Reframing aviation to ensure a safe landing and lay the tracks towards a fair planet
Chapter One, the **Introduction** (p. 5), describes the objectives and approach of this guide and the aims of the larger project it is part of. Start here if you want to explore the concepts this reframing project is grounded in. If you want to know why it is so important to campaign for a reduction of air traffic, what its climate and social impacts are, and how public opinion is evolving, read **Chapter Two: The Climate Crisis and Aviation’s Role** (p. 13). It’s also a good place to start if you are new to campaigning against aviation, as it provides facts and figures on why an expanding aviation industry is incompatible with a thriving planet and makes a case about why, to be successful, it matters to use the lens of climate justice. If you are looking for inspiration to broaden your climate campaigning, delve into the new narratives and associated stories in **Chapter Three: Tracks Towards a Fair Planet** (p. 37). This chapter illustrates what a new economy based on wellbeing, care and a sustainable mobility* system could look like. It also provides five **new narratives** (p. 41) that make up the core part of this guide. And finally, if you are ready to take action and help others imagine a new way of living, working and being together, **Chapter Four: How to Use the New Narratives** (p. 73) outlines useful tools and practical advice for reframing aviation and making the case for why we must now lay the tracks towards a fair planet and a wellbeing economy.

* Throughout the guide we talk about ‘mobility’ rather than ‘transport’, to highlight that transport is not an end in itself but a tool to satisfy needs.

**Narratives and how to find them**

The core of this guide is our five narratives about the problems with the aviation industry and the way to a better mobility. You can find them from page 41.

- **Plane Greedy:** About how the airline industry puts its own profits above the future of people and planet (p. 42).
- **Common Destination:** About why, on our shared planetary home, we don’t need more air traffic and tourism to thrive (p. 46).
- **Green Means Grounded:** About why industry promises are just green lies and how mobility can become truly sustainable (p. 52).
- **Safe Landing:** About why people working in aviation need a planned descent of the industry and how we can put the future on track (p. 58).
- **Enjoy the Journey:** About alternatives to flying and why we will enjoy the journey more with them (p. 62).
This guide seeks to help escape this trap and provide readers with a toolkit to cast aviation in a light that illuminates its realities: the inequality of aviation within and across borders, the lives and livelihoods destroyed through airport expansion and industry offset schemes, the greenwashing efforts of an embattled aviation industry hanging onto the status quo, and – most importantly – what is to be gained from laying the tracks for more equitable and climate-safe mobility systems around the world.

The pages of this guide serve as a toolkit for campaigners and organisers to help reframe our collective understanding of aviation in the global economy. It aims to support better storytelling about air transport and the wider impacts of aviation on people and the planet. It is about driving change, and connecting with diverse and various audiences in a positive and meaningful way. And finally, it is about showing that a better world is possible and that there are alternatives: to air transport, to the current exploitative economic system, and to unsustainable ways of life.

What do we mean by ‘reframe’? We mean that if the commonly held mental image of flying is one that is alluring, our task is to shift that frame of thinking to one that realistically incorporates the harm aviation is causing to people, workers, communities and the planet. This means carefully considering how to speak, write and visualise the aviation industry in order to enable people to make a deliberate choice of how they think, feel and act in relation to it.

We all have images in our minds that can incite strong emotional feelings, including those related to the aviation industry and flying. These feelings can be positive, neutral or negative, but they can also be complex, conflicted and change over time in response to social pressures, political moments or our understanding of the world. The point is that what shapes how we feel about something has certain roots; it has been shaped or ‘framed’, often by things that we might not be consciously aware of, like media coverage, advertising and marketing.

Now is the time to embark on a reframing journey. In 2020, air traffic came to a near halt for some months due to the pandemic, and airlines were plunged into crisis. During the first year of the Covid-19 pandemic, the number of daily flights fell from almost 110,000 to less than 50,000, on average.1 Instead of using taxpayers’ money to bail out airlines, it would have been a perfect chance for the world’s governments to pull the ripcord and change course towards a fairer and more sustainable mobility system. If you weigh the harmfulness of air transport against its benefits, and if you take the urgency of addressing the climate crisis seriously, there should have been no other choice. Yet governments didn’t take this opportunity.

But why? While air traffic is not unique in receiving government support during the pandemic, the amount of public funds it did receive is a reflection of the wider flaws of our current economic and mobility systems. Many of these bailouts were handed to the industry without any requirements to change, despite the aviation industry embodying so many of the injustices behind the climate crisis and social inequality. It is an industry that is constantly accelerating and expanding, primarily serving a small and wealthy fraction of humanity to the detriment of the majority.

In 2022, Russia’s war against Ukraine and its economic and energy supply consequences show once again how vulnerable to shocks and crises the fossil fuel-based energy system and the capitalist economic system as a whole are. We need more cooperation and solidarity to reach our common destination: a peaceful, just and sustainable world.

Yet aviation has become a core part of a mobility system that is detached from the needs of most people and the limits of the living planet. With this guide, we hope to equip as many people as possible with the tools to reframe aviation and share empowering, positive stories about how to steer aviation towards a safe landing and lay the groundwork for a new economy.
OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

A theory of change describes what we think needs to be done to bring about desired changes in society, and what our role is in this process. It is helpful for activists and civil society organisations when they are drawing up big strategies and deciding on concrete actions. The theory underlying this guide focuses strongly on the power of discourse, the importance of big narratives: how do we think and talk about the world and what influence does this have on concrete political and social change? Our world is not determined by thoughts and language alone. Concrete actions, real institutions and physical infrastructures matter. Nevertheless, one thing is certain: we must first have a vision of what a better world could look like before we can build it.

We do not subscribe to the false division of individual behaviour change and system change. The urgency of the climate crisis, and the scale of change that is required, means that the privilege of choosing one over the other has long since passed, especially for those in the Global North. We need both – not only because they are both impactful and important in driving change, but because they reinforce each other: how individuals act and how our systems look like are inherently linked; systemic change is in part constituted by many acts of individual change, via social and cultural dynamics, while systems in turn reinforce certain types of behaviours and circumscribe the scope for individual change. Individuals are embedded within and across multiple systems, and are shaped by them as well as exerting influence on them as citizens, users and, crucially, social actors. Our approach seeks to enhance agency by empowering and connecting communities across regions and contexts, triggering systemic change.

WE WANT TO ...

→ achieve real social change that moves us towards a society and economy that allows everyone to thrive for generations to come. We focus on aviation as a particularly grave example of harmful climate injustice;

→ shift what is politically possible, what is considered beneficial in society and what needs to be left behind;

→ strengthen and connect narratives that can contribute to such change;

→ increase and strengthen the knowledge and skills needed in our networks to communicate effectively;

→ help and work together with communities living on the frontlines of the climate crisis;

→ support the most affected groups in spreading their stories and winning their struggles

TO ACHIEVE THAT WE ...

→ scrutinise dominant narratives and highlight which values, beliefs and stories are underlying them;

→ create positive narratives that strengthen our own values, visions and goals in a way that resonates with people;

→ collaborate with partners who all have their unique experiences and strengths and learn from each other;

→ work with and listen carefully to people and groups who have been marginalised, learn from them and try not to reproduce inequalities;

→ create spaces for exchange and mutual learning, in our networks and projects and beyond;

→ spark and perform concrete actions to make our narratives tangible and draw attention to our stories and struggles;

ABOUT THE PROJECT

The Reframe, Rethink, Reshape project is led by Stay Grounded and aims to bring together the experience, diversity and breadth of the Stay Grounded network with insights on transformative climate communication. This guide was written by Stay Grounded together with the New Weather Institute. Partners in Spain (Ecologistas en Acción), France (Résistance Climatique) and Germany (ROBIN WOOD) supported the process with their expertise and have also translated the guide into Spanish, French and German while adapting the content to their particular needs and local context.

From the beginning, it was important that this project be oriented towards the requirements and needs of those who will work with the guide, and that it includes their expertise. While this project is Europe-focused, we also wanted to take a global perspective as possible on the issues to ensure the guide is useful for a diverse and expansive movement of active citizens, community leaders, change makers, and climate communicators. We are, however, conscious of our limitations. As such, much care was taken to include perspectives outside of the project’s European partners, and to acknowledge the realities of frontline communities globally. This was accomplished in part through multiple feedback rounds and interviews with additional experts, with a focus on voices from countries in the Global South.

ABOUT STAY GROUNDED

Stay Grounded is a global network consisting of more than 180 member organisations. These include local airport opposition initiatives, climate justice groups, NGOs, trade unions, academics, groups fostering alternatives to flying, and organisations that support communities struggling against on-the-ground offsetting projects or agrofuel plantations.

The network started to form in 2016, the year in which a very weak global strategy to target aviation’s climate impact (CORSIA) was launched by the UN’s aviation body ICAO. At different airports around the world, protests were organised simultaneously, and it became clear that building alliances is hugely important in order to exchange experiences, support each other, come out of the shadows and involve more stakeholders. It showed that local airport struggles (often framed as ‘not in my backyard’ conflicts) are not isolated cases, but that they are connected with the massive growth of aviation globally, the unfair subsidies of its industry and the proposal of false solutions like offsetting and agrofuels.

A modal shift of mobility can only be achieved by involving more and more groups and individuals to build pressure from below both locally and on a bigger scale by resisting, transforming and creating alternatives. In 2018, the network went public and since then it has grown steadily and has organised several international campaigns and days of actions.

Find out more at: stay-grounded.org

* The conceptual ‘Global South/Global North’ terminology used to describe early industrialised regions respectively poorer regions of the world originates from an academic discourse and is ambiguous, which is why we ourselves recommend avoiding it where possible and suggest naming specific countries or places instead. Moreover, justified criticism can be made of the rhetorical division of the world into two parts. Nevertheless, because of its analytical value, we resort to the terms in a few cases.
Language matters: it is how we make sense of the world around us. All social and political struggles are competitions over people’s hearts and minds, and language is key to winning. Facts are important too, of course. But when presented without considering the bigger picture they are part of, even the most shocking statistics are ineffective – no matter how much they reinforce our own ideas and goals.

Throughout this guide we use some terms frequently. They are: narrative, story, framing, and metaphor. All these terms are important for campaigners and activists but they are often understood differently, play into each other and sometimes overlap.

**A narrative** is a system of stories that is based around some central ideas and beliefs. Narratives are created through stories and have to be actively sustained. They are extremely powerful: people understand narratives at gut level and they do not need to be explained. Unlike stories, narratives do not have a concrete start or finish: they are ongoing, developing and open to interpretation. One narrative we often see is that economic growth can become “green”, a claim which is not supported by evidence. 

Some narratives are deeply rooted in our cultures and are vital to how whole societies and economies are structured and organised. These are often referred to as meta-narratives, grand narratives, world views or common sense. One example of a meta-narrative is ‘progress’: the belief that ‘humanity’ is constantly improving and that this happens primarily through technological developments, innovation and entrepreneurialism. It is some of these narratives that play into ‘discourses of climate delay’ which are used to delay action against the destruction of our planet, research shows. 

**A story** is a concrete account of an event that happened to someone or something, real or imaginary. It touches on the how, when and where of a situation. Unlike a narrative, a story is a closed account with a clear beginning and end. Stories have protagonists and antagonists, they can describe struggles of good over evil, and can include lessons and advice for those that hear them. They can draw images and foreshadow the future. Stories can convey ideas, values, beliefs and emotions. They also can – and should – be entertaining, engaging and fulfill the human urge to re-tell them, over and over again.

The organisation Narrative Initiative explains the relation between narratives and stories like this: “What tiles are to mosaics, stories are to narratives. The relationship is symbiotic; stories bring narratives to life by making them relatable and accessible, while narratives infuse stories with deeper meaning.” 

Framing describes the process of embedding information, events and topics within interpretive structures. Done consciously, framing can present facts in accordance with certain values and narratives. The effect of frames has been extensively studied, from neuropsychology to applied linguistics, and shows that certain terms and expressions activate patterns of interpretation and connections in our brains. These patterns determine how we perceive information: for example, the way a question in an opinion poll is phrased may lead respondents to answer it in a certain way. As this happens subconsciously, it is highly relevant for political communication to express messages in a way that aligns with values and campaign demands. But, unfortunately, this is often hard to do. Powerful actors, with substantial resources, are often able to push their frames, almost unchallenged and unhindered. This has a pervasive impact, where the frames of powerful actors are reinforced and reproduced carelessly.
The practice of reframing was popularised by George Lakoff in his book Don’t Think of an Elephant10, which explored how political framing can be used to sway and shape public opinion and people’s political allegiances. It has roots in the 1970s and early 1980s interest in linguistics and postmodern theory that through ‘deconstruction’ sought to reveal the particular underlying mechanisms that create our sense of reality and why we think of some things as ‘normal’. For example, imagine if every work of great philosophy used the pronoun “she” to represent a typical person.

When reframing something, we are trying to change the discourse surrounding it and all the meanings attached to that specific way of seeing the world. Reframing is a process where you help others to think and understand subjects, issues or ideas in a different way. It is an invitation to see the world from a new perspective as our imagination is freed from the constraints of the status quo. To change the world, we must be able to identify ways that it can be different – and often it can just be a matter of perspective.

We use two metaphors throughout this publication: guiding aviation towards a safe landing* and laying the tracks for a fair planet** with sustainable mobility and economic systems. With the first metaphor, we describe how the aviation industry must come down from its current altitude and that a safe landing, including a just transition for people working in the industry, is still possible. The alternative – if we continue flying as high and as fast we are – is an inevitable crash. In other words, the intended growth of the aviation industry is not sustainable and it must shrink, either by design – or by disaster.

The second metaphor makes clear that our mobility and economic systems are something that people can actively shape, and not something that is unchangeable: we can lay down new tracks that lead us toward a sustainable and liveable future for all – it is up to us.

SOURCES

7. Lakoff (2004): Don’t Think of an Elephant!
10. Lakoff (2004): Don’t Think of an Elephant!
12. Think of an Elephant 10, which explored the work of great philosophy used the pronoun “she” to represent a typical person.
The climate crisis is escalating ever faster and aviation is making a significant contribution to it, although it only benefits a few people in the world. Here are the most important facts about the climate crisis, its injustices and the role aviation plays in it.

Flying is the fastest way to heat up the planet — and it has become normal for a relatively small part of the world’s population, while even fewer profit from it. The excesses of the aviation industry come at the cost of the majority, whose coastlines are disappearing, their skies filled by air traffic and pushed off their land by ever-expanding airports, oil extraction, or agrofuel plantations (see story on p. 56). Most of these communities will never benefit from this growth, which comes at the expense of the rest of the living planet.

Most of us understand that things cannot go on like this. But we can’t achieve real change if we act alone. That’s why we need to come together to make a difference and to win. This is as true for air transport and mobility, as it is for all other areas of the global economy. It takes many different acts: changing your own behaviour and talking to others about it, organising, making good political choices, co-creating alternatives and taking a risk to protect the lives and livelihoods of people today and in the future. It is not too late to act, but we must move fast. Now is the time for action.
The importance of achieving climate justice and leveraging the current desire for change is brought into sharp focus when you consider the excesses of the aviation industry. Aviation’s inequity of access, the environmental damages, health risks and social consequences of its continued expansion, as well as the ownership structures that prop it up allowing a small minority to reap the profits, are all illustrative of the injustices, oppressions and wrongdoings of the global economy.

But to successfully reframe aviation, you must be able to answer the simple question “why aviation?”. To help you do this, the following section sets out the evidence of the realities of both the aviation industry and global air traffic, providing readers with the latest science, thinking and statistics to argue impactfully and proactively about why we need a safe landing for the aviation industry to stop climate catastrophe.

Relative to the size of the aviation industry and the number of people that use it, its environmental impact is enormous and its continued expansion is rapidly eating up our remaining carbon budget. In 2018, the best estimates for aviation’s overall contribution for that year to global heating was 5.9%.

If aviation was a country it would be between the 5th and 7th biggest emitters, just behind Japan and ahead of countries like Germany and South Korea.

Aviation’s climate impact is more than just carbon

For years, the aviation industry claimed that the sector was responsible for only 2% of man-made carbon emissions – a number consistently cited to downplay both the impact of aviation and the need for action. In fact, aviation’s CO₂ emissions alone are significantly higher – amounting to 2.4% of all human-caused carbon emitted globally in 2018.

When the CO₂ emissions from the production and distribution of jet fuel are included, this figure rises to 2.9%.

But aviation’s total climate impact is caused by more than just carbon. Burning kerosene at altitude also generates contrails, induced cloudiness and nitrogen oxide derivatives that, although short-lived, are known to increase aviation’s contribution to global heating. When you consider these non-CO₂ climate impacts, aviation’s responsibility for global heating is approximately three times higher than CO₂ emissions alone.

