

Overall, while centered on Burakumin and Dōwa policies, the work provides compelling frameworks through which we can better understand the mechanisms of policy development, making and implementation. The work makes a strong contribution to our understanding of Japanese policy studies and minority studies, and can provide a framework for a comparative examination for other political systems that have considered their own form of affirmative action policies.

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Continent in dust: experiments in a Chinese weather system

By Jerry C. Zee. University of California Press, 2022. 332 pages. Hardback, \$85.00 USD, ISBN: 9780520384088. Paperback, \$29.95, ISBN: 9780520384095. Ebook, \$29.95, ISBN: 9780520384101.

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Continent in Dust is an ambitious and illuminating exploration of contemporary environmental and political-economic shifts in China and beyond. In the book, Jerry Zee develops a “political anthropology of strange weather” (p. 8), which challenges both universalizing Anthropocene narratives and methodological nationalism as it traces changes in the seasonality of the monsoon and the atmospheric vagaries wrought via desertification, industrial emissions and wind patterns, from the deserts of Inner Mongolia and Gansu to the streets and buildings of Beijing, and on to Seoul, and to San Francisco. The text examines changing environments and weather not as passive objects of, or backdrops to, political action, but as lively participants in a more-than-human “choreography”, presented here through a material-semiotic lens attentive to the politics and the poetics of dust, storms, and breathing; of living with and through change.

Reflecting on the rise of dust storms and air pollution as an increasing focus of attention for China through 40 years of economic Reform and Opening, the book shows how this “modern weather” (p. 15) confounds conventional environmental management and international relations. The 2008 Beijing Olympics drew international interest to the Chinese state’s ability to manage air quality, which soon expanded to the implications for China’s neighbours in Asia and other “downwind” locations. By following dust flows beyond mapped borders, Zee explains his field as an “aerosol China” (p. 34), conveying the extra-territorial reach of material and political effects. Drawing primarily on 14 months of multi-sited ethnographic fieldwork and interviews, he follows dust across time and space, noting how Chinese officials trying to manage Beijing’s air traced its particulate contents up-wind, to the deserts of the interior, seeking to avert or reverse desertification via policies banning pastoralism in favour of forestry, and infrastructural efforts to hold back encroaching sands. This is the setting for Part One of the book, which focuses on “wind-sand” (*fengsha*), the compound vernacular

evoking the “interphase” of earth and air that Zee centres in thinking with meteorology and materiality. Through the activities and reflections of forestry officials, entrepreneurs and ex-herders, Zee demonstrates how the government’s environmental and social engineering efforts are not so much a modernist scheme to control nature, as a set of labour-intensive and never-ending interventions with uncertain outcomes. In Part Two, Zee heads downwind to Beijing, where wind-sand is encountered as fine particulate matter, cut with industrial emissions, breathed by city dwellers whose shared but uneven exposure entangles them in political movements and claims. Further downwind still, Part Three considers how ideas about responsibility shift along airstreams and beyond national/regional frontiers, bringing situated encounters alongside planetary concerns.

By exploring environmental and political relations through the medium of airborne earth, the book contributes to emerging conversations in anthropology and allied fields that engage the *elemental* (e.g. Cohen and Duckert 2015; Neale, Phan, and Addison 2019) to decentre the focus on the human – even the biological – in debates about the Anthropocene (p. 238). Sand/dust for Zee is a “medium of ethnographic relations” (p. 10). Its properties and dynamics also lend themselves to burgeoning discussions of *volume* in geography and anthropology (Billé 2020; Elden 2013). This is clear in Chapter Five “City of Chambers” – which presents Beijing not as seen on a two-dimensional map but as perceived by “breathers” moving through air of different qualities and densities. This enables Zee to draw out how the risks and inequalities of toxic air are phenomenologically experienced, represented in the public sphere, and navigated by state and citizens. Beyond the city, the volumetric approach is also a way to interrogate questions of nature and national sovereignty. Where others have explored this through examples of hydraulic potential reconfiguring nature and nation via electricity generation (Folch 2019), Zee invites readers to think with dust particles as they move through four dimensions, eluding cartographic containment. While the book is concerned with what Zee identifies as a recognizably “Chinese weather system” (p. 34) – manifesting as clouds that may later arrive in California carrying “the distinct geochemical signatures of decades of the Chinese style of development” (p. 209) – this dust extends attention along “regional and eventually hemispheric avenue[s]” (p. 33), reconfiguring the meanings, limits, and reach of the nation-state under a changing climate. Zee presents an evocative image of the territorial form of China (literally) *rising*: its terrain lifting into the sky on the winds, “the country’s interior passing over itself... [an] uncanny meteorological double” (p. 6–7). The book at once offers a way to understand China’s specific trajectory and role in planetary predicaments, and to recognize the shifting sands of sovereignty within and beyond nation-states and regions – studying the weather as such is a way to enrich understanding of a “more-than-human world system” (p. 213).

