

Special Issue 6.2: 'Care-ful convening: towards low carbon and inclusive knowledge sharing'

The consequences of human-induced climate change, the extinction of flora and fauna, pollution, environmental predation and injustices are causing a spectrum of constraints, shrinkage, alteration and loss (Murphy 2017; Elliott 2018; Dokumaci, 2023). In response, people are figuring out how to think, communicate and act differently to account for damages done by systems whose human, more-than-human and planetary harms are fueled by petrocultures (Chapman and Ahmed 2021; Gomez-Barris 2018; Táíwò 2022). Carbon-concerned researchers, professionals and citizens are advancing necessary shifts, including designing and implementing alternative communication and gathering forms. Our call invites scholars across disciplines to explore the articulation between media and new forms of collaborative and non-extractive ways of knowledge exchange and communication.

Alternative histories of digital networks and convenings invite us to radically recenter community, care and human needs and aspirations rather than capital accumulation, hyper-mobility and efficiency. We find inspiration in Arseli Dokumaci's (2023) exploration of 'activist affordances' that bridge disability studies with our shrinking planet and activism that centres care (Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha 2018), pleasure (Adrienne Maree Brown 2019) and rest (Hersey 2022). The decolonial work was carried out by The Civic Laboratory for Environmental Action Research (CLEAR) in Canada, and the praxis was promoted by communities like Virtually Connecting (Caines 2016). We are intrigued by academics who travel low and slow (Knox 2019; Conti 2021) and aim to decarbonize conference travel (Klöwer et al. 2020), communication systems and research (Jekanowski et al. 2022; Miya et al. 2021). We are grateful to participate in the Low Carbon Research Methods Group and LIMITS initiatives for online and offline research exchange. In addition to arguing for what is needed and why, we are eager to illuminate what is being done and how. Contributors to this special issue of JEM, 'Care-ful convening', will be invited to discuss the practicalities of organizing such virtual communication spaces, the philosophies and processes that animate them and their materialities.

As Big Oil barrels on, new configurations are emerging to decarbonize how we produce and share media and knowledge. We locate these new configurations of low-carbon communication and convening within the decades-long evolution of participatory and democratic media and concomitant political changes that challenge the power dynamics beneath communication systems. Long before the advent of digital media and platform studies, proponents of democratic media highlighted the concentration of ownership of networks, infrastructures and technologies that shaped global culture. Advocates of media democracy pushed for global systems change and, at the same time, showed how participatory media can be used as an antidote to corporate control of telecommunications networks, to the screen hegemony of Hollywood movies, and more recently, to the algorithmic distortions of search engines and social networks. Positioning screens and digital media as portals to community connection and conversation opens possibilities to shift power away from the centralized material infrastructures of communication technologies. For example, radio and podcasting become extensions of vibrant local oral traditions of dialogue and governance; web portals and phone apps act as sites for language reclamation and growing Indigenous sovereignty; digital platforms allow citizen



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scientists to work multimodally across networked environmental monitoring devices and analogue methods of observation to establish how air pollution is impacting local schools; 360-degree film offers the possibility for filmmakers and policy advocates to bring environmental dilemmas to decision makers and urban dwellers in compelling new ways (Troy and Skurka 2023).

We acknowledge the challenges of low-carbon convening within the constraints of telecommunications infrastructures and platform architectures geared to marketplace logic and engineered by and for a Silicon Valley demographic that is overwhelmingly wealthy, male and white. As Gillespie (2010) points out, the term 'platform' has evolved as a discursive tool for tech giants such as Google and Facebook to evade government regulation and public good accountability mechanisms required of telecommunications formats such as television, radio and satellite transmissions. As Sharma and Singh (2019) explain, platforms are normative spatial arrangements that go well beyond the digital, ranging from elevated pulpits in early Catholic churches to nineteenth-century slave auction blocks. This broader genealogy flows into today's digital platforms, including the invisibilization of essential workers, mainly people of colour and women, who moderate content, operate warehouses and deliver goods and services (Nakamura 2014; Crawford 2021); the biases baked into the algorithms and architectures of dominant platform media (McPherson 2011; Noble 2018; Chun and Barnett 2021); and the everyday injustices embedded within online platforms that rely on infrastructures of undersea cables (Starosielski 2015), data centres, energy grids (Hogan 2015), digitalization of the oil industry (Mointeiro, 2022) and consumer electronics (Pasek et al. 2023). Singh asks whom platforms elevate, whether this elevation brings power or vulnerability, and if we can widen our scope beyond the taken-for-grantedness of digital platforms as dominant infrastructures. In solidarity, this callout seeks cracks and opportunities: what does care-full convening look like considering the entanglement between platforms and the global supply chains, extractive industries and capitalist geopolitics that have led to climate breakdown? Taking into account the past and present, what future possibilities can we enact or imagine? Can we create forms of meeting and sharing across, within and without platforms in ways that empower, promote equity and challenge the status quo?

