London at the George Padmore Institute, which houses archival collections that document the black diaspora of Caribbean, African and Asian descent in Britain and Europe. The institute hosts education activities that amplify the histories of those who are typically excluded from school curricula and that link to a past formed by those who resisted Euro-imperialism. The institute is strengthened by networks that span the globe, from the Caribbean to northern Europe. The founder of the institute, John La Rose, was born in colonial Trinidad and was politicized through the reading of banned literature and participating in the movement for independence. His own mobilities of the 1950s were motivated by the international development of socialism. La Rose moved to Britain the very same year the UK started to extract archives from its empire. In contrast to the suppression of historical evidence related to colonial exploitation, La Rose helped start a Britain-based forum for Caribbean intellectuals and started a publishing company that re-printed works by Caribbean and other authors from the global South lest they be forgotten. His life's work was committed to amplifying the work and ideas of those around the globe who were intent on imagining and enacting alternatives to the Euro-imperial world view behind colonialism and global capitalism, which have created the climate crisis.

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Whiteness is the ownership of the earth forever and ever. Amen. – W.E.B. DuBois, 1920

I returned to Germany (**88.8kg CO_2**) in the fall and shortly after attended the African Studies Association conference in Boston (**776kg CO_2**) to present some of my research. The conference was the first time in my 8 years in higher

education that I was surrounded by such a magnitude of Black scholars. On a round table on decolonizing African studies, I listened to psychology professor Glenn Adams describe how he teaches his largely white students at the University of Kansas about epistemological violence. This focus on epistemology redirects the scholarly tendency to address the question "What is my research about?" to "What is the function of this research? What does it do?" This form of examination is especially crucial regarding the climate crisis, global capital, and coloniality.

The discussion on the climate crisis within the international community (i.e. the UN) describes "human-induced climate change" and implies that it is a problem "for which we are all equally responsible." This view, through universalizing rhetoric, conceals the disproportionate role played by the global North in generating CO_2 emissions and the unequal burden carried by the global South weathering climate emergencies. Consequently, the discourse forecloses debate on how certain governments/institutions/companies should shoulder more responsibility in CO_2 reduction. Instead, as scholar Vishwas Satgar highlights, the international-institutional discourse on the environment can very often lead to blaming the most populous countries and "darker nations" for the crisis.

The question of academic air travel must be answered taking into consideration global inequities and how they are perpetuated by academic institutions. A universal suggestion to restrict scholarly mobility risks further alienation of scholars from the global South from the resources consolidated in the North and performs the work of racist border regimes. Institutions and individuals in North American and European higher education contexts face a greater responsibility of epistemological and behavioral transformation to combat the climate crisis. How can our knowledge-work sustain life? This reflection on the cost and value of my academic travels reveals how academic institutions reproduce elite structures by default, for example, through access to "networks" and funding. The CO_2 cost of my academic travel is inextricably linked to the bigger costs associated with forms of global extraction. How can reshaping academic mobility service a degrowth in CO_2 expenditure and reparative redistribution in both a material and interpretative sense?

There are practical steps that are within reach of graduate students: Demand/seek funding for lower carbon transport (i.e. trains). Demand the use of video technologies wherever possible. Diversify citations to increase the intellectual mobility of scholars from around the globe. Collaborate with other junior scholars from the global South by digitally sharing research materials. Support open access publications and open source research tools. Familiarize yourself with the ways in which your discipline is uniquely entangled in the climate crisis. Prioritize global equity measures as you grow into your career. Refuse to see your scientific work as separate from the material realities around you. Listen to those who have been struggling against ecological devastation for centuries, very often

those dispossessed by settler colonial projects. These suggestions are at odds with academic environments that produce individualism and precarity through competition and scarcity. Regardless of discipline, transforming our academic environments is essential to climate justice. Examining academic air travel is a useful way to map out individual and institutional carbon impact on a global scale. However, alone, it is not a reliable metric for climate damage. What aims is that mobility serving? John La Rose's journey from Trinidad to Britain had a similar carbon cost as the flight carrying colonial archives from the Caribbean to London. One journey resulted in decades of international anti-racist activism and the other in decades of suppressing documentary evidence of colonial exploitation.

