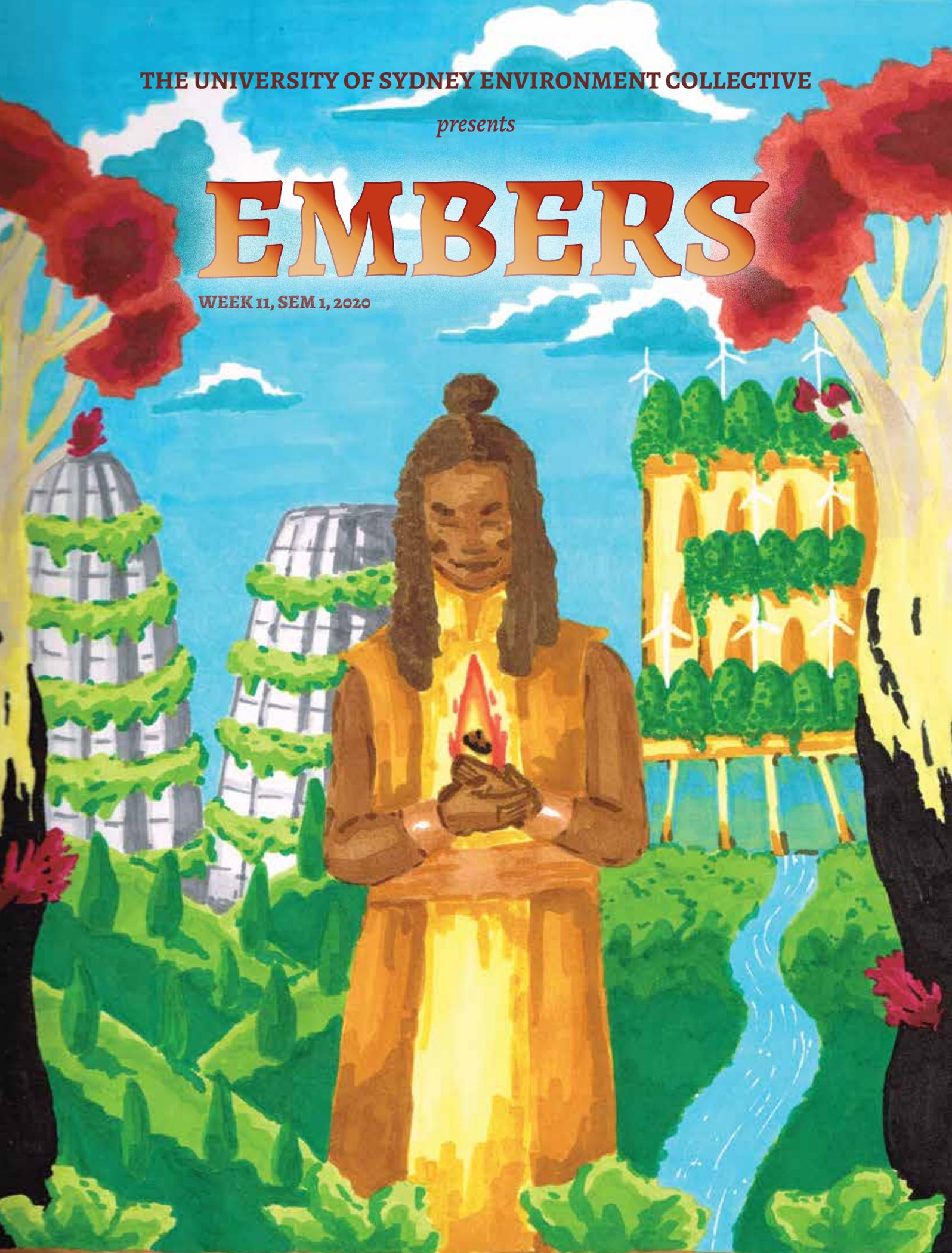


THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY ENVIRONMENT COLLECTIVE

presents

EMBERS

WEEK 11, SEM 1, 2020



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The University of Sydney Environment Collective primarily meets and organises on the land of the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation. This edition was produced by editors, writers and artists living and working on various sovereign lands including Dharawal, Dharug, Bidjigal, and Gandangara land. All stolen land, all unceded. From where we are today, we pay respects to Elders past, present and emerging. Settler colonialism was the first act of environmental dispossession and destruction on so-called Australia. This cruelty continues—continues to manifest in our legal and policing systems, in governance, in business, in media representation and the education of our youth. From the coastlines to the rivers, to the red centre of this continent, we recognise that First Nations peoples continue to fight for the survival and health of their communities and their lands. As environmental activists, we must stand in solidarity. There can be no environmental justice without Indigenous Justice. We recognise the vital importance of Indigenous and Bla(c)k knowledge and organising in the environmental and climate movements, centring these voices and perspectives in all that we do. This is and always has been Aboriginal land.

EDITORIAL

Welcome! You have opened the inaugural edition of *Embers*, an Honi Soit pull-out created by members of the Environment Collective. This is a strange, difficult, and lonely time for many of us. As such, collaborating on this publication—written and laid up across the Internet—has formed a necessary space of creativity, radical ideas and hope, for which we are grateful. This edition is a slice of what we envision for environmental justice, equity, and safety during and beyond a Covid-19 world.

In our feature article 'Black Smoke: Living through Bushfires', Lucy Taylor writes, "Fire is unrelenting and unforgiving, but it is not the enemy."

Yours in solidarity,
The Editors

Indeed, the events over the past summer were horrific and painfully unforgettable for many families and communities. So why use fire imagery, why *Embers*? In short, we want to set new fires. To burn capitalism, colonialism. Fire is a metaphor for the energies we carry towards environmental justice: rage, passion, desire. As the great James Baldwin said, "Fires can't be made with dead embers, nor can enthusiasm be stirred by spiritless men. Enthusiasm in our daily work lightens effort and turns even labor into pleasant tasks."

We hope this edition offers you new perspectives and an ember of hope (or at least keeps you warm as winter draws near).

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Contributors: Ezra Acevedo, Kiki Amberber, Drew Beacom, Sylvia Bozym, Melanie Conlon, Isabella D'Silva, Angus Dermody, Deaundre Espejo, Altay Hagrebet, Bella Henderson, Rory Kae, Lauren Lancaster, Tahira Mångata, Amelia Mertha, Elizabeth Mora, Claire Ollivain, Lia Perkins, Kritika Rathore, Kate Scott, James Sherriff, Emma Sproul, Ellie Stephenson, Elissa Sugunanathan, Raúl Sugunanathan, Lucy Taylor, Ellie Wilson, Varsha Yajman

Front cover: Altay Hagrebet
Back cover: Ellie Zheng

Environment Swept Under the Rug

How governments are leveraging the pandemic to pass dodgy environmental policies, explained by Drew Beacom.

As we have come to grips with COVID-19, epidemiologists, conspiracies and economic turmoil have dominated the news cycle. While this may be appropriate given the significant impact of this crisis, it also leaves the general public without the critical eye of the fourth estate. As Australians turned their eyes to Italy and China fearing what was to come, state governments turned their eyes towards deregulation and the environment.

In mid-March, as many feared the prospect of unemployment, Daniel Andrews and the Victorian Labor party lifted the moratorium on onshore gas drilling in Victoria. This was completed under the guise of introducing stronger environmental legislation, as it was coupled with a ban on fracking within the Victorian Constitution. This exercise in misdirection not only allows for the extraction of conventional gas to resume, but also tries to paint Victorian Labor in a good light for 'banning' fracking, a move which could be overturned with a change of government or change of heart.

Not to be outdone, Gladys Berijikian's government has used this time to approve an expansion of Peabody's Metropolitan mine in

Helensburgh, NSW. The proposed expansion involves mining underneath the nearby Woronora reservoir, a reservoir that provides drinking water to approximately 220,000 residents of the Sutherland Shire and North Wollongong.

The project has become a cause for concern over possible subsidence, which could lead to water loss and water contamination. Professor Stuart Khan of the School of Civil & Environmental Engineering at UNSW states: "From a water quality perspective, I don't think any of this mining should be happening in the drinking water special areas." In light of the recent drought, any sensible person would think that developments which could contaminate and deplete our sources of drinking water should be off the table completely.

