

A Call for Cleaner Air Travel



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Opinion

I recently had the opportunity to read Kim Stanley Robinson's *Ministry for the Future* for my climate fiction book club. Using several geoeengineering ideas and eco-terrorist tactics, the novel shows how those in power are persuaded to make changes to reduce climate change actions for the future generations. One advancement that caught my eye was air ship travel. Robinson creates a not so far off future, where the businesspeople and jet setters of the world turn to air ship travel because of eco-terrorist activities. Yes. The eco-terrorists who want a better tomorrow, now, blow up several airplanes. 60 to be more precise. Most of them being private and business flights carrying executives and CEOs. With this eco-terrorist act, fear becomes the main driver for airplane travel to all but cease—not the total devastation of the world because of climate changes.

Today, airplane travel is the most energy intensive form of travel. Frequent plane travel can blow your carbon footprint score off the roof. To start with, airplane travel in the U.S. is responsible for over 67 million tons of plastic and food waste. That amount does not count the added costs of the resources and production of the products to become this waste. In the U.S., airplane travel is responsible for 10% of Greenhouse gas emissions. On the global scale, airplane travel is only responsible for about 2.5% of the Greenhouse gas emissions. Even with those small percentages, the Swedish and other northern European countries, have coined the term 'flygskam,' and started a flight shaming movement.

Historically, it was businesspeople, the wealthy, and politicians who could afford to use new fuel burning airplane travel, once it was deemed safe. Still today, airplane travel is only readily accessible to that 1.7 million Americans who can afford it. Special recognition is given to millennials, who are reported to have the most recorded usage of travel related apps of all the age groups. Currently in America, the Green New Deal seeks to drastically reduce commercial use of planes for transportation by inducing

stronger pollution regulations and heavy taxes. The replacement transportation system is to be electric powered planes. Millennials should spearhead this movement's progression, demanding businesspeople and politicians change current legislation to make the necessary transitions for cleaner energy systems, NOW. Do those in charge want the eco-terrorists of the *Ministry for the Future* to hold them hostage at their conferences, and show them PowerPoint presentations and repeated footage of what those living in poverty looks like, while being denied use of electricity and running water in their fancy hotels, just to force them make decisions now?

Electric powered air ship fleets could not only transport cargo and people at a fraction of the environmental cost of airplane travel, but air ships can also reach remote areas with meager infrastructures, like those lacking landing access. The ability to reach remote areas alone could turn out useful in the coming climate changes. With rising sea levels, melting ice caps, and threatened land-based connections, the airships of the near future could reach areas that could easily become inaccessible.

Early air ship technology allowed for the commercial movement of cargo and people, short and long distances, starting in the 1930's. This was the innovative technology at use until kerosene burning airplanes took over with their over expenditure of fossil fuels and quicker transportation times. The dirigible's environmentally friendly siblings, windmills and electric cars, were also taken over by less expensive fossil fuel versions—coal burning electrical power plants and gasoline funneling cars.

A transition that returns to air ship travel should be a straightforward process, and it needs approval and support from those who are involved in making the changes. Innovations have been steady in the advancement and safety of air ship travel. The airplane industry infrastructure can be easily modified to air ship usage. Then, any remaining airplanes could be used as

port stations for glacial ice sheet drainage projects (yes, another geoengineering effort from the climate fiction novel *Ministry for the Future* that could become real).

Air ship travel. Not just for Goodyear advertising anymore. It is how the modern American should get around, no flygskam needed.



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