Adding on flying’s non-CO₂ climate impacts, it has been calculated that in 2018 aviation’s contribution reached 5.9% of the heating effect of all the human-caused greenhouse gas emissions of that year. Overall, aviation is responsible for 4% of global heating to date.
THE INEQUALITY OF AVIATION

The global emissions share from aviation becomes even more problematic when you ask the question, ‘who flies?’ The industry’s advertisers and marketers would like you to think that the answer is ‘most people’ – but it really isn’t. Not only is flying the most energy-intensive mode of transport available to humanity, it is also the most unequal – in terms of cost, restrictive immigration policies and accessibility to air travel options.12 The act of taking one flight can emit as much CO₂ as many people do in an entire year.13 While estimates vary, flying is accessible to only a small fraction of humanity with approximately 80% of the global population having never flown in a commercial aircraft.14 In contrast, in 2018, just 1% of the world’s population was responsible for 50% of global aviation emissions.15

10 countries are responsible for about 60% of total aviation CO₂ emissions and 30 countries for 86%.16

What’s more, 19% of aviation’s emissions in 2019 came from passengers flying in business and first-class, which is more than all the emissions that came from air freight in the same year (15% of all aviation emissions).17 And, on a yearly basis, the figures are even more stark with only 11% of the world’s population taking a flight in 2018 and only 4% flying overseas.18

With such a small fraction of humanity flying, and aviation already taking up a significant chunk of global emissions, it’s clear that the frequency of flights taken is an important factor. In the UK, one of the nations whose citizens fly the most internationally,19 only 1% of the population took a fifth of all the overseas flights in 2018.20 British frequent fliers are often wealthy, with a household income of over £115,000 a year and the ownership of a second home abroad – often in a tax haven – being the strongest predictors of frequent flying.21 A similar pattern is repeated in every major aviation market worldwide for which data is available,22 and contrary to aviation industry narratives around the ‘democratisation’ of air travel,23 these inequalities have grown as the industry has expanded.24

Other characteristics that influence how often someone flies are gender and migration background.25 To this day, freedom of movement is still determined by origin. A Japanese passport allows you to enter 192 countries without a prior visa, while a Somali passport allows you access to 34 countries and an Afghan passport allows you to enter just 26 freely.26 Gender also determines access to flights, with men flying more frequently than women and making up the majority for business trips.27 Gender inequality impacts airline employees too. In 2018, travel group TUI reported the largest gender pay gap of any UK company, with women earning 56.9% less than men.28 This, combined with dress codes and other codes of conduct for staff that are often perceived as sexist, led the Guardian to ask: “is aviation the least progressive industry?”29 Only 3% of aviation industry CEOs30 and only 5% of commercial pilots are women.31

AIR TRAFFIC IS THE MOST UNEQUAL Mode OF TRANSPORT

No mode of transport is more unjust than aviation. A 2020 study estimates that only 2% to 4% of the world’s population flew internationally in 2018. It concludes that 1% of the global population, a small minority of wealthy frequent flyers, is responsible for 50% of commercial aviation emissions.


PRIVATE JETS AND SPACE FLIGHT

When it comes to flying, there’s nothing more unjust than private jets – perhaps with the exception of billionaires’ space flights. In 2019, there were 21,979 active private jets worldwide, with 71% of these based in North America. Europe accounted for another 13% or 2,760, of which 495 were in Germany and 341 in the UK. Africa, on the other hand, has the smallest fleet worldwide with about 2% of all private jets.32 Emissions from private jets have recently risen faster than those from regular air traffic, a trend that the global pandemic is accelerating. This is particularly destructive for our climate, as private jets are between 5 to 14 times more polluting per passenger than scheduled flights. They are also more often used for short-haul flights, which are particularly unnecessary, because there are low-carbon alternatives.

PRIVATE JETS: DESTINATION CLIMATE DISASTER

Regular flights are bad for the climate, but private jets are much worse in terms of per capita emissions. And they are extremely unevenly distributed. In 2019 there were 21,979 active private jets worldwide. Most were registered in North America, where the US is home to roughly 89% of the total jets on the continent.


Space travel is an unnecessary step for humanity, but a decadent race for a few egotistical billionaires. This latest illustration of obscene pollution and inequality can emit 250-1000 tonnes of CO₂ for an 11-minute flight. In contrast, a large part of the world’s population causes less than one tonne of CO₂ per year per capita. This means that one billionaire damages the climate as much with an eleven-minute flight as several individuals from the poorer part of the world’s population do during their entire lifetime.34
AVIATION HAS CONTRIBUTED MORE TO GLOBAL HEATING THAN ENTIRE CONTINENTS

MILITARY AVIATION

While reliable statistics on military aviation emissions remain scarce, it is estimated to account for 8% to 15% of aviation’s total climate impact. The carbon footprint of the military, and the industries that provide their equipment, has successfully eluded scrutiny for decades and continues to be excluded from virtually all international climate obligations currently in place. The US army provides an especially shocking example. In 2017, the total greenhouse gas emissions of the US military were greater than the climate emissions of entire industrialised countries, such as Portugal or Sweden, with jet fuel emissions from virtually all international climate negotiations. In 2017, the total greenhouse gas emissions of the US military were greater than the climate emissions of entire industrialised countries, such as Portugal or Sweden, with jet fuel emissions alone. The pre-Covid annual share of aviation’s emissions was even higher due to it’s rapid growth.

The public debate around the health impacts of flying is mostly centered on the risks posed to passengers. For instance, long-haul flyers often face higher exposure to issues such as Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT) or what’s more commonly known as ‘economy-class syndrome’. Scientific studies have found that the risk of developing DVT increases by 12% if just a single flight is taken each year, with risks especially high for those with pre-existing health conditions. Another study looking at the health impacts of flying found that “consistent disruption of body rhythms from jet lag and travel fatigue can lead to cognitive decline and psychotic and mood disorders, sleep disorders, and possible heart disease and cancer.” What’s more, the low humidity found on aircraft can reduce the effectiveness of our bodies’ natural defence mechanisms, such as drying up mucus, making us more susceptible to getting sick. Catching a cold, for example, is 100 times more likely after taking a flight. In the age of Covid-19, the health risks of flying need to be brought into sharper focus – especially as air transport has been a major contributor to the rapid spread of the virus around the world. What’s more, frequent flying has significant psychological effects, especially among business travellers, with studies highlighting isolation, loneliness and a reduction in ‘friends’ social ties.

There are also considerable health impacts associated with working in airports and living nearby. A 2021 study found that exposure to jet engine emissions, which contain ultrafine particles (UFP) that are prone to reach the lower airways and lungs, is reported to increase the risk of disease, hospital admissions and self-reported lung symptoms. Another study found that jet engine emissions had similar organic particulate matter composition to diesel, which is linked to a myriad of adverse health impacts such as lung cancer, asthma and heart disease.

THE GROWTH OF THE AVIATION INDUSTRY

While aviation’s share of total global climate pollution is already vast considering the number of people that fly, the growth of the industry is cause for concern. After the pandemic-induced pause, which saw planes grounded around the world, growth is set to return to the industry once more and emissions are set to climb. Without decided action to curtail air traffic, emissions will continue to rise.

Aviation growth doesn’t just mean more climate heating and health damages – it also requires a vast expansion of airports around the world and the construction of new ones. Between 2000 and 2016, new runways were added at 55 of the 150 airports with the most flights globally. By 2016 more than half of the expanded airports were below the capacity before the expansion, which casts doubt on the necessity of their expansion. As of 2019, almost $1 trillion has been invested into building new airports around the globe, with 423 new airports planned or already under construction. Over half of these – 223 – are being built in the Asian Pacific region, with 58 planned for Europe. China alone has announced plans to build 213 new airports by 2035.

All of these newly built airports will require huge amounts of concrete, steel and glass, raising their emissions impact even further. The infrastructure will also lock-in emissions for decades to come, making urgent change even more difficult. In addition, there is the immediate danger to people and nature. Communities around the world struggle against human rights violations, eviction from their homes and farmland for aviation expansion, and protection of forests, wetlands and coastal ecosystems.

For about 40 years, the airlines’ frequent flyer programmes (FFPs) have been a major driver of the rapid growth in air traffic. FFPs are among the world’s most successful marketing programmes. As the programmes are coupled to credit card use, rampant card use for purchases of all sorts – in order to acquire “free” “air miles” – has raised the price of goods for everyone, frequent flyer or not.

The health impacts to industry, workers, passengers and communities

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We need to shift towards other ways to sustain local livelihoods, not rely on tourism.

Dario Schian, Fundacion Cultural La Negreta, Dominican Republic

FLYING IS THE FASTEST WAY TO FRY THE PLANET

Flying is the most climate-damaging means of transport per hour. Due to the speed and the long distances, flying emits many times more CO₂ than other means of transport. In addition, there are the non-CO₂ effects of flights. The total climate impact of a flight is about three times higher than CO₂ alone due to the altitude and other pollution. Exact emissions per trip vary due to various factors. Figures here are based on French data.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CO₂ per hour/passenger</th>
<th>CO₂ per flight/passenger</th>
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<tr>
<td>0.56 kg</td>
<td>6.7 kg</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.2 kg</td>
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research has also shown that ultrafine particles can lead to premature births. These health impacts, however, are not equally distributed across society and disproportionately affect ethnic minorities and those living in poverty. The health impacts of aviation and flying reinforce the inequalities that are pervasive throughout society.

Many of the public and health impacts of flying have social impacts too. For instance, the noise pollution from aircrafts can cause a range of health issues, such as hearing loss, hypertension, depression, stress, cardiovascular disease, sleep deprivation and possibly even dementia. In 2017, it was estimated that 3.2 million Europeans were highly affected by aircraft noise and over 1.7 million suffered from high sleep disturbance around Europe’s 47 major airports, although these figures are likely to underestimate the true extent of noise pollution. Sleep deprivation can have very real knock-on effects for the quality of life of people that live in the vicinity of airports and their opportunities in life, especially children’s educational attainment. A 2005 study discovered that children living close to airports in Britain, the Netherlands, and Spain fell behind in their reading levels by up to two months for every 5 decibel increase above the average noise level in their environment. The study concludes by linking aircraft noise to lower reading comprehension.

### AVIATION’S PRIVILEGED POSITION

Aviation’s climate impact is poorly regulated by international aviation agreements. In the Paris Agreement, international aviation, accounting for about 65% of civil aviation emissions, is treated as separate from countries’ Nationally Determined Contributions. Most countries do not cover international aviation in their national climate plans and emissions budgets. Instead, the regulation of international departures’ climate pollution is left to the ineffective ICAO. The International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) is a UN organisation funded and directed by 193 governments. The ICAO Secretariat is the most important institution on aviation policy internationally.

Despite the environmental impact of aviation, and the relatively few people that fly, it has enjoyed a disproportionately privileged policy environment for the last 75 years. In large parts of the world, the flight industry is practically tax-free despite its impacts on society and the environment. Most notably, an international agreement called the Chicago Convention, signed in 1944, sought to facilitate and expand aviation by prohibiting the taxing of fuel already onboard an aircraft when it lands. Over time this convention forgave the common practice of exempting all aviation fuel from both taxation (excise duty) and value added tax (VAT), sometimes formalised through bilateral agreements. Fuel for domestic flights can usually be zero in wealthy nations. Even if hydrogen-powered planes do take off, it will be hard to make it move away from fossil fuels. Flying is a highly inefficient means of transport, with take-off and ascent consuming large amounts of energy. The sheer weight of batteries is therefore a big constraint for electric flight. Currently this means that electric aircraft will only be viable for short flights under 1,000 km by 2050, which accounts for just 17% of aviation emissions. Medium and long-haul flights, which now make up the greatest share of aviation’s emissions, have little chance of being fully electrified.

### The GREENWASHING OF AVIATION

Many in the aviation industry, and some outside of it like politicians and corporate lobbyists, are holding out for technological fixes to drive down emissions and ensure that a global minority can continue to fly frequently. To this end, various technologies are presented by industry and politicians as climate quick fixes, but they cannot be scaled up soon enough. What’s more, all of these technologies have problems, adverse side-effects or will be constrained by the eventual limits on renewable energy, required elsewhere to serve basic needs. The most important of these false solutions are electric flight, hydrogen, alcohol (commonly called biofuels) and e-fuels as well as carbon offsets – all of which perpetuate the unsustainable growth of aviation.

Misplaced hope in techno-fixes and false solutions is growing as the efficiency gains of aircraft engines are being pushed to their absolute limit – all while the forecasted growth of the industry outruns any additional efficiency gains made. And even when efficiency has increased, history shows that this is usually accompanied with rising emissions. Conductions make flights cheaper so air traffic surges. Electric aircraft can only be considered as ‘green’ as the electricity they are powered with. With the world still a long way off decarbonising electricity generation, adding additional load from an energy-intensive activity like aviation will make it harder to move away from fossil fuels. Flying is a highly inefficient means of transport, with take-off and ascent consuming large amounts of energy. The sheer weight of batteries is therefore a big constraint for electric flight. Currently this means that electric aircraft will only be viable for short flights under 1,000 km by 2050, which accounts for just 17% of aviation emissions. Medium and long-haul flights, which now make up the greatest share of aviation’s emissions, have little chance of being fully electrified.

The advent of hydrogen-powered planes by 2035 is probably nothing more than industry hot air, and will come far too late to contribute to the urgent emissions reductions required. For medium and long-haul journeys, hydrogen-powered planes will not be viable before the middle of this century, when emissions already need to be zero in wealthy nations. Particularly compared to other sources, hydrogen-powered planes do take off, they still wouldn’t provide clean, green flights. Hydrogen produced from renewable sources will still emit nitrogen oxides (NOx) and generate contrails, which have a significant climate impact.

To make matters worse, hydrogen requires huge quantities of energy to produce, pulling clean electricity away from areas that are more widely used than aviation and serve more basic needs.
To stay below 1.5 °C of global heating, we have to cut average consumption-based climate emissions down to 2.5 tonnes of CO₂e per year. Roman Abramovich, one of the richest men on earth, consumes 3400 times this amount of emissions just with his planes, helicopters and cars. Others such as Bill Gates, Michael Dell or Jeff Bezos also emit at a similar level with their jet-set lives.

Agrofuels (biofuels) only account for around 0.01% of all aviation fuel currently used and, in the near future, will only replace a tiny fraction of aviation fuel.20 Even if agrofuel production were to scale up enough to make a dent on aviation’s emissions, it would create a raft of environmental and social harms. That’s especially true for “first genera
tion” agrofuel from crops like oil palm, rapeseed or soy, which have not been ruled out by the aviation industry. While palm oil is being touted as the most viable option to create agrofuels due to its energy density, palm tree plantations are one of the leading global drivers of deforestation, biodiversity loss and hu-
man rights abuses. What’s more, studies have shown that agrofuels can actually cause three-times more greenhouse gas emissions than the polluting jet fuel they replace.21 While airlines are continuously lobbying governments for subsidies to scale up agrofuel production, these risk watering public money on a false solution and could keep flights artificially cheap, stimulating more air traffic.22

E-fuels are synthetic fuels made from hydrogen and carbon dioxide with elec-
tricity in 2018.73 If everyone flew as much as the wealthiest 10% of Europeans do, aviation alone would emit 23 billion tonnes (giga-
tones, Gt) of CO₂ in 2021, and is 230 times current consumption in 2050, the resulting electricity demand would be 20% higher than the current to-
total worldwide electricity production and 4.7 times the production of renewable electricity in 2018.73

Offsets are sold by airlines to indi-
vidual passengers with the argument to compensate for their emissions. But they are also the foundation of the Inte-
national Civil Aviation Organization’s (ICAO) UN-backed “climate strategy”, the Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation (COR-
SIA). However, the problem with offsets is that they do not do what they promise: a like-for-like carbon savings for hav-
ing already polluted. Leaving fossil fuels in the ground is the best way of keeping carbon out of the atmosphere. Offset schemes, on the other hand, are a huge mix of hard-to-measure, poorly moni-
tored, short term, unreliable schemes that do little more than provide an ex-
cuse for business as usual. The CORSIA scheme is the only in-
ternational framework for regulating avi-
ation emissions, but it is fatally flawed. It is designed to keep aviation emissions at 2019 levels to allow “carbon-neutral growth”. Its baseline, originally planned to be the average of 2019-2020, was shifted due to the Covid-induced slump of flights after heavy industry lobbying, further watering down the scheme. By 2030, CORSIA will only cover 12% of emissions as it includes only internation-
al flights and has many exemptions.74 CORSIA is set to rely heavily on offset schemes around the world. The problem is that offsets don’t work. One study for the EU Commission found that 85% of the offset projects under the UN’s Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) failed to actually reduce emis-
sions, and that only 2% of offset projects have a high likelihood of doing so.75 In August 2021, the New York Times reported that 153,000 acres (61,000 hectares) of forests that were part of a carbon-offset project for the state of Cal-
ifornia burned down during a heatwave – which are becoming ever more frequent due to global heating – releasing carbon back into the atmosphere.76 Offsets of-
ten lead to ecological and human rights issues, particularly affecting indigenous communities (see p. 56), and may have actually increased global emissions by legitimising ongoing pollution.77 With no technological fix on the horizon in the next decade, and offsets providing no actual emissions compensations, all these promises must be seen as greenwash from a polluting industry. This means that the importance of re-
framing aviation to reduce flights and systematically shift society away from frequent flying has never been more im-
portant and can deliver immediate emis-
sions reductions.78

The International Air Transport Associ-
ation (IATA), the airline industry’s inter-
national lobbying body, regularly sets targets for jet fuel substitutes (e-fuels, agrofuels,…) – and the industry reliably fails to meet them. IATA’s new 2030 target for alternative jet fuel of 5% is al-
most as high as the missed 2020 target and is 230 times current consumption (100 million litres, about 0.01% of all jet fuel used).