An attempt was made by local environmental and public interest groups to reject the proposed expansion. A petition, which garnered over 10,000 signatures, was set to be debated in the NSW Parliament. But in the spirit of democracy, it was ignored as COVID-19 saw the suspension of Parliament. Thus, the project was approved without

proper consideration or due process.

Sadly, this pattern does not stop here. At the time of writing, the highly criticized Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (1999) is under independent review, with community submissions being made from organisations such as the Australian Conservation Foundation as well as USyd's Enviro Collective. However, Environment Minister Sussan Ley has already claimed that the government may change the nation's environmental laws before the review is actually completed in October, which would render the whole process redundant.

The Government has conveyed a desire to deregulate and remove 'green tape' in an effort to stimulate the economy following the current pandemic. One suggestion may be to stop spending \$41.8 billion on fossil fuel subsidies, or more radical still, make the fossil fuel conglomerates pay their fair share of tax. Looking ahead, it is pivotal that we stay vigilant and continue to critique our governments that clearly value their stock portfolios more than they value the environment, their constituents and, most of all, our democracy.

Community Organising in Times of Crisis

Emma Sproul on directing her energy into small and local deeds.

It seems each season in Australia is characterised by a new disaster. I feel I live life too fast, spreading myself across spaces which prevent me from relating to my present context. It isn't until the perceived sense of control I have over life is shaken by crisis, that I actually stop and slow down. We have ways of carrying ourselves through the muck and grit of existence. During the crises we have faced in the last 6 months, I have seen communities respond by actively being a part of individual and collective action.

The impending sense of powerlessness I feel has been diminished by joining in on existing community initiatives. Often, we look at this action as futile in light of big problems. But who's interrogating what 'counts' and what 'doesn't count' as action? While capitalism's main imperative is to economically rationalise individuals as consumers, rendering other needs invisible, I have found community organising to be a way to radically fight back.

I have volunteered at Addi Road community-operated Food Pantry over the last month or so, which has galvanised the effectiveness of mutual aid efforts in empowering individuals and communities. Not only have practical needs been met, but emotionally and socially, vulnerable groups feel braced by the community (even if the government aren't economically

supporting them). Addi Road, nestled in the centre of Marrickville, has adapted in these extraordinary times by diversifying and providing Food hampers to both NGOs (such as the Asylum Seeker Centre) and individuals with growing needs in the community. They have always had two main objectives: to rescue food from landfill and to provide nourishing food to the vulnerable. It empowers me to witness the mutual aid of the community, to see others seeking environmental and social justice.



Action however, can be as mundane as being present to ourselves, the people and the places we dwell in. This presence enables me to reconnect to things fundamental to my existence that is not encouraged under capitalism. Abstracted from food and material production we consequently use our supermarket shelf as a pantry. How I

can simplify and foster skills in life that will reduce the burden I have on global chains of production? Shifting our focus to our homes during this time may not be a bad thing. Putting the care into growing plants or learning how to bake your own bread requires engagement in a ritual that helps relearn lost knowledge reducing our reliance on unstable systems. By no means do we all have to live off-grid or become entirely self-sufficient, but supply chains are fragile and rebuilding robust practices in the home is one way of reducing our environmental impact and helping us to withstand future changes.

Post COVID-19 life will have far-reaching psycho-social and environmental effects on us. We will not go back to normal.

Naturally, the suffering COVID-19 will bring is immense. But I hope that there can be silver linings that cause us to collectively shift to a different perspective on life. We have the choice every day to resist systems that created this problem. Our reliance on global supply chains is not sustainable and that governments don't always make decisions in your interest. By investing in personal resources, skill building and local, deliberate action we can reclaim power and be a part of radical action.

Art by @armadillojones

Water Scarcity: A Beef With Industrial Farming

Tahira Mangata and Deaundre Espejo explore the impacts of animal agriculture on our water resources.

Water is a fundamental resource for sustaining life around the planet—thus, increasing commodification of water is threatening our ecosystems and communities. While issues surrounding water allocation are not new, the rapid growth in animal agriculture is putting more strain on our water resources than ever.

Animal agriculture is one of the most significant contributors to the climate crisis. Not only is it a major cause of land clearing, biodiversity loss, and greenhouse gas emissions, it is also responsible for up to a third of all freshwater consumption in Australia.

The Water Footprint Network estimates that beef production consumes twenty times more water than fruit and vegetables, cereals or starchy roots. Additionally, it takes around 800 litres of water to produce just one litre of cow's milk. As cattle require significant amounts of feed to convert to body mass, significant amounts of water are required for animal consumption and crop irrigation.

However, the economic value that animal agriculture brings to the economy continues to be used by governments as justification for its destructive impacts. Every year, the beef industry alone makes almost \$17 billion, and production continues to grow at an immense scale.

This has contributed to the poor health of the Murray-Darling Basin, an important water source and one of Australia's largest and

most diverse river systems. Dairy farms, along with cotton and rice industries, use trillions of litres of water per year in the basin alone, causing river flows to drop at an extremely worrying pace.

Further, reduced water quality, associated with runoff of fertilisers and pesticides, is causing Australian flora and fauna ecosystems to suffer. There has been a 50% decrease in wetland bird species, and 450 plant species are threatened with extinction through salinity. The runoff from animal agriculture has also caused a rapid increase in algae blooms, creating ocean dead zones and mass suffocation to marine life.

With Australia facing record levels of drought and low rainfall due to the growing impact of climate change, over-extraction is pushing Australia to the brink of a water crisis. Those in rural communities, who are still recovering from the most recent bushfires, are most vulnerable to such crises. In towns such as Menindee and Pooncarie, drinking water

is mainly sourced from donated supplies as their tap water is undrinkable. At times, water supply has been completely cut off, forcing residents to survive on emergency reserves.

It is impossible to balance sustainable water usage whilst feeding the population under a capitalist model of food production. Capitalism monopolises water allocation, allowing agricultural industries to use up

huge amounts of water all in the name of private profit.

If we truly want to use water sustainably, industries must stop being over-dependent on our water resources for profit. Governments and corporations need to employ values of respect and balance in decisions about water allocation, invest in technologies that improve water efficiency, and move away from water-intensive agriculture.

It is crucial that we start to incorporate Indigenous knowledge in water planning, and fundamentally rethink our relationship with water. In particular, we need to recognise how valuable our river systems are in a number of intertwined ways—they are a part of a culturally significant landscape, they provide a lifeline for regional and rural communities, and they have the potential to sustain future water-related business and employment.

"If the water is healthy, Country is healthy. If Country is healthy then the People and Culture will be healthy."

As this Indigenous proverb outlines, protecting water is not just about sustaining life, but also sustaining the development of communities. If we don't allocate our finite supplies of water more justly, we may soon be left thirsting for the world's most vital resource.

Where There is War, There is Environmental Destruction

Lia Perkins considers the links between armed conflict and resource extraction.

War and environmental destruction are so deeply entwined it is impossible to view conflict without considering their mutual relationship.

Resource wars are the most easily identified. These occur both in order to protect an abundance of fossil fuels, as well as occurring over resource scarcity which increasingly includes water. For instance, conflict in the Middle East exists largely due to the United States' attempts to maintain authority over abundant oil supplies to have control over international oil prices, particularly in Iraq.

By contrast, the scarcity of water is a significant cause of conflict in the Middle East and Sub-Saharan Africa. The 2007 Civil War in Darfur, Sudan was regarded as the world's first climate change conflict and the displacement of 13 million people by the

Syrian Civil War can be traced back directly to climate change: drought and agricultural difficulties. The African subcontinent is extremely vulnerable to climate change and the inevitable conflicts that arise in response, yet has contributed a minuscule percentage of global emissions.

Another fundamental connection between war and the climate is the military activities. The US Department of Defence is the single biggest polluter on the planet due to their carbon dioxide emissions. For example, the US occupation of Afghanistan since 2001 has contributed tonnes of emissions to global warming along with causing deforestation and destruction of the natural environment. Ironically, US army officials are concerned about the implications of climate change on their operations and changes they will have to make as a result.

Indigenous land has been under threat for centuries, with imperial colonisers disregarding true owners in the interest of expanding territory to exploit natural resources. The legacy of colonisation lives on — attacks, encroachments and unlawful taking of Indigenous land continues, often driven by fossil fuel and logging companies. Contemporary examples include the Wet'suwet'en people, and the Kanaka Maoli of Hawaii. Attempts to take First Nations land for these purposes not only infringe upon

land rights, but contribute to atmospheric warming and biospheric destruction.

