

## Joint Preface to *Wind and Power in the Anthropocene*

### A Dynamic Duo

---

Welcome to our duograph. You may be entering into the duograph through *Ecologics* or *Energopolitics*, but in each case, we invite you to engage both sides of this work. The duograph is a new and experimental form that needs your active engagement. But what is a duograph? you might rightly ask. A duograph consists of two single-authored ethnographies that draw from a shared fieldwork experience and the same archive of research material. As a textual form, the duograph emerged from our field research (2009–13) on the political and ecological dimensions of wind power development in Mexico's Isthmus of Tehuantepec. The idea evolved partly out of experimental interest and partly out of necessity. The two of us spent many long evenings debating the significance of one aspect or another of the research and gradually found ourselves setting out from the center of the project in different theoretical and thematic directions. The fieldwork itself was a joint enterprise from start to finish; every interview, every meeting, every protest, involved both of us. We originally expected that the writing would follow a similar path toward a coauthored monograph. But while coauthoring offers many opportunities to learn and grow through dialogue, it also involves many compromises and ultimately must resolve in a synthetic voice and direction. We wanted to do this differently.

We eventually realized how important it was to each of us that we be able to tell a different part of the immensely complex story unfolding in the isthmus. Cymene wanted to spotlight the salience of human-nonhuman relations

in energy transition while Dominic wished to concentrate on unraveling the political complexity of wind power. We decided to experiment by elaborating our different analytics and interests in companion volumes that are meant to be read together. A working definition of the duograph would be a conversation between researchers that materializes in two texts, which do not require analytic synthesis or consensus. We view the duographic form as a way to produce collaborative scholarship that helps to make visible the multiplicity of stakes and attentions existing within the practice of research collaboration. The observations and arguments found in each of these volumes emerged from close dialogue and are by no means incommensurable, but neither are they serial parts of the same narrative. They speak in parallel, but not always in unison. Characters, dynamics, and events crisscross them, but they are approached through different analytic lenses. We hope that the duograph offers an experimental prototype in collective authorship that may be of value to other collaborators and other projects elsewhere.

### Wind Power in Mexico

---

Our ethnography addresses a central question of our anthropocenic times: How can low-carbon energy transition happen? Or, put differently, What happens in those transitions? Who sets the agenda? Who—human and otherwise—is affected? And what are the political (in the broadest sense of the term) forces that shape the possibilities for low-carbon energy futures?

These questions initially took shape at Busboys & Poets café in Washington, DC, in late 2008 as we prepared for a move to Houston, Texas, a global epicenter of the fossil fuel industry. We considered a number of different fieldsites of renewable energy production that appeared to be poised for rapid development. We looked at the DESERTEC solar project in Morocco and nascent programs of wind development in Venezuela and Brazil among other cases. But the one that attracted and held our attention most strongly was Oaxaca's Isthmus of Tehuantepec.

A gap in the Sierra Madre Mountains creates a barometric pressure differential between the Gulf of Mexico and the Pacific Ocean, forming a wind tunnel in the isthmus where wind speeds regularly flirt with tropical storm strength. The *istmeño* wind is capable of overturning semitrailers with ease, uprooting trees, and stripping the paint off boats. This region—often said to be the least developed in a state that is the second poorest in Mexico—is considered to have among the best resources for terrestrial wind power any-

where in the world. That potential was first tapped in the mid-1990s through government demonstration projects designed to lure transnational investment in renewable energy production. But wind development only really gained attention and momentum during the administration of President Felipe Calderón (2006–12). Although Calderón’s administration is better known for its drug war and for ceding sovereignty to cartels and capital, his climate change advocacy transformed Mexico from a pure petrostate into a global leader in low-carbon energy transition. Mexico passed some of the most ambitious, binding clean-energy legislation anywhere in the world, including a legal mandate that 35 percent of electricity be produced from non-fossil-fuel sources by 2024, with 50 percent of that green electricity expected to come from wind power, and with most of that wind power expected to come from the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. Private-Public Partnerships (PPPs) in wind energy development mushroomed rapidly. Between 2008 and 2016 the wind energy infrastructure of the isthmus expanded from two wind parks offering 85 megawatts of production capacity to twenty-nine wind parks with 2,360 megawatts of capacity, a 2,676 percent increase in less than a decade that has made the isthmus the densest concentration of onshore wind parks anywhere in the world.