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Atelier d'écologie politique francilien: An interview with André Estevez-Torres

The Île-de-France political ecology workshop (Atelier d'écologie politique francilien) brings together members of higher education and research institutions in all disciplines, who wish to participate in building a scientific community centered around questions of ecology and climate change in the Paris area.

The workshop's goal is to weave together knowledge from scattered academic traditions and to reflect on how to share it with society at large. We wish to work beyond academia on ways to radically change the current socio-economic structures.

Our initiatives include a public-facing seminar, publication of political ecology texts, and calling upon academics to reflect on the position of researchers in the current environmental context.

In short, the workshop's aims include but are not limited to: building long-lasting bridges between various disciplines in order to tackle the complexity of the problem, changing our research practices, and establishing a dialogue with the public.

Translated from https://ecopolien.hypotheses.org/

André Estevez-Torres (Andre.Estevez-Torres@upmc.fr) is a senior researcher of chemistry and physics at Sorbonne University and CNRS and a member of the Île-de-France political ecology workshop.

Can you define political ecology?

I think that there are two definitions. One corresponds to the academic discipline that takes as a working hypothesis that we cannot understand environmental change (for example the degradation of agricultural land, or forest) just from a biophysical point of view, but that we also need politics and relations of power to understand environmental transformations. The second one refers to an ideology, in the same way that marxism or capitalism are ideologies, that mainly says that the environmental impact of our society needs to be treated politically. This ideology challenges the notion of progress—which marxism or capitalism do not do—and basically says that human political issues will be greatly influenced by the environmental impact of our civilizations.

How was this group born? What movements or schools of thought do you see as the historical basis or inspiration?

Since the fall of 2018, there has been an increasing awareness in many countries about the dramatic climatic and environmental challenges that we face. Greta Thunberg was an icon of this movement in the western world. In France, a key moment was the resignation of Nicolas Hulot—a national icon, we could say—as ministry of Ecology, and the 'gilets jaunes' demonstrations, that crystallized the great difficulty to make a synthesis between ecological and social urgencies. In France, this awareness spread to the academic world, principally with the creation of two groups through the publication of two manifests in the spring of 2019. One of these groups is Labos1point5—referring to the 1.5C report of the Intergovernmental panel on climate change (IPCC)–that seeks to put research practices in agreement with the constraints of the Paris agreement. The second one, is the Atelier d'écologie politique de Toulouse (Atecopol), who has a more political, and we could say, more radical approach, of challenging research and social practices in the light of the dramatic climatic and environmental challenges, and was founded around Jean-Michel Hupé, a former neuroscientist. Our Atelier d'écologie politique francilien (Écopolien), was born a little later, in the fall of 2019, in the greater Paris area, as an offspring of the Toulouse group. Both groups seek to bring together academics of all disciplines that want to act in reaction to this challenge. On one hand, to think from an 'indisciplinary' approach about this challenge and, on the other, to convey to the general public a political ecology view of this problem. As far as I know, the Toulouse group is quite influenced by the degrowth movement, in particular through the Barcelona school, of which one of the current representatives is Giorgios Kallis. We are also influenced by Philippe Descola, a French environmental anthropologist. In any case, many of us are just discovering this 'field' and we are reading and discovering the main schools of thought, such as Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen, for instance. Currently, many other cities of France are setting up their 'Ateliers d'écologie politique', we call them the 'Écopols'.

Do you receive any funding for the Atelier's efforts?

Yes, both in Toulouse and in the Paris region it was important to get a bit of institutional funding, principally because it provides a professional legitimacy to our work. We have been funded by regional bodies that were, as far as I know, very interested in our approach.