Israel's expropriation of land and settlement building subjugates Palestinians. The system of environmental discrimination is symbolised in Israel's "Turning the Desert Green" policy which directly funds the key infrastructure for the Israeli military, including in the Negev Desert. Naomi Klein argues that this is an example of "green colonialism", a type of environmental protection involving carbon offsets and infringements on the abilities of less developed countries.

Climate change will make parts of the earth uninhabitable and prompt resource wars which could displace between 25 million and one billion people by 2050. Interestingly, rhetoric directed towards protecting the planet and reversing climate change often involves war-like language. We speak of "fighting" climate change, "destruction", and a "war on climate change". Even the Green New Deal echoes inter-war history. In light of the inextricable links between war and environmental degradation, we must question our framing of protecting the planet and humanity in this way. Perhaps it should be reframed less violently; to focus on compassion, peace and Indigenous self-determination over their land.

Using Our Senses in the Anthropocene

Claire Ollivain on why we should decentre the human by listening to birdsong.

During the late 18th to early 20th century, when Western artists and travellers saw a landscape that pleased them, they would turn their backs from the scene to observe it through a pocket-sized mirror. One of the first users of the Claude glass fell backwards and broke his knuckles, unwilling to tear his eyes from the beauty he saw in the reflection. This anthropocentric use of the senses — where looking and listening have the effect of separating us from the world — is quintessential to Western relations to nature. By reducing landscapes to a picturesque scene subdued in the palm of an onlooker's hand, the Claude glass provided precedent to the ecological emergencies of today.

The illusion that humans are central to existence stems from a form of sensory perception that is manifest in the Claude glass; nature is perceived to be dominated for our own use. This has led to what is called the Anthropocene, a word that comes from the Ancient Greek 'anthropo,' meaning human; it proposes that the most recent period in earth's geological history has been shaped primarily by human activity. Some argue that this began during the Industrial Revolution, others say with the testing of the first atomic bombs. What is resoundingly clear is that human activities have accelerated species extinction, left an irreversible trace on the geological record, and catastrophically increased levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.

The Anthropocene might implicate all of humankind in one sweep, but it is not all humans who are damaging the planet. It is fossil fuel companies and capitalism's constant drive for accumulation and growth. Adani, for example, has been violating the ancestral lands of the Wangan and Jagalingou people for coal mining profit. These companies want you to believe your carbon footprint is causing the climate crisis rather than their exploitative practices. We must remember that Indigenous people protect 80% of the world's biodiversity even though they make up less than 5% of the population. Recognising that it is not merely human activity but a profit-oriented structure that is leaving a mark on the earth, Jason Moore has

proposed the alternative term Capitalocene, emphasising capitalism as a way of organising nature. Furthermore, Donna Haraway has argued for a third term, the Chthulucene, to signify how the human and non-human are linked in 'tentacular practices,' urging us to seek multi-species kinship.

Whichever term we may use, the destructive effects of human activities is a sensory phenomenon, perceptible in the experience of living in an increasingly diminished and dangerous world. During the 'black summer', it was the unavoidable presence of smoke around us; the heaviness

all the sounds of different species fit together harmoniously like an orchestra. Sound-making is a way of forming relations with other living creatures and territorialising space. It is a type of symbolic communication that has been dismissed by the narrative of human exceptionalism. In the Western philosophical tradition, our supposedly singular possession of language places us on a pedestal, and this has had perilous consequences.

Human activities cause disruptions to avian soundscapes both by submerging nature's orchestra beneath the noise of machinery and by driving species extinctions.

The resultant absence of birdsong — a sound that flitters between human and non-human worlds — leads to feelings of anxiety and loss. The encroaching silence of the non-human is symptomatic of the epoch we live in, where catastrophic blazes can wipe out more living beings than we have the ability to conceive of. Listening to the sounds and silences of nature's orchestra, without intruding, is a way of reconfiguring human ecological relations, of seeking out multi-species kinship.

The spiritual way of deep listening and still awareness is embodied in *Dadirri*, a word from the Ngangikurungkurr language. Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr, an Elder from the Nauiyu Community, Daly River, Northern Territory, articulates that:

Dadirri recognises the deep spring that is inside us. We call on it and it calls to us. This is the gift that Australia is thirsting for...Our people have passed on this way of listening for over 40,000 years...To be still brings peace - and it brings understanding.

There is a responsibility learnt from listening deeply with the intention to act. Instead of turning our backs to nature and looking at it through a mirror of our own, we must listen and look closely at how human activities on this continent, since colonialism, have disrupted the environment. Then, we must transform this knowledge gained through our senses into an imperative for collective action.

and itches of our lungs served a constant reminder of unimaginable loss. For those living in areas where the fires tore through, this was followed by an anxious silence — that of birdsong. While some birds were able to escape the fires, much of their habitat and the insects they feed on were destroyed. The lyrebird which has survived for 15 million years, with its distinct song and ability to imitate almost any sound, is now under threat of becoming permanently silent.

The Anthropocene has a profound influence on the mix of sounds that can be heard. Different natural environments have evolved their own 'acoustic ecologies' where



Art by Claire Ollivain

Global Indigenous Violence, Corporate Greed and the Wet'suwet'en Resistance

Isabella D'Silva reminds us that there is no environmental justice without Indigenous justice.

"There is a difference between inconvenience and injustice... don't confuse one with the other."

These words by Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chief Woos represent the ongoing fight of First Nations against colonialism.

The Wet'suwet'en resistance is a blockade protesting Coastal GasLink — a pipeline project by big energy corporation TC Energy which would run 670 kilometres across the province of British Columbia, Canada. The pipeline will cut through a significant part of the sacred, unceded territory of the Wet'suwet'en people. Indigenous communities were never adequately consulted in regards to the project. Coastal GasLink considers the blockade an 'inconvenience'. Such rhetoric is characteristic of the global injustices faced by indigenous peoples. In Victoria, Australia, the extension of a highway into Indigenous land forced the fight of Djab Wurrung people against the destruction of sacred birthing trees. In an interview by the SBS, an opposer of the resistance stated "it's gonna happen regardless...let it happen so that it makes it easier for everybody". This is another key example of the trivialisation of the Indigenous fight for land rights in western culture today.

The greed of corporations who thirst for profit extracted from Indigenous land deepens violence and racism experienced by Indigenous communities globally.

VIOLENCE AND RACISM TOWARDS FIRST NATIONS COMMUNITIES

For generations, First Nations communities have fought the devastation caused by colonialism; from innumerable massacres during early colonial invasion to the current disproportionately high levels of incarceration, deaths in custody, child removal and overall lack of financial, educational and mental health support. The Wet'suwet'en resistance is not a unique or isolated event, but rather a reminder of how colonialism manifests in modern society.

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) are at the forefront of violence and corporate protection against Wet'suwet'en resistance. Ironically, the police have labelled

land defenders as "extremists" who are "violent in nature."

The United Nations Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) are against the forced removal of the Wet'suwet'en people from their land, advising the RCMP to stand down. Despite this, the conflicting interests of the corporation and state to continue the project have suggested moving RCMP stationing from the current camps to Houston, British Columbia, even though it is also Wet'suwet'en territory.

The RCMP has exercised their state-given power by removing 80 land defenders from Wet'suwet'en camps along roads and during solidarity demonstrations. In February, the RCMP dismantled a demonstration of land defenders by forcefully arresting 43 peaceful and unarmed protesters. Some were carried away despite not displaying aggressive behaviour.

The words of Kalamaoka'aina Niheu, a woman born into the frontlines of the Hawai'i independence resistance, particularly resonate:

"Violence is embedded into the fabric of society"

The unjust acts towards the Wet'suwet'en resistance have resulted in an increase in anti-Indigenous behaviour and hate crimes in Canada. A visibly Indigenous person buying groceries was assaulted from behind with a weapon, and a 14-year-old boy was subject to death threats and racial slurs on the way to school; both attacks linked to the pipeline developments. No charges have been laid.

CORPORATE GREED

First Nations people comprise 5% of the world's population but protect 80% of global biodiversity. They are not standing down their ancestral land for the greed of corporations.

The \$6.6 billion energy corporation project could potentially result in devastating impacts on the environment where the burning of 140 billion litres of gas transported via the pipeline would contribute to 13% of the greenhouse emissions produced by Canada daily.