Over the course of sixteen months of field research (in 2009, 2011, and 2012–13), we sought to cast as broad a net as possible and speak with representatives of every group of “stakeholders” in wind development in Mexico. Conversations with community members and corporate executives; federal, state, and local government officials and NGO staff; industry lobbyists and antiwind activists; conservationists and media professionals; indigenous rights advocates, bankers, and federal judges, all provided a meshwork of perspectives, which we traced as we moved between the many communities of the isthmus; to the state capital, Oaxaca City; and finally to the federal capital, Mexico City. In total, we conducted more than three hundred interviews and participated in hundreds of hours of less formal conversations. Working with a team of local researchers, we were able to conduct the first door-to-door survey of reactions to wind development in La Ventosa—one of two isthmus towns that are now nearly completely encircled by wind parks. We sat in on governmental and activist strategy meetings and toured wind parks. We marched, rallied, and stood at the fulcrum of many roadblocks erected by opponents of the wind parks. We witnessed the evolving politics of solidarity between *binnizá* (Zapotec) and *ikojts* (Huave) peoples whose shared resistance to particular forms of energy infrastructure brought them into alliance after hundreds of years of interethnic conflict. We arrived at and left fieldwork

as committed advocates for low-carbon energy transition. But our experiences in Mexico taught us that renewable energy can be installed in ways that do little to challenge the extractive logics that have undergirded the mining and fossil fuel industries. Renewable energy matters, but it matters more how it is brought into being and what forms of consultation and cooperation are used. We thus came to doubt that “wind power” has a singular form or meaning. Everywhere in our research, it was a different ensemble of force, matter, and desire; it seemed inherently multiple and turbulent, involving both humans and nonhumans. To capture that multiplicity, we came to think about our object of research as “aeolian politics,” borrowing from the Spanish term for electricity derived from wind power, *energía eólica*.

Three case studies of aeolian politics came to absorb us in particular—Mareña Renovables, Yansa-Ixtepec, and La Ventosa—the first is the most complex and is treated at length in the *Ecologics* volume. The other two are highlighted in the *Energopolitics* volume. All three represent distinct configurations of aeolian politics; two can be categorized as cautionary tales of failure and the other as an example of the successful achievement of what for many is the renewable dream come to life. And yet success and failure were always in the eyes of their beholders. In all three studies we have sought to balance the fact of anthropogenic climate change and the need for global decarbonization against the local salience of vulnerable statecraft, demands for indigenous sovereignty, and the other-than-human lives that inhabit the Isthmus of Tehuantepec.

## Volumes

---

### *ECOLOGICS*

*Ecologics* tells the story of an antidote to the Anthropocene, one that was both a failure and a success. The Mareña Renovables wind park would have been the largest of its kind in all Latin America, and it promised immense reductions in greenhouse gas emissions as well as opportunities for local development. In *Ecologics* we follow the project’s aspirational origins as well as the conflicts and ethical breakdowns that would leave it in suspension. Drawing from feminist theory, new materialisms, and more-than-human analytics, this volume of the duograph examines the ways that energy transitions are ambivalent: both anticipatory and unknown, where hope and caution are equally gathered. In the case of Mareña Renovables, distinct imaginaries of environmental care and environmental harm were in conflict, effectively

diagnosing the deeply relational qualities of energy and environment. The core argument that *Ecologics* advances is that the contemporary dynamics of energy and environment cannot be captured without understanding how human aspirations for energy articulate with or against nonhuman beings, technomaterial objects, and the geophysical forces that are at the center of wind power and, ultimately, at the heart of the Anthropocene.

The analytic architecture of *Ecologics* is both anticipatory and interruptive, and readers are encouraged to engage with the work in an itinerant and wandering way. Three chapters focus on the case of the Mareña project, tracing its inception and the policy regimes and economic conditions that allowed for its initial development (chapter 2, “Wind Power, Anticipated”), following it through a series of dramatic standoffs and protests against the park’s creation among indigenous and mestizo communities in the isthmus (chapter 4, “Wind Power, Interrupted”), and finally witnessing the collapse of the wind power project itself resulting from multiple political, economic, and communicational impasses (chapter 6, “Wind Power, In Suspension”). These chapters are interrupted by others that focus on wind, trucks, and species respectively. The interruptive design is intended to mime the empirical, ethnographic dynamics of the research, where forces (like wind), technomaterial tools (like trucks), and other-than-human beings (creatures of all kinds) came to stall and vex human-designed notions of progress and infrastructural development. In *Ecologics* creatures, materials, and elemental forces are bound up with wind power as an analytic object, and they in turn invite new human responses to the paradoxes we face in a time of climatological uncertainty.