Sources:
Idea: Dan Rutherford

To stay below 1.5 °C of global heating, we have to cut average consumption-based climate emissions down to 2.5 tonnes of CO₂ equivalents by 2030. Roman Abramovich, one of the richest men on earth, consumes 3400 times this amount of emissions just with his planes, helicopters and cars. Others such as Bill Gates, Michael Dell or Jeff Bezos also emit at a similar level with their jet-set lives.

To stay below 1.5 °C of global heating, we have to cut average consumption-based climate emissions down to 2.5 tonnes of CO₂ equivalents by 2030. Roman Abramovich, one of the richest men on earth, consumes 3400 times this amount of emissions just with his planes, helicopters and cars. Others such as Bill Gates, Michael Dell or Jeff Bezos also emit at a similar level with their jet-set lives.
People are beginning to connect aviation, and the act of flying, with the climate crisis. This presents an opportunity for all of us to place the criticism of aviation, and opposition to its continued expansion and greenwashing efforts, within a necessary wider criticism of the current economic system.

It's important to remember when answering this question that flying is something only a small fraction of humanity does – or has ever done. On a historical scale, it is also a relatively new activity, the vast majority of people having never even stepped foot on a plane. As such, how aviation is seen by the public will vary greatly between those that fly frequently, those that have flown before but do not fly regularly, and those who have never flown. Other factors that can influence this view are ideology and knowledge about the climate crisis. Furthermore, airline workers and people with other connections to the industry, as well as people living near airports, will have specific perspectives on aviation.

To add another layer of complexity, understanding how aviation is seen by the public, surveys around aviation are often done by the industry itself. Thus, in many cases, aviation surveys are framed as gauging public perception on aviation, or flying, as a good or service. These questions pertain to consumer preferences over the specific airline, the convenience of the booking experience and the overall airport experience, rather than measuring the public sentiment towards aviation and the wider mobility system.

What's more, the public perception of aviation is shaped by the aviation industry's advertising and marketing efforts that insistently frame aviation – and the act of flying – as something desirable, accessible and attainable for all. As part of these marketing and advertising efforts, airlines have consistently downplayed the environmental impact of aviation and embarked on greenwashing efforts, such as IATA’s Fly Aware campaign, whose members include airlines, airports and aviation manufacturers. In fact, some airlines, such as Ryanair, KLM and Green Airlines have been penalised by advertising regulators for their greenwashing efforts that have misled consumers. In addition, we are increasingly surrounded by images of distant countries and romanticising photos of flights, which can increase the desire for long-distance travel, for example from travel magazines and content on social media from celebrities and influencers.

Due to these factors, creating a cohesive and representative understanding of how aviation is seen by the public is fraught with challenges – but there are also opportunities. By creating stories and messages that speak directly to certain audiences, as well as across them, there is huge potential for communications initiatives to nurture new narratives and reframe the practice of flying, which we turn to in more detail in section three (p. 40) of this guide.

WHAT DOES THE PUBLIC THINK ABOUT AVIATION AND CLIMATE BREAKDOWN?

There are a variety of surveys that indicate shifting public sentiments towards aviation – especially in light of the climate crisis. The European Investment Bank’s (EIB) climate survey explored what people were willing to “give up” to tackle the climate crisis. According to the survey, 72% of Europeans and US citizens, and 84% of Chinese citizens, believe that their own behaviour can make a difference in bringing down emissions. According to the survey, the easiest behaviour to adjust in light of the climate crisis is to give up flying, with 40% of Europeans, 38% of US Americans and 43% of Chinese respondents agreeing. These sentiments carry over to respondents’ intended behaviours too, with 37% of Chinese citizens, 22% of Europeans and 22% of US Americans saying that they will avoid flying due to concerns over the climate crisis. These sentiments are also reflected on a global scale. According to global survey data from Ipsos Mori, one in seven people (14%) would use form of transportation with a lower carbon footprint than flights even if it were less convenient or more expensive. Twice as many (29%), however, would forgo flying in favour of a low carbon mobility option if it were as convenient or no more expensive than a flight. Survey findings like these show the potential for building new narratives through campaign communications and also for making the case that the appetite for better mobility systems clearly exists. Optimism, however, must be tempered by the fact that research consistently shows that within the realm of aviation, there is a disconnect between concern over the climate crisis and the use of air travel, often referred to as the “attitude-behaviour gap”. While the attitude-behaviour gap has been shown in recent research to be sometimes overstated, it may play a more important role in some concrete actions such as taking a flight.

The phenomenon of ‘flygskam’ or ‘flight shame’, a societal trend originating in Sweden that encouraged individuals to stop flying to reduce their emissions, is testament to shifting public perceptions around aviation, where the act of flying can now be used to evoke feelings of moral responsibility and consciousness over its environmental impact (often negatively labelled as guilt or even as “shaming”). The impact of flygskam on aviation demand has been found in Sweden, where it first arose, to France, Germany and also New Zealand. Tågskryt is the positive alternative to flygskam and literally means ‘train brag’, highlighting the pride of choosing a low carbon mobility option. It has been found to encourage people to take the train, as well as talking about it online and offline.

Despite this impact, the power and influence of societal norms and social pressures around flying, the incessant advertising and how it rewires our brains, as well as narratives that connect flying to freedom and mobility, appear to remain dominant for many people. This means that advocating for individual behaviour changes alone will not be an adequate strategy for shrinking the aviation industry over the long-term, despite its important role in reducing demand for air travel. Within particular countries, there are also signs that concerns surrounding the social and environmental impacts of global heating are shaping public sentiment towards transport policy. A recent survey conducted in the UK found 93% of respondents supporting the idea of better-integrated public transport coordinated by local government authorities. Specifically relating to aviation, 89% of respondents supported the idea of raising the costs of flights, particularly on frequent fliers. While international survey data shows a clear trend around growing environmental concerns across the world, and that the public feels the aviation industry is doing more to tackle the climate crisis, there are large swathes of humanity whose sentiments towards aviation are not adequately captured. Most of these people live in the Global South and the vast majority have never set foot on a plane. These communities are already feeling the impacts of climate breakdown today, despite contributing very little to global emissions. Where there is survey data, it is often framed around the consumer experience of flying, the aviation indus-
The aviation industry must be placed within a wider criticism of the global economic system and issues such as uneven power relations, poverty, inequality, corruption and environmental degradation. The global Edelman Trust Barometer of 2020 found – for the first time – that the majority of people surveyed across 28 countries believe that capitalism, as it exists today, does more harm than good in the world. The general distrust in capitalism was highest in Thailand (75%) and India (74%), with France following close behind on 69%. Only in Canada, Australia, the USA, South Korea, Japan and Hong Kong did the majority of respondents believe that capitalism does more good than harm – and only by a narrow margin, except for Japan. Surveys like this highlight a growing global discontent with the status quo and emphasise the potential for alternative ways of living and travelling to take root.

The same survey also found that 57% of global respondents believed that governments served the interests of a few, rather than everyone. This is particularly relevant in light of the gigantic bailouts airlines received during the pandemic, with a Greenpeace survey finding that 93% of respondents saying that the aviation industry should not be a priority for taxpayer support. Another survey, conducted in the USA, found that a relative majority of 35% of respondents said that the government should not bail out the aviation industry, with only 31% of people believing it should (34% had no opinion).

Added to this sentiment is the growing precariousness of the current economic system, with 83% of global respondents fearful that they will lose their job due to automation, globalisation or economic crises. A survey from the World Economic Forum (WEF) of citizens from 27 countries found similar sentiments, with 54% of respondents stating that they fear losing their job in the next twelve months. Concern over job losses in the next year was highest in Russia (75%), Spain (73%) and Malaysia (71%). Internationally speaking, there is clearly an audience who would respond and relate to narratives confronting and criticising reluctant politicians and corporate power, as well as building solidarity with workers. This general sense of distrust and dissatisfaction in the current economic system has given new life to alternative visions of the future. A survey of young people’s attitudes towards capitalism conducted by the right-wing British think tank, the Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA), found that 67% of young Brits would like to live in a socialist economic system. The same survey found that three-quarters of those surveyed agree with the assertion that climate breakdown is a specifically capitalist problem. An Amnesty International survey amongst 18-25 year olds across 22 countries identified a similar sentiment, with 41% of respondents citing climate change as the most important issue facing the world. The People’s Climate Vote, the biggest-ever global climate survey conducted by the UN in 2021, showed that 64% of people throughout all 50 countries surveyed believed climate change was a global emergency. An Ipsos Mori survey from November 2021 found that climate change was the biggest concern for the British public with 40% of respondents saying so, ranking above the pandemic (27%) and Brexit, as well as healthcare issues (both 22%).

In a 2021 survey of all G20 countries conducted by Ipsos Mori for the Global Commons Alliance, 73% of all respondents believed the planet was close to tipping points due to human activity. This was most pronounced in Indonesia (86%), Turkey (85%), Brazil (83%) and Mexico (78%). A large majority of 83% of respondents from across the G20 want to do more to protect nature, which was more pronounced in “emerging economies” than in the richest countries. Furthermore, 74% of respondents were in favour of shifting economic priorities away from profit and growth towards well-being and environmental protection.

In the wake of Covid-19, the appetite for an alternative future – new social and economic systems – was brought to the heart of public consciousness. A survey conducted by Ipsos Mori on behalf of the WEF found a deep and popular desire for change after the pandemic, rather than a widespread return to how things were before the onset of Covid-19. Nearly three-quarters (72%) of adults from across 27 countries, said they want their life to change significantly after the pandemic, with nearly nine in ten (86%) saying they would like to see the entire world change significantly to become more sustainable and equitable.

Russia and Colombia are at the top of the table of countries where the desire for change and an alternative future is the most pronounced, with 94% of respondents wanting significant change to the global system. Closely behind those nations are Peru (93%), Mexico (93%), Chile (93%), Malaysia (92%), South Africa (91%), Argentina (90%), and Saudi Arabia (89%). People are also willing to embrace such changes themselves: in a Pew Research Survey in 17 countries from 2021, 80 percent said they would make at least some changes in their lives to reduce the impact of the climate crisis. In countries like Greece (62%), Italy (54%) and Spain (49%), large parts of the respondents were also willing to make ‘a lot’ of changes. In the same survey, 72% of people said they were somewhat or very concerned that the climate crisis will harm themselves at some point in their lives.

Desire to Shift Away from Profit and Growth to Protect Nature

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A 2021 survey in all G20 countries showed that a vast majority of people want put more focus on protecting our planet and to shift the economy away from its focus on growth and profit.

Source: Gaffney et al. (2021): Global Commons Survey: Attitudes to planetary stewardship and transformation among G20 countries.

In a 2020 international survey, 86% of people said they wanted the world to change significantly and become more sustainable and equitable after Covid. People are also willing to embrace such changes themselves: in a Pew Research Survey in 17 countries from 2021, 80 percent said they would make at least some changes in their lives to reduce the impact of the climate crisis. In countries like Greece (62%), Italy (54%) and Spain (49%), large parts of the respondents were also willing to make ‘a lot’ of changes. In the same survey, 72% of people said they were somewhat or very concerned that the climate crisis will harm themselves at some point in their lives.
Concerns about the Climate Crisis and the Will to Act

People Concerned That Global Climate Change Will Harm Them Personally at Some Point in Their Lifetime

People Willing to Make Changes About How They Live and Work to Help Reduce the Effects of Global Climate Change

India and the UK, around a third of people said they would fly less after the pandemic due to concerns over public health and the climate crisis. However, the survey also found the opposite sentiment in other nations, with 50% of Nigerians and 40% of Brazilians saying that they would fly more post-pandemic. The latter, of course, has to be seen in light of how few people have flown in these countries to date. These travel preferences have obvious implications for how the public thinks about travel preferences have obvious implications for how the public thinks about travel, citing lower carbon emissions as a top reason for this shift. There is a risk that the public perception of mass mobility options, such as public buses and trains, was permanently damaged by the global pandemic due to concerns over viral transmission. Yet surveys conducted during this period paint a more nuanced picture. Across the US, economies are willing to alter how they live and work for the sake of the climate, but there is less confidence in efforts to solve the problem, according to a Pew Research Center survey in 17 countries.

Will Business Flights Take Off Again?

One YouGov poll found that 45% of business travellers want to fly less or not at all after Covid. The same poll showed that half of them state that the pause to aviation has had no impact on their working lives. Over a quarter of French and Dutch business travellers reported that their work lives had actually improved during the flight pauses caused by the pandemic. One YouGov poll found that: 45% of business travellers want to fly less or not at all after Covid. The same poll showed that half of them state that the pause to aviation has had no impact on their working lives. Over a quarter of French and Dutch business travellers reported that their work lives had actually improved during the flight pauses caused by the pandemic.

Bullshit Flights

We know that flying is bad for the climate. Less obvious is that a lot of it is pointless and unnecessary as well. In the same vein as the anthropologist David Graeber’s concept of ‘bullshit jobs’ – jobs that are meaningless and harmful for society – we can therefore talk about ‘bullshit flights’. These are flights that are unnecessary, frivolous and also, not only because of their impacts, unfair. They should be stopped immediately.

Examples for bullshit flights could be flights for weekend trips, ultra short-haul flights, very cheap flights, private jet flights, as well as billionaires’ space flights. Also, though slightly different, the ‘ghost flights’ undertaken by empty planes to protect airlines’ landing slots. In contrast, there are also legitimate flights such as ones in case of emergency and for disaster relief, visiting family members on another continent or safe escape routes for refugees. Some flights may be difficult to classify, such as those for stays abroad for an extended period of time. Clearly the discussion surrounding flights touches other topics such as injustice which are also important to debate. Talking about them helps reveal the connections between individual flights and a system that gives a free pass to wealthy super emitters.

Reducing air traffic in an equal and fair way means bullshit flights need to have their ‘social licence’ removed, through cultural change but also through targeted regulation and changes in corporate policy.

People across the world are greatly concerned about climate change and willing to make sacrifices to address it, but there is less confidence in efforts to solve the problem, according to a Pew Research Center survey in 17 countries. The latter, of course, has to be seen in light of how few people have flown in these countries to date. These travel preferences have obvious implications for how the public thinks about travel preferences have obvious implications for how the public thinks about travel, citing lower carbon emissions as a top reason for this shift.
We are living in times of ecological and climate injustice. Those communities that have contributed the least to the climate crisis are already suffering the most from its consequences. Without urgent action this will only get worse in the future. Rich countries in Europe, North America and the rest of the world must be the first to stop their climate-wrecking actions and implement policies that reduce emissions and adapt to the climate crisis. The countries of the Global North are responsible for 92% of climate-damaging emissions beyond the safe planetary limit of 350 ppm CO₂. The Global South is responsible for just 8%. Overall, the US is the largest historical polluter, responsible for 26% of all the emissions ever released into the atmosphere since 1850. Almost two-thirds of climate pollution to date can be traced back to 90 major corporations, many owned by private shareholders based in the Global North, such as Chevron, Peabody and Shell.

Even today, many of the wealthy nations have per citizen carbon footprints that far outstrip the footprints of those living in the Global South. An average Australian citizen, for instance, has an annual carbon footprint of just over 15 tonnes of CO₂. In comparison, the average carbon footprint of a Bangladeshi citizen is 0.56 tonnes a year, while a Ugandan citizen has an average carbon footprint of just 0.11 tonnes a year. It follows that arguably the most equitable way of reducing emissions would see the richest 10% globally take responsibility for 87% of the total emissions cuts needed, while the poorest 50% of humanity are not yet required to cut their emissions at all.

The divide between rich and poor, and between the powerful and disempowered, is not only geographical: there are huge disparities in carbon inequality within regions and nations. Disadvantaged and marginalised groups in these places suffer far more from the climate crisis and its consequences than the wealthy sections of society do, despite them doing the least to contribute to it. It is those who also suffer from other forms of discrimination: women, Black people, people of colour, indigenous peoples, economically deprived communities and those on the frontlines of fossil fuel extraction and climate colonialism. This is true in several ways:

- Firstly, they are more often excluded from the benefits that come from burning oil, coal and gas and suffer more from the side effects of exploitation. In other words, wealthy men fly and drive cars the most. It is also predominantly men who run oil companies and rake in their profits.

- Secondly, the groups mentioned suffer the harmful effects of the fossil fuel system.

Aviation is one of the gravest examples of climate injustice. This makes reframing – and reducing it – a matter of climate justice.

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We are living in times of ecological and climate injustice. Those communities that have contributed the least to the climate crisis are already suffering the most from its consequences. Without urgent action this will only get worse in the future. Rich countries in Europe, North America and the rest of the world must be the first to stop their climate-wrecking actions and implement policies that reduce emissions and adapt to the climate crisis. The countries of the Global North are responsible for 92% of climate-damaging emissions beyond the safe planetary limit of 350 ppm CO₂. The Global South is responsible for just 8%. Overall, the US is the largest historical polluter, responsible for 26% of all the emissions ever released into the atmosphere since 1850. Almost two-thirds of climate pollution to date can be traced back to 90 major corporations, many owned by private shareholders based in the Global North, such as Chevron, Peabody and Shell.

Even today, many of the wealthy nations have per citizen carbon footprints that far outstrip the footprints of those living in the Global South. An average Australian citizen, for instance, has an annual carbon footprint of just over 15 tonnes of CO₂. In comparison, the average carbon footprint of a Bangladeshi citizen is 0.56 tonnes a year, while a Ugandan citizen has an average carbon footprint of just 0.11 tonnes a year. It follows that arguably the most equitable way of reducing emissions would see the richest 10% globally take responsibility for 87% of the total emissions cuts needed, while the poorest 50% of humanity are not yet required to cut their emissions at all.