Coastal GasLink argues the blockade is

ruining the livelihood of 1,600 rail workers since they will be laid off, preventing future economic development. It is not uncommon for workers' interests to be pitted against Indigenous justice and environmental actions. We must acknowledge the intersectionality of struggle, and that no struggle is genuinely separate. The state's system of colonialism and corporate greed is the real enemy. Fortunately, groups such as the National Farmers Union negatively affected by the blockage have recognised its importance. They are standing in solidarity with the Wet'suwet'en land defenders.

When it comes to climate-hazardous corporations, their bond with the state makes it easy for them to violate fundamental land rights. Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau addressed the "importance of unity across all people in the state" with empty promises. In signing off on the pipeline, he participates in the violent mistreatment of Indigenous people and their land. This allows for the ongoing attacks on the Wet'suwet'en nation and in turn, setting the standard for persecution of Indigenous communities globally.

If the gas leaks out from the pipeline, it will destroy the sacred land which generously offers food for energy. Water for life. Natural medicine for healing. Humans need all, but most importantly, the Wet'suwet'en people need it for survival — their livelihood and cultural practices depend on it. It may destroy everything that they fight for and believe.

THE RESISTANCE CONTINUES...

With distressing responses to the Wet'suwet'en resistance by those in power, made worse by the current pandemic, it is difficult to determine the outcome of the construction in favour of land defenders. However, the fight not only against the pipeline but against corporate greed and violence towards Indigenous communities globally has been paused but not stopped by a global pandemic. Going forward, we must stand in solidarity with the fight for Wet'suwet'en and First Nations rights to end all ongoing colonialism.

Art by Ezra Acevedo

Salt

by Rory Kae

from between the teeth of mothers
 history has been stolen,
 stolen by men and decay,
 by fate —
 a cruel mother to us all.
 mothers,
 tell me how to prosper
 on earth scorched, to remove the last trace of you
 how to sustain myself
 on air singed with smoke.
 mother, tell me
 where is there safety,
 the earth cannot save us
 the men violate her too,
 she has been suffering for far longer than I
 and I am far too small to help her.
 the only solace comes in musings of the time to come,
 when womanhood is not shaped by terror
 when our daughters will know safety;
 in sovereign skin, under sovereign skies
 and when beneath them, the earth can rest gently once more.



my voice

it left me

violently

it didn't speak to me
 it walked out on me

sped

over the humps of me
 at the cliff's edge

it grew lucifer's wings

below
the other life

the old life
 the past life
 nests in my mouth
 a severed tree

I Was Supposed to Be Her Hero

by Elizabeth Mora

I wait I wait I wait I
nothing

only Mother returns
 only Mother will

Her beak pours down my neck

feed yourself
 She cries
 She sings

You were supposed to be my messenger

I point

I am

to all the things



Art by Amelia Mertha

BLACK SMOKE: LIVING THROUGH BUSHFIRES

Lucy Taylor on how fire inscribes trauma into both lives and landscapes.

**The sun goes down on this place
For what could be the last time and
Car boots are open
Filling up with remnants of life
A snapshot of what matters here, now
Neighbours are on driveways
Packing like they're going on holiday;
Shipping their memories to safety**

I found those words in the notes app on my phone. I wrote them at 12:11am on the 12th November 2019, clearly unable to sleep ahead of the day of 'catastrophic' fire danger ahead. It was all over the news—predictions of a doomsday inferno that could burn down our world. We had packed the things we wanted to save into boxes and gave ourselves up to the wind and the heat. In the end, the fire didn't come on that day in November, but we lived out of those boxes for the next two months as we endured the worst fire season I've experienced in my lifetime.

I live in the Blue Mountains, on Darug and Gundungurra land, west of Sydney. This past summer was the third time in my life that my house narrowly escaped being burnt down. There wasn't a shade of colour left anywhere in the world. The green had been ripped from the trees and the grass. The sky was suffocating, brown with smoke, mirroring the colour of the earth. Everything was ash and dust. The only colour left to us was the light that would filter through the smoke as the sun set in a searing orange. A warning sign.

Blackened eucalypt leaves parachuted into our yard for weeks. Like tiny soldiers evacuating a burning town, they screamed at us to get out. We had had no rain and the land was ready to burn; asking us to burn. She asked us—quietly at first, then furiously—if we would get out of the way so that she could alight. We obeyed.

"We didn't hear from my dad until the morning after the fire. We spent the whole night not knowing if he had died fighting the flames."

We evacuated our house three times in the space of two weeks over the Christmas and New Year period. December didn't have any festivity to offer us, just 45 degree days with winds that had the power to incinerate us given a spark. The danger on those days was so high that if the bush had caught alight even 20 or 30 kilometres away from us, we wouldn't have had time to get out before it was tearing through the houses on our street. Even amidst such fear, there was still some strange shame in evacuating. It felt like giving up, like not even fighting back.

We couldn't stay and defend our house though—not after last time. In 2013, on a Thursday afternoon while I was at school, a fire started a suburb away from us and tore through the lower Blue Mountains in the space of one afternoon. The phone towers were unresponsive—we couldn't contact anyone, we didn't know if our families were safe, the roads were closed and sirens cried well into the night. I remember going to my grandparents' house to get them to safety, and looking out their window to see that their back fence was on fire. Everything, everywhere was alight.

My dad stayed to defend our house that day in 2013. It was early October, much earlier than we would've thought to start preparing a fire survival plan. Given no warning and no preparation, he faced a fire front that came quite literally to our doorstep. With our fire pump and the help of firefighters, he saved my house and both of our neighbours' houses from burning down. The road to our house was closed overnight as the earth continued to smoulder, so my mum and I weren't able to go and see if it was still standing. Worse than that, we didn't hear from my dad until the morning after the fire. We spent the whole night not knowing if he had died fighting the flames.

My dad and our house pulled through that fire remarkably well, at least on the surface. We were the lucky ones: every second house on my street was gone. We had no power for weeks afterwards — we had to use candles as a light source and I was scared that their flames would eat me alive. The smell of smoke was stuck in every piece of clothing for months—a gutting, inescapable reminder of what had happened. Our whole community was ash and so many people I knew were left with absolutely nothing.

Eventually the bush regrew, houses were rebuilt, and our lives were no longer charred by fire. There was so much relief in the return to some semblance of normality that we didn't think to go back and confront the traumas that we had faced. Why would we want to bring it up again right as the land was starting to heal? Leaves were starting to grow back and so we tried to as well, not realising how this would shape the way we'd respond to fire seasons in the future.

And so 2019 came and brought with it all the trauma that we had experienced six years prior. We knew the conditions would be particularly bad this summer. The advice from the RFS was to decide early on whether to stay and defend your house or to evacuate. Putting together our fire survival plan made me sick to my stomach. My parents too, I'm sure. We couldn't watch it happen again. We weren't going to stay.

So this summer we evacuated, each time leaving a sign that said "We've left. Fire pump & water tank to the right of the house" attached to the Christmas wreath on our front door. Leaving a sign like this means that firefighters know they don't need to search your house for bodies once the fire front has passed through.



Art by Bella Henderson

When you spend two months living in limbo—continually driving away from your house not knowing if you'll be returning to nothing; trying to pick what to pack into a box to save—you are forced to let go of your tangible connection to everything. I spent endless hours agonising over what possessions to save—how do you boil a life down to a 50 litre storage box? There are photos somewhere in my camera roll that I took of my house and my bedroom just before we evacuated. They mean nothing now, but at the time there was a good chance that they could have been all I had left of my childhood home.

What did I put in that 50 litre storage box? Not much, in the end. Important documents, some photos of my friends, my textbooks (I still had exams to pass), a childhood toy, some of my favourite books. It feels embarrassing to admit that half of what I packed ended up being clothes; so unimportant and replaceable. But if your house burns down, you're probably going to want some clean socks the next day.

The thing is, you come to realise that physical possessions mean nothing. That life is the only precious commodity. You go to pack your photos and favourite books and childhood memorabilia and you realise that in the end, it just doesn't matter. And that's okay, because you learn to be enormously thankful for your friends and family above all else.