#### ENERGOPOLITICS

*Energopolitics* engages the case of Mexican wind power to develop an anthropological theory of political power for use in the Anthropocene anchored by discussions of “capital,” “biopower,” and Dominic’s own neologism, “energopower.” At the same time, the volume emphasizes the analytic limitations of these conceptual minima when confronted with the epistemic maxima of a situation of anthropological field research on political power. Those maxima not only exceed the explanatory potential of any given conceptual framework, they also resolutely demand the supplementary analytic work of history and ethnography. Concretely, the volume argues that to understand the contemporary aeolian politics of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, one needs to understand, among other things, a contested history of land tenure, *caciquismo* (boss politics), and student/teacher/peasant/worker/fisher opposition

movements specific to the region; the phantasmatic status of state sovereignty within Mexican federalism; the clientelist networks and corporatist machinations of the Mexican political parties; the legacies of settler colonialism; a federal government anxious about waning petropower and climate change; and a vulnerable parastatal electricity utility trying to secure its future in an era of “energy reform.” These forces are just as critical to Mexico’s aeolian politics as the processes and dynamics that are duly captured by concepts such as capital, biopower, and energopower. *Energopolitics* is thus an urgent invitation for Anthropocene political theory to unmake and remake itself through the process of fieldwork and ethnographic reflection.

The invitation unfolds across five ethnographic chapters, each highlighting a different localization of aeolian politics. We begin with the as-yet failed effort to build a community-owned wind park in Ixtepec, then move east to the town of La Ventosa, which is successfully encircled by turbines that were built in the dominant PPP paradigm, yet has also been beset by uncertainty and unrest. We encounter the performative sovereignty of the state government in Oaxaca City as it searches for a means to regulate and profit from wind development and then journey northwest to Mexico City to interview those in government, industry, and finance who firmly believe they are steering the course of wind power in the isthmus. Finally, we return to Juchitán, which is not only the hub of local aeolian politics in the isthmus but also a town whose citizens imagine themselves to be the inheritors of a decades- if not centuries-long tradition of resistance against the Oaxacan and Mexican states. In this way, *Energopolitics* seeks to speak *terroir* to *pouvoir*, highlighting the need to resist anthropocenic universalism by paying attention to the profound locality of powers, agents, and concepts. As Claire Colebrook has argued, recognition of the Anthropocene should mark the “return of difference” that has been long called for in feminist and ecological criticism.

### Collaboration in Anthropology

---

Our duograph belongs to a long history of anthropological collaboration in research and writing. In the early decades of North American and European ethnology, the discipline’s close ties to fields like geography and natural history meant that the scientific expedition was an important apparatus of anthropological research practice. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, projects of linguistic and cultural salvage and analysis remained

closely allied with archaeology and museology, which explains how some of the most ambitious and important collaborative anthropological enterprises of the era—Franz Boas’s Jesup North Pacific Expedition (1897–1902), for example—were organized principally around building natural history collections. As the twentieth century wore on, an individualistic model of field research came to predominate in American and European anthropology, at least normatively, and was celebrated for the transformative qualities of participant-observational immersion. But one would scarcely have had to scratch the surface of any ethnographer-informant dyad to illuminate the complex webs of social enablement—involving research assistants, translators, laborers, intermediaries, government agents—that made anthropological research in the classic Malinowskian mode possible.

After the Second World War, a new emphasis on interdisciplinary area studies research in the social sciences expanded and intensified anthropology’s range of collaborative engagements around the world. Much as expedition-era anthropology was absorbed into colonial and imperial knowledge projects, the area studies era was imbricated with the national and international political dynamics of the Cold War. Governments sought to enroll anthropologists in military and intelligence operations across the world—Project Camelot being one of the most well known. However, anthropology was also broadening its epistemic ambitions and moving from cultural salvage projects toward a grappling with modernity and the complex cultural and social dynamics of cities, nations, and world systems. Interdisciplinary exchanges no doubt served to accelerate this shift. And 1950s enterprises like Cornell’s Vicos project in Peru (creating a “laboratory for social change”) or the MIT Modjokuto project in Indonesia (which gave Clifford and Hildred Geertz their first fieldwork opportunity) cultivated the kinds of long-term interdisciplinary research networks that influenced graduate training and pedagogy as well.<sup>1</sup>

The postwar period also saw an efflorescence of anthropological research partnerships mediated through marriage and other life partnerships. Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson are a classic example, Margaret Mead and Ruth Benedict a more elusive but possibly more substantial one. Then came the Geertzses as well as June and Manning Nash, Marilyn and Andrew Strathern, Edith and Victor Turner, and Margery and Eric Wolf, followed later by Barbara and Dennis Tedlock, Michelle and Renato Rosaldo, Sally and Richard Price, and Jean and John Comaroff, among others. Anthropology has seen many couples practice the crafts of research, teaching, and writing under at least a partly shared sense of identity, each navigating its

own relational dynamics as well as the dominant masculinist heteronorms of the discipline and the university in the twentieth century.