The divide between rich and poor, and between the powerful and disempowered, is not only geographical: there are huge disparities in carbon inequality within regions and nations. Disadvantaged and marginalised groups in these places suffer far more from the climate crisis and its consequences than the wealthy sections of society do, despite them doing the least to contribute to it. It is those who also suffer from other forms of discrimination: women, Black people, people of colour, indigenous peoples, economically deprived communities and those on the frontlines of fossil fuel extraction and climate colonialism. This is true in several ways:

- Firstly, they are more often excluded from the benefits that come from burning oil, coal and gas and suffer more from the side effects of exploitation. In other words, wealthy men fly and drive cars the most. It is also predominantly men who run oil companies and rake in their profits.

- Secondly, the groups mentioned suffer the harmful effects of the fossil fuel system.

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Finally, it is marginalised people who suffer the direct impacts of false solutions to the climate crisis. For example, when indigenous communities are driven off their land for offset projects or economically deprived communities have their livelihoods threatened due to land grabs for agrofuel production. How much climate pollution an individual causes depends above all on their income and wealth. Between 1990 and 2015, the richest 1% of European citizens were responsible for 27% of the EU’s total emissions – the same level of emissions from the poorest half of the European population combined. While the latter’s share of emissions is associated with essential needs such as food and heating, the excess emissions of the richest come from luxury consumption such as big cars and flights. And the emissions of the richest are accelerating: over the same time period emissions from the richest 10% of the European population grew by 3% and emissions from the super-rich 1% grew by 5%, while the emissions from poorer and middle income segments fell.

Measures to deal with the climate crisis must not ignore or reinforce these inequalities and injustices within and between nations. Climate policy and action must tackle inequalities and create opportunities for a good life for all humans and non-human beings. There is no way around this: climate justice must lead to a transformation of how we live together on this planet, how we make decisions, work, produce, consume, and how we understand our relationship to the natural world. Climate justice must be both global and local.

Between 1990 and 2015, the richest 1% of the world population (c. 63 million people) alone were responsible for 15% of cumulative emissions, twice as much as the poorest half of the world’s population. The richest 10% caused 52% of all climate-damaging emissions. How much climate pollution an individual causes depends above all on their income and wealth. Between 1990 and 2015, the richest 1% of European citizens were responsible for 27% of the EU’s total emissions – the same level of emissions from the poorest half of the European population combined. While the latter’s share of emissions is associated with essential needs such as food and heating, the excess emissions of the richest come from luxury consumption such as big cars and flights. And the emissions of the richest are accelerating: over the same time period emissions from the richest 10% of the European population grew by 3% and emissions from the super-rich 1% grew by 5%, while the emissions from poorer and middle income segments fell.

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Reparations must go beyond the financial. They must also include technology transfers, patent waivers and debt cancellations for the most vulnerable countries. Philosophers Olufemi O. Táwọ̀nú and Beba Cibrán understand reparations as “a systematic approach to redistributing resources and changing policies and institutions that have perpetuated harm — rather than a discrete exchange of money or of apologies for past wrongdoing.” This includes policies that would respond to the displacement caused by accelerated global heating and its consequences. Necessary changes and steps to tackle the climate crisis and adapt to it should not be imposed from above. Genuinely inclusive and democratic processes are needed and disadvantaged groups must be at the heart of these processes in order to remedy historical power imbalances and discriminations. This is not true for all humans. All sentient and non-sentient entities are part of our planet and therefore part of us: whether animals, plants, rivers or mountains. They too have a right to exist. The goal of all this must be planetary justice, where everyone and everything on our planet has the opportunity to live a good life.

**SOURCES**

- Asdecker (2022): Travel-Related Influencer Content on Instagram & TikTok. bit.ly/Asdecker2022
- ICRC (2020): Seven things you need to know about the CCW. bit.ly/ICRC2020
Now that our reframing journey has begun, and we know why we must guide the aviation industry towards a safe landing and lay down the tracks for a new economic system, it is time to talk about the destination we are all collectively working towards: an economy based on wellbeing and planetary health. The previous chapters provide facts and figures to argue in favour of changing our current mobility and economic systems, but a positive idea of what the future could hold that many can relate to is vital for bringing people on board. Successful communication campaigns are able to reflect the wants, desires and values of the audience, as well as evoking and galvanising the desire for change.

This chapter is not a blueprint for one single future, but a compass that can guide us towards a range of better, possible futures. Laying down the tracks towards a new economy is an act of constant co-creation. While there are many paths available, there are three broad qualities that it should include: equity, wellbeing and living within the ecological limits of our planet.

Utopia is on the horizon. I move two steps closer; it moves two steps further away. I walk another ten steps and the horizon runs ten steps further away. As much as I may walk, I’ll never reach it. So what’s the point of utopia? The point is this: to keep walking.

Fernando Birri
EQUITY OVERCOMING INJUSTICES TO CREATE A FAIRER SOCIETY

Fairness and a regenerative approach to nature must be at the heart of our new economy if we are to all flourish within ecological limits. And this fairness must radiate within borders and across them, addressing the injustices of race, gender and class, as well as geographic disparities and ecological debt. By prioritising justice and meeting the needs of all, the new economy could create the space for more democratic and participatory forms of local decision-making. Policies to address the legacies of global injustices will need to be global in ambition but led by local initiatives. They could range from new mutual and cooperative company ownership and governance models that ensure more equal sharing of economic benefits. They could include policies such as Universal Basic Services (UBS), where the building blocks of a good life – education, housing and health care and mobility amongst other things – are not governed by the logic of profit. There could also be a Universal Basic Income (UBI) to ensure that everyone has the necessary means for a dignified and more fulfilled life. This would also mean that the value we all create with our work is spread equally and fairly, taking into account previously unpaid labour such as child rearing and caring for elderly members of our communities. It is important though, due to the scale of change required, that policies are not implemented in an ad hoc manner that will further damage and inequitable growth.

Economic activity could be geared towards promoting human wellbeing, rather than maximising profit. A well-being economy would reverse the current situation where those who undermine social and environmental value are highly rewarded and those who protect and care for their environment are systematically disincentivised.

Social and economic success is no longer measured in productivity and growth, but in the well-being and health of citizens and the planet. This requires new indicators instead of the obsolete GDP, which does not distinguish between meaningful and harmful economic activity. In its place are new yardsticks that reflect the diversity of human needs and respect other parts of the living planet and its limits. We will finally acknowledge that often less is more.

ALTERNATIVE FORMS OF SOCIETY ORGANS OF CHANGE

Defenders of how the global economy is currently organised often say that there is no alternative. The reality is however, that whatever your persuasion, there are many alternatives, and here are just a few examples, both practical and theoretical....

Buen Vivir, also called Sumak kawsay, is a principle in the worldview of the indigenous peoples of the Andean region. It focuses on sustainable living within a community of human beings and the rest of the living world. Commons are social systems consisting of a concrete group of people who share and use certain resources together within clear rules. Interest in the practice of ‘commoning’ is growing. Classic examples are grazing grounds or fishing grounds, but there are also digital commons such as Wikipedia. Degrowth is a movement and academic field that challenges the paradigm of endless economic growth. It calls for an open, democratically planned redistributive reduction of production and consumption to achieve social justice, environmental sustainability and societal well-being. Doughnut Economics is a framework for a sustainable economy in harmony with the Planetary Boundaries. The doughnut-shape visualises social foundations and an ecological ceiling between which a sustainable economy for humanity can thrive. Ecological Footprint is a current of ecological thought that builds on marxism. It views the capitalist mode of production and consumption as the root cause of ecological degradation and human immiseration and calls for a transition towards a publicly owned and democratically planned economy. Kurdish Democratic Confederalism is a project of democratic autonomy based on the works of Abdullah Öcalan. It has been operated in the midst of conflict and a complex emergency. Open Localisation is a concept for transforming local places into spaces for social reproduction. Reclaiming and localising economic activity is meant to counteract harmful globalisation tendencies and enable for more autonomy, democracy, sustainability and multicultural forms of coexistence. Post-Growth is based on the recognition of natural and social limits to economic growth and seeks to promote the development of different measures of societal well-being than economic growth. Alternatives to the current economy should be based on locally and culturally appropriate principles. Ubuntu is a concept from southern Africa that can be translated as ‘humanity’ or ‘humanness’. It is an understanding that an individual can only realise their true humanity in relation to other human beings as well as to the non-human world. Ubuntu suggests that it is our responsibility to care for others. Wellbeing Economy describes a wide range of ideas and measures that work towards the common vision of an economy designed for the purpose of collective wellbeing. The key idea is quality of life and prosperity for all people and sustainability for the planet. Zapatista Autonomy is central to the rebellion of the Zapotistas movement in Chiapas in southern Mexico. It strives for indigenous self-determination as a radical and dignified alternative to the dominant extractivist system and its institutions.
The other world described in the last section may already be “on her way” – and most likely she will arrive on a train. This section develops five distinct ways to talk about aviation and the transformative journey we need to make. These new narratives are foundations with some suggested examples of how they can be turned into powerful messages. They are intended for others to build on and are open to being adapted and developed for different cultural circumstances and diverse campaigns. One narrative is never clearly separated from others; they overlap and inform each other. This also applies to our narratives, which together reveal the realities of aviation and invite people to picture alternatives, encourage imagination and ask the key question: ‘what if?’.

**THE NEW NARRATIVES**

**PLANE GREEDY**

about how the aviation industry puts itself above the needs of the many, how it is ‘free riding’ at the expense of people, nature and communities, and taking profits for itself while passing damage and costs onto others.

**COMMON DESTINATION**

about how a liveable planet is our only, viable, common destination. And why, on our shared planetary home, we don’t need more air traffic and tourism to thrive. But having a tiny, wealthy minority of the world’s population flying regularly, with even fewer capturing the profits, is a big obstacle to completing the journey.

**GREEN MEANS GROUNDED**

about why industry promises of change are greenwash and how mobility can become truly sustainable. The only way to lay tracks for ecologically and socially viable systems is to reduce air traffic and foster alternatives.

**SAFE LANDING**

about how times are changing and the aviation industry needs to face reality and find a safe landing for the people working within it. Climate breakdown, cultural shifts, the rise of virtual meetings, pressures on fuel and responses to the pandemic all mean change is inevitable and will happen by design or disaster.

**ENJOY THE JOURNEY**

about alternatives to aviation, and how by travelling in other ways we can enjoy both our lives and journeys more, on the shared path towards a more just and sustainable society.

The other world described in the last section may already be “on her way” – and most likely she will arrive on a train. This section develops five distinct ways to talk about aviation and the transformative journey we need to make. These new narratives are foundations with some suggested examples of how they can be turned into powerful messages. They are intended for others to build on and are open to being adapted and developed for different cultural circumstances and diverse campaigns. One narrative is never clearly separated from others; they overlap and inform each other. This also applies to our narratives, which together reveal the realities of aviation and invite people to picture alternatives, encourage imagination and ask the key question: ‘what if?’.
The aviation industry is a polluting and plane greedy engine of self-interest, ripping-off people and the planet, even though it has lobbied hard to convince us that it brings big economic benefits. Their version is that they are a vital and indispensable source of wealth creation for economies, providing much-needed jobs and aspirational leisure opportunities. Reality in all aspects is very different from this tale. While profits are made for shareholder and top salaries are paid to senior management, the climate, workers in the industry, the public who pay their taxes and local communities are being short-changed.

A few get very rich from the aviation industry while its lobbyists push for ever more tax breaks, subsidies and bailouts. At the same time it opposes new measures to address the ecological and climate emergency, and often treats its lower paid employees appallingly. During the pandemic we saw this first hand (see story p. 44), with airlines handed billions in public money while simultaneously firing staff, challenging unions, putting workers on precarious new contracts and lobbying for weaker environmental rules. Also, at the peak of the pandemic, when big bailout packages were put together in most countries, leading economists from around the world found unconditional airline bailouts to have the lowest economic payoff and overall desirability.

Bringing the aviation industry back down to earth from its privileged economic treatment will be vital in building a fair economy. Airlines serve at the whim of their financial backers and, despite their misleading marketing that says otherwise, their loyalties lie with their shareholders – many of whom are also part of the jet-setting pollutant elite. Even where airlines are private and not run by governments, they are subsidised and supported by public resources, tax-free jet fuel, infrastructure and ‘friendly’ regulatory systems. All this amounts to billions in giveaways every year to a climate-wrecking industry that is ripping us off today, and tearing up our tomorrows.

It’s no surprise then that the needs of working people and their communities, as well as the disproportionate damage caused to the planet, are not a priority for the aviation industry. Instead, it’s profit over people, and shareholder dividends over breathable air and clear skies. This isn’t so that a nationalised airline would automatically put the interests of the many ahead of the few, but shedding light on issues of ownership could broaden the industry’s priorities beyond just profit, to social and environmental responsibility. Key to this is a more democratic organisation and decision-making involving workers. Through the dynamics that this creates, windows of opportunity can be seized to protect livelihoods, further rights in the workplace and democratising the process of the industry winding-down through a just transition (see Safe Landings, p. 58). But to achieve this, it will not be enough to appeal nicely to politicians and industry managers – we have to stand up against their excesses and business as usual, be loud and put pressure on them.

The story told by the industry is that air transport is one of the most important drivers for the economy and accessible to all. They would love us to believe that aviation is only responsible for a very small part of global emissions and that nevertheless, the industry has already done and continues to do a lot to become more climate-friendly. Aviation lobbyists argue with straight faces and no obvious irony that for the industry to become even greener, burdens such as a kerosene tax, carbon prices or harsh regulations must be avoided: only then can airlines and the rest of the industry invest in ‘sustainable aviation fuels’, electric aircraft and hydrogen. In order for them to take off, these technologies must be supported by governments. This “economic exaggeration” argument tries to paint a picture of an industry indispensable to the global economy. It argues that millions of jobs depend on it directly, and many more indirectly. Without air transport, national and regional economies are cut off from the rest of the world, they say. That is supposedly why the airline industry deserves government subsidisation. The bailouts during Covid-19, therefore, they argue were necessary to protect jobs and reduce negative impacts on the whole economy. But, as we explain in this guide, these arguments are either false, misleading or greatly exaggerated.

We can’t afford airlines being plane greedy when a fair well-being economy needs companies to work for people, nature and the climate, not against them. Airlines have avoided accountability on reducing pollution, yet governments continue to prop-up and support them, putting the financial burden of their subsidised existence onto the taxpayer.

Messages to help communicate the ‘Plane Greedy’ narrative include:

- The aviation industry is plane greedy, out for itself and ripping us off. It gets a free ride at others’ expense, for decades it has dodged paying its way and respecting the environmental rules that others comply with to protect people, nature and our collective future.
- The aviation industry is flying away with public money; the aviation industry is flying off with public money and always first in line for public bailouts, while laying off workers and draining the economy, leaving more accessible and less polluting ways to travel underfunded and overshadowed.
- The aviation industry allows a tiny, wealthy elite to pollute at the expense of all; the industry feels entitled to more than their fair share of the shrinking amount of the pollution the climate can handle.
- Airports and airlines are bad neighbours – they’re making money from keepers communities awake at night and pumping out toxic fumes; the mental and physical health impacts of airport operations fall heavily and unequally on local communities and aviation workers.
When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, parts of the world came to a standstill. No where was this more apparent than within international aviation, where airports became ghost towns. With no planes taking off, aviation workers simply couldn’t work – and without any work, the livelihoods of millions of families were thrown into doubt. In response to this forced standstill, governments handed airline operators billions of dollars to safeguard jobs within the industry, while the pandemic pushed the global economy into its worst crisis since the Second World War.

In the US, the government agreed to a bailout deal for the aviation industry totalling $25bn as part of the $2.2trn bailout deal for the aviation industry. 

Second World War.

Airlines.

United Airlines is the third-largest airline in the world.

Yet while staff have been continually warned that job losses are looming, the bailout money was quickly used to hand back billions to shareholders and millions to the airline’s executives. Just two months after the bailout was finalised, United Airlines sent job loss warnings to nearly half of its US staff, approximately 36,000 employees. The majority of this staff were set to be flight attendants (15,000) and customer service staff (11,000) and some pilots (2,250). Unions described this as “a gut punch”.

Throughout the pandemic, workers were receiving consistent reminders about the insecurity of their jobs and the uncertainty of the salary and benefits, even after United Airlines had spent $8.57bn on stock buybacks between 2014 and 2019 – cash that could have been used to protect workers during the pandemic. It also committed to rewarding its top executives to the tune of $7.5m with profits expected to bounce back by 2023. The exact number of job losses are currently unknown, but it’s no wonder workers feel like that damage is already done: “I feel betrayed”, said one worker from Texas, “we’ve served so many years to this company. We’ve been breaking our backs.”

But for what? Just for United Airlines to announce the order of 15 supersonic jets in an ill-timed attempt to resurrect the days of Concorde from 2003. In the midst of a climate crisis, and after threatening workers with job losses, such a strategy from a major polluting business is outrageous. When these planes enter circulation in 2029, they will offer just a 30% reduction in journey time while burning 5 to 7 times more fuel. Of course, United Airlines insisted that these plans will run on ‘sustainable fuels’, despite agrofuels only accounting for 0.01% of fuel currently used by aviation.

