

Kicking the Habit: Rethinking Academic Hypermobility in the Anthropocene

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ABSTRACT

Examining the hypermobility of many “elite” academic workers, this article situates mobility within the context of higher education and sustainability, decoloniality, and institutionalized expectations for academic travel. The mobility of HEI workers is described in relation to Anthropogenic climate change (ACC), which highlights the need for: (a) critical examination of and responses to the carbon footprint of academic workers; (b) exerting pressure to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) production associated with expected mobility; and (c) deliberate changes to professional mobility approaches that take into account issues of equity vis-à-vis knowledge production, the effects of ACC, and GHG production from academic air travel. We offer an instrument—in the form of queries—to provide starting points for individual deliberations and collective actions to begin addressing these three issue areas.

Keywords: Internationalization, mobility, climate change, higher education, decoloniality

The unprecedented and destructive COVID-19 pandemic will no doubt have a profound and lasting impact on higher education institutions at the organizational, professional, and personal levels. The devastating spread of the virus around the globe provides a glimpse of the power of biological and environmental phenomena to intrude upon and fundamentally change human activity. The devastation of the COVID-19 pandemic will be a defining feature of our era, and it calls for a dramatic rethinking and overhaul of sociopolitical, economic, and cultural norms and structures heretofore considered “normal,” but which are largely sustained by the exploitation and precarity of vulnerable populations and communities.

We can only hope that the multiple disruptions to the status quo brought about by the pandemic may bring about not only danger and mortal trials but also the opportunity to reimagine and rebuild our institutions in more equitable, compassionate, and life-sustaining ways. Furthermore, the virus highlighted the

importance not only of swift, human-centered responses to global emergencies, but also the importance of preparatory and preventative action to counteract and deter future crises—significantly those linked to Anthropogenic climate change (ACC). Similarly, we believe that this disruption may offer a ‘critical juncture’ to reflect and act on humanity’s relationship to the environment—particularly as it relates to environmental degradation and the unfettered resource consumption by some, to the (unequal) detriment of all.

In this article we focus specifically on a subset of academic workers¹ whom we broadly term “Hypermobile Academic Elites” (HAEs). By this we refer to academic workers whose employment conditions, national context, socioeconomic status, social identities, geographic location, or other related characteristics places them in a privileged position within their situational context. Our notion of academic elites is built on an understanding of positionality as proposed by Torres-Olave and Lee (2019), and which stresses the polyvalent, complex nature of a scholars’ identities, and the ways in which privileged statuses can be differently foregrounded based on context. This definition intends to trouble binary, reductive, static understandings of academic workers in the so-called “Global North” and “Global South,” which tend to emphasize the positional power and privilege of the former while neglecting to engage those of the latter. For example, a researcher in an institution located in the “Global South” may be a member of overlapping professional, social, and institutional elites based on specific time-geographies. The same academic worker may experience various degrees of insiderness and outsidership based on “differences in status according to institution, discipline, gender, ethnicity and labor status, among other characteristics” from one moment to the next (Torres-Olave & Lee, 2019, p. 9). As we try to show in the article, this approach does not seek to deny the reality of geopolitical power asymmetries between nation-states or world regions resulting from deeply entrenched colonial relations. Rather, we wish to gesture toward a more nuanced language to talk about the privilege of a very specific subset of academic workers, without denying the situational, intersectional, polyvalent nature of this privilege.

Under this lens, we see HAEs as academic workers who enjoy a degree of polyvalent, context-dependent privilege, and whose mobility is seemingly restricted only by available funding and time resources (Higham & Font, 2020). In this article, we attest that there is a need to contest and imagine alternatives to the practice of academic hypermobility. Specifically, we aim to address the need to re-envision academic cultures and practices in light of urgent climate priorities. This includes tensions between, on the one hand, individual, professional, and institutional expectations to be academically mobile, and, on the other hand, the earth’s capacity to survive under existing path dependencies of continued environmental destruction and climate change. We do this while wrestling also with the tensions of individual, collective, and institutional action, and power and responsibility as it pertains to the

¹ We use the term ‘academic workers’ to include not only faculty but other knowledge workers in higher education settings, such as research scientists, lecturers, administrators, postdocs, teaching assistants, and student affairs professionals, among others.

spectrum of academic mobility. In the face of such tensions, the high GHG emissions generated by HAEs (among others) are conspicuous:

It is widely noted that the emissions of greenhouse gases triggering global warming to a large extent originate in unsustainable lifestyles among the world's more affluent minorities, mainly the so-called developed regions...[However], geographical and economic factors are not exhaustive for explaining climate injustice. The situation is complex with great inequality regarding the causes and effects of climate change largely due to unequal power relations... in material and institutional as well as normative senses. (Kaijser and Kronsell, 2014, p. 418)

In this article we want to engage with the polyvalent, contradictory aspects of privilege that come with the accumulation of cultural, social, and human capital embodied by academic workers, and the ways in which the former are imbricated in normative, institutionalized habits of hypermobility. Our topic calls for intersectional approaches to identify “factors that may determine responsibility and vulnerability in relation to climate change” (Kaijser & Kronsell, 2014, p. 422). We do this while also troubling the ways in which “political and societal institutions that regulate and create demands for transport, energy and consumption... both build on and take part in the construction and reinforcement of injustices and intersectional categorisations” (Kaijser & Kronsell, 2014, p. 426). An intersectional lens, then, is necessary “not only to look for the adverse impacts of climate change on vulnerable groups,” important as this aim is, “but to turn our gaze toward the economic elites” (Kaijser & Kronsell, 2014, p. 418) who have a disproportionate impact on climate change. This serves to illuminate and trouble norms and underlying assumptions routinely regarded as common sense, but which build on and reinforce unequal structures of power through institutional practices.