By the middle of the summer, I was angry and tired. My home was surrounded by walls of fire in every direction and I was tired of hearing people in the city complain about the smoke, as if it weren't the smell of people's whole lives being burned down. 5.4 million hectares were burnt in NSW alone. Nearly 2500 homes were lost. 800 million animals were killed. The grief was too much to bear and we were drowning in it— every time we walked outside, every conversation we had with others—there was no way out.

When the fire season was over, I slipped back in between the seams of my normal life. Looking around at my desk and my bed and my posters and my cupboards, they felt like a lie. I had ripped these things out of my life and to coexist with them once again felt impossible. It felt like living inside a mirage. I had made myself let go of it all in preparation of losing my home, but my home was still there and I felt like a stranger inside of it.

It's not that we don't expect fires when we live in the middle of the bush. Of course we do—it's an innate part of our lives; our summer religion. We learn the patterns and the language of fire as though worshipping its laws correctly will spare us. We analyse the way fire

moves and breathes under different conditions. We count down the seconds until the wind changes direction and puts us out of harm's way for a few hours. We hack the frequencies of RFS two-way radios to hear where the latest flare up is. There are weeks and weeks of not knowing if we'll scrape through or not, but we ultimately know that in intervals of five or ten or fifteen years, the bush has to burn.

Fire isn't really the enemy. Fire is unrelenting and unforgiving, but it is not the enemy. We expect fire, and we prepare for it accordingly. But we don't expect it like this. Not at this scale, this intensity, or this frequency. Our capitalist and colonialist structures, our failure to act on climate change, and our wilful ignorance of Indigenous land and fire management principles are all contributing to fire seasons becoming more severe. This increased severity only heightens the trauma that fire inscribes into our lives, and makes us fear most of all for fire seasons to come. For now, I am still healing. I am still learning to accept that the land I live on has welcomed us back, and I am sitting with the knowledge that while my family was lucky this time, it only means we will be more vulnerable next season. I have only just unpacked that 50 litre storage box.

"We learn the patterns and the language of fire as though worshipping its laws correctly will spare us."

We are safe in the cold months. When the fire season ended, we exhaled for the first time in months. We cried when we first saw blue skies and green land again. We learn to live with the almost-grief until it comes back next year. We hold our families tight. We thank the bush for letting us stay.

**We all fear the inevitable
Ignoring that this place is built to burn
down
Regrowth and rebirth only stem from
What people deem as a loss,
But the bush begs us to be alight
She is ready and waiting
She will rise again
And so will we, I hope.**



Veggies for a Rough Patch

The Enviro Collective's non-definitive guide to growing your own fruit and veggies.

These days, we have little ability to feel truly connected to nature and our community. Our time is spent stuck indoors, glued to our laptops and extracted from food production, the natural world and our neighbourhood. Gardening can be a meaningful way to restore your connection with nature, providing a chance for you to get some fresh air, stick your toes in the soil and be inspired by the natural processes involved in growing your own food. While this is by no means a definitive guide, we have a few tips on starting your own veggie patch.

Step 1: Which plants suit you?

The first thing you need to consider is where your plants will go. Most herbs and veggies require a lot of sunlight (6–8 hours a day) in order to thrive, so take stock of where in your house or garden is well-lit throughout the day.

If you do have an outdoor space that gets a lot of regular sunshine, then you'll be able to plant pretty much anything. But beware of vining vegetables such as tomatoes and cucumbers—they require either a lot of room to grow or a lot of attention to prune so your garden isn't overrun.

If you only have a windowsill to work with, then herbs are definitely the way to go. They don't require much room to grow, and will be in a perfect spot for you to snip some lovely flavours for cooking.

If you only have limited light, you may want to try leafy produce like lettuce and kale or root vegetables like beetroot and carrots; they can survive in lower light but more patience is required!

If you do have a lot of room and a lot of sun, native Australian edible plants are a great option. In NSW, plants such as the Fraser Island Apple, Midgem Berry, and Burdekin Plum all produce beautiful fruits and help attract native pollinators to your area. However, plants like these generally grow quite large and require a fair amount of sunlight, so take that into consideration before you get started.

Step 2: Get growing!

You can often find seeds or small plants at your local nursery or Bunnings store—check if you can order online, or even ask a friend or family member if they have some they are willing to donate. Make sure you check which season is best for planting when you do!

Have a think about what plants grow well together and what combinations to avoid. Companion planting is a great way to help a garden flourish, as it can mimic the way

that plants grow naturally by creating a microclimate in whichever patch of garden you have chosen.

If you want to grow tomatoes, make it an Italian section and grow basil and rosemary as well. If you're growing cabbages, root vegetables like carrots and parsnips can really help them flourish. Mint, rosemary, and onions also help to repel different insects and pests, with onions being particularly great at repelling aphids. Don't be afraid to layer plants too—growing herbs and leafy greens beneath vines or tall-stemmed plants will mean you can get more from less space, and the density will help to keep pests away.

Alternatively, get resourceful and try growing vegetables from scraps you might have thrown away! For most fruits, you simply want to pick out a couple of seeds and either plant them in a seed starter kit, or you could use an old egg carton filled with soil and placed inside a tupperware container. These will act as mini greenhouses—just remember to put it someplace with a lot of light and to add some water to it so that you see condensation.

For onions, lettuce, and celery, cut away the base and place it in a bowl of water (or a baking tray) and wait for the roots to grow. Roots may take a few weeks to develop, so be patient and remember to change the water when you can. Once the roots are an inch or longer you can plant them in soil.

Growing from cuttings is another way to go if you have the space in a garden, and it's a great opportunity to talk to friends or neighbours and see if you can share shoots, roots, or produce.

When the seedlings are ready to plant properly, make sure you've prepared a garden bed or the right-sized pot with a good amount of fresh soil. Potting mix is best for herbs and smaller vegetables, while bigger plants, vines, and root vegetables do well in layered garden beds. You can build these layers up

by starting with shredded newspaper, then alternating layers of fresh soil and compost or manure mix, and finishing with a layer of mulch if necessary. Mulch will keep weeds away and help to maintain the moisture and temperature of the soil.

Step 3: Problem solving

In order for veggie patches to thrive, they do require some maintenance. Besides watering and sunlight, your plants need nutrients! So make sure that every so often (each fortnight or so) you fertilise your plants either with some plant food, manure, or compost.

Watch your plants for pests and try to remove them as soon as you see them appear, as they do work frustratingly fast. There is the pesticide route, however there are a lot of milder forms of pest control: wiping leaves and stems with a bit of soapy water, or even placing copper tape down can deter slugs, mites, and caterpillars. Aphids are often deterred by a squirt from a spray bottle, and if mixed with a dash of mint oil this spray will keep most other insects away too.

If you lose any plants, don't give up! Growing great veggies takes time and a lot of patience. Even the most experienced gardeners are always learning new things, so don't expect to get it right the first time. Do your research and keep trying—we promise that your hard work will pay off!

We hope that by igniting your green thumb you are reminded of the healing and regenerative aspects of nature. It would be a great idea to use your new skills to connect with your neighbours and community. You could exchange seeds, let them know what works in your local soil conditions or give them herbs for dinner. Your garden is an opportunity to feel a sense of normalcy and connection with others.



Art by Kritika Rathore and Lauren Lancaster

Fighting for Creation

How Raúl Sugunananthan's Christian faith compels him to act on climate change.

There are many different reasons to fight for climate action. Some have suffered firsthand from the destruction of increasingly extreme weather events. Others feel a sense of injustice when faced with the denial and negligence of political leaders. For me, standing up for the environment is closely related to my faith.

Although I grew up attending various congregations of the Uniting Church, I have not always considered myself religious. I often felt reluctant to explore my spirituality because I could not see a place for God in the modern world. While I saw the value of community, who lifted up my family in times of need, as we did for others, I was never able to reach out and start a personal relationship with God.

Something that helped me open up to my faith is the idea of creation. Creation recognises that the world is a work of God, a concept I feel drawn to because it helps answer a deep curiosity within me—that there must be a greater reason for the existence of myself and everything around me.

Part of this creation narrative is a divine mandate to care for creation. This does not make humans superior to other forms of life, but responsible to them. My faith also calls me to love my neighbours. Whether it be

rising seas threatening the homes of Pacific Islanders, or unpredictable weather straining rural farmers, climate change has devastating impacts on real people. How can I profess a love for others when I know they are suffering as a result of a government and economic system that perpetuates environmental destruction? As long as corporations burn fossil fuels for profit and our politicians are complicit in this country, I will speak up.