The necessary pause in aviation caused by the global pandemic, and the reduced forecast demand for flights in the coming years, could be used as an opportunity to secure a just transition for aviation workers and those working in related sectors, as well as pivoting the aviation industry away from its dangerous growth path. Alongside securing the livelihoods of thousands of workers during the pandemic, the bailout money received by United Airlines could have gone directly to retraining and re-skilling programmes to help its workers find employment in low impact, future-facing sectors. Conditions too should have been attached to the bailout money so it could not be used to line the pockets of shareholders and executives, but instead be put to transitioning workers out of polluting sectors and into clean ones, such as public transport. The continuing mistreatment of workers in the aviation industry at the hands of companies that have been lavished with public bailouts during the global pandemic highlights the vital importance of bringing workers and unions to the forefront of a just transition. Workers will be the ones that build the future.
Our common destination is a world in which we can all thrive. This means we must lay the tracks for a fair and sustainable economy with mobility for all. It means less polluting travel by a minority of the world’s population and new development directions for tourism-dependent low-income countries. This is because, as mobility changes, how and why we move around, and our ideas of travel and tourism, change too.

The narrative of aviation as a machine of progress stems from a narrow, flawed and partial idea of what such “progress” actually is: that life gets better for everyone as a result of technological development and economic growth. But this is like saying that every-nological development and economic progress is better for everyone as a result of technological development and economic progress. Though varied, they are typically utilised by the common destination of satisfying people’s true needs, while respecting the limits of the natural world and finding a new balance (see box: Alternative economic models, p. 39).

Aviation, on the other hand, has no limits. The desire to be internationally connected is real, but there are ways to meet it culturally and virtually without flying opens possibilities and frees resources to imagine and design transport to meet the needs of local people and livelihoods.

The industry claims that air transport is a catalyst for sustainable development and essential especially for countries in ‘growing markets’ in Africa, Asia and Latin America. This argument rests on the idea that economic growth spurred by aviation will create prosperity and unlock the potential of regions where many people cannot fly yet. It claims that for communities around the world with no or poor road infrastructure, or remote island states, air transport has a role to play. Their position is that even if not all people have the possibility to fly yet, this will change. Rather than a playing of rich elites, they argue that aviation is becoming democratised.

They will use this to defend expansion in other regions, and also say that the benefits of connectivity must be protected by subsidies from governments if the aviation sector is to realise its potential as a connector for people, trade and tourism and be a driver for sustainable development. Implicit is the suggestion that the whole world is on a journey to levels of consumption seen in wealthier parts of Europe and North America, and that every country should share the same future of full integration into a global economy based on deregulated trade and uninhibited aviation. It says that accessible and affordable air transport and good connectivity to the rest of the world are a right, no one in the world should be denied.
fair nor equally accessible for all. In terms of flights per person, Europe, North America and other regions of the Global North largely outnumber most countries in Asia, Latin America and Africa – an unequal distribution that will not change significantly in the coming decades, even according to the industry.16 Aviation lobbyists claim, being connected to the global aviation network is the only path to having a fully functioning economy. But building and expanding airports and the fossil fuel infrastructure it depends on does not mean that local people themselves enjoy greater mobility. Poorer people often live in the vicinity of airports or where they are to be built and are therefore seen as mere obstacles that stand in the way of industry profits.17 Here, local people don’t even think about flying. Instead, new and expanding airports mean danger to local livelihoods such as soil and water, which, unlike the luxury activity of flying, are the building blocks of all life.

Tourism is the cause of many flights, and is a problematic industry for several reasons. Many places in the Global South turn to tourism for income because other opportunities are closed to them by an unfair and unequal global economy. Some jobs are created, but tourism can be a damaging and extractive business for local people and economies when it becomes rampant, just like mining and agriculture. Hotels can put a strain on local water supplies and other natural resources, employees often rely on subsistence wages, and profits tend to leave the local economy in the hands of foreign management and shareholders. Tourism dependency is also a major obstacle to global sustainability and social equity. Reducing reliance on tourism and building economies to meet local needs, is part of the journey to a fair wellbeing economy.

Here, we don’t even think about flying.

Tourism happens for the cultivation of crops for fuel substitutes, which are supposed to give well-meaning people a good conscience – but in reality do more harm than good. Corporations grab poor people’s land so that their profits can keep flying high. Instead of deepening a system that serves the few, we need a common destination: a fair planet where people and the rest of nature can thrive.
When Alex, a mid-40s resident of Vila Nazaré, talks about the community where he was born and raised, his voice changes. His grief and anger becomes palpable as he talks about the way his neighbourhood was demoralised and ultimately torn apart. About 2,000 families were forced to give up their homes to make space for the extension of a runway at Porto Alegre airport. Only Alex’s family and a few dozen others could stay because their houses were just a few metres outside the newly declared ‘safety area’.

For the past 16 years, Alex has been president of the institution Criança Feliz Nazaré (‘Happy Child Nazaré’). He takes care of the children but also the whole community, as a skilled electrician, he likes to help out wherever he can. He is also a well-connected community leader and has been a driving force in the resistance against the airport expansion. At first the community stood united against the relocation, but some point, further protest became too dangerous: Alex feared for his life and had to go into hiding for over a month. In the end, most of the families were forced to relocate, and their houses crumbled after massive intimidation by the company’s management, the eviction of communities in Vila Nazaré was never more than a potential reputation risk that they hoped would fly under the radar.

To the residents of Vila Nazaré, however, it was clear from the onset that they would not benefit from the airport expansion. At first the community stood united against the relocation plans. No one wanted to leave as the alternatives offered were undesirable: two different housing areas, both on the outskirts of Porto Alegre, further away from their jobs, with worse transport connections and with huge problems of drug related violence. The community also doesn’t want to be divided. “I don’t want to be separated, I’ve known these people for over 30 years. Why do they want to separate us?”, said Vânia Soares. The residents organised events, held demonstrations and tried to talk to the municipality. But their sense of unity crumbled after massive intimidation by the staff of a subcontracted firm carrying out the eviction, threatening house visits by heavily armed military police and also physical confrontations. At some point, further protest became too dangerous: Alex feared for his life and had to go into hiding for over a month.

At a shareholders meeting in 2018, Fraport’s CEO tried to justify the evictions saying that the settlement was illegal and that the residents had no right to live there, even though Brazilian law grants customary rights to communities who’ve occupied a piece of land for a certain amount of time. Public consultation was organised by the Federal Public Ministry only once, but local residents did not get a chance to engage with Fraport representatives as the two men who came did not even sit down at the table, refused to respond to questions and quickly disappeared. At a second shareholders meeting in 2019, Fraport rejected responsibility for the eviction altogether, claiming it was a precondition to the concession and therefore the responsibility of the Brazilian government.

The case of Vila Nazaré raises important questions: who benefits from the so-called ‘economic development’ that airport expansion projects promise? What must be done to ensure the rights of disadvantaged communities when facing displacement? And what rules of engagement are legitimate for investment by foreign corporations in line with a more equitable global economic model moving forward?

For Alex, it is clear that Fraport is responsible for the destruction of his community. Their primary aim is to make money – the lives and livelihoods of local community members were simply inconvenient hurdles. There were suspicions that they took advantage of rampant corruption in Brazil, using connections to corrupt elite circles of politicians and business people. As such, former and remaining residents of Vila Nazaré demand compensation. Money can’t make up for the loss they have suffered, but it can help rebuild parts of the community’s infrastructure and livelihoods that Fraport destroyed.

New airports and airport expansions hardly, if ever, benefit local communities – in fact, they are often to their detriment. Responsible investment requires free, prior and informed consent where the people – not governments or foreign corporations – get to decide what economic development looks like.
Before Covid, the climate has been growing faster than in most other sectors – still, after the pandemic the aviation industry wants to continue growing as before. Rising emissions do not stop the industry from promising people they can fly with a clean conscience (see box: the ‘Green Lie’). Technology and the reality of needing to stay grounded. There are numerous problems associated with them: hydrogen planes won’t be here for decades; producing synthetic fuels requires gigantic amounts of renewable energy to make flying “greener” is like stealing those resources from the majority, and it slows down the transition to greener mobility for everyone. It will prevail over the excesses and expansion plans of aviation. But there is some good news: we can now lay the tracks for a fair and sustainable mobility system (see narrative Enjoy the Journey, p. 62).
average, a train ride emits only a small fraction of the emissions of a flight. Night trains are climate-friendly and take us from one city to another while we sleep. Also bus journeys cause far less pollution than planes. For overseas journeys, ships, especially sailing ships, are a slower and more sustainable option. And finally, many journeys can be avoided simply because they are not necessary at all. In order for us to travel grounded and sustainably in the future, many things will have to change. A shift in work culture that allows for longer travel will be necessary and we will need to make ecologically sound behaviour so normal that we don’t even think about other options. This requires better structures such as smooth booking systems and fair prices for all. But also, some major new infrastructures will be needed. Wherever they are built, for example new train lines, which are very necessary in some parts of the world, it must be done with meaningful community engagement, and the utmost consideration and care for local residents and nature.

To turn the tide, a single strategy will not be enough. Instead, a package of measures is needed to reduce air traffic and put us on track for sustainable mobility. One step is ending the numerous frequent flyer reward schemes that encourage unnecessary flying. Another would be addressing the financial privileges and tax exemptions granted to aviation; pollution taxes, like a carbon tax, are necessary and long overdue. And because we all currently indirectly subsidise cheap flights and frivolous frequent flying by the rich, taxes on jet fuel and airline tickets would be a socially just measure. However, the tax system also has to target the status of flying as a luxury activity directly. Frequent flyers can be charged a progressive levy, instead of being subsidised at the taxpayers’ expense as they currently are. But without setting absolute limits across the board, changing the price of flights alone is not enough to reduce them sufficiently nor cut pollution; the rich can always buy their way out of responsibility. Limits are a normal part of everyday life that we accept for our collective safety – speed limits on roads, alcohol limits for drivers, pollution limits in water. Along these lines, the most effective way to reduce air traffic is to directly cap the number of flights. This can be done by ending short-haul routes, where alternative transport could easily be used or built, or by limiting the amount of departures per day on specific routes. Setting absolute caps and bans is fair because nobody can use their money or privilege to get around it. A straight ban is also needed for private jets. There is no justification for allowing a few rich individuals to pollute the atmosphere we all share, at the cost of our collective future. There also needs to be a halt to the destructive construction and expansion of airports around the world. Building new infrastructure now for an industry that actually needs to shrink is nonsensical. Just the opposite, airports in many cities need to be scaled back or even closed and repurposed to the benefit of all. This all needs to be part of a larger societal shift to create affordable, green and grounded mobility.

Air transport as it exists today is a symptom of the very worst excesses of the current economic system, from inequality to ruining the planet that is our only home. The remedies lie in systemic change and collective behavioural change – we need both, and we need them now.
Greenwashing projects around the world destroy nature and livelihoods. Two particularly harmful examples from the Democratic Republic of Congo and Paraguay involve carbon offsets and agrofuels.

We know that flying harms our climate — but the aviation industry does everything it can to obscure this. While there are a multitude of ways that the industry is guilty of greenwash, there are some false solutions particularly causing exploitation and suffering in the Global South. Two of them are carbon offsets and agrofuels. Airlines that are offering these are selling a fantasy. Not only are they used to justify polluting practices, they also bring disruption to many regions in Africa, Asia and Latin America, turning upside down the lives of those that have never stepped foot on a plane. Carbon offset projects provide carbon credits for the aviation industry and its customers, allowing them to continue polluting without a second thought. One example of these dubious offset projects is found in the Mai N’dombe project. Projects located here are guilty of greenwash, there are some false solutions particularly causing exploitation and suffering in the Global South.

Potential pollution from the biofuel refinery, as well as increased construction and shipping along the river pose a serious risk of significant adverse impacts and also seriously affect the livelihoods of the local fishing community. Social conflicts have emerged since access to the affected Santa Rosa community has been encased by the company implementing the project. One resident, Ezequiel Pereira, sums up the situation bluntly: “Our dilemma is: do we die by starvation or do we die by poisoning?”

The cruel irony of Omega is that Paraguay has an exceptionally low demand for aviation fuels. In fact, Paraguay is the lowest emitter of CO₂, with only 2% of the world’s CO₂ emissions coming from air transport in South America, and the second lowest emitter per capita after Venezuela. But regardless of this, all extractive projects, brings more destruction, pain and extinction to the Paraguayan people, who above all demand healthy and sustainable food, not crop fuels for other people’s planes. Offsets and agrofuels do not offer solutions to aviation’s pollution problem and also have other dynamics in common: they are destroying the lives, livelihoods and futures of communities around the world just so the aviation industry can claim it’s “going green”. But when one sees through the greenwash, it becomes clear: the real solutions lie elsewhere, and they will need to involve less flying.

Residents of the villages in conservation project regions lose access to their forests and are often not sufficiently informed about the projects. © Rainforest Foundation UK

We know that flying harms our climate — but the aviation industry does everything it can to obscure this. While there are a multitude of ways that the industry is guilty of greenwash, there are some false solutions particularly causing exploitation and suffering in the Global South. Two of them are carbon offsets and agrofuels. Airlines that are offering these are selling a fantasy. Not only are they used to justify polluting practices, they also bring disruption to many regions in Africa, Asia and Latin America, turning upside down the lives of those that have never stepped foot on a plane. Carbon offset projects provide carbon credits for the aviation industry and its customers, allowing them to continue polluting without a second thought. One example of these dubious offset projects is found in the Mai N’dombe project. Projects located here are guilty of greenwash, there are some false solutions particularly causing exploitation and suffering in the Global South.

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Safe Landing!

When do I use this narrative?

This narrative can be used to talk about the urgent need for a planned industry descent, and to counter the misleading ‘jobs hypocrisy’ by the aviation industry and governments. It can also be used to make the case for a widespread, fair and rapid transition, ensuring aviation workers are secured in a future in other sectors better aligned to an economy based on wellbeing. You can work with it as well to drive home the message that the world is changing unavoidably in ways that mean a much smaller aviation industry.

How do I use this narrative?

Use this narrative both as a response to impossible industry expansion or to shape the debate around the aviation industry’s future, its need for managed shrinkage, and to plan for workers, within and outside of the industry. It will support demands for a plan from government and industry for conversion and to protect workers and the planet.

The aviation industry is set to shrink for many unavoidable reasons and needs a safe landing. Many things were forced to pause during the pandemic from 2020 on, and aviation was one of the sectors hit hardest. Many took this time to reflect on how we, as a globally interconnected society, could move forward and make things better. Ideas of work, travel and leisure have been altered and there is a collective energy to slow down and make space for new ways of living, working and coexisting with one another this will include changes to work and rapid transition, ensuring aviation workers are secured in a future in other sectors better aligned to an economy based on wellbeing. You can work with it as well to drive home the message that the world is changing unavoidably in ways that mean a much smaller aviation industry.

The workers who built the aviation industry of today deserve a prosperous and protected future – to lay the foundations for a just transition for their workers, coughing up the cash for re-training programmes and pivoting their business models away from its fossil-fuel addiction. – that means creating political pressure through the workplace, challenging heel-dragging politicians and organising public protest to ensure alternative opportunities.

The first stage of transition is putting the brakes on expansion – both in terms of the size of the aviation industry and its workforce. Those workers that have just joined the industry must be supported in finding fulfilling work elsewhere, as a long and enduring career in the industry is not possible.

The aviation industry likes to claim that it supports tens of millions of jobs worldwide, although it admits only a fraction of these are people working directly in aviation. The other jobs are said to be employed in the industry’s supply chain and in the aviation-based tourism sector, or result from employee spending. The industry also argues for the quality of its jobs saying that they give purpose, fulfilment and offer long-term security.

They invoke that for many to become a pilot or stewardess is their dream. To harm aviation would be to destroy the dreams of children. For those whose dreams have supposedly already come true, the industry claims to take good care of them with good wages and conditions. This is why, they argue, it was so important that airlines and other parts of the airline industry were supported by governments during the pandemic. Securing jobs in the sector means that air travel can take off again after the pandemic – and all of us with it. The common realities of long anti-social working hours, job losses and industrial unrest do not feature in this old story.

Changes are already happening that are only the beginning of a larger social, cultural and economic transformation. The most important question, especially for people working in aviation, is whether it will be through design or disaster, whether the industry will crash or make a safe landing.

Messages to help communicate the ‘Safe Landing’ narrative include:

- **Change will happen by disaster or by design** – let’s choose design. Ensuring a safe landing means reducing the industry sustainably – or we risk a crash.

- **Delaying change is reckless, exposing working people to growing risks** – the longer the industry fails to plan for change the more likely disasters and other things outside its control will force change far more painfully.

- **The workers who built the aviation industry of today deserve a prosperous and protected future** – both in terms of the size of the aviation industry and its workforce. Those workers that have just joined the industry must be supported in finding fulfilling work elsewhere, as a long and enduring career in the industry is not possible.

- **We bailed out the airlines from our own pockets, now it’s their turn to pay back with action** – to lay the foundations for a just transition for their workers, coughing up the cash for re-training programmes and pivoting their business models away from its fossil-fuel addiction.