In the case of HAEs, it is vital to address how material, ideational, and normative aspects of power are reproduced through everyday behavior and practices which contribute to climate change. We suggest that academic hypermobility is tied to and reified by “common sense” institutional structures of prestige and promotion which present the “cosmopolitan” academic worker as the ideal professional. Having done so, we advocate for reimagining our relationship to academic mobility both individually and collectively: that is, we stress the need to consider our carbon footprints and our institutional handprints, respectively (Pashby & Andreotti, 2016). Consideration of issues of power and equity relating to academic mobility is equally important. At this point it is also worthwhile to note that our perspectives as the authors are embedded—as befits our professional and learning histories—within North American academic ontologies and cultures.

We begin with an overview of current discourses around sustainability and climate change in educational spaces. We consider the literature that addresses the connection between sustainability, ACC, and internationalization, and identify gaps concerning the response-ability (Haraway, 2016) of institutions and HEAs. Next, we explore the concept of “academic hypermobility” as an accelerated, intensified, and normalized version of academic mobility, where hypermobility is conceptualized as

a “habit of being” (Shotwell, 2016; Stein, 2019) embedded in multiple, overlapping, and mutually reinforcing levels of academic life and work. We examine how “academic hypermobility” reflects institutionalized norms of consumption, energy use, and transport symbolically, materially, and normatively associated with models of what it means to be a “successful” academic worker in hegemonic and colonial models of higher education institutions (HEIs) (Stein, 2019).

We contend that scholarship and HAEs must consider (a) the ways in which privilege, power, and domination contribute to the current inequities of climate change effects, as well as (b) the ways in which unequal academic mobility deepens the inequities in terms of access to knowledge production and dissemination opportunities. We examine the intersections of climate change and the academic mobility of HAEs, while emphasizing how institutional/academic norms and practices (relating to e.g., tenure, prestige, hiring, networking, revenue generation through internationalization) must take into consideration effects on the environment and climate. Asking how we might move towards more equitable, responsible, and less damaging practices reflective of our shared “finite future” (Rappleye & Komatsu, 2020), we offer a set of reflections to help academic workers recognize and embrace their response-ability in their respective spheres of action. We conclude with thoughts on the prospects of our proposed courses of action.

HIGHER EDUCATION, INTERNATIONALIZATION, & CLIMATE CHANGE

Decolonial critiques explicitly point to colonialism—as the constitutive underside of modernity—as the primary cause of climate change. The origins of coloniality are often traced back to Black enslavement and Indigenous colonization in the 15th century. Over time, however, coloniality has evolved into “a set of categorical divisions, extractive relations and ontological configurations” that coalesce into an enduring, contested, and persistent ordering of the world which “remains the price of modern existence” (Stein, 2019, p. 199). According to Stein (2019), this modern-colonial habit-of-being rests on a series of foundational tenets: (a) an ontological and epistemological separation of humans from each other and “the natural world”; (b) a global capitalist economic system that promises “endless economic growth and accumulation without consequence;” (c) the nation-state as the provider of order, security, and shared identity; and (d) a hierarchical social system that promises socio-economic mobility, as well as unconstrained autonomy and independence, as a reward for hard work (p. 200). Significantly, these principles

can only be fulfilled within a colonial ordering of the world that is premised on separation and hierarchy, through which the dominance of a particular subset of humanity is secured at the expense of all other humans and the environment itself. In other words, modernity’s emergence and maintenance is subsidised through ongoing genocide and ecocide. The implication of all this for climate change is that the modern-colonial habit-of-being is not only inherently harmful, but also inherently unsustainable. (Stein, 2019, p. 200)

Stein concluded that such decolonial critiques of the discourse of sustainability tend to be marginalized within climate change education and broader conversations on climate change. Being confronted with this lineage of death and destruction, and one's own complicity and complacency with the modern-colonial habit-of-being, is extremely uncomfortable. The result is that such critiques tend to be denied, made invisible, or rationalized away in academic circles and beyond.

At the institutional level, a growing number of colleges and universities have taken up the banner of "sustainability" by incorporating changes into their physical infrastructures, creating sustainability offices, as well as by introducing academic programs and curricula with an explicit focus on sustainability. However, scholars have questioned the extent to which these changes allow institutions to selectively and triumphantly highlight sustainability work without questioning deeply entrenched, ethically harmful, and ecologically unsustainable "habits-of-being" (Shotwell, 2016, p. 38) underpinning institutional activity, and which are inherently premised on the "ceaseless racialised exploitation and expropriation of labour, land and 'natural resources'" (Stein, 2019, p. 198).