The constraints of just decarbonization are challenging long-standing colonialist and ableist mobility norms that have propelled people to travel far and wide to connect. Now, to reduce carbon emissions (Jäckle 2022; Pasek et al. 2020), increase accessibility (Bastian 2021; Wu et al. 2022) and mitigate the spread of COVID-19, more conferences and professional encounters are taking place online. However, while formal aspects of virtual conferences might be perceived as 'better than expected' (Niner and Wasserman 2021), a significant number of participants expressed concern that it is challenging to build meaningful connections in online events (Bray et al. 2022; Seidenberg et al. 2021). In addition to documenting the carbon footprint of scientific conferences (see Astudillo and Azarijafari 2018; Burtscher et al. 2020), others argue in favour of 'hybrid' formats (Tao et al. 2021), champion the ways that virtual platforms enhance inclusivity (Skiles et al. 2022), or question how mobility, fossil fuel use and bibliometric evaluations are intertwined (Berné et al. 2022). The perspectives revealed by this literature should not be confined to the academic realm, as international mobility is more largely a consequence of transformations within capitalism (Young et al. 2015) that impact a wide range of professions. How, to what extent, and for whom do these digital technologies change knowledge sharing? We




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welcome contributions with an intersectional perspective and are capable of articulating both the subjective and the objective, the cognitive and the materialist dimensions of their current use.

We also aim to position ourselves and identify the social tensions of care-ful convening within academia and in the larger economic realm. Indeed, as scholars editing this special issue from both inside and outside the porous walls of the academy, we are well aware of the difficulties that mark the current political economy of scholarship, including the increasing privatization of scientific work, outsourcing and subcontracting (Mirowski 2011) and the growing proportion of academic workers in precarious situations, shifting more and more academic endeavours into 'hope labor' (Kuehn and Corrigan 2013; Waquet 2022). When academic work is marked by a quantified race to publish (De Rond and Miller 2005; Fanelli 2010; Burrows 2012; Waltman and van Eck 2012; van Dalen 2021) and profound inequalities of gender, class and race (Davis 2021; Diele-Viegas et al. 2021) in an environment where 'bullying' is a 'career tool' (Täuber and Morteza 2022; Moss 2018), how can care-ful convening counter violence and predatory practices?

This special issue will illustrate how numerous scholars have employed media theories and techniques to adjust decarbonization amidst precarity, leading to new forms of gathering to support one another and imaginatively blend head and heart, theory and practice, academia and activism. Its lessons must be brought to light alongside other sectors that may face similar challenges. In a context where competition for positions and financial resources is intense and facing sociotechnical change, such as the use of algorithms in journalism (Christin 2020), how can we imagine, test and make possible, convivial, low-tech, low-carbon, exploratory and equitable projects?

We seek contributions which showcase creative possibilities of care-ful convening without romanticizing the constraint or the ability to thrive amidst institutional scarcity and political violence. This special issue will bring questions about ethics and methodologies to the foreground, such as: What technical, organizational and communicative approaches will be restorative for living beings and the planet? Who needs to be in conversation with whom, and by what media? What types of new media platforms and offline programs will challenge uneven and oppressive power dynamics that contribute to environmental harm? How do we know when something 'works'? And more broadly, how does care-ful convening probe taken-for-granted assumptions about the 'contours of "media"' (Brodie et al. 2023) and open out to new possibilities?

Form and format

We welcome diverse submissions from across disciplines and invite contributions to one of the three categories below. Authors are welcome to submit to multiple categories. We encourage collaborative submissions, particularly those that cross academic boundaries, institutional borders and geographic locations. We are eager to accept pieces that: bring together the past, present and future; that hold complex tensions; that showcase alternative value systems to challenge dominant modes of relating steeped in racism, patriarchy, capitalism, extractivism and colonialism; that provoke new ways of engaging with carbon, inclusivity and knowledge exchange; and that inspire reflectivity, justice-driven advocacy and care. Black and white images of any kind are welcome, including photographs, sketches and drawings, graphs and charts.




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Analyse – Articles (5000–7000 words)

These are research articles and/or critically reflective essays. We are open to articles written in traditional disciplinary writing styles as well as non-traditional formats and writing styles, including first-person prose and creative essays.

Submit to the Analyse section:

Please send us an abstract of up to 250 words and three keywords no later than **15 January 2024**, via this submission form. Authors will be notified of the editorial team's selections in February. Full drafts are due **1 July 2024** for peer review. Please review the *Journal of Environmental Media's* submission guidelines and submit via this form: <https://forms.gle/eLh6sjCNHDsjYebc7>

Actualize – Fieldnotes (500–1500)

To examine and explore what is being done and how, these entries share documentation and reflections from media encounters that exemplify convening in more care-ful, equitable and environmentally conscious ways. Key takeaways from these experiences can be shared as instructions for alternative convenings, lessons learned, undergirding concepts, etc. Have you been to a gathering that inspired you, made you think differently and deserved some critical thought and attention? During the course of your research, have you had a convening of technology and people that surprised you, rearranged your thinking and opened up a new way to make and disseminate knowledge? We invite memories and reflections, sketches, field notes, portraits of software and diary entries. Think of these short write-ups as being 'event reviews' or 'moment reviews' similar to a book review but more free form.

Fantasize – Speculative Proposals (500–1500)

We welcome visions of future convenings and forms of convening. This can be grounded in something you'd like to implement right here, right now on earth or can suggest a speculative convening that takes place in a fantastical imaginary realm.

Submit to the Actualize or Fantasize section:

Please send the complete submission by **15 May 2024**. Submit via this form: <https://forms.gle/gEWGKMTobousTQQA>

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