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- **Internationally agreed targets and emissions reductions agreements are already in place** – the industry must be supported in finding fulfilling work elsewhere, as a long and enduring career in the industry is not possible.

The aviation industry is strategically working to prevent the necessary change. The industry’s self-serving story tells us that it can maintain high quality jobs on a large scale no longer tenable (see box: ‘Safe Landing’). It can also be used to make the case for a widespread, fair and rapid transition, ensuring aviation workers are secured in a future in other sectors better aligned to an economy based on wellbeing. You can work with it as well to drive home the message that the world is changing unavoidably in ways that mean a much smaller aviation industry.

The aviation industry urgently needs to choose design. Ensuring a safe landing means reducing the industry sustainably – or we risk a crash. The most important question, especially for people working in aviation, is whether it will be through design or disaster, whether the industry will crash or make a safe landing.

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and ever-increasing climate impacts, means that tourism, and the aviation industry that props it up, will change. And this change must come through design, where economies, businesses and communities are given the support to pivot and diversify, with the objective that tourism is no longer seen as one of the only available routes to prosperity for poorer countries.

Being proactive is vital. This entails bringing the long-term job security, safety, health and the future livelihoods of people working in the industry, and the communities they comprise, to the heart of demands for change. Those working in aviation, tourism and related industries need a just transition – where they are given the skills, training and confidence to find secure, well-paid jobs in the ‘green collar’ economic sectors of tomorrow. This transition can even create more jobs. A report for Possible shows that for every job lost through a reduction in air traffic in the UK, about three new ones could be created.20 Transitioning workers away from fossil-fuel dependent livelihoods is not an argument for delaying the changes required. When it comes to averting the worst impacts of climate breakdown, speed is crucial. But we must ensure the just transition is targeted, led by working people, democratic, and part of a society-wide push to put us on track for a fair economy. At the global level, a just transition must also address the historical responsibility for the climate crisis, by making sure that large emitters support the countries most affected by the climate crisis in the transitions they choose.

While we deliver the controlled descent of the existing aviation industry, airport expansion must be ended. At the same time, we must switch new training and employment in the aviation sector to other branches, and ensure that those who retire or gain employment in other industries are not replaced. Compensation must be made available for those who have joined the industry at great expense to themselves when there is no longer a lengthy career available to them. All of this needs to be supported by governments, instead of repeatedly propping up the aviation industry with taxpayers’ money.

This will bring new opportunities for some, depending on skills and experience, but will leave others more precarious and exposed. Then there are shifts which many, if not all, parts of the economy must deal with. And, the longer that the aviation industry delays making plans for a just transition and conversion, the more it exposes its own workforce and investors, both public and private, to growing risks. For both economic and social reasons, we need to plan for a better future before abrupt, uncontrollable changes are forced upon everyone. Let’s land the plane safely, and lay tracks for the new journey ahead. We need change by design, not by disaster.

It’s Thursday afternoon and night is falling in the coastal area of Castelldefels, just twenty minutes from Barcelona. From the terraces of the bars, always full of neighbours eager to enjoy the sea breeze while having a drink with friends, a lively murmur rises. The scene is ideal, until the murmur suddenly stops. The noise of an aeroplane’s engines, as loud as roaring thunder, forces conversations to pause. In the background, someone else says as the aircraft passes by at low altitude to land at the nearby El Prat airport.

Beyond other types of impacts – climate, health and biodiversity amongst others – the exponential increase of air traffic in Barcelona has aggravated the impacts of an unsustainable mass tourism model. The expulsion of residents for the transformation of their houses into tourist accommodations, the increase of rental prices or the substitution of daily commerce with shops and services for tourists are some of the main problems faced by the residents of Barcelona and surrounding towns.

These impacts would only increase if the Barcelona airport expansion project was to be approved. For Daniel Pardo, an activist in Barcelona representing Asamblea de Barrios por el Decrecimiento Turístico (Neighbourhood Assembly for a Degrowth in Tourism), the increase in capacity at El Prat would be devastating. “The statements made by public officials claiming that an increase of 30 million passengers a year would not increase the number of tourists are absurd. Of course they would. And, with it, the number of tourist accommodations needed – and therefore of evictions and expulsions,” he laments.

Precisely because of the potential repercussions of the airport expansion, just twenty minutes from Barcelona. From the terraces of the bars, always full of neighbours eager to enjoy the sea breeze while having a drink with friends, a lively murmur rises. The scene is ideal, until the murmur suddenly stops. The noise of an aeroplane’s engines, as loud as roaring thunder, forces conversations to pause. In the background, someone else says as the aircraft passes by at low altitude to land at the nearby El Prat airport.

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Demarcation against the expansion of Barcelona Airport in September 2021. © À un pam de terra
people want to travel responsibly even hard to enjoy and justify. 30 by looming climate breakdown, makes and the care for loved ones threatened the very places it promises to take you to, the natural world, the damage it does to must be a better way to get around. Also, thing that leave many thinking that there entwine some of these dynamics and tivate travel. Travelling for work may also for those who would normally cur-ential affordable, comfortable and accessi-ble for all. But travelling differently can ble for all. But travelling differently can for work, leisure or the many are needed to make travel that is essen-tial affordable, comfortable and accessi-ble for all. But travelling differently can be less damaging and more enjoyable also for those who would normally cur-rently fly.

Therefore, inspiring people to find new narratives to offer a ‘solution’ and counter prejudices that the pandemic has motivated. Also, this narrative can be used in combination with other new narratives to offer a ‘solution’ and counter prejudices that going green is a sacrifice.

The idea of travel, specifically when voluntary and chosen, presses lots of positive buttons in people. Adventure, escape, romance, curiosity, pilgrimage, rejuvenation, refuge, making remote hu-man connections – all of these can mo-tivate travel. Travelling for work may also entwine some of these dynamics and add in a few others such as things to do with status, responsibility and trust. However, the often uncomfortable realities of taking flights are just one thing that leave many thinking that there must be a better way to get around. Also, rising awareness of aviation’s harm to the natural world, the damage it does to the very places it promises to take you to, and the care for loved ones threatened by looming climate breakdown, making contributing to air traffic increasingly hard to enjoy and justify.11 Ever more people want to travel responsibly even if doing things differently is not without challenge: insufficient funding has resulted in alternatives to privileged and artificially cheapened air transport being systematically neglected. In poorer, rural areas and especially in the Global South, even basic transport systems are lacking. Major investments and innovation are needed to make travel that is essential affordable, comfortable and accessible for all. But travelling differently can be less damaging and more enjoyable also for those who would normally currently fly.

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The industry argues that flying is freedom and that airports are our gateway to the world. They say that aviation brings people together like no other mode of transport en-abling people to visit friends and family, and experience the world’s cultures. According to aviation advocates more and more people have started to fly in recent years and this means that flying is being ‘democratised’. This is meant to lead to greater global tolerance and understanding of differ-ent cultures, and mean that positive economic effects from globalisation are made possible through affordable and convenient travel.

The picture painted is that flying is fast, comfortable and affordable. Air travel enables you to enjoy distant, exotic and new countries. It is exciting and adventurous. As individuals, those who can afford it are offered the opportunity to broad-en their horizons. This overlaps with the industry story that aviation benefits human progress in poorer regions of the world too, when people from Europe and North America fly and spend their money there. This ‘freedom’, they say, only comes at a small cost because air travel is allegedly only re-sponsible for a small part of climate change, which is often exaggerated. What the old story leaves out is the pleasure derived from other, slower ways of travelling, the frequent discomfort and inconveniences of flying, and how its local and global impacts take away key freedoms from many.

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Our new economy is about well-being for all within natural limits – that means modes of mobility that allow people everywhere to find much more joy in the journey. The benefits of remote work are plenty, and people are rediscovering the numerous opportunities for relaxation and adventure that are closer to home.

Messages to help communicate the “Enjoy the journey” nar-rative include:

→ Moving with meaning – by choosing to travel better, you are safe in the knowledge that your choices are not heat-ing up the planet or supporting an industry that is actively undermining the habitability of our climate.

→ Don’t travel when you don’t want to – if flying was already a burden, something you had to do for work, then not fly-ing by connecting virtually is now easy and common, sav-ing time, energy, cost and pollution.

→ It feels better being grounded – travelling overland gives a much greater sense of time and connection, it is more sociable by train, there is time to adapt and arrive in tune with a place, and no jet lag.

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time? But there are still more adventurous ways to travel on the ground: a trip by ship, perhaps by sailboat, to cross the ocean is something not many people can say they have had the adventure of doing. And if you want to be sporty, a cycling trip or a multi-day or even multi-week hike can make the journey itself the central part of a holiday.

So called ‘staycationing’ – holidaying at or nearer to home – is another part of the new picture, although it has already been an established habit or necessity for many. It allows people to rediscover neighbouring regions and contribute to local economies closer to where they live. Different types of ‘active travel’ holidays also grew in popularity alongside reviving night train services that, in Europe for example, opened up new ways to travel longer distances without flying. These alternative holiday ideas allow people to form deeper connections with time and place, directly challenging the need for air travel sustaining human connection.

Especially where work is concerned, for those people who were able to do their job from home during the coronavirus pandemic, many discovered that they could save time, money and carbon by ‘travelling virtually’ instead of commuting, whether that was by car or plane. This was especially the case where flying was concerned. Business travel as it used to be, pre-pandemic, is dying out. Now, either from the perspective of individuals expected to travel, or organisations formerly requiring their employees to fly, the pause in air traffic due to the pandemic has established different expectations, and allowed some pleasures to be rediscovered.

As a result, an appealing narrative to tell is how when we travel, we can enjoy the journey better. Enjoying travelling sustainably means travelling differently and in many cases less frequently, but with meaning, purpose and the knowledge that your travel choice – or the reason to forgo travel altogether – is contributing to a safe climate for your community, family and countless others around the world.

As well as real life case studies, you can illustrate your narratives with popular or deep cultural references that help bring them to life and connect with people on a different level. What works will depend on what is known or familiar to your context and audience – but cultures are full of examples that can be drawn on for different circumstances. Brainstorm which ones might work for you. Here are a just a few to give a flavour:

Icarus – Icarus is a figure from ancient Greek mythology who, to escape imprisonment made wings with feathers fixed by wax, but flew too near the sun, melting the wax, and crashed to his doom – a tale of how flying too high without respecting natural limits leads to disaster.

The Tortoise and the Hare – being obsessed and over-confident with how fast you can get from one place to another can lead to a fall, slow and steady wins in the story of the tortoise and the hare who agree to a race.

The Subtle Knife – in Philip Pullman’s award winning His Dark Materials book trilogy (also a film) it tells of how a knife that allows people to pass easily between worlds also lets lethal spectres enter the world. In an interview the author said the idea partly came from looking at airline contrails in the sky.

Snakes on a Plane – airline disaster movies are a whole film genre to themselves, and a constant reminder of how vulnerable people are when flying and how unnatural it is. Snakes on a plane became an iconic example of the genre.

Indigenous myths and folklore – are full of flying monsters, threats that fill the air posing danger to life on the ground. There are monsters like the Kanontsistóntie’s from the Native American Iroquois and Wyandot mythology. These are human eating disembodied flying heads with fire in their eyes and long unkempt hair. A similar creature exists by different names in many South East Asian cultures – possibly more horrific for dragging its own entrails along – known as penanggalan in Malay ghost myths, or leyak in Bali and kasu in Laos.

Traveling to places closer to home often involves a slower and more comfortable journey.
When plans were announced to expand Karad Airport in Maharashtra, India, this triggered a major protest in July 2011. Nearly 1,000 farmers protested against the acquisition of their land, marching from the airport to the sub-divisional office (SDO), where they submitted a memorandum and demanded a meeting with then Chief Minister of Maharashtra, Prithviraj Chavan, to discuss their grievances. One of the demonstrators was peasant leader Ashok Thorat who said: “No one from Karad has ever demanded the land.”

Nearly 1,000 farmers protested against the airport expansion. One of the demonstrators was Prithviraj Chavan, to discuss their grievances. When plans were announced to expand Karad Airport in Maharashtra, India, this triggered a major protest in July 2011.

Vivek Gilani, Managing Director of social enterprise cBalance was an aviation enthusiast – until he discovered what flying does to his carbon footprint. Now he advocates for grounded travel, especially trains. “Most places are well connected through trains and the train culture here is something to be experienced. I enjoy my train travel. From the special ‘tiffin’ or travel food that one carries from home and co-passengers still readily share, to the diversity of language and conversations and the changing landscapes and sounds at each station, there’s much to enjoy.”

Gilani has also applied his principles in his work at cBalance, which focuses on sustainability issues, and implemented a general no-fly policy for staff. “On the rare occasion one of us does need to fly it is the exception – a one way flight because rescheduling is not possible or a flight for health reasons. Since our work is in environmental justice perspective, I think we’ve seen enough of the damage done to realise that we all need to make better transport choices, irrespective of where we hail from.”

Over the next few years, Gilani does not want to take any international flights and find a sea route to Europe and the USA. “I’m hoping that through our work we find many more colleagues, collaborators and clients within India who cut back on flying. We are all surrounded by people who push us to be and do what the world defines is normal! But we need to stay focused and understand that slow travel is the way forward. Slow, not in terms of time, but slow, as a way to look at humanity through a different lens like a worm through the earth versus a missile through the sky. Slow as a way to enrich the earth through our life on it.”

Back to Karad: in July 2019 small-scale farmers began protesting, continuously through days and nights, with a sit-in in front of the district’s planning administration against the airport expansion. The farmers who started the sit-in (Thiyya Aandola) announced they would continue their protest until the government meets their demands and cancels the project. The farmers claim that the expansion will not help the development of the district. On the contrary, it will lead to their impoverishment: for expansion of an existing airstrip into a fully-fledged airport next to the city of Karad, fertile and irrigated farmland will be grabbed.

Vinayak Shinde, the spokesperson of the affected villagers and activist of Shramik Mukti Dal, says that 1,335 hectares of farmland cultivated with an irrigation system are under threat. Critical infrastructure for the irrigation system is located on the land to be acquired. Shinde said: “Residents of the villages of Warunji, Kese, Munde, Padali, Gote and Supane have worked to develop this irrigation scheme for more than 50 years. If the land acquisition is carried out this will be a huge loss for about 25,000 people who depend upon this agriculture.”

On 19th September 2019, after 53 days and nights, farmers ended their protest. The farmers maintain that the airport expansion project is illegal. Still today, they are trying to stop expansion, but the government of Maharashtra is not fulfilling their demand.
What might a long journey look like 20 years from now if we prioritised a just mobility system within a wellbeing economy? How will the world have changed and what does that mean for each of us? There are many possibilities for this – and arriving there will depend on our collective ability to implement the futures we dream of. Below is a particular vision from the perspective of a young European on their first sabbatical in two years. Countless other visions are thinkable, possible and welcomed as we build our new economy of wellbeing.

Birdsong greets you as you wake after a good night’s sleep. Today’s the day. You’re finally travelling again. Your suitcase is packed and waiting. You leave your room and head downstairs to the shared dining room and kitchen. Mika, your housemate is still having breakfast. You sit beside her with a bowl of porridge. “There are some of the Algerian dates left,” she says, “they taste amazing in the porridge.”

Algerian dates, you think, are something very special, but I’m already looking forward to fresh strawberries from the community garden next door. And all the fruits waiting for us this summer. I will not miss the dates at all even before winter returns. And, who knows: maybe the cooperative will get some in anyway. There will, without doubt, be another big delivery of tropical fruits and goods via the North-South Solidarity Co-op next winter.

The sky is clear blue and calm as you close the door and look up. Unusually, there is an aeroplane contrail. Maybe that was another humanitarian emergency flight, you think. There have been several recently that took off from the nearest airport in the capital city, 50 kilometres from here. The capital is one of the few cities that still has an operating airport.

Today you don’t take the cargo bike you usually ride, when you run errands for your family and the rest of your housemates. You attach your small bike trailer to your bicycle, so that you can transport your suitcase comfortably, get on the bike and head towards the train station.

You look at your watch and realise that you will be at the station far too early. But never mind, you think, it’s a great place to spend time. When you arrive at the station, you go to the bakery and buy two sandwiches. Bread tastes much better today than it did thirty years ago, your father always says, remembering his youth. The thing is, there’s hardly any bad bread any more since we started dedicating more time to making our own food. The old, revived varieties are not only more resistant to the erratic weather, but tastier too.

Abdullah is working in the bakery today. Thanks to him, there are fresh flatbreads twice a week. After a short chat, you go into the large waiting room in the station, find a seat in the waiting room, intending to read a book. But suddenly you find yourself watching the children playing in the childcare area at the other side of the hall. Their parents are probably waiting for their train in the small café next door.