As such, despite significant research, scholarship, and proactive endeavors taking place within HEIs to educate on and deter ACC, as organizations, HEIs "can be considered analogous to small cities with significant environmental impacts" (Klein-Banai and Theis, 2011, as cited in Davies and Dunk, 2016, p. 1). Comparing the environmental impacts of HEI internationalization activities (including the prodigious mobility of academic workers and students) with pro-sustainability initiatives highlights the necessity of a greater collaborative alignment of institutional internationalization policies on the one hand, and sustainability policies or initiatives on the other (Glover et al., 2017). Part of our intent in this article, then, is to foreground institutionalized policies and practices tied to hypermobility and explore how academic workers can begin to disinvest from and even change the harmful habits-of-being associated with them.

Environmental sustainability, a catch-all term used to describe any number of topics of ecological concern, environmental degradation, and use of natural resources, among others, is of central concern as we discuss (hyper)mobility of academic workers. As critical internationalization scholars, concern with the environmental sustainability and impact of academic activities of the academy's mobile elite calls for engagement with a variety of related topics, including the importance of education for sustainable development, higher education activities that respond to environmental issues and climate change, how academic mobility begets greenhouse gases and requires significant resource consumption, and the inequalities of resource consumption and effects of climate change. These topics are briefly discussed in the following section.

Education and Sustainability

Over the years, the United Nations has provided varied determinations of global emphases and goals, including the 1992 plans for "sustainable development," the

2000 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and the 2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These have been oriented towards the creation of a “blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet” (United Nations, n.d.). As described in both the Brundtland Report and the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, sustainable development (SD) is established as “the ability to make development sustainable to ensure that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (Brundtland, 1987, p. 16). While perhaps satisfying as a general goal worthy of pursuit, critical perspectives on this simple definition show that it leaves much to be desired.

Within the goals pertaining to SD, education is implicated as a driving force in the promotion of sustainable and equitable relations between individuals and between humans and the earth. The concepts of ‘sustainable development’ and the associated ‘education for sustainable development’ (ESD) have been used for 30 years or more in international environmental sustainability and environmental education discourses (Fien & Tilbury, 2002; Sauvé, 1996; Brundtland, 1987; UNCED, 1992). And yet, despite the valuable work done in this and other areas, these terms remain contested, complex, and in many ways ill-defined (Kopnina, 2012).

A 1993 report by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development suggested, for example, that “education is of prime importance for promoting sustainable development...” (Sauvé, 1996, p. 18). However, in a comprehensive review of the concepts of sustainable development and educational practices that might lead towards its realization (i.e., ESD), Sauvé (1996) explicates the varied *and conflicting* conceptualizations of interwoven ideas of SD and ESD. These highlight misalignment of how different actors understand terms like ‘sustainable development’, ‘education’, and even the ‘environment’, all of which are foundational for discussions of SD and ESD.

Others have offered conceptualizations of ESD as either focused on engendering behavioral change as it relates to practices impacting the environment, or alternatively, orienting learners in critically thinking about environmental issues and the ways in which humans conceptualize issues and responses to them (Vare & Scott, 2007). Jickling’s work (1992, 1994), for example, is critical of education *for* anything, highlighting concerns about an education that promotes a specific orientation as opposed to “an emphasis on autonomy and critical thinking” (Sauvé, 1996, p. 9). This is especially the case for a concept so ill-defined as ‘sustainable development.’ Just this sort of concern might be evidenced by the work of other scholars, such as Sibbel (2009), who proposes a reorientation of curricula to produce graduates who have an “understanding of emerging problems, and a commitment to reversing unsustainable trends” as future leaders (p. 79). This is further exemplified by the work of Cortes (2003), in explaining that “understanding how the natural world works and learning how to have human technology and activity mimic and live within the limits of natural systems are crucial to education for citizenship in the 21st century” (p. 18). Clearly, ESD is not a simple concept nor an approach to SD that can simply be dropped into curricula.

As an approach to the pursuit of the SDGs and other sustainability goals, ESD can be juxtaposed with the concept of ‘environmental education.’ Sauvé (1996)

explains that ESD is differentiated from environmental education (EE) wherein the latter was seen by some as “focusing too narrowly on the protection of natural environments (for their ecological, economic or aesthetic values), without taking into account the needs and rights of human populations associated with these same environments, as an integral part of the ecosystem.” (p. 8).

ESD though, is seen by others as primarily concerned with social, anthropocentric foci (in the SDGs) to the detriment of ecocentric thinking (Kopnina, 2012). This is a concern with an expansion of educational priorities from EE to its replacement by social and neoliberal prerogatives (Sibbel, 2009). For example, the SDGs include a range of issue areas, including “quality education,” “good health and wellbeing,” “decent work and economic growth,” and “responsible consumption and production,” among others (United Nations, n.d.). According to Kopnina (2012)

The key concern here is that ESD presents a radical change of focus from prioritizing environmental protection towards mostly social issues, which may or may not be related to environment. While the moral obligation in regard to the poor in the ‘developing’ world is acknowledged by most ESD theorists (e.g., Stevenson 2006), moral obligation for caring about other species or the entire ecosystems is less often part of ESD discourse. (p. 701)

EE and ESD, though overlapping and contested, are positioned to facilitate and promote potentially positive change through educative practices that highlight the need for understanding how humans affect the earth and how the earth and human actions affect humanity.