Christian community has helped me put this calling into action. A discovery of faith is rarely an individual pursuit, and I have been blessed to be part of a congregation who sees their faith as a reason to pursue social justice. One experience in particular epitomises this fellowship of activism.

Last year, I co-led a team of organisers from Christian Students Uniting who had the vision of unifying the Church for the September 20 Climate Strike. Across a span of 3 months, we organised vigorously, bonding in our common goal to protect creation, and growing under the mentorship of leaders in our community. As a result of our work, over 500 members and affiliates of the Uniting Church answered our call and we marched through the streets in support of the global environmental movement, a collective

proclamation of our faith in motion. The event was not only immensely rewarding, but deeply spiritual. Mesmerised by the combined power of 80,000 voices, I felt more connected to humanity than ever before. This is religion for me—not merely a system of beliefs, but a motive for action.



Art by Elissa Sugunananthan

Intergenerational Equity is Not Enough

Ellie Stephenson thinks we can do better for future generations.

A common piece of framing used when talking about the environment is the idea of “intergenerational equity”. It appears in newspaper rhetoric and formally in environmental law. The intention behind this seems reasonable; it expresses a desire to safeguard future generations, and contrasts with the selfish attitude of the ruling class and the fossil fuels industry which prioritises immediate profit. However, I argue that this is an imperfect framing, and one which can be built upon to be more meaningful.

Intergenerational equity does not make sense where it claims that distributive justice between generations is possible and desirable. It implies that environmental assets today should be maintained for the future, however this wrongfully places moral value in static conditions. The world will necessarily change in a multiplicity of ways, and it is very difficult to create some objective measure for deciding the needs and conditions of future generations. This means that equity is impossible to accurately conceptualise or predict.

More importantly, a conception of equal conditions between this era and future generations is limiting. This perspective neglects the importance of pursuing better

lives for future generations. By focusing solely on mitigation and preservation to soften the blows of environmental destruction, though important, we miss the opportunity to build more robust and meaningful institutions which lay the groundwork for a better world. Instead, we should embrace the more holistic aspirations of the environmental justice movement. We should hold that there are certain outcomes that communities fundamentally deserve, now and in the future. These include participation and respect for intersectionality within environmental decision-making, integration of environmental outcomes with related goals such as education, healthcare and social wellbeing; incorporating solidarity with others and the establishment of accountable institutions.

We owe future generations something more creative and valuable than a preservation of current conditions.

We owe future generations something more creative and valuable than a preservation

of current conditions. We owe them an environmental movement which pursues equity in all facets of life, and a world where the cruel and exclusive excesses of our current economic system and governance are solved. It also solves the question of how much we should sacrifice to protect future generations. Emphasising the trade-off between present and future generations is an ineffective and unnecessary rhetorical move: it is immensely speculative and tends to turn people off. The environmental justice movement illustrates how we can have our cake and eat it too: by safeguarding the planet and vulnerable people in the present, we improve the environmental outcomes in the long run.

Finally, the benefit of this conception is that it can be powerfully used in response to rising ecofascism. Where ecofascism manipulates the need to protect nature to justify cruelty to humans and consolidation of unjust state power, we can reply: is this solution worth it? If we believe we owe future generations something more than conservation, that we owe them democracy and community and the ability to enjoy and treasure the environment, the answer is no. If we truly care about future generations, then we should create for them something better.

Art by Ellie Stephenson 11

In the film *Uncut Gems*, Adam Sandler plays Howie, a frenetic jeweller on the run from debt collectors and his own impending gravitational collapse. It's an arresting watch, full of claustrophobic tension. Running under the film's pulse is an orientation towards the Global South and its resources, revealing its colonialist contours the more you tap away at it. Hovering just beneath the surface, dizzying.

Uncut Gems opens onto chaos at an opal mine in northeastern Ethiopia's Wollo region. A man, badly injured, is carried out into a clamor of angry brown faces. The camera cuts inside the mine where two workers surreptitiously unearth a blue-green glimmer that drives the film: not a diamond, but surely bloody. Black labouring bodies become a disposable force, the weight of their physicality balanced neatly against the retrieval of capital for the West.

By the time the so-called black opal winds up in Howie's hands to be sold to basketballer Kevin Garnett, it carries not just the legacy of violent extraction, but also an origin narrative of mythic quasi-religiosity. (As Jordan T. McDonald motions, the fact that Garnett, a black man, buys the opal complicates the white fascination--African spirituality dynamic, pointing to black diasporic desire and its complicity in colonialist flattenings of the global south; that in trying to grasp the 'homeland', warps it.)

Salvation, granted to the West by mythic ethnic powers-that-be, is a familiar narrative: popular culture is full of black or brown figures only valuable for the wisdom they bestow onto the (white) protagonist. Watching mainstream films and TV shows becomes a running joke: "Wow, [insert PoC character] is still alive?" Even more dominant is the collar of this colonial fascination: the west as benevolent caretaker of the global south. Generous, charitable, *salvatory*. Together these ideals create an ideal extractive apparatus; a project of violence that erases itself. This violence flows along with capital, in ripples of harm, glimmering as though oil on still water.

Kathryn Yusoff has brilliantly exposed the links between geology and systemic racism. Both carry a fundamental logic: value extracted from 'inert' matter, be it rock or black labour. In her book *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None*, Yusoff writes, "White Geology makes legible a set of extractions, from particular subject positions, from black and brown bodies, and from the ecologies of place."

Yusoff frames extraction as carrying a material history of colonialism: an 'afterlife' of harm. This spans "[I]ndigenous dispossession of land and sovereignty ... through to the ongoing petropolitics of settler colonialism; of slavery ... to the current incarnations of antiblackness in mining black gold; and of the racialized impacts of climate change." These afterlives are at work in the capitalist flows

WESTERN IMAGINARIES OF AFRICAN RESOURCES

Kiki Amberber tells us to leave them in the ground.

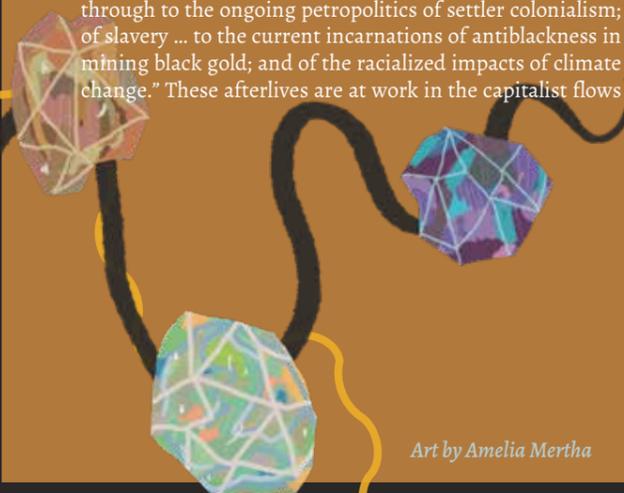
of resources exported out of Africa and into the west; not only imprinted with past violences, but creating new traumas in their wake.

These extractive flows of oil, gold, diamonds, coal and platinum pried from African soil and rock are controlled almost entirely by private overseas corporations. African nations rarely use the products or see the profits of this extraction: a combination of tax evasion by the western corporations, lack of export taxes, and low rates of African governmental shareholding. A 2016 report by the UK organisation War on Want termed these extractive practices 'the new colonialism,' invoking in the frantic rush to plunder, a second imperialist 'Scramble for Africa.' Far from being new, the western profiting off exploitative extraction has always been an active element in settler-colonial state agendas.

A landscape of extractive capitalism complicates our climate justice organising. The framework of environmental racism draws attention to the unequal spread of climate change across the world; harm arrives first in brown countries, first on brown skin. So too is the spread of environmental redress unequal. In calls for renewable energy, who and what will continue to bear the cost? The pitfalls of 'green-washing' policies that leave capitalism unchecked have been laid bare by activists such as Naomi Klein. In Africa and the global south, green capitalism remains a tool for injustice: "exploitative and destructive" in nature.

Extractive colonialism and the western imaginaries that undergird it will only be undone when we dismantle the systems that do not serve us and build new worlds in their place. Recently, Arundhati Roy conducted a teach-in, thinking through her essay *The Pandemic Is A Portal*. She reflected on the nature of this current pandemic as a harbinger of new, more unjust worlds: "national authoritarianism is colluding with international disaster capital and data gatherers and they are preparing another world for us." Can we refuse these?