It’s amazing that I have the chance to make this journey, you think. The last time you made such a long journey was two years ago. Three months via Spain and Morocco and Mauritania all the way to Senegal. First by night train – it was
incredibly nice to wake up, open the blinds of the cosy sleep-
ing compartment and see the Mediterranean Sea stretching
out before you, sparkling blue. From Malaga you travelled by
train and the last part by electric bus. Senegal was exciting.
You hadn’t planned it, but when people there told you about
a new eco-airship line from Dakar to Yamoussoukro in Cote
d’Ivoire, you spontaneously decided to head there. When you
asked a woman outside the train station where the nearest
hotel was, she kindly invited you to stay at her family’s home.
In Abidjan, you stayed with acquaintances of your friend
Claude, who grew up near the city. And in a group of
friends talked to you all night about football, excited to learn
that Didier Drogba was the coach of your favourite club. He is
still a hero in his home country – even though he was a much
better player than coach.
Your train is about to arrive. You fetch your bike, and roll it
into one of the two bike wagons. Inside, you hang it on a hook
and put the trailer in the spacious storage area. You take your
suitcase with you and find a seat in the next coach.
As the train departs and the station building with its
green facades slowly moves away, you watch as your town
shrinks, drifting further and further away. It is criss-crossed
by lush green and gleaming beautifully as the rooftop solar
panels that adorn most homes glitter in the sunlight.

"Where are you going?" asks the woman sitting in the seat
across from you. "That’s a big suitcase!"
"To Kathmandu," you say.
"Oh, are you on sabbatical?" she asks, introducing herself as
Mia.
"That’s right, I’m going to travel for half a year. I’ve never been
away that long before. And I haven’t been that far either. I’m
really looking forward to it."
Well, you’re still young. After this trip, you’ll have a lot to
tell your friends. You know, when I was your age, travelling was
different. We called it ‘tourism’. We got on a plane, flew to the
other side of the world, sometimes just for a few days, and
we often spent most of our time there, just in the hotel. Point-
less. But I had a job where I had to fly to another city every few weeks. It was so stressful and I
was exhausted all the time. But when the Great Pandemic hit,
things started to change …
Many readers of this guide will be experienced campaigners working in diverse situations around the world. You might fight for change through organising and mobilising support, movement building, lobbying and influencing politicians, critiquing and opposing those with economic or political power, or with other strategies. The tools presented on the following pages are intended to be suggestions to help you; not a list of instructions that you must follow rigidly. We have tried to make them as practical and widely applicable as possible, but some will simply not suit your circumstances. The intention is for creative campaigners to pick and choose from these tools as ingredients and use them to make up your own recipe for success in your environment. We will also introduce a few theories that may help explain why people support or oppose a cause, and link them to the new narratives to illustrate how they might work in practice, but there are no hard and fast rules. Use these tools alongside your own experience and local knowledge.

A great message doesn’t say what’s already popular; a great message makes popular what needs to be said.

Anat Shenker-Osorio

HOW TO USE NEW NARRATIVES
How to Think About Your Audience

With a strong set of new narratives and detailed case studies to support your messaging, you will want to put some time into considering your audience. Following your communications strategy and plan, you should have a strong idea who you wish to target and what you want them to do. In order to reach them effectively, you will need to pay attention to what makes them tick. Where do they get their information? Who do they listen to and trust? What are the core values that drive their decision-making? Changing hearts and minds is complex. Psychologist and economist Daniel Kahneman’s work on confirmation bias revealed our tendency to believe things that are supported by the evidence we have and to use data to change our minds. If it is difficult to change how we think and act ourselves, then it is even harder to alter what we already believe, and concludes that we have to work hard if we are to become the person we wish to be. Confirmation bias revealed our tendency to believe things that are supported by the evidence we have, and if it is difficult to change how we think and act ourselves, then it is even harder to alter what we already believe. For this reason, we need to work hard if we are to become the person we wish to be.

The reason people are triggered by certain campaigns and not others is because of the stories they tell and how that story connects with the audience emotionally. Just like when we form friendships, we first respond to how we “feel” about someone before taking the time to find out more about them. Many relationships fail at this first hurdle and many campaigns too. The aim is to get people to have an emotional response to the story you tell, creating a connection with them based on shared values. Fairy tales and myths are good examples of how we are triggered by these stories. In the past, they have been used to influence public opinion. For example, the story of the giant and the beanstalk was used to encourage people to plant trees and care for the environment.

Care/harm: our long evolution as mammals with attachments to and empathy for others underlies virtues of kindness, gentleness and nurture. The Common Destination and Safe Landing narratives are popular among this group because of the stories they tell and how they are supported by evidence. The Plane Greedy and Common Destination narratives link strongly to this and can be used to reveal how a minority of wealthy companies and individuals are impinging on the global majority in a damaging way.

Fairness/cheating: the evolutionary process of reciprocal altruism generates ideas of justice, rights and autonomy. The Plane Greedy and Common Destination narratives link strongly to this and can be used to reveal how a minority of wealthy companies and individuals are impinging on the global majority in a damaging way.

Loyalty/betrayal: means standing by your group, family or nation. Our long history as tribal creatures with a sense of belonging and belonging to a group, family or nation has been maintained through stories and symbols. The Plane Greedy and Safe Landing narratives can be used when airlines and governments are not complying with climate targets.

Authority/subversion: our long tradition of hierarchical social interactions generates leadership and followership, including deferral to legitimate authority and respect for tradition. The Plane Greedy and Safe Landing narratives can be used when dealing with industries which have a long history of deferring to authority.

Sanctity/degradation: shaped by ancient traditions of disgust and contamination, this underlies religious notions of striving to live in an elevated, less carnal, more noble way. The Plane Greedy and Safe Landing narratives fit with these values, encouraging us to live more harmoniously with each other and with nature.

The Basic Human Values theory developed by Schwartz identifies ten foundational human values, each distinguished by underlying motivations or goals which are recognised by people in all cultures. For example, the self-transcendence values benevolence and universalism are associated with pro-environmental behaviours. A particular value can conflict or align with other values.
different, sometimes conflicting values. For example, people may vote for a political party that does not really reflect their values out of loyalty. Cultural or societal attitudes also add to the complexity of action aligning with values: for example, a person might keep using their car despite the knowledge that it is harming the environment because of a lack of public transport infrastructure.

In addition to understanding a little about our common values, it can be useful to grasp the idea of a ‘common sense’ as described by Antonio Gramsci, which is how any dominant culture agrees on a shared understanding of what is good, bad and normal. He calls this cultural hegemony. The mainstream view developed over decades by the aviation industry promoting flying as good, normal and bringing benefits to all could be described as cultural hegemony. Our new narratives are an attempt to shift this – and our global experience of the pandemic illustrates how common sense and therefore cultural hegemonies can sometimes shift very quickly. For example, during the pandemic, working at home shifted from being a minority activity and even unprofessional to being mainstream and entirely acceptable. We can do the same with flying, making it a rare activity done only when no other viable option is available.

When deciding how to campaign on an issue – and particularly if you have limited resources – it is useful to look at the work of veteran UK campaign strategist, Chris Rose, and his useful guide to campaigning about the importance of looking at the audience and seeing the issue through their eyes. If a campaign is to succeed, he believes it must appeal to enough of the population to tip the balance towards something becoming the new common sense. This can mean focusing on a particular aspect of an issue where a broad range of people can find enough common ground to get the effect you need. He suggests not to waste time and effort trying to convince hard set opponents who have already harnessed their identities to something you are trying to change. Looking at flying, it will be important to find out which – perhaps small – part of the whole issue is the touchstone for most people. This could be the Safe Landing narrative, which builds on growing awareness of climate change and maintaining a pristine environment but also looks to the future of existing industries and their employees. This appeals to values from across the spectrum.

Several of our new narratives focus on a positive future where human relationships and wellbeing and flourishing, such as Enjoy the Journey, Safe Landing and Common Destination. To understand the importance of looking at the softer side of life, such as relationships and creativity, it is worth noting the ideas of US academic Tim Kasser. He looked at how materialism and consumerism have a negative relationship to wellbeing and human flourishing. These latter “intrinsic” values, he suggests, are hard to realise beneath the daily battering from advertising and media messaging, which is why – although individual action is useful – widespread changes also need to be supported by policy and effective regulation. Another source of work on these elusive but inherently rewarding values is the work by the Common Cause Foundation who lists examples such as community, love for friends and family and creativity as “intrinsic” and public image, power and how we are seen in the world as “extrinsic” values. Our new narratives are positioned to strengthen these intrinsic values, building on ideas of fairness, collaboration and acting for the greater good. In doing so, they follow the approach of transformative communication, working with messages and campaigns that strive to promote the positive compassionate values in people and society while effectively pursuing concrete goals.

Movements do not usually win by overpowering their opposition. Instead, they need to increase their own base of support and mobilise people who have been so far neutral to their cause. The concept of the Spectrum of Allies helps campaigners think about who their active supporters are, how passive supporters can be mobilised, and how opponents’ support is composed and can possibly be weakened. Source: Beautiful Trouble: Spectrum of Allies. bit.ly/BT_SpectrumOfAllies

Often, behavioural changes by individuals and large-scale systemic and political changes are presented as separate paths to sustainability. Many campaigns rely heavily on one pathway or the other, but research shows that the two approaches actually support one another. People tend to change their behaviours when others around them change theirs. This is especially true in the case of close relationships, such as family and friends. The behaviour of influential people such as celebrities and politicians can also have a great influence on what we see as desirable or negative. Research shows that people rate the credibility of ‘climate change communicators’ higher when their carbon footprint is smaller. Especially when it comes to mobility and travel, individual actions can boost or undermine political messages. Just think of a politician flying short-haul in a private jet to a climate conference and giving a big speech about how we need to reduce our emissions and that everyone needs to do their share. People like few things less than hypocrites. Behavioural changes by individual pioneers can serve as positive examples and initiate ripple effects across communities. Once a critical mass is reached, what is seen as normal and desirable starts to shift, thus creating the basis for the acceptance of institutional and political change. In this sense, one could also speak of ‘cultural change’. When triggered in the right way, reflecting on behaviours related to one’s values or identity can actually increase support for climate policies.

On the other hand, changing institutional structures and the policies that underpin them can in turn facilitate or make possible necessary changes in individual behaviours. Switching from a flight to a night train, for example, is only possible when such alternatives are available. All this makes clear: behavioural change and systemic change is no “either/or” – they cannot be separated and we need both.
**How to apply what you know about reframing aviation**

This section focuses on using the new narratives of aviation within the climate crisis to get out there and make a difference with your campaigns. This will involve working out which of the new narratives work well for you, finding good stories that fit your context and will appeal to your audience. Making the most of media opportunities, understanding when and where to use the new narratives successfully, and building capacity to ensure the whole network can share skills and learning effectively. Appealing to intrinsic values as discussed earlier may also be useful, and the Common Cause Foundation offers some excellent detailed examples of how to analyse your communications to check if they are based on intrinsic values.

This section may seem basic to experienced campaigners, but it is always useful to return to first principles and check that you and your work has not become siloed or stuck in some way. This is an opportunity to explore new creative ideas and to exchange them with others in the network. New people often bring interesting insights, so try to remain open and take a step back to reexamine your campaign and communications approach as if it is brand new.

**Step by step: how to intervene effectively.**

*Identify your goals and strategy.* Be clear about what you want to achieve so that you can ensure your strategy and communications plan lays out how to reach your goals. Decide who you plan to target, your timeframe and what you want to achieve. Consider the new narratives and work out which ones are most useful to you, given your goals and target audiences. Choosing your new narratives will help you determine what messaging is most likely to succeed. This gives you something to measure against to monitor your success. Try to put actual numbers in where possible, even if you are guessing to start with.

This campaign canvas from MobLab here on the right side helps you ensure you’ve touched on all the essentials of an effective campaign, from vision and strategy to storytelling and metrics.

**Look back at past successes and disappointments – and learn from them**

It is also useful to collate past communications – for the last year or couple of campaigns and then ask yourselves ‘what worked, and why did it work’, and ‘what didn’t work, and why not’.

- What goals did you set and did you achieve them?
- Did you reach your target audience(s) and how consistent and effective was your messaging?
- Was your campaign messaging and imagery diverse and inclusive enough?
- How strong were the images used? How could you improve them?
- How detailed and how honest was your monitoring? Were the results as expected or disappointing and – if so – do you know why?
PREPARE YOUR COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

How will you tell people about your work and convince them to support you in order to achieve your goal?

Creating effective communications strategies is highly dependent on the audience you are targeting and the context in which these interventions will take place. Despite the need to tailor communications strategies, there are some general principles of best practice that transcend contexts, audiences and aims. Here are some pointers to help you write your own communications plan:

→ Try to use simple and understandable language to speak directly to your audience and avoid technical jargon about the climate emergency, the aviation industry or broader topics such as economics or finance. Use everyday words and metaphors that are connected to people’s lived realities that show the severity of the problem. For example, ‘saying the aviation industry is good for the economy is like saying dynamite is good for a barbecue’.

→ Use language that is consistent with the worldview, values and goals you want to convey and reinforce. Talk about good things in positive terms and about bad things in negative terms (e.g. ‘strong climate targets’ instead of ‘tough climate targets’).

→ Try to create the right images in people’s minds with your framing. For example, instead of talking about ‘air travel’, say ‘air traffic’, while the word ‘travel’ evokes images of beaches, the sea and pina coladas, ‘traffic’ tends to make us think of traffic jams and aircraft noise.

→ Be accurate. Avoid exaggerating for effect – the truth is powerful enough. Many people really struggle with numerical information – so keep statistics to a minimum and as simple as possible. When you do use data, keep it short, ensure sources are reputable and referenced and use graphics if possible.

→ Maintain some sense of being near to current experiences or proximity by using examples of what is happening now and around your audience to keep what you are saying grounded in the present and in your experience or locality. Avoid talking about 2030 and 2050 (e.g. for climate targets) wherever possible.

→ Stay positive by talking about the opportunities and benefits of achieving your goal – whether it’s more breathable air, less congested roads and fewer sleepless nights, or the enjoyment of travelling more slowly and meeting people in their own surroundings, make the benefits real. Try to avoid catastrophic framings that create fear and paralyse action.

→ For those who are organising, you can also stress the joy and sense of community that can come from constructive, collective action – describe what is to be won from addressing the excesses of aviation and direct people as to how to take action.

→ Play with humour and creativity. Although this may not be suitable for every occasion, funny metaphors, cartoons, memes, creative changes of aviation ads, actions and videos that make people laugh often work well.

→ Appeal to people’s shared values and explain why they should care, how it impacts them and how they can take action. This is an essential part of a storytelling arc, appealing to the sentiments and values that people hold dear, and taking them with you.

→ Tell stories. Find stories that appeal to the widest audience possible and fit within the new narratives you have chosen to focus on. Use metaphor and simile to bring the issue alive.

→ Use images – they are powerful (see box on p. 87) at communicating messages and appealing to emotions.

Whether you want to stir up anger in your audience about unjust developments, expose the destruction caused by air traffic, or generate hope with a glimpse of alternatives and better mobility, images are vital.

→ Avoid the opposition’s framings wherever possible – using the opposition’s language, such as phrases like ‘carbon neutral’ flying or ‘decarbonising’ aviation might implicitly legitimise offsetting schemes and single tech-solutions, despite their problematic nature. Put your view and framing first and assert your stance with your own language and terminology, not theirs. Of course, it is not always possible to avoid certain suboptimal terms. For example, when criticising them, it may also be necessary. In this case, make sure to contextualise appropriately.

→ Be careful about getting into detailed discussions that can reinforce the negative influence of mainstream economics. This means not talking about the ‘true costs of flying’ as they are incalculable and impossible to monetise. In fact, monetising costs in certain cases, such as children’s educational attainment, may detach from the more human, lived experience elements of your communications strategy. What’s more, small disagreements or mistakes in calculating costs, may leave your communications strategy vulnerable to attack and side-tracking away from your narrative.

PREPARE A CAMPAIGN STRATEGY USING THE NEW NARRATIVES

Decide which audiences you need to target in order to achieve your goals and set your timeframe. Consider the new narratives and work out which ones are most useful to you, given your goals and target audiences. Choosing your new narratives will help you generate strong, engaging messaging and content. Clearly identify the target of your campaign – what or who you are against – so that you can focus communication and actions in the right place and also identify potential partners and allies. Within your main goals, you may want to include smaller goals along the way and specific “outcomes”, which are often more easily quantifiable. These are useful for you to measure against to monitor your effectiveness. Try to put actual numbers in where possible, even if you are guessing to start with. Your aim might be to double your local activist group to 100 members and hold monthly demonstrations at each council meeting.

The report The Illusion of Green Flying sparked discussions about aviation and the future of mobility. © Christine Tyler

An activist from the Stay Grounded network giving an interview disguised as a penguin. © Stefan Müller

© Christine Tyler
Keep an open, discursive tone that encourages agreement on shared values. Lecturing and hectoring people will turn them off your cause.

Address people as citizens with agency and extended responsibilities rather than as passive consumers. Remember they are all also employees, parents, friends and neighbours i.e. human.

FINDING SPOKESPEOPLE AND ALLIES

Successful communication needs an authentic voice telling a story that is understandable and believable. Does your team know what they stand for and what they are trying to achieve? If you ask them to write it down, would they all say the same thing? The Elevator Pitch is the imagined way you would describe what you are trying to achieve if you were in an elevator with an influential person and had just that short time to communicate your message. So what is yours? And who is best at delivering it? People facing the public and media must be able to speak authoritatively, with confidence and in an engaging way to give you the best chance of communicating successfully.