In many ways, education has been overwhelmingly conceptualized as a positive force in efforts to prompt and promote development in environmentally sustainable ways (Hopkins & McKeown, 2002). Again, though, more than 30 years after the Brundtland Report’s institutionalization of ESD as a major international project, the concept remains overwhelmingly contested both in its meaning and—a natural extension of this lack of consensus—in the methods by which ESD can and should be employed in pursuit of the sustainable development goals.

Many academic workers may identify HEIs as ahead of the curve in terms of action for and in consideration of environmental sustainability. HEIs are taking a range of actions such as conducting research into more efficient technologies to reduce emissions and environmental harm of systems and processes (Shields, 2019; Sibbel, 2009); incorporating topics of environmental sustainability in their curricula (Lozano et al., 2015; Adomssent & Michelsen, 2006); and agreeing to and performing comprehensive sustainability audit initiatives (Findler et al., 2019). Many HEIs are also engaging with issues of environmental sustainability and climate change in multidisciplinary ways not limited to environmental science programs (Androff et al., 2017; Sibbel, 2009) and making commitments to reductions and activities to improve environmental sustainability of institutional activities (Calder & Clugstone, 2003; Wright, 2004; Berkowitz & Delacour, 2020).

Despite these valuable pursuits, implementation is sometimes held back by “constraining variables” at the sub-institutional level, which is reflected in a highly

varied and inconsistent implementation of the (contested) ideals of education for sustainable development (ESD) in higher education (Cotton et al., 2009). These and other examples of HEI commitments to environmental sustainability are important and must be continued as well as consistently improved and updated, however these areas of emphasis all too often neglect consideration of the greenhouse gas production resulting from the professional mobility of the institution's HAEs. In the following section, we focus more narrowly on HEAs' habit-of-air-travel to discuss the notion of hypermobility and its imbrication in institutional structures of prestige and promotion which present the "cosmopolitan" academic as the ideal worker/professional.

Academic Hypermobility

[Institutional] sustainability practices are relatively ineffectual in the face of increased pressure from universities for academics to internationalize their careers [by participating in] new and expanded arrays of collaboration, teaching, and research practices that necessitate flying often. By sidestepping questions about why academics fly, and the routines that flying enables, sustainability policies therefore serve to legitimize the promotion of more flying.

(Glover et al., 2017, p. 9)

It is becoming increasingly impossible to ignore the many ways in which higher education and the mobility of academic workers counter positive efforts by HEIs to respond to issues of environmental sustainability and global climate change. The mobility of many privileged educators is an often-invisible factor in the situation of HEIs as prodigious emitters of greenhouse gases (GHG) (Davies & Dunk, 2016). Among much else, this complicates the assumption by many that "the answer to sustainability and development problems is education" (Pashby & Andreotti, 2016, p. 782) and forces critical examination of the ways in which HEIs can be both "part of the problem and part of the solution as well" (Vogt & Weber, 2020, p. 17).

There is considerable evidence showing that those connected with academia perceive academic mobility as a crucial component to advancement, especially for scholars (Glover et al., 2017; Ackers, 2008; Le Quéré et al., 2015). Academic mobility in the form of travels such as field research and conference participation remains an expectation for and perceived right by many HAEs; despite this, it is unequivocally a source of significant negative environmental impacts (Higham & Font, 2020; Arsenault et al., 2019; Fox et al., 2009; Reay, 2003; Burian, 2018; Burke, 2010). Unfortunately, the environmental impacts of academic workers' mobility are often under examined or ignored, both in the literature and in the everyday lives of scholars (Arsenault et al., 2019).

According to Burian (2018), traveling by air remains one of the most carbon-intensive activities an individual can undertake in terms of emissions, and "academic researchers are among the highest emitters, primarily as a result of emissions from flying to conferences, project meetings, and fieldwork" (Le Quéré et al., 2015). This is what is meant by the terms "hypermobility" and "hypermobile academics" (Glover

et al., 2017; Higham & Font, 2020). Implicating more than just teaching faculty, Fox et al. (2009) found that academic workers in a variety of roles are highly mobile and reliant on air travel as they conduct a range of activities including networking, research, training, managerial tasks, and fundraising. A general lack of awareness of the impact of the GHG production of frequent flying is certainly part of the problem and it is in part to rectify this issue that we are joining the growing chorus of scholars examining the environmental impacts of their own and their colleagues' hypermobility.

Climate change, and its anthropogenic genesis, is often seen in academia as exogenous to the activities of scholars and their professional activities (Rickards & Watson, 2020), perhaps due to the aforementioned positive efforts by HEIs and individuals to study and respond to issues arising from ACC. When acknowledged, moral justifications (whether right or wrong) for the environmental costs of our mobility can come in many forms (Higham & Font, 2020; Nevins, 2014), including the importance of one's research activities (Nevins, 2014); the necessity of international collaboration and exchange (Shields, 2019); career development exigencies (Ackers, 2008); and travel time efficiencies.