Throughout the book, Zee articulates an approach to “environmental governance” that challenges frameworks that view politics and the environment as separate from one another. For Zee, explicit state efforts to anchor the dunes – to reduce the threat the desert poses to Beijing – are examples neither of a decentralized *environmentality* whereby subjects internalize new subjectivities through participation in conservation projects, nor of a centralized mastery over external nature. This is more a mutual co-production; in Zee’s terms, involving “reprogramming”, “scaffolding”, “sculpting”, “refracting”, and “choreographing”. The engineers recognize the limits of their efforts to control wind and sand. Interestingly, state officials seem to have more confidence in their ability to effect predictable reactions from humans. They deploy economic policies and incentives to try to convince herders to forego their pastures and become entrepreneurs and/or foresters (Chapter Two). Ultimately, however, Zee shows that these projects too are always partial, and challenged by the (ex-)herders. This exploration of environmental and social governance exemplifies the efforts and the limitations of the state to manipulate the economy and ecology. Chapter Three is a compelling investigation of temporality: recognizing the impossibility of controlling the sand means recalibrating political time, away from the imperative to bring on a future utopia, to an effortful struggle to hold dystopia at bay (illustrated by evocative photographs of slogans disappearing beneath dunes). As one desert ecologist tells Zee: “In places like this, we are no longer confronted with the problem of development [*fazhan*], but rather the question of existence [*cunzai*]” (p. 113).

This sense of suspense and survival continues through Part Two, which explores breathing as a political relationship. [As the author notes, the book is a generative companion piece for Timothy

Choy's work (e.g. 2016)]. Alongside the call to extend geopolitical attention above and beyond state borders, the focus on breathing turns attention inwards, seeking to dissolve assumptions about bodily borders. Zee coins the "body meteorologic" (p. 160) to think through how people not only appropriate spaces but are appropriated by them. [As several endnotes indicate, encounters with aerosols have of course taken on new weight in the context of coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19)]. The involuntary action of respiration, Zee argues, demands a rethinking of politics because it disrupts ideas of passive/active binaries and individual bounded bodies. Unavoidable exposures lead to an atmosphere of decay he terms "necrosis" (pp. 143–46). Considering this, the Party slogan "breathing together, sharing a destiny" seems incredibly portentous (p. 141). Chapter Five explores local artistic and social media responses that evoke the work of building alternative, humble, situated solidarities amid this danger.

For Zee, a key connection between these modes of environmental governance in the interior and "air-spacing" in the city is that they take the form of *experiments*. Zee posits that this way of doing politics and environmental engineering is characteristic of Chinese "late socialism" – a term he deploys to avoid the cut-off suggested by "post-socialism"; to counter claims of a neoliberal state retreat (p. 66); and to frame contemporary Chinese politics as a process of "becoming" rather than a pre-defined logic. Significantly, the book addresses how political-economic regimes other than Euro-American neoliberalism interface with the geophysical world, generating not a singular Anthropocene or Capitalocene, but a plural weather-world-system. Discussing the "Sinocene", Zee attends to Chinese influence enacted though not determined by the Communist Party (CCP)'s aspirations towards *ecological civilization* (pp. 203–05). Zee holds space for alternatives to narratives of blame underpinning some China–US relations, unearthing in a Sino-Korean forestry project the potential to reframe the challenges of sharing an airstream or "dust-shed" as *friendship*, rather than geopolitical enmity. This extends longstanding discussions of watersheds as potential ground for commoning (e.g. Loeffler and Loeffler 2012) to the atmospheric domain. Swept up in the book's journey across airspaces, I wondered at times about what happened between the desert and the city, where else wind-sand whipped up from the desert mixes with coal dust and other emissions, their provenance more shadow-like than directly approached. Readers who are not overly familiar with the region might benefit from some more background on this, and though probably beyond the scope of this already ambitious book, it would be interesting to think on what other places and processes may constitute the multi-sited field of the "Chinese weather system".