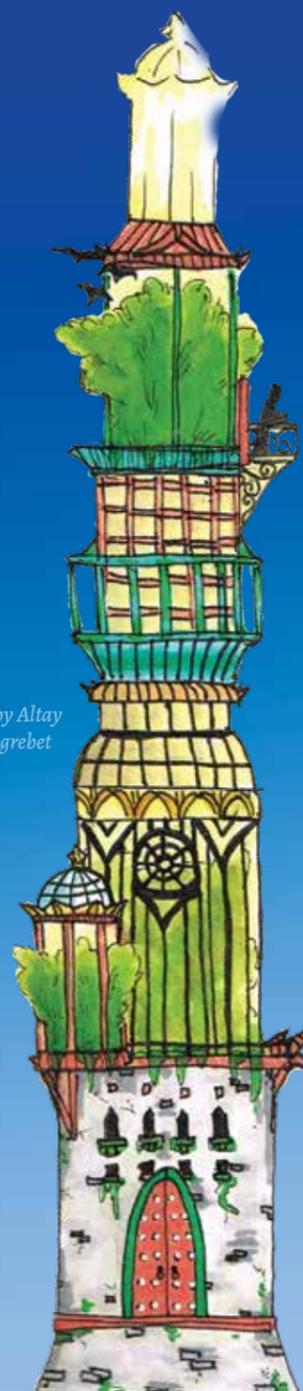
I find myself turning to the world-building strategies offered by Afrofuturism; in radical PoC autonomy (in 'F.U.B.U.' Solange sings, "All my niggas in the whole wide world / Made this song to make it all y'all's turn / For us, this shit is for us"); and pan-African resource re-distribution and solidarity (*Black Panther* for one; *Born in Flames* if you're feeling spicy). Alternative imaginaries are powerful; they are speculative tools for environmental justice. Arundhati Roy looked deep into my web-cam and said gently yet firmly: "[this new world] isn't going to be given to us like a cut fruit. We're going to have to fight for it." That's dizzying in all the right ways; spinning me around to re-orient me towards justice.



Art by Amelia Mertha

SOLARPUNK: IMAGINING A POST-CAPITALIST FUTURE

Altay Hagrebet says we no longer need to look to yesterday's future.



Art by Altay Hagrebet

'It's easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism', or so the saying goes. This encapsulates a common impasse – the inherent irreconcilability of capitalism, the system that governs our lives, and the need to avert the impending doom of climate catastrophe and ecological collapse. The phrase, popularised by the late Mark Fisher, lays the foundations for his concept of capitalist realism, the common sentiment of resignation that there are no alternatives to our economic system, that we have reached the end of the world, or of history. The most potent takeaway upon seeing past the veil of depressive stupor, however, is that other worlds are not only possible, but worth fighting for.

Yet, it is not enough to hold onto this notion in the abstract. Concrete visions of post-capitalist worlds lie right in front of us in speculative fiction and, in recent development, the sub-genre and movement of Solarpunk. Renewable technologies integrated harmoniously with the built environment – stained glass panes containing solar cells, buildings bestrewn with green gardens and foliage. Solarpunk paints a plausible world in the not-so-far future where humankind lives in harmony with ecology - without the need for a post-dystopian retreat into a 'pristine wilderness'. It is a politics of hope that rejects the alienation of industrial capitalism and atomisation of the individual. Instead, it opts for the creation of new social relations in a society where false scarcity has been abolished and self-actualisation becomes the primary form of labour.

Following in the footsteps of its Steampunk and Cyberpunk predecessors, Solarpunk examines the relationship between radical advances in technologies — in this case renewables — and how they mutually reinforce the radical transformation of society. If the Cyberpunk of the 1960s and 70s – with its imaginary of a dehumanising high-tech future – served as a dystopian warning of the current path of decay under capitalism, Solarpunk presents itself as the solution. Though initially aesthetically similar to Steampunk, it orientates itself away from the nostalgia for lost retro-futures, towards what could be.

The lineage of Solarpunk's social content stretches far back, owing much to the imaginaries and social relations of non-Western societies and the practices of Indigenous peoples. Utopianism lays the basis for its literary lineage; built upon the approximation of ideals rather than a 'flawless endpoint' or idle political action. One of the first literary examples is found in *News from Nowhere*, authored by textile designer and socialist activist William Morris in 1890. Following a socialist revolution, Morris imagines a society where labour is no longer waged, and instead is driven by leisure and self-actualisation.

Influenced from his involvement with the Arts and Crafts Movement – Solarpunk also hails the return of craftsmanship and artistry. What we see in Morris' work is the mutual importance of imagining new worlds through literature and art, and the political action needed to realise change. Later on, the writings of Octavia Butler and Ursula K. Le Guin examined the interplay between science fiction, ecology, and utopia through the lenses of Feminism and Afrofuturism.

What differentiates the recent conception of 'Solarpunk' however, is that it seeks to unify and ultimately realize an alternative to capitalism amidst the fall of 20th century socialism. One aspect heavily linked to its popularisation on Tumblr is its aesthetic unity – Solarpunk is a revolt against the capitalist realism of 'sterile iPod futurism' and the 'finance blue' of homogenous skyscrapers. Stemming from a 2014 Tumblr post, its artistic sensibilities have been tied to a renewed Art Nouveau, Afrofuturism, the films of Hayao Miyazaki, and other imaginaries that reflect the reunification of science with culture, spirituality, and nature.

The 'punk' suffix carries a quality of rebellion, for Solarpunk this is the recognition that to bring about a world that we would thrive in, as well as one where future generations can prosper – there needs to be some sort of radical uprooting of the status quo. Solarpunk serves as a sort of hyperstition; a type of fiction that seeks to manifest its existence in reality by rewriting the social historical narrative of progress. This doesn't mean it serves as a strict blueprint and nor will it autonomously arise. Hyperstitional futures form a navigating tool - one that orientates and spurs us onwards through the hope for an alternative future and the will to fight for it.

The Solarpunk movement has yet to bloom and its politics in bridging the gap between the present and future requires development. The Left's collective vision for emancipation is fragmented, especially in the sphere of environmentalism where it is overshadowed by a subconscious acceptance of ecological collapse — itself a form of capitalist realism. The futures we strive for are only conveyed in the fleeting moments of protest and prefiguration. It is time to present a coherent vision that challenges the monopoly capitalist realism has over the cultural imaginary. In these times, hope itself is a desperately needed political act. In the words of Mark Fisher, "emancipatory politics must always destroy the appearance of a 'natural order', must reveal what is presented as necessary and inevitable to be a mere contingency, just as it must make what was previously deemed to be impossible seem attainable."

YOUNG ADULT DYSTOPIAN FICTION AND CLIMATE ACTIVISM



Art by
Ellie Wilson

There are many clear parallels that can be drawn between young adult dystopian fiction and the climate justice movement. Characters often live in worlds full of violence, manipulative technology, extreme poverty, totalitarian governments and military control. A large majority of these stories attribute their repressive social structures and bleak ways of life to a catastrophic event in the past, often a war or natural disaster that completely devastated their country or continent. Memorable examples include the sun flares in James Dashner's *The Maze Runner* series or

the unspecified ecological collapse and “dark days” in Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games*.

Apocalyptic environmental disasters shape many young adult dystopian stories, creating worlds that are dangerous, oppressive and difficult to survive in. Characters regularly struggle to find food and basic living supplies or they are given barely-substantial rations by a government that subjugates and exploits them. Ecosystems are often barren; flora and fauna are extinct, leaving behind a lifeless, depressing wasteland. Extreme weather events terrorise survivors and destroy more of what little they have left. Authors paint a grievous picture of what is possible if climate change does continue unchecked, leading to many young readers understanding and fearing the results of ecological disaster.

The genre often places emphasis on identity and belonging. Whether characters feel an alliance to the geographic area they are designated to live in or a personality-themed faction they were split into (such as in Veronica Roth's *Divergent* series), the stories consistently encourage communities to unite against their enemies and resist the Orwellian states they live under. These values are often reflected in modern climate activism. Ordinary people come together to attend strikes and demand that governments and major corporations stop accelerating climate

change and take action to prevent a real apocalypse. Quotes, characters and symbols from these books feature on many posters and in chants at climate strikes; enabling relatable and meaningful ways to convey messages.