It is also crucial to acknowledge the institutional pressures for mobility faced by many academic workers (Glover et al., 2017). This may include, for example, expectations to present research at or simply attend international conferences; idolizing and rewarding the 'cosmopolitanism' of faculty, staff, and researchers (Rhoades et al., 2008); and looking favorably upon relocation (i.e., for enrollment or employment) in continued pursuit of the "best" academic institutions. These academic norms may be accompanied by a variety of cultural expectations including: (a) the idea that current or future academic workers should *not* remain at a single institution for studies and/or employment; (b) trivialization of alternative educational modalities (i.e., online learning); and (c) devaluation of new modes of collaboration and scholarship (e.g., virtual conferences, Internationalization at Home, teleconferenced field research, etc.). Other examples will surely come to mind for academic workers who face such pressures and judgements, whether or not they are or have been professionally mobile.

Hypermobility and Inequality

The lack of awareness of the GHG-production of mobility is perhaps also understandable due to the differential effects of climate change as a result of human activity. Unlike many individuals from High Income Economies who may be shielded from many, though not all, of the *current* repercussions of natural resource overconsumption and climate change (Norgaard, 2012), it is the "vulnerable, oppressed, and marginalized populations [who are] are disproportionately likely to suffer from environmental crises" (Androff et al., 2017, p. 399; EAUC, n.d.). According to Norgaard (2012) "the impacts of extreme weather events associated with climate change are disproportionately borne along the lines of gender, race and class, both within and across national boundaries" (p. 81); this unfortunate reality is made doubly problematic when noting that those who produce the highest carbon

emissions are also those who are least likely to be concerned with climate change (Norgaard, 2012).

Climate change poses outsized threats not only to those in poverty but also those on the fringes of poverty whose situations, national institutional arrangements, or livelihoods do not provide safety nets for ‘smaller’ events directly stemming from climate change (Hallegatte et al., 2015). Though it would be an oversimplification to say that the causes and impacts of climate change fall solely along national citizenship lines, it is generally accepted that “climate change disproportionately impacts people of color and low-income populations and countries” (Nevins, 2014, p. 299).

Intersecting with other inequalities, high-emissions transportation and air travel is a privilege limited to a small percentage of people. According to Nevins (2014), “the wealthiest 20 percent of the world’s population... is likely responsible for more than 80 percent of all contemporary greenhouse gas emissions...” (p. 302). When connected with academic hypermobility, Higham and Font (2020) show that approximately “15% of academics globally are responsible for 70% of conference air travel” (p. 3). We contend this 15% can be classified as HAEs. Such figures indicate the severe inequality embedded in the consumption of resources and GHG emissions of wealthier countries and individuals, including HAEs. This identifies the dual issues of (a) high emissions resulting from hypermobility, and (b) inequitable mobility among academic workers at HEIs around the world. We return to these dual issues in the next section.

DISCUSSION

We are cognizant of the critique levelled against education for sustainable development (ESD) and related climate-friendly initiatives, where historically there has been a tendency toward over-emphasizing individual behavioral change at the expense of wider social processes. Pashby and Andreotti (2016) illuminated how this focus on the individual is imbricated within a modern-colonial global imaginary that permeates and bounds how we think about the role of education relative to climate change, sustainability, and economic development. This contested but enduring modern/colonial grammar conceals “the historical and ongoing processes of racialization, dispossession, destitution, exploitation and genocide that are constitutive of the project of modernity” (p. 774) behind a teleology of benign, necessary, and desirable notion of progress.

Pashby and Andreotti (2016) caution that as this imaginary “mediates our relationship with the world,” it also “restricts intelligibility: what lies outside of it is not what we do not imagine, but what we cannot imagine from within it” (p. 773-774). Nonetheless, they argue for analyses that illuminate complicities and paradoxes and which “facilitate more self-reflexive and consciously situated decisions” in each context of application (Pashby & Andreotti, 2016, p. 775). After them, our analysis is premised on a threefold commitment to (a) intelligibility, or “making inequities and inequalities visible and articulating some of the taken-for-granted assumptions at their core;” (b) dissent, that is, “engaging in the complex task of resisting the rules, principles and precepts that reassert inequities, while acknowledging our

complicities”; and (c), solidarity, or “coming together across and with difference” (p. 775)

Equity & Mobility

As noted, our work to push back on unsustainable academic hypermobility is informed by decolonial approaches and the realization that “we remain invested in the continuity of a modern-colonial system² that is both modern higher education’s condition of possibility and the root cause of climate change” (Stein, 2019, p. 2). Accompanying our calls for a reconsideration of harmful hypermobility is our identification of the need for greater equity connected to mobility and its benefits among the world’s scholars.

Historical colonialism subjugated—and the modern coloniality of the Western academy continues to devalue—epistemologies from the Global South (Bhambra, n.d.). This, combined with limited mobility of scholars from the “Global South” (at least in relation to Western academic hypermobility [Higham & Font, 2020]) or less privileged HEIs, accentuates the need for corrective action (overall mobility reductions) emphasizing equity, not equality. That is, equity in terms of the natural resource consumption and carbon footprint of global academic mobility.