Do you feel generally supported in this work by your institution and/or has it been challenging to do it alongside your other academic work?

The French system still provides a great deal of academic freedom, principally due to the early-career tenured positions (that are, unfortunately, disappearing to embrace the American system of fierce competition). For this reason, it is relatively easy for tenured scholars to make an academic shift like this one without worrying too much about what the institutions—that are slow—think about

it. However, we will need more and more institutional support if we want these kinds of movements to not stay purely marginal. I would say that our institutions have been reasonably supportive, or at least not reluctant.

You talk in the Écopolien manifesto about the pressure to maintain a 'neutral' discourse in academia about climate change related research. What does that mean and do you have a specific example of how this has played out for you or other members of the Atelier?

Yes, academic neutrality about environmental issues is a rising subject of debate in France, with a number of Op-Eds being published in national newspapers. To me, this neutrality means that, in the public debate, scientists should restrict themselves to conveying and explaining the scientific facts, without taking a political stance. I am totally against this point of view. I think, of course, that scientists should be very careful about reducing biases to a minimum when they perform their research. However, I also think that they should actively contribute to the political life of the *polis*, in particular concerning the daunting environmental challenge. I don't have a specific example, but from a political ecology perspective we can say that there is no neutrality, in particular technological neutrality. The technologies that our society develops and the research topics that we undertake are all but neutral, and they are very much influenced by the dominant neoliberal ideology.

An idea that features prominently in the manifesto is the interaction with the general public and cooperation with popular movements. What has this looked like in practice or how do you envision it looking?

We organized in February our first conference/debate with the general public. The theme was "Faced with ecological disaster, does current political action measure up to scientific findings?" Our wish is to bring specialists from both the social and natural sciences to these debates, as we share the principle, already exposed by Wallerstein, that to understand the great challenges of our time we need to overcome disciplinary barriers. We try our best to hold these conferences outside campuses, so that we reach a non-academic public. In addition, we also plan to make these conferences in the greater Paris area, and not only in the city center of Paris. However, the covid-19 outbreak has changed all our conference plans!

Concerning popular movements, I know that the Toulouse workgroup has important interactions with Alternatiba, an ecological alter-globalization movement. At Écopolien, we have contacts with Sciences citoyennes, an association that promotes the interactions between research and citizens. In addition, we have worked with University unions and other movements during the recent strike against the new neoliberal Research Act planned by the government. We organized a debate session on the theme: 'what role for the University in the current

social and environmental crises?' that was a great success, in particular among undergraduate students.

Why is it important to you that this group is specifically centered around a geographic location (Île de France), as opposed to being a delocalized community (as many academic communities are)?

It is quite important. In the political ecology movement there is the intuition that solutions, at least some of them, need to be local. At Écopolien, we want to know each other, to discuss frequently, to understand, act and influence our local communities—movements, neighborhoods, campuses, cities. I think that, in order to do this properly, we need to know our local environment well. This is why, to me, this geographic location is important. However, we also have quite a lot of interactions at the national level. In particular among different local groups of the Ecopols, but also with colleagues of Labos1point5—several of us, including myself, are active in both Labos1point5 and Ecopols groups. We are of course happy to talk and interact with international groups—maybe yours—but now our energy is focused at the local level.

In the manifesto you argue that interdisciplinarity is necessary to understand the complex scientific, social, and political problem of climate change. Do you see other advantages or possibilities of an interdisciplinary framework?