The influence of young adult dystopian fiction has already extended beyond entertaining slogans. The mockingjay symbol and three-fingered salute in *The Hunger Games*, both of which come to represent hope and rebellion in the series, are banned in Thailand for inciting political unrest. Specific films in the series are also banned in China and Vietnam and the books are banned from libraries in multiple areas of the United States.

Young adult dystopian fiction dominated the market in the early to mid 2010s. Teenage readers of the time are now young adults and of university age themselves. Recent increases in student climate activism suggest that these books may have had more influence than is recognised. Perhaps the themes that characterise this style of fiction have indirectly inspired collective action against fossil fuels and climate-denying politics. As many have repeated recently, if you raise children with stories of young people taking down corrupt systems against all odds, what do you expect them to do when faced with similar threats in the real world?

A NEW CHAPTER

Varsha Yajman reflects on her experience in the climate movement.

Joining the climate movement, I truly didn't know what to expect. But after having had the opportunity to participate in different spaces like the Australian Youth Climate Coalition (AYCC), School Strike for Climate (SS4C), and various groups at the University of Sydney, I've learned many lessons about organising that I'd never thought about before.

Having the privilege to organise is often associated with being a leader or taking authority. However, I've learned that the ability to build a network is much more important. Making sure that you and those around you have put in their share of effort is much more efficient when the group is comprised of a strong and non-hierarchical network of people. Networking and relational organising are key to a successful movement, more so than being a “leader”.

Being part of a youth movement where most people are under 18 and trying to balance HSC assessments, work and social life had some limitations. We faced difficulties with filing police reports or knowing that our

target audience often needed their parent's permto attend our actions. Leaving high school and moving into the university space feels like an entirely new world of activism. I have met people with far more autonomy to make decisions for themselves without the weight of family pressures, and in many cases, more knowledge on the climate crisis itself. It's exciting to see so many different ideas and recognise the intersectionality of the climate movement with issues of race, gender, economics and sustainability all merging into one. I've since realised that working together with similar movements around us and tapping into different demographics is a crucial part of mobilisation.

Another important lesson which applies to any space of organising is that self-care must come first. The fight for climate action can only come from sustainable activism — putting mental health above all. This can be trickier when organising in high school due to the lack of flexibility, however, in university, it fortunately exists. But ultimately in any space, burnout culture is real and prevention is certainly better than cure.

In the past couple of months during this pandemic, organisers have also had to learn the hard way that flexibility is crucial. Although online activism has always existed, shifting our major actions and training online while making sure the level of engagement is the same has been difficult. On the other hand, being forced to seek alternate ways of organising has exposed the inaccessibility of activism previously done, especially to disabled communities. Those in regional and rural areas are now able to accelerate their journey in the climate movement with a simple click of the button. It's all about building new opportunities out of the many challenges we face.

Finally, through organising in the climate movement, I've learnt that it's not just about fighting for climate action, but for climate justice. It's not about having a strike with a few demands for the government, but instead about showing solidarity with First Nations communities, workers and people on the frontlines of the climate crisis. While it can be overwhelming sometimes, I'm excited to use these lessons to better my organisational skills as I continue on my journey in the movement.

GREEN NEW DEBT?

New economics for modern activists, explained by James Sherriff.

With all the chaos brought on by COVID-19, economics seems to be having a bit of a moment. Welfare payments are doubling, billion-dollar stimulus packages are the ‘new normal’, and it would be fair to ask: “how might we pay for all this spending once the crisis is over?”

The real question though is: how do we ever pay for anything? If we can print billions at the press of a button to save the economy from a pandemic, could we not do the same to save ourselves from climate catastrophe? Indeed, we could.

The time for radical structural change has arrived, so just how do we make it happen?

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The last few years have seen a shift in the popular consciousness, and some genuinely transformative ideas are now on the negotiating table. Since a team of progressive US Democrats announced their Green New Deal (GND) in February 2019, the plan has been adapted by social movements and left-wing political parties around the world, acting as a catch cry for climate action. At the same time, Modern Monetary Theory (MMT) has emerged as a prominent—if contentious—new way of understanding the peculiarities of modern capitalism. Both have gained mainstream appeal for their focus on how capitalist economies can be made to work more sustainably – by no means a

revolutionary aim. But what makes these new ways of thinking powerful is that they are both exciting, flexible, and within reach, and can be used to pave a realistic path towards a genuinely radical future.

The strength of the GND idea is not so much in any one particular version of it, but in its broader symbolism as a redrafting of the social contract – a chance to democratically draw together the various strands of progressive thought under the banner of societal and economic renewal. In the strongest iterations of the GND, broad themes of climate action are interwoven with commitments to Indigenous justice and workers' rights, all of this rooted in clear, simple plans that would make a tangible difference to people's lives.

At the heart of the GND is a jobs guarantee. This is, arguably, the lynchpin of a just transition to a sustainable society. A jobs guarantee that provides people with secure, stable, and dignified work is not just possible, it is a moral and economic imperative.

A national jobs guarantee would bring people left behind by the transition away from fossil fuels into the fold, while addressing many of the bread and butter concerns people have with this process. It would create and provide jobs through a vastly expanded public service – from critical community work that has been devalued and defunded for so long,

to the high-skilled labour needed to rebuild public infrastructure. These jobs would be provided to anyone who asked, boosting productivity and strengthening the economy in the process.

This program, and the rest of a GND, could be paid for by the same debt that will see us out of the current coronavirus crisis – a healthy debt, that is backed by the productive capacity of the nation, and itself allows us to maintain and improve this productive capacity. This is the core idea of Modern Monetary Theory: that debt is the natural state of a modern capitalist economy, and that rather than being ‘paid back’, it only needs to be managed by controlling inflation and keeping employment high.

This moment of crisis should help us to realise that economics is no more a science than history or philosophy – rather, it is political. Just as neoliberal politics shaped the economy to work for the rich, so too can we reshape it to work for all. Guided by a strong, democratic GND and a jobs guarantee, a new understanding of the nature of modern economics should be our stepping-stone to a stronger, sustainable, eco-socialist economy.

If activists can seize on this moment, it could be an opportunity to bridge the gap between the future we need and want, and the future that has been left to us.



Angus Dermody loves being out in nature.

I believe that one of the most fulfilling activities we can engage in is hiking. To go off, on your own accord, on your own two feet, is truly a blessing. I also believe that there is no better place for this than in nature. Whether it be a 30 minute walk in your neighbourhood or a multi-day hike in rugged landscapes, walking through nature feels right. And in many ways, it has the power to improve our well-being. Perhaps this is why it feels so right?

For me, hiking is about changing my environment, replacing the monotony of suburbia with the joys of nature. Being out on the trail forces you to engage with

your surroundings, because, to be honest, it can be a little boring at times - in the best possible way! Once you've gotten away from the overwhelming hum of society you can truly appreciate your place in the world, and specifically in the natural environment. We are meant to engage with nature, the smells of the trees, the sounds of the birds, the rhythm of your walking—the pieces of the puzzle fit perfectly.

Hiking doesn't just provide an emotive response, there's an endless list of well-documented benefits to your physical and mental wellbeing. Your cardiovascular fitness will improve tremendously, as making your way through a natural landscape engages all kinds of muscles and forces your heart to work harder. The mental benefits of hiking are the most important ones, and are what distinguishes it from other forms of exercise. Getting out into nature can do so much for your mind; providing incredible stress relief and helping to ease symptoms of anxiety and depression.

But it goes both ways: you have to be kind to the environment as well. The golden rule of the great outdoors is “Leave No Trace” which

means, quite simply, leave nature exactly as you found it. Whatever you bring into nature with you, bring it out too. You could even take it further, and take any rubbish that you might find. “Leave No Trace” is an important thought when engaging with the environment; it's an all-encompassing set of principles that ensures the best outcomes for not only nature, but for the safety and enjoyment of other hikers as well. Practicing this set of ethics on a local scale can also allow you to apply them on a global scale. By protecting our local habitats in the ways that we engage with them while hiking, we can help contribute to overall wildlife conservation alongside challenging the systems that have threatened the environment.

I could go on forever about how much I love hiking. I truly believe that it is the best way to understand nature. And how can we save nature without understanding it?



Art by Kate Scott