Where reductions in overall mobility for those from the Global North may be appropriate (movement from an—admittedly imprecise—‘hypermobility’ to more sparse ‘mobility’), an equal reduction of mobility for historically and contemporaneously less-mobile scholars may serve only to further the epistemic injustices of colonial suppression, subjugation, and devaluation of non-Western or less-privileged knowledges³ (Bhambra, n.d.; Handelman, 2017). Simply put, reducing the academic mobility of those with already limited professional mobility (for example to conduct research or collaborate with professional partners) risks further silencing or obfuscating the work of these academic workers.

Our critiques of Western, privileged academic hypermobility are thus (a) born from our own positions in the North American higher education landscape, and (b) necessarily Western-centric because of the degree to which hypermobility is an ‘activity’ of many Western and/or privileged academic workers. However, we suggest that the consideration of more equitable (though overall reduced) academic mobility can serve the needs of “pluriversal decoloniality” (Walsh & Mignolo, 2018, p. 2) to curb the devaluation and repression of knowledges of the less mobile. Said differently, we suggest that work to reduce mobility must be accompanied by efforts to increase access and mobility for those who are not HAEs; that is, those who have limited professional mobility and who are seeking to gain greater influence in global knowledge creation and dissemination processes.

² Again, in the words of Sharon Stein (2019), this is a ‘habit-of-being’ that is “is ethically harmful and ecologically unsustainable... premised on the denial of our entanglement and ceaseless racialised exploitation and expropriation of labour, land, and ‘natural resources’” (p. 1).

³ Our work and suggestions in relation to this equality-equity discussion relating to the Global North and Global South draws on valuable work presented by Handelman (2017), though their work focuses on economic and industrial development in ‘less developed countries’ as it pertains to high emissions and environmental degradation.

In short, reducing hypermobility seeks to engender emissions reductions from academic workers as a whole while also ensuring that remaining opportunities requiring mobility are more equitably distributed amongst all academic workers, taking into consideration different positionalities of the privileged and less privileged educators among them. What if, simplistically, it was possible to not only reduce the total number of miles flown by the world's academic workers, but also to have those miles were more equitably distributed among scholars from diverse geographical, social, economic, ethnic, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds and positionalities? If such a project could succeed, this could push back on current norms that unequally benefit the privileged and/or those in the Global North, in terms of knowledge dissemination, access to opportunities, privileged ontologies and cultural perspectives, as well as the felt effects of ACC.

Footprints & Handprints

Following Pashby and Andreotti (2016), we want to highlight the valuable notions of one's 'footprint' and 'handprint' in relation to emissions reductions and impact on institutional ecological impacts, respectively. We have utilized these conceptualizations as simplifications of one's actionable potential for reducing harm to the planet and lean into these helpful concepts not only to seek individual changes (reducing one's footprint) but also to apply pressure towards institutional and policy change (increasing one's handprint). The latter is in response, at least partially, to the issues with what Maniates (2001) describes as a pervasive "individualization of responsibility" and emphasis on "green consumption" in U.S. rhetoric vis-à-vis climate change and environmental sustainability. This clearly hearkens back to the modern-colonial global imagination introduced above.

Maniates (2001) argues that the "individualization of responsibility" is a privileging of the conceptualization of the value and necessity of personal consumer and behavioral adjustments as a primary means for combating ACC. Maniates argues that this ultimately narrows "our 'environmental imagination'" (p. 34), limiting how we might consider our collective roles and responsibilities for mitigating the detrimental effects of humans on the world's overall environmental health. Accordingly,

When responsibility for environmental problems is individualized, there is little room to ponder institutions, the nature and exercise of political power, or ways of collectively changing the distribution of power and influence in society—to, in other words, 'think institutionally.' Instead, the serious work of confronting the threatening socio-environmental processes... falls to individuals, acting alone, usually as consumers. (Maniates, 2001, p. 33)

This can be seen as a trap in which attempts to reduce one's carbon footprint are often understood as requiring new, greener *means* of consumption (e.g., purchasing a more fuel-efficient automobile, replacing single-use shopping bags with cloth sacks, etc.), as opposed to *reduced* consumption. We do not argue that these individual-level

changes are not beneficial. This highlights, though, the pervasive ways in which global capitalism, and the nation state's "promise of engineered progress" (Pashby & Andreotti, 2016, p. 774), as well as technological ACC problem-solving⁴ (Higham & Font, 2020; Kuh, 2009), built upon a foundation of "colonial-capitalist exploitation" (Stein, 2019, p. 4), are seen through "green" consumption choices to offer a glimmer of hope in combating ACC. The result is the obfuscation of more tenable means of reducing emissions and GHG-production and improving the health of the planet (Maniates, 2001). Similarly, idealistic visions of greener means of transportation in the context of hypermobility may, at this point, be less beneficial for reducing GHG production than outright reductions in mobility.