I think interdisciplinarity is key. The problems that we face are very, very complex. We simply cannot understand them from the point of view of a single discipline. But true interdisciplinarity is very hard to practice. I have practiced it to some extent in my research in biophysics, at the interface between physics, chemistry and biology. But what we are talking about concerning the ecological disaster has nothing to do with that, we are talking about mixing history with geology, biology and economics. The challenges of interdisciplinarity are at least three-fold. Firstly, most scholars have been bred in a disciplinary context, so that it is very hard for us to even think of interdisciplinarity (or even of my favorite word, indisciplinarity). Take for instance, teaching. My experience is that when we teach interdisciplinarity at undergraduate level, it is challenging to be rigorous, because the notion of rigor is probably different in different disciplines. With my rather monodisciplinary education, I would advocate for rigorous monodisciplinarity at the undergraduate level and multidisciplinarity at the graduate level. But I am probably wrong and we will have to invent a new way of teaching beyond disciplines. Teaching the Anthropocene could be a good way to build this multi- or indisciplinary approach. The second challenge of interdisciplinarity is to overcome the shock of cultures and vocabularies. At Écopolien, we are trying to overcome that and I am very interested in observing what comes out of it. The third challenge of interdisciplinarity is institutional.

Scientific institutions, at least in France and in Europe, are profoundly monodisciplinary. I am evaluated for doing physics or chemistry, but if I start doing history combined with geography, with a sort of physical approach, I will probably have problems with the institutions that publish and evaluate this work. A final advantage of interdisciplinarity is that it is fun. It is very pleasant to discuss, the otherwise terrible ecological problems that we are facing, with my colleagues of Écopolien, because the diversity of points of view puts a bit of light in this unthinkable predicament.

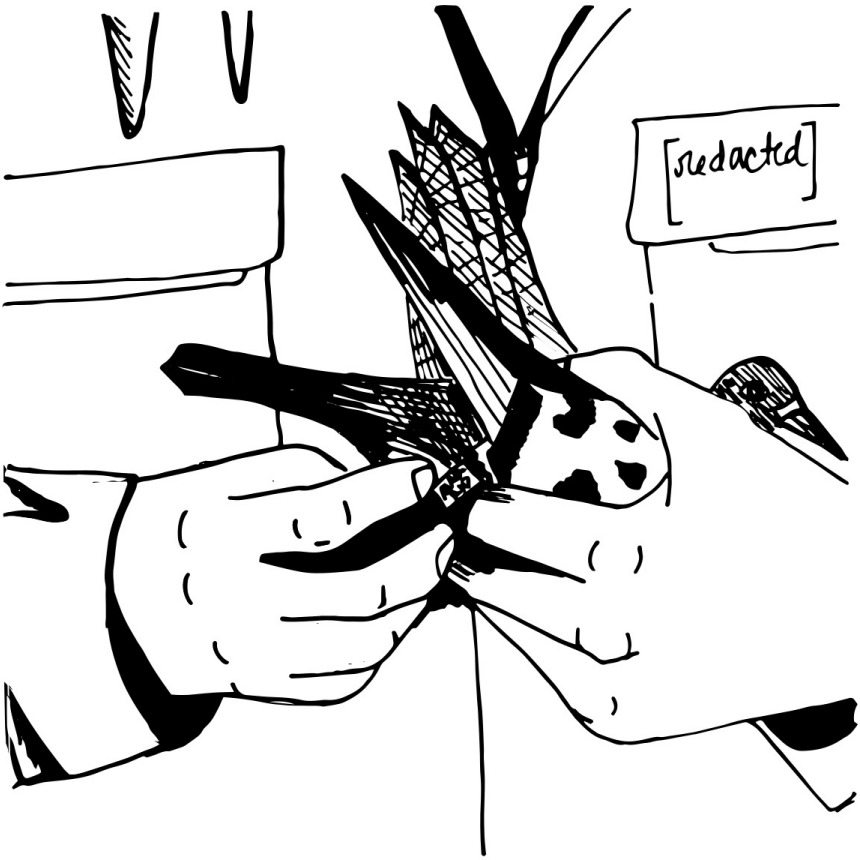
What actions do you encourage readers of this zine to take?

I would encourage them to take any sort of collective action related to the dramatic environmental and social challenges that our societies face. If they are in academia, they could question their research topics and practices taking into account that we live in a finite world, where many limits have been overcome. The same applies concerning their lifestyle and work if they work outside academia. These questions are too hard for an individual to face, that's why we generally don't face them. But talking out loud about them with other people is already of great relief, and hopefully will bring some solutions.