Reacting to the still broader and more complex scale of post-1980s globalization and its social, economic, and environmental consequences, the twenty-first century has seen renewed interest in collaborative research partnerships. Three that have inspired our duograph in particular have been the Matsutake Worlds Research Group (Anna Tsing, Shiho Satsuka, Miyako Inoue, Michael Hathaway, Lieba Faier, and Timothy Choy), the Ethnographic Terminalia collective (Craig Campbell, Kate Hennessy, Fiona McDonald, Trudi Lynn Smith, and Stephanie Takaragawa), and the Anthropology of the World Trade Organization group (Marc Abélès, Máximo Badaró, Linda Dematteo, Paul Dima Ehongo, Jae Aileen Chung, Cai Hua, George Marcus, Mariella Pandolfi, and Phillip Rousseau).<sup>2</sup> All are multi-institutional and international partnerships that have explored new ways of creating anthropological knowledge by crossing the boundaries between anthropological research practices and the arts.

Collaboration itself is nothing new in anthropology; there is abundant evidence that it has been a productive dimension of anthropological research and writing since the discipline's beginning. Further, intimate research partnerships have long fueled the production of anthropological knowledge. There is doubtless an important book to be written about how the particular qualities, subjectivities, and dynamics of particular collaborations have influenced the kinds of knowing and knowledge that those enterprises generated. But our intervention here is more limited. We have found it striking that the spirit of collaborative research has not always translated well into practices of authorship. Coauthored texts remain the exception rather than the rule in anthropology, even when they derive from jointly undertaken field research.<sup>3</sup> The reasons for this gap are not simple and involve considerations ranging from professional reputation to relational dynamics to institutional audit cultures that seek to impose a mathematics of individual accomplishment and accountability on the sociality of research, analytic, and writing practices. What is striking in our view is that there are relatively few models for collaborative writing beyond the model of the jointly authored single text that synthesizes analytic perspectives under a common "we." This is why we have centered our methodological intervention on the duographic form: we are looking for ways to strike a better balance between individual ideation and expression and collaborative fieldwork and archiving.

An important added benefit of the duograph is that it permits a more extensive analytic division of labor between its volumes, as parallel yet distinct



arguments can be developed with respect to the common research archive. In our case, the *Ecologics* volume's close focus on how human energetic and environmental aspirations intersect with other-than-human beings and agencies complements yet also reframes the *Energopolitics* volume's effort to offer a more nuanced and comprehensive set of analytics of (human) political power, and vice versa. If the general premise of the entire research project has been that a certain politics of energy is creating a situation of ecological emergency, then it is fitting, and we might say necessary, to be able to offer detailed conceptual and ethnographic accounts of both sides of the equation—energopolitical and ecological. Had we tried to compact all these storylines into a single, synthetic account, however, we might well have burst its seams or have been forced to simplify matters to the extent that neither side would have received its due. In the duographic form, meanwhile, two volumes working together in the mode of “collaborative analytics” can dive deeply into different dimensions of the research while still providing valuable ethnographic elaboration and conceptual infrastructure for each other.<sup>4</sup>

### Your Turn

---

One of our favorite rationales for the duograph is what is happening right now: you are deciding where to start. True to the lateral media infrastructures and expectations of this era, we aspire to offer a more dialogic, collaborative matrix of encounter with anthropological writing. We have sought the words to write; you now seek the words to read. We have left signposts as to where we think the volumes intersect. But you can explore the duograph as you like, settling into the groove of one narrative or zigzagging between them. Think of it somewhere between a Choose Your Own Adventure book and open-world gameplay. Follow a character, human or otherwise; riddle through the knots and vectors of aeolian politics; get bogged down somewhere, maybe in the politics of land or the meaning of trucks; then zoom back out to think about the Anthropocene. Or perhaps pause for a minute or two to watch the birds and bats and turbines that now populate the istmeño sky.

*Cymene Howe and Dominic Boyer*