One byproduct of this individualization of responsibility is the hiding or watering-down of culpability for the heavy-hitting emitters: industries and larger institutions (Arquit et al., 2011; EAUC, n.d; EPA, n.d.a; EPA, n.d.b.), the high emissions of which are supported and normalized by policy and institutionalized histories and conventions. It is crucial, therefore, to respond to the inadequacies of approaches that rely *solely* on reducing one's individual carbon footprint with the pursuit of also increasing one's institutional handprint. The aim of this latter exhortation is to identify allies and avenues with whom and through which one might succeed in exerting power to change these conventions, norms, and path dependencies which permit HEIs to remain significant contributors of GHG (Shields, 2019).

Importantly, the ways in which environmental protection and GHG reduction are often described as the responsibility of individual actors and remedies (ignoring the impacts of bigger emitters) does not remove the need for these individual responses. Nevins (2014) describes this as follows:

Just as it would be intellectually, ethically, and politically illogical for someone to contend that individual racist behavior is inconsequential and that its scrutiny is a diversion from the struggle against structural racism, it is unacceptable to suggest that individual consumption—especially that of a grossly unsustainable sort—is meaningless and unrelated to dys-ecologism and its reproduction. (p. 307)

As this suggests, work in both areas (the footprint and handprint) is extremely important. Not only will individual changes make a difference in terms of GHG production, they may also increase knowledge of ACC issues and engender more sympathetic and motivated efforts to take on the policies and industries contributing so heavily to GHG production (Crumley-Effinger et al., forthcoming).

Finally, we see the handprint-footprint binary, in the context of this paper, as functional both in micro (professional), meso (academia and higher education), and macro (civil-social) spheres. As academic workers we may seek to reduce our individual, academic carbon footprint while also seeking to enhance our institutional handprint as part of our respective HEIs and sundry professional organizations to strive for new norms and systems that will reduce larger GHG-producing activities.

⁴ See Caset et al., 2018 regarding the "technological hoax."

Furthermore, as individual citizens we must embrace individual changes that reduce our personal carbon footprints (without falling into traps of “green consumption” [Maniates, 2001]), while also using available civic or social privileges and power to “alter institutional arrangements” (Maniates, 2001, p. 38) that facilitate and empower larger, high-consumption and high-emission industrial GHG producing activities. Again, how our varying levels of power and influence—whether as an academic worker, HEI member, or individual citizen—are positioned to push such changes will vary greatly depending on many factors pertaining to (intersectional) positionalities and contexts. The aim is not equal work or impacts in this respect, but instead a more equitable distribution of efforts in pursuit of more environmentally conscious and healing individual, institutional, and industrial activities.

An Instrument for Action

We have identified (a) the need for individual-level professional reductions of mobility to reduce our GHG footprints resulting from academic work. This is accompanied by an exhortation to (b) increase our handprint to influence institutional norms and conventions that currently expect and reward GHG-intensive hypermobility for many academic workers. Finally, we (c) emphasize the need for reflexive and deliberate consideration of the ways in which these prior two calls to action must be balanced with the currently inequitable distribution of mobility opportunities and the negative consequences of ACC, differential access to professional mobility, and the devaluation of local cross-cultural experiences, among others. In foregrounding these ideas, we work from the premise that “[w]e don’t just have a knowledge problem – we have a habit-of-being problem” (Shotwell, 2016, p. 38).

The disruptions of the current pandemic present us with an opportunity to develop and nurture alternatives to this environmentally destructive “habit-of-being” in the form of these three (a, b, and c) aims. The following queries are presented as our first foray into the development of an instrument to pursue these aims (*Table 1*). We suggest that these queries can provide starting points for individual deliberations and collective actions to begin addressing the issues we have highlighted. We acknowledge that these queries do not speak to all professional contexts, nor do they provide straight-forward, immediately applicable actions for interested parties. We have refrained from greater specificity so as to provide space for individuals to determine paths and connected ideas that are not hampered by our specific contexts and positions. Instead, we offer these queries as a foundation for continued work by HAEs and academic workers to (a) confront personal-professional GHG emitting activities, (b) pursue collective actions to alter institutional norms glorifying or requiring hypermobility, and (c) seek to redress the inequalities of academic mobility that position some academic workers as HAEs while others’ voices are silenced or obfuscated by lack of mobility opportunities. We hope that these queries will elicit conversation and consideration of these three overarching aims, and that subsequent sharing and wrestling with these queries will yield valuable courses of action for a diversity of the world’s mobile academic workers.

Table 1. Queries to Elicit Action

Reducing: Individual Carbon Footprint

- Where, at the intersection of my professional mobility opportunities, are there opportunities for reducing my carbon footprint?
 - What room and responsibility do I have for re-imagining ways to progress in my field that are less reliant on hypermobility in order to reduce the environmental impact of my current ways of being?
 - How do the accumulative effects of my privileges, opportunities, and experiences, position me and my hypermobility in relation to academic workers who started (are starting) from a different point or global / political location?
 - For field work, collaboration, networking, and learning processes that traditionally require flying, how might I reconsider less carbon-intensive alternatives?
-

Increasing: Institutional Handprint

- In what ways are potential re-imagined pursuits (or changes in my mobility behaviors) bound or hindered by institutions of which I am a part?
 - How is hypermobility of academic workers condoned or expected within the institutions with which I am associated?
 - What concrete actions are within my sphere(s) of influence in service of reimagining “common sense” behaviors, expectations, and norms of HEIs that have historically been at odds with climate justice imperatives (or attempts to reduce hypermobility)?
 - With whom can I collaborate to strive for institutional changes?
-