The Stay Grounded Multiplier Network is intended as a place for campaigners to share knowledge, resources, experience and expertise. It will also be a great place to make the most of powerful voices who may not be close at hand but are willing to co-create or collaborate as an ally on certain projects. Sharing others’ stories will strengthen your own campaigning and using voices from other affected regions and countries is important in communicating the global nature of this work. Finding strong spokespeople and sharing them is one of the most important ways in which you can work together to amplify your messages. For example, the UK’s Bristol Airport fight against expansion was not only a successful collaboration between local environmental groups; it was also able to call on collaborators in Canada once they realised that the site was owned by a Canadian teachers’ pension fund. When working with people from other countries and cultures, it is important to be respectful of their culture and precise about their geography. Avoid talking about the Global South as if it is a single homogenous place. Instead, be specific about the country and climate impact you are referring to.

It is really important that spokespeople are comfortable in front of a camera and microphone, and in front of a crowd. These skills are not about being people who are also naturally effective in this role and may be found in any part of an organisation, so remain open-minded and try out different spokespeople in a variety of situations. Think about who your target audiences are and who they might be likely to listen to. This doesn’t mean they have to look or be the same type of person, but it is really worth trying out different people with different audiences to see who gets the messages across best.

Who is best placed to speak to the new narratives? High-profile people are good for attracting large audiences but can also be liked/disliked by different groups. Try to find stories in your locality that illustrate each of the new narratives and spokespeople willing to talk about the issues from their perspective. For example, if you are campaigning against a new airport, it might be effective to line up someone living nearby whose home might be affected by pollution to use the Plane Greedy narrative to target the airline’s unfair behaviour, alongside an economist to counter arguments about financial impacts using the Green Means Grounded narrative about the need to fund real alternatives. You can support these with hard data, infographics and further interview options from your organisational representatives, but “real” people who are not seen to be working for a campaign group will appeal better to the public. The Stay Grounded Multiplier Network will enable you to link up different regions to illustrate how actions in one place can affect people elsewhere. Find some positive stories of change, such as local companies or organisations who are no longer flying and use them to encourage others to follow suit with the Enjoy the Journey and Safe Landing narratives, setting out new patterns of behaviour and new potential policies for a sustainable future.

BUILDING CAPACITY - INTERNALLY AND WITH ALLIES

Capacity building means increasing both numbers of active people and supporters, and the skills they bring. A regular skills audit can help you to see where your strengths lie and to identify any skill gaps. It is worthwhile for even skilled practitioners to keep enhancing and updating their skills. You might find you need to bring new people into the team, train existing members in new methods or look for specific tools. Get to know your fellow network members and find out who is best at what. Few campaigning groups have the luxury of recruiting people with the perfect experience, so it’s sensible to be honest about what you are good at and where you need to ask for help.

Before and during COP26 Climate summit in Glasgow, the COP26 Coalition showed how effective collaboration and collaboration can be, successfully bringing together hundreds of organisations working across climate issues, including environmental and development NGOs, trade unions, grassroots community campaigns, faith groups, youth groups, migrant and racial justice networks. This gave them the resources to put on larger events, pool media impacts and attract delegates from the formal proceedings who would otherwise have been fragmented and forced to choose between causes to support. Collaborating not just within the network but also locally with other campaigning groups that may not overlap completely with your work but can align on a single campaign can be effective and good for morale. Unions and other worker groups – particularly from the aviation industry – that may not be formally participating in your campaigns, may provide valuable input and be happy to support, comment or take part in certain activities. Building and nurturing these relationships is an important part of campaigning for a just transition and is how the Safe Landing narrative works on the ground.

The climate movement Extinction Rebellion’s ways of working are interesting to examine, as they represent a shift away from centralised decision-making through a guru-like prioritising of well-being, a simple set of principles within which activists can self organise, and a willingness to learn and evolve in order to flourish. Despite their huge success, their form of direct actions have also been criticised as non-inclusive and outright dangerous for non-white activists due to police violence. Therefore, it may also be useful to organise various anti-violence trainings to improve your team’s awareness of socio-cultural dynamics within the movement. Although anti-racism training will not change behaviour overnight, it can help to embed attempts to bring different perspectives into working practices and to normalise sensitivity to other people’s experiences. In many countries, especially in Europe, the climate movement reached a new level of mobilisation through movements such as Fridays For Future. Networking with national chapters or local groups of existing environmental organisations can help you reach committed climate activists, for example to coordinate decentralised action days.

The citizens’ assembly movement may also be a good collaborator, enabling the impact of aviation to be discussed in depth and in a well informed, calm environment. These events can be costly if well organised by trained practitioners with a broad representative group of people participating. But they are generally seen to be fair – and can be a good way to engage a wider section of the community.

Look for good training programmes or workshops within your budget. Free or low-cost options can be found. Ask for recommendations from other NGOs and ask a local professional to give you support for free via work-placed information platforms such as LinkedIn. Local colleges might offer a free place on a suitable course and some local TV or radio stations offer media training – after all, they all want good content for free, which is what you are providing. Your own social media or newsletters might be a good place to ask for resources and/or skilled volunteers from people who are already on your side. Many NGOs have developed toolkits for campaigning and communication such as Earth Defenders, who encourage campaigners to share tools, ideas and what works with each other via an interactive platform. Others – such as Project Inside Out – offer DIY workshops you can run to improve your skills based on evidence of what works. The movement-building network NEON also has a toolkit and other training resources that are free to use on areas such as organising and spokespeople.
Some Tips on Working Successfully with External Media:

- **Think like a journalist:** put yourself in their shoes and ask which story in their paper should be kicked out in order to insert your own? Have you got a new fact, are you revealing something for the first time, or are you doing something on a significant date that might attract attention?

- **Make it easy for them to report:** what you are doing by building a relationship with them so they can trust you and try to give them what they need. If you can provide information, quotes, film clips and images in formats and to a length that fits their remit and timetable, they will be more likely to use it.

- **Use ‘cheat sheets’ for spokespersons:** to ensure messaging is consistent; make sure everyone has a few solid quotes and your key messaging to hand.

- **Find a famous person or a social media influencer:** who champions your cause and ask for their help with a specific event or campaign action.

- **Concentrate on high quality content rather than quantity:** for a big story, develop soundbites, graphics, quotes, film clips and images, reaching new audiences, and starting conversations. Are you doing something that is important; is it not obvious or is there a need for an advertisement?

- **If you cannot contact journalists online:** call them as this is the only way to ensure they have your undivided attention, particularly if time is pressing.

- **In addition to mainstream media platforms:** there are many more easily accessed progressive media platforms that you can strengthen by supporting, and that every subject has its own specialist media outlets.

- **You can always say no to an interview:** or ask someone to call back for a quote to give you time to think about messaging. Do not allow yourself to be pressured into talking about something you don’t understand or is not part of your campaign.

TAKING ACTION

Campaign actions are not just about getting a single photo opportunity and publishing information on the day that appeals to your existing constituency. They should be designed as part of a planned campaign strategy that contributes to broadening appeal, widening your networks, amplifying your messages, reaching new audiences, and structured conversations. Are there new issues or questions that the media’s attention is drawn to a length that fits their remit and timetable, they will be more likely to use it.

Some of these activities can be self generated and disseminated to interested parties on your mailing list or through partners and supporters. However, if you want your campaign content to be reported in the media by third parties, you must think about how to make it newsworthy in your chosen topic if the media’s attention is drawn to a length that fits their remit and timetable, they will be more likely to use it.

- **Concentrate on high quality content rather than quantity:** for a big story, develop soundbites, graphics, quotes, film clips and images, reaching new audiences, and starting conversations. Are you doing something that is important; is it not obvious or is there a need for an advertisement?

- **In addition to mainstream media platforms:** there are many more easily accessed progressive media platforms that you can strengthen by supporting, and that every subject has its own specialist media outlets.

- **You can always say no to an interview:** or ask someone to call back for a quote to give you time to think about messaging. Do not allow yourself to be pressured into talking about something you don’t understand or is not part of your campaign.

TEST, TEST, AND TEST AGAIN

Do not rely on those inside the organisation to tell you that the messaging is good; they are firmly inside the bubble and will probably agree with you. Go to friendly outsiders and ask them to judge your work. Ask people who reflect the audience you are trying to reach. You could do this face to face in your local area by talking to people on the street in an organised way. Asking open questions (to which people cannot respond simply yes or no) is useful when gathering information. Use these people in your team or support network who are comfortable engaging with the public in a non-confrontational way.

Social media can be useful to test messaging. Facebook or Twitter ads, for example, allows targeting by interest or keyword, as well as the usual demographic criteria. Forums and Groups are also good ways to test responses – and sometimes to find supporters. Look out for large, active groups where your message will be of interest in each of the new narrative areas. For example, there are social justice Facebook groups, sustainable transport groups, environmental groups, and local issue campaigning groups that might align with your work. You might try different posts using each of the new narratives to see which has most appeal to which group. Do they get what you are saying? Did they read or watch to the end? Did they share your work or tell anyone else about it? Do they remember anything about it afterwards? And then change what you are doing in response; do not feel offended or disappointed (although you might feel either or both) – just go with what works and move on.

Use available analytics software (Google analytics for websites, Facebook, Instagram and Twitter analytics for posts here) to track visits, impressions and engagement levels of your messaging. Online polls are also a good way to get feedback on communications, to find out who is listening and what they are hearing. These can be done to your mailing list if you have a newsletter, or during online events if you hold these – instant responses to simple questions.

Use the data collected as feedback to hone your messaging, adjust language and images, tone and style. Theory is useful to guide your work, but you will only know what works with any given audience by trying it out.

Using the new narratives to communicate means adopting some new language and thinking carefully about continuing to use old language. The box on page 86 covers some suggestions of terminology, phrases and keywords that are useful for our new narratives – and those that might be best avoided. These are suggestions and should not be taken as prescriptions. Dictating the use of language is always tricky, because circumstances and contexts can vary so enormously. In some contexts, such as short news clips, using the most well-known phrase is often the best course of action. We have tried to give some reasons for our choices here, but you will have to make your own decisions about which are useful to you in your own location, situation and media opportunity. Don’t be afraid to use your own initiative and experiment in the different spaces you are in.
### Conventional Phrasing vs. Stronger Messaging

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conventional Phrasing</th>
<th>Stronger Messaging</th>
<th>Why</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Air travel</strong></td>
<td>Air traffic</td>
<td>reminder of the misery of traffic; evokes pictures of congestion in the sky and loud engines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jet fuel, aviation fuel</strong></td>
<td>Polluting fuels; dirty fuels</td>
<td>reminds people of the impacts of fossil fuels and the need to move away from them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aviation emissions</strong></td>
<td>(Climate) pollution, toxic fumes; dirty gases</td>
<td>link to impact on people and nature, show that emissions not only heat up the climate, but also have other effects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aviation expansion/growth</strong></td>
<td>More runways, more air traffic and more pollution</td>
<td>point out and be clear about the impact on people, livelihoods and nature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Carbon neutral flying</strong></td>
<td>Greenwashing of aviation; greenwashed flights</td>
<td>Show that there is no such thing as climate-friendly flying; highlight the industry’s false promises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Future effects of climate change</strong></td>
<td>The reality of today’s climate crisis; looming climate breakdown; loss and damage that is happening right now</td>
<td>shorter timescales bring home the impacts and makes the climate crisis tangible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Air miles</strong></td>
<td>Climate destruction reward scheme; polluter pyramid scheme</td>
<td>Remind people that these schemes are incentivising damage Budget travel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Low-cost airlines, budget travel</strong></td>
<td>Externalised cost travel; cheap for you, expensive for the planet</td>
<td>Reminder of the real loss and damage through aviation and climate destruction; cheap flights means someone else paying the price</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Frequent flyer</strong></td>
<td>Frivolous flyer, excessive flyer</td>
<td>Remove elite glamour and reframe as more damaging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Everyone who flies</strong></td>
<td>The minority of people who take flights</td>
<td>Remind audience it’s a small minority that flies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Alternative fuels / sustainable aviation fuel (SAF)</strong></td>
<td>Jet fuel substitutes; SAF – scarce aviation fuels; agrofuels, crop fuels, fuel instead of food (for biofuels)</td>
<td>Remove the positive framing of “alternative” and show that kerosene substitutes are not sustainable; point out that agrofuels can compete with food production</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Democratise flying</strong></td>
<td>Profit-driven expansion of the aviation industry</td>
<td>Emphasise the real driver behind more flights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Decarbonise aviation</strong></td>
<td>Reduce air traffic</td>
<td>Decarbonisation through technology will not be possible for decades – let’s rather talk about what is realistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tourism</strong></td>
<td>Mass tourism, extractive tourism</td>
<td>Tourism dependency is an unsustainable form of ‘development’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tax free</strong></td>
<td>Tax exempt, tax privileges, subsidised by taxpayers</td>
<td>“Free” is positive framing for something that is a problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Climate change, global warming</strong></td>
<td>Climate crisis; global heating; (looming) climate breakdown; destruction of our life support systems</td>
<td>“Change” and “warm” are positive framing for something that is a major problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Private jet flights; shopping weekend trips by plane; space trips etc.</strong></td>
<td>Bullsh*t flights, frivolous flights</td>
<td>If you want, call flights that you find unfair, frivolous and unnecessary “bullsh*t flights” and differentiate them with legitimate flights (e.g. from a migrant visiting family only once in a while)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Give up flying; renounce flying</strong></td>
<td>Slow travel, better travel, grounded travel; responsible decision; climate-conscious travel</td>
<td>Show positive aspects or what can be gained from not flying</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Visuals are so important it is hard to overstate. Controlling your own images is best, using photography, film, and infographics. But this is not always the case – particularly at short notice. In this case, use open source, creative commons sites to find eye-catching imagery. This means the artists or photographers have given explicit permission for their content to be used by others for free. Do not just take and use images without permission and ensure that citations and credits are correct. There are also numerous paying sites – sometimes it might be worth paying for an excellent image you need and photographers also need to earn a living. However, volunteers in your own field can also often provide great imagery and film clips, given a clear brief and a commitment from your side to credit them and their work clearly. Remember that the image must be striking and not just accurate. In other words, an image of the correct site that is difficult to read or poorly lit is not as effective as an image of a similar site (accurately labelled) that is stunning and will draw attention. Images are easier to remember than text and are even more important now that many audiences will be looking at news on smaller devices such as phones and tablets. They simply will not see the detail in an image, but will be drawn to its graphic impact. Examples of images that work: a picture of a demonstrator with many people in the background and one or a few clearly recognisable people to symbolise emotions and broad support at the same time. But be careful not to use too many images of protests and “typical activists” as they can also put many people off. Instead, show (geographically close) impacts of the climate crisis and positive solutions. If you are campaigning against a project, either an image of the site of already happening destruction – or one of untouched nature or a community that could be destroyed for the sake of a project – can be a good fit. Try to avoid using images of planes in the sky as these are the images the industry uses to promote frequent and unsustainable flying. If your intervention is around the future of mobility and transport, try and use pictures of that future: trains, trams, buses, slow travel options, or other forms of mass mobility. If using images of planes is unavoidable, make sure that they are either grounded, or their nose shows to the left and/or downwards. Images of planes ascending are very common and used to show progress and hope – this is something we must challenge and try to avoid reinforcing visually. In western cultures, “up” is associated with good and “down” as negative; and because of the reading direction in most languages, we perceive left as the direction for “past” and right as “future”. Take particular care with graphics where type must be readable – if you want someone to see the header without zooming in, for example, test that it is big enough on your own phone. Make sure also that graphs use colourways and fonts that enable people with dyslexia and other common reading conditions to read them easily. Infographics are such a key part of campaigning materials that it is worth finding people in your team or – if you have the budget professionally – to make them work well. A strong infographic will live on and on, and is highly shareable. Make sure sources are widely trusted and clearly marked as they give credibility.**
CONCLUDING REMARKS

We’ve reached our final destination. This train, err, guide ends here. But while this may be the end of this guide, it is the start of the reframing journey. Up to this point, we have covered why aviation needs to be reframed and why now is the time to do it; we have set a course to where this path could potentially outside of your window offers glimpses of different futures take us; and we have explained how reframing can be practically applied by you through the networks you are embedded within. You now have the tools to embark on your own journey, one where you will challenge the dominant narratives, build collaborative relationships with like-minded campaigners and, in some way, lay the foundations for a better mobility system and a new economy.

RESOURCES AND FURTHER READING

This guide covers only a specific and small part of communication for social change and climate justice. See the following websites for more resources on impactful communication, effective campaigning, visionary framing and more.

Beautiful Trouble: beautifultrouble.org
Center for Story-based Strategy: storybasedstrategy.org
Climate Visuals: climatetalks.org
Digital Charity Lab: digitalcharitylab.org
Earth Defenders Toolkit: earthdefenders toolkit.com
Framing Climate Justice: framingclimatejustice.org

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Common Destination: a guide on reframing aviation to ensure a safe landing and lay the tracks towards a fair planet.

The aviation industry has spent billions over decades to paint itself in a positive light, and it is easy for people to fall into the trap of discussing the future of the industry on its own, rigged terms.

This guide seeks to help escape this trap and provide a toolkit to cast the aviation industry in a light that illuminates its realities: the inequality of aviation within and across borders, the lives and livelihoods destroyed through airport expansion and industry offset schemes, the greenwashing efforts of an embattled industry hanging onto the status quo, and – most importantly – what is to be gained from laying the tracks for more equitable and climate-safe mobility and economic systems around the world.

A better world is possible and there are alternatives: to air transport, to unsustainable ways of life and to the failing current economic system.