

Academic Workshop: The Infrastructures of Climate Crisis
Manchester, May 30-31, 2019



Participants:

Patrick Bresnihan (Trinity College Dublin), Sarah Knuth (Durham University), Nate Millington (University of Manchester), Kasia Paprocki (LSE), Nadine Reis (Universität Bonn), Jon Silver (University of Sheffield), John Stehlin (University of Manchester), Mark Usher (University of Manchester), Zac Taylor (KU Leuven), Caitlin Henry (University of Manchester), Camila Gomes Sant'Anna (Federal University of Goiás/University of Brasília), Henrik Ernstson (University of Manchester), Kathleen Stokes (University of Manchester), Kevin Ward (University of Manchester).



Figure 1 Day 1 Discussion

Academics interested in climate change, critical social science, and just transitions came together for a workshop on the “Infrastructures of Climate Crisis,” held at the University of Manchester and organized by Nate Millington. The workshop, with participants from universities in the UK (Manchester, Sheffield, Lancaster), Europe (KU Leuven, Trinity College Dublin, Bonn), and Brazil (Goiás/Brasília), was designed to collectively develop insights through open-ended discussions between a group of scholars interested in critical climate social science. With all participants broadly rooted in approaches drawn from Political Ecology and Critical Geography, and with overlapping

interests in finance, energy transitions and clean energy infrastructure, and urbanization in the global south, the workshop was designed to facilitate collaboration and develop a network going forward. The broader purpose of the collective is to trace new political, institutional and financial configurations emerging in the context of climate change and associated processes of climate change response. Central to the collective project is a focus on the costs of climate change adaptation. By cost we refer both to the human costs of climate change and its associated violences, but also novel forms of financialization, investment, and disinvestment that are accompanying the growth of the climate economy.

Towards those ends, the workshop consisted of two days of open discussion with the ultimate goal of formalizing a research network with events scheduled for the next academic year. On the first day of the workshop, participants in the workshop



Figure 2 Nadine Reis presents her research

presented ongoing research and future projects in three sessions. Thematic overlaps that were identified included the financing gap in climate change adaptation, urban/rural relationships and contestations, new financial instruments for adaptation planning, and the infrastructural costs of just transitions. Research presentations drew from ongoing research in the UK, Bangladesh, Mexico, Brazil, Uganda, and the United States, and focused on the governance of specific resources including energy, water, and personal data. As a workshop organized around the theme of decarbonization in part, much of the conversation focused on the politics of energy infrastructure and the implications of green/clean energy for existing relationships between urban/rural or centre/periphery. The day concluded with a colloquium presentation by



Figure 3 Patrick Bigger presents ongoing research

Patrick Bigger (University of Lancaster), entitled “Fighting fire with finance? Reproducing forests as rent-bearing infrastructure.” The talk drew from Bigger’s ongoing research into the fire prone landscapes of California, which tie together a changing climate with governance dynamics related to the provisioning of water and energy in the US.

The second day of the workshop consisted of open-ended discussion aimed at developing a shared conceptual vocabulary that could be used going forward. In the morning session, participants discussed overlaps in research projects and pulled out critical, comparative threads. In the afternoon session, participants focused on preparing for next steps. These include the development of a set of collaborative and creative writing prompts (designed to further collective theory building) as well as planning and preparing for follow-up events in the



Figure 4 Workshop Participants



Figure 5 Meeting with Kevin Ward

spring. Plans were made for a series of follow-up events, including a writing retreat in the spring and an academic symposium to follow. Additionally, participants met with Kevin Ward (University of Manchester) about the UK and EU funding landscape and possibilities for collaborative funding applications in the future. We concluded the workshop with a walk through Manchester’s (post-)industrial landscape, a visceral reminder of the complexity of socio-economic changes and the histories of industrialization that underpin contemporary discussions around climate change.