Balancing: Power & Prestige vis-à-vis Hypermobility

- How does my hypermobility and position as an academic worker impact (e.g., support, subjugate, obfuscate, contest) the work of others?
 - From what source(s) does my hypermobility stem? Is/are this/these sources available to differently situated (nationality, geography, language, etc.) academic workers?
 - How does my HEI / professional association support academic workers who are currently less mobile than I?
 - How can my efforts and actions demonstrate solidarity with academic workers in more precarious situations, be it in terms of work relations, positional power, career stage, geopolitical status?
 - Do such solidarity actions call for my relinquishing something of value to my self-image or status? Are there less harmful options I can adopt and advocate for in my sphere of influence?
 - How should I grieve this loss? Can I find comfort in opting out of habits-of-being that are harmful to myself and others?
-

CONCLUSION⁵

With an eye on our collective “finite future” (Rappleye & Komatsu, 2020), the normativity of GHG-producing academic hypermobility, and the catastrophic human and environmental consequences of ACC, critical questions must be asked of the current status quo of internationalization in many HEIs and the mobility of HAEs. In the words of Vogt and Weber (2020), “with new urgency, the old question arises as to whether science can be content with analyzing the world, or whether it should also immediately strive to change it. Is the role of science mainly that of an observer or an actor? What role do universities play in the society?” (p. 4). We complicate the challenges of our proposal by also arguing that despite the high emissions and GHG production activities concomitant with many internationalization strategies, there remains value and potential for internationalization to contribute to mitigating and deterring ACC.

Universities may be part of the problem, but they can be part of the solution as well. If they are to be driving forces for a more sustainable future, HEIs must “undergo a cultural revolution regarding the concepts of rationality, freedom, wealth, and progress” (Vogt & Weber, 2020, p. 17). Responses to the world’s problems require collaboration and international knowledge and educational exchange, hinting that solutions to large problems such as climate change, global health pandemics, and isolationist nationalism, among others, will come from interaction and cooperation that is not bound by national borders. So, while it is not straightforward, we believe that internationalization has an integral role to play facilitating international collaboration to confront the challenges our world faces.

Despite this, we believe that there are questions to pose, conversations to have, and sacrifices to make in the name of the planet’s health. This article and the introduced instrument represent a collection of ideas that identify some of these potential sacrifices. Yet these sacrifices may also help redress some of the environmental issues identified here. We note, however, that these changes will likely benefit some more than others, so, in addition to attempting to ease the environmental pressures on the earth, we must seek equity within our field(s) so that the necessary but challenging personal-professional repercussions of these sorts of changes are not unduly felt by those with the least power, those in vulnerable positions, or the newest scholars, to name a few.

Such changes may also create new space for problem-solving capacity. For instance, more equitable balancing of mobility opportunities for Indigenous academic workers could highlight (or remove barriers to sharing insights from) Indigenous

⁵ Accompanying our conclusion, we offer an energy consumption and emissions statement (ECES). An ECES or environmental impact statement is used to describe how scholarly activities may incur environmental costs and are limited to those activities that were undertaken in the course of research and preparation of a study that otherwise would not have occurred if the study were not conducted (Crumley-Effinger et al., forthcoming). In the case of this study the ECES is not a comprehensive, quantitative calculation or approximation of GHG emissions or energy consumption, instead it is a qualitative description of the energy consumption activities from our study. For both authors, this consists of energy usage in the form of personal computers, lighting, internet access, cloud storage, and climate control for our workspaces. The desk research for this project did not require energy- or resource-intensive fieldwork or travel and relied solely on searching, reading, writing, and discussion using digital systems.

knowledge systems. These knowledge systems have often been subjugated by the modern-coloniality of the Western HEI (Stein, 2019), so more equitable sharing of mobility benefitting Indigenous scholars could reverse impediments to their inclusion as decision-makers and offer new ideas and insights to the (environmental/ACC, political, humanitarian, etc.) conundrums and emergencies we face today (Gurung, 2002; Stiles, 2002; Sauv , 1996).

The possibility of severely curtailing our own personal-professional mobility will likely include mourning: mourning the loss of significant prior access to adventure, scholarly opportunity, networks, development experiences, and more. As such, we offer the wise words of Donna Haraway (2016):

Mourning is intrinsic to cultivating response-ability: Mourning is about dwelling with a loss and so coming to appreciate what it means, how the world has changed, and how we must ourselves change and renew our relationships if we are to move forward from here. In this context, genuine mourning should open us into an awareness of our dependence on and relationship with those countless others being driven over the edge of extinction... The reality, however, is that there is no avoiding the necessity of the difficult cultural work of reflection and mourning. This work is not opposed to practical action, rather it is the foundation of any sustainable and informed response. (p. 38-39)

We would mourn these losses as well but see them in the context of the possibility of relinquishing some privileges to support the work of others; reduce the unequal effects of contemporary climate change repercussions; and respond to the grave climate emergencies that lay ahead.

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