Appropriately for a book centrally concerned with poetics, *Continent in Dust* is beautifully written. It invites and rewards a variety of reading approaches. As Zee notes (p. 250:n51), the six substantive chapters work in sequence but also as a set of resonating pairs: Chapters One and Four deal with *relations* (the hyphens of wind-sand and dust-shed linking the desert interior to Beijing; the human-aerosol relation of breathing). Two and Five deal with *experimental interventions* (the labours of cultivating windbreaks and cash crops; measures to capture (un)clean air in Beijing); and Chapters Three and Six attend to potential "phase-shifts" (anticipating burial in the interior, navigating blame and/or friendship across regional and planetary scales). The chapters are also interspersed with seven shorter essays ("apparatuses") that evoke wind-sand from different angles: among them the sensory experience of a nocturnal storm; historic metaphorical linkages of sand and Chinese society; the scientific modelling of dust-storms; the emergence of reformulated ocean-dwelling entities. Apparatus E, "Wildfires" (p. 166), associates the deployment of tear gas in Hong Kong protests with the author's memories of air density and ancestral home. For me, this was a particularly moving segment amid the affective political analytics of Part Two. Photographs and lines of poetry illustrate and expand the analysis throughout, encouraging engagement with the sensory ethnography, which echoes its subject matter in its fluid vocabulary of suspension, precipitation, and drift. Occasionally, elaborate prose threatens to run loose of the reader. I was however receptive to Zee's appeal to bear with him on this (p. 241:n3); the resonance of style and argument shows as well as tells the relations at play. Judicious use of the first-person plural brings the reader along without assuming too much. For all the sense of dust-blown convolutions, the book's own poetics are carefully structured and grounded in the ethnography, working on a range of levels. It is also rewarding to dig into the endnotes for additional theoretical groundings.

The book also engages important methodological questions. How can one remain grounded during ethnographic explorations of planetary change? How to grasp meaning (or deal with the un-graspable) when it comes to socio-political and geophysical transitions? Zee argues that we should also think of ethnography as an experiment, promoting a “parallax” approach that (suitably for the book’s volumetric inclination) seeks depth over singular truth, and presents a variety of perspectives, sites, scales, and possibilities rather than a linear story (p. 27). The final pages of Chapter Six and the second part of the last apparatus (“Monsters”) reflect key ideas and summarize the book’s main messages, but there is no clearly delineated conclusion section. Our predicament is argued to be open-ended, and so too is the text.

Continent in Dust is a timely and critical intervention in the roles and relationships of China and Asia in weather-world-systems. This book will be valuable for scholars and students of political and environmental anthropology, geography, media theory, and environmental humanities in Asian Studies and beyond; and for those teaching and engaging with creative modes of ethnographic theory, method, and writing. It is a welcome contribution to a growing conversation about how material, ecological and meteorological phenomena are mutually implicated with practices, knowledges and experiences of sovereignty, ethics, and sociality.

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Taiwan and the Changing Dynamics of Sino–US Relations: A Relational Approach

by Hung-Jen Wang. Routledge, 2022. 86 pages. Hardback, \$59.95; Ebook, \$20.65.

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The overarching objective of this book was, in the words of the author, Professor Hung-Jen Wang, “to take a relational approach to understanding Taiwan’s current status in the context of the changing dynamics of Sino-US relations – a purposeful attempt to step away from conventional and mainstream