

Call for Papers

Immobilities in a Climate Changed World: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Places, Phenomena, and Processes

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As climate change continues to escalate, places around the globe increasingly experience its consequences. In light of ongoing “polycrisis” (Tooze, 2022), the impacts of a changing climate are further aggravated. Mitigation and adaptation processes are stagnating due to declining political will, funding cuts, austerity measures, and the rise of populist, right-wing governments that downplay or deny climate change. The overlap of financial crises, political instability, ongoing wars, violence, and climate change crystallizes in a pressure to *remain* in place, while jeopardizing the homes and facilities to stay of many. The *right to stay* has thus become even more precarious, with more and varied forms of immobility emerging as climate change traps people in place, slows urban life, or violently disrupts global travel.

These developments call for a review and, where necessary, an expansion of how immobilities in a climate changed world have been described and understood. As climate change progresses, our concepts need to adapt: Contrary to the long-proclaimed inevitability of climate migration, more recent studies by climate mobilities scholars show that mobility might decrease as the climate crisis intensifies, impeding people’s ability to move (Benevinste et al., 2022). We thus now find a turn to the imperative of “people’s right to stay” (Boas et al., 2025) alongside claims for new climate change politics and more resources for adaptation. Scholars have long called for greater nuance in how immobilities are understood (Blondin, 2021; Thomas et al., 2025; Wiegel et al., 2021; Yee et al., 2022; Zickgraf, 2018, 2021), stressing that we need to complexify place attachment and perspectives on so-called ‘trapped populations’ (Foresight 2011). Zickgraf (2018, 2021), for instance, holds that we need to consider the spatiotemporal dynamics as well as the multi-scalar power relations that shape decisions on whether to move or stay in place. While acknowledging the dynamic interplay of mobilities and immobilities, scholars also argue that an in-depth analysis of immobilities is necessary as it warrants differentiated political, economic, social, cultural, and legal responses (Keenan, 2025).

This Theme Issue aims to conceptualize climate immobilities in its own right. We are not only interested in how climate change might cause immobility, but also in how immobility itself is shaped and re-shaped by climate change (Everuss, 2024). Who and what is staying in place? Which practices of remaining and staying in place are marked as immobility? How do immobile and sedentarist ontologies respond to climate change? What makes staying an act of self-determination? How does this emphasis on the right to stay reduce mobility options as pressure from climate change increases?

To further strengthen the concept of climate immobilities, we would like to weave together a variety of perspectives on places, phenomena, and processes. The field of climate (im)mobilities studies has widely profited from interdisciplinary approaches, yet has focused on a rather narrow geographical range of case studies. This is most evident in the persistent gap between case studies on the global north and the global south. This Theme Issues thus aims to further develop this multiplicity by bringing together a wider range of immobility phenomena, while also considering multi-scalar power relations and the complexities of climate vulnerability. Is being trapped in the heat during a heat wave in Europe

a case of climate immobility? What about vertical mobilities which enable people to stay in or near their homes in case of flooding? Is the extension of a dike that enables people to stay in place a phenomenon of immobility? What about all the efforts to save crumbling building foundations or summer residences by the beach? Can we develop a concept of climate immobilities, which integrates the dynamics in resource-rich contexts without flattening the greater vulnerabilities of other geographical regions? How do we account for this simultaneity of climate immobilities across difference?

This Theme Issue is intended to foster open, critical, and constructive dialogue on the multifold phenomena and processes we observe in order to develop a “thicker” concept of climate immobilities. We are particularly interested in novel theoretical approaches to the study of climate immobilities as well as in methodological advances which flesh out the often-theoretical notions of immovability, motionlessness, stillness, and stasis in relation to climate change. Paper contributions might explore the physical immobilities of individuals, communities, other-than-human actors, infrastructures, and institutions in a climate changed world. Furthermore, contributions might investigate the representations and imaginations of immobilities that inform mobility decisions, policy frameworks, and artistic engagements. Additionally, we are interested in exploring climate immobilities in contexts which have so far received little attention.

Contributions may engage with one or several of the following interrelated themes and questions under the “umbrella” of immobility:

- *Spaces*: What are the spaces of immobility? How can climate immobility benefit from inter-scalar approaches? Can we develop an approach to climate immobility that moves beyond Western ontologies of space (and time)? What can we learn from indigenous and decolonial ontologies?
- *Temporalities*: How can we conceptualize the asymmetrical simultaneity of mobility and immobility in the age of climate change? Can we think immobility, stasis, and the right to stay in temporal rather than spatial terms? (von Redecker, forthcoming) How are spatial and temporal dimensions intertwined? Thinking with the “ordinary Anthropocene” (Frederiksen, 2025), what are everyday forms of immobility, stillness, and rest in a climate changed world?
- *Materialities*: How do climate immobilities materialize? How does the mobility of some enable the immobility of others and other-than-human beings? What remains immobile even if people move on? What is left behind?
- *Subjects*: Who is the subject of climate immobility? Who is marked as immobile? Whose immobility is not accounted for? While the climate migrant has long become a political figure – racialized, classed, and gendered – what about the non-migrant? Which social, cultural, and emotive contexts shape subjects of immobilities and their decision-making process?
- *Politics & Governance*: How do we manage left-behind places considering immobile populations as well as infrastructures, cultural artefacts, historical monuments, human and industrial waste? How can governance structures and policy frameworks be sensitive to local and indigenous concerns? How can governance structures reflect both the concerns of mobile populations and those who remain immobile in receiving zones? How are immobility and stillness reframed as forms of adaptation and preparation?

Our endeavor is rooted in interdisciplinary exchange and a keen interest in artistic and activist engagements with climate immobilities. We thus welcome empirically grounded contributions from a wide-range of disciplines which offer novel conceptual and methodological insights into the study of immobilities in a climate changed world.

Timeline

In preparation of a peer-reviewed Theme Issue, we kindly ask for a working title of your paper, a 200-word abstract, and a short bio (no more than 100 words) by **August 17, 2026**. Please submit your proposal to Judith Keller (judith.keller@geo.hu-berlin.de) and Aurora A. Sauter (ausauter@em.uni-frankfurt.de). Selection notifications will be sent out in late August 2026. Full papers of 7,500 words will be due on **February 1, 2027**. We are also looking into the possibility of having an author workshop to discuss paper drafts.

Editing Team

Judith Keller (Geography Department, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Germany, postdoctoral researcher) is an urban geographer with an interest in housing, displacement, and climate adaptation, specifically in North America and Western Europe. Her current work focuses on climate change-induced urban insecurities, planned relocations, and imaginaries of climate (im)mobility.

Aurora A. Sauter (Institute of Sociology, University of Frankfurt, Germany, doctoral researcher) is a sociologist. Her current project examines the production of maintaining living in times of climate change, with an ethnographic focus on the Netherlands and the United States. She is part of the sub-project “The Production of Climate Flight as an Occasion for Theorization” within the DFG Collaborative Research Centre “Production of Migration” at the University of Osnabrück.

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