

Editorial

The world is *hot* and not just in the meteorological sense.

It is no longer possible to speak of heat as mere weather. It is metaphor, it is method, it is warning. The heat we live in is designed. It coils in policy, in neglect, in the calculus of who is left to burn. It is in the warming of oceans and the tightening of borders, the intimate pressure of human emotion, and the broad sweep of systemic disregard under the guise of order, security, and development.

It becomes difficult then, maybe even impossible, to talk about sustainability and climate justice when an open genocide is being carried out in Gaza—when entire neighborhoods have been flattened, families erased, and infrastructure such as hospitals, schools and water systems deliberately targeted. This is not a natural disaster but a man-made catastrophe, an apartheid, carried out in full view of the world. And yet the global response has been largely inadequate. While people across the world protest, many governments, particularly in the West, continue to frame the violence as 'collateral damage' and refuse to call it for what it is: the deliberate destruction of a people.

This silence is not neutral. It tells us whose lives are grievable and whose deaths are dismissed as inevitable. Gaza is not simply a tragedy, it is a warning. It shows how power can decide who gets to live, who gets to rebuild, and who is marked for destruction.

So when we talk about climate justice, we have to ask ourselves: justice for whom? To talk about sustainability without talking about disposability is to miss the point. To talk about infrastructure without acknowledging who it serves and who controls it, is to risk reinforcing the very systems we critique.

In this volume we ask: what does it mean to be 'hot' in a time of planetary crises and political combustion? How do embodied experiences of heat, whether physical, emotional, or metaphorical, inform our understandings of place, power, and precarity? And what do they reveal about the fragility of the systems we inhabit, the volatility of our inner worlds, and the force of our resistance? At its core, this volume is a study of both the oppressed and the oppressor, engaging with themes of resource scarcity, inequality, and infrastructural neglect. Contributors from diverse disciplines ground their explorations in histories of industrialisation

and state power, forces which have manipulated landscapes, displaced communities, and intensified ecological vulnerability. What emerges is not a single narrative but a collection of frictions, an inquiry into how systems of heat—environmental, emotional, technological, and political—shape our everyday lives.

Ali Mehdi Zaidi opens this volume with his ethnographic study of Perfume Chowk, a roadside stall in Karachi that sells counterfeit perfume. As the city's long, hot months shape daily life, he explores how scent becomes a way of coping with the pressures of urban life, in which appearance, labour, and survival intersect. Through this setting, Zaidi demonstrates how heat is not accidental but engineered, maintained by systems that insulate the privileged and expose others to precarity.

Nazgol Ansarinia's essay draws on her visual practice to explore the link between heat and absence, tracing it through Tehran's disappearing water bodies. Once central to culture and architecture, water now exists as loss—in empty swimming pools, dried riverbeds, and fading rituals. Through personal and historical lenses, she shows how water's absence embodies ecological decline, surveillance, state neglect, and longing. Scarcity here becomes political, reshaping how people remember and resist.

Danika Cooper extends this analysis and explores how constructed perceptions of emptiness, particularly in desert landscapes like Xinjiang in China, are used to justify extraction, displacement, and surveillance. Drawing on historical and contemporary cases, she shows how these voids are dense with political activity and obscured by global systems, such as land classification tools and megaprojects like China's Belt and Road Initiative. Invisibility, she argues, becomes a tool for control.

Building on themes of erasure and state violence, Aslam Kakar's essay examines political anger among marginalised groups in Pakistan. Focusing on the Pashtun Tahafuz Movement, he shows how dissent is often criminalised by the state. Kakar reframes anger as a powerful expression of injustice and resistance, pushing back against state narratives that cast it as irrational.

Mohib Hassan's essay reflects on a project he proposed to address inefficiencies in Pakistan's sugar industry. Drawing on his research and experience from a tech-based intervention, he shows how environmental stress and outdated infrastructure intersect with elite control and corruption, deepening the vulnerability of farmers within Pakistan's politically driven agricultural economy.

Shanzeh Afzal's essay returns us to Karachi but this time we look at how extreme heat operates as a slow, cumulative form of violence. Centering her fieldwork in the densely populated

neighbourhoods of Lyari and Korangi, she shows how weather, infrastructural neglect, and urban exclusion wear down vulnerable communities over time, turning daily survival into a slow, grinding struggle against deep-rooted disparity.

In parallel, Marvi Mazhar offers a complimentary but critical understanding of Karachi's expanding cooling infrastructures. Through visual documentation and expert dialogue, she shows how air-conditioning units cool interiors while worsening external urban conditions. Her essay links these mechanical cooling systems to flawed infrastructure, rising urban temperatures, and ecological degradation, emphasising the relationship between built environment, heat and non-human life.

Zehra Shabbir Khan closes the collection with a turn to intimacy. Her essay captures how young people carve out moments of tenderness and autonomy in rented rooms—small sanctuaries of freedom in a city that surveils desire as much as it does dissent. By ending on intimacy, we gesture towards the small but radical acts of care that exist even in adverse conditions, offering a final, quiet counterpoint to the heat of our world in crisis.

This volume stands as a testament to collaborative effort and its foundation lies in the shared commitment to confronting urgencies of our times. The process of putting it together, giving it context and direction has been both challenging and rewarding and I am especially grateful to the incredible editorial team, whose expertise and dedication helped refine this vision; to our designer, Kiran Ahmad for bringing the work to life visually with such care and nuance; and to the peer reviewers whose critical insights helped strengthen every contribution. I'm also thankful to my friends and family who patiently lived alongside this project and offered quiet forms of support throughout.

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