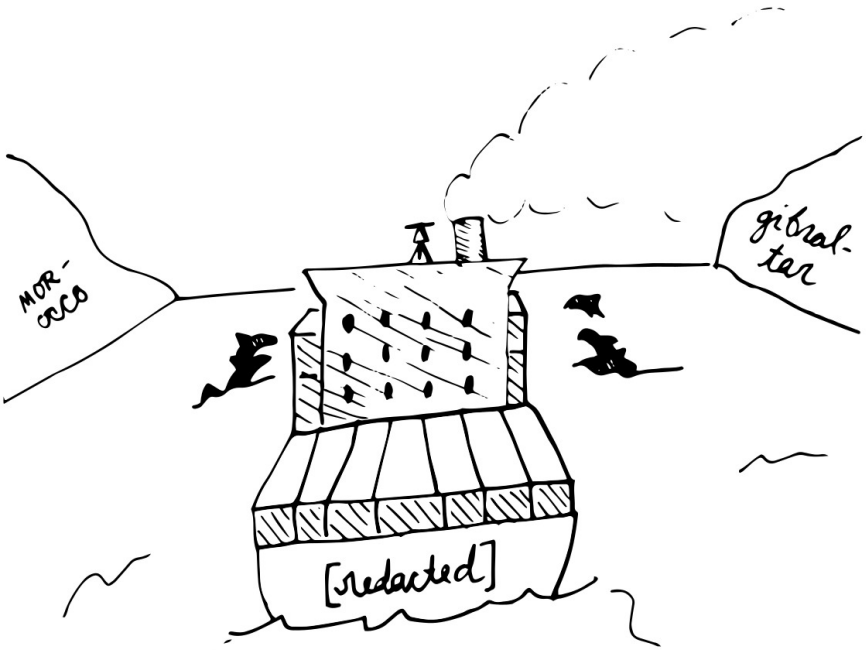
La Española

Hannah Eisler Burnett

Hannah Eisler Burnett (hburnett@gmail.com) is a PhD candidate at the University of Chicago who studies water and the people who live and work with it.



La Española



IN THE SUMMER OF 2018, I TRAVELED TO EUROPE FOR A CONFERENCE ON POLITICAL ECOLOGY. IN AN EFFORT TO TRAVEL SLOWER — AND LESS WASTEFULLY — A FRIEND AND I TOOK A CARGO SHIP BACK TO THE U.S.

FROM BARCELONA TO NYC TOOK ABOUT 2 WEEKS.

TO PASS THE TIME, WE LOOKED OUT TO SEA, WHERE WE FOUND BIRDS, DOLPHINS, TURTLES, SHARKS, FLYING FISH, AND WHALES.

SOON, WE BEGAN LOOKING FOR ANIMAL LIFE ABOARD, AS WELL.

CARGO SHIPS ARE NOT ALLOWED TO CARRY LIFE-FORMS ACROSS CONTINENTS. IN FACT, THEY HAVE TO FLUSH OUT ALL THEIR WATER BALLAST BETWEEN

PORTS TO ENSURE NO BACTERIA, ALGAE, OR OTHER ORGANISMS ARRIVE WITH THE SHIP.

la española

AND YET, WE HEARD RUMORS OF A STOW-AWAY. ONE AFTERNOON, AFTER WANDERING THE DECKS COOING, WE FOUND HIM: A PIGEON THE CREW NAMED "LA ESPAÑOLA," AFTER THE TAG ON HIS LEG.

WE FED HIM RICE AND WATER, AND HE SURVIVED THE JOURNEY ACROSS THE ATLANTIC.

NOW, I LIVE IN NYC, AND EVERY TIME I SEE A PIGEON, I THINK ABOUT OUR JOURNEY TOGETHER...

COO! COO!