Our Inheritance: An Honors Capstone exploring the potential future of environmental policy under climate change

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Our Inheritance:
An Honors Capstone exploring the potential future of environmental policy under climate change

By Maggie Strecker
Preface

Before we begin these two stories there is a lot of important contexts that I feel is necessary for delivering the message I am trying to convey through these characters and the situations they find themselves in. By explicitly stating the themes and inspirations for my work I hope to make it easier to identify them throughout the work as well as assist in deepening the readers understanding of these ideas to help them think critically about both the work and our real-life understandings of the conflict around climate change and systems of governance.

The title of this small collection, Our Inheritance, is in reference to the idea that the reason why the society in this world functions the way that it does is because of their inherited fears, cultural values, and past wrongs. The guilt and fear that influences this society to function in the different ways that it does, especially in regards to the perception of risks, are products of previous generations that have been passed down to the next.

The title directly relates to one of the largest themes I am exploring here of risk perception and its impact on environmental policy. Risk perception, according to Mike Hulme in Why we Disagree about Climate Change, is how people view the potential for risk with a given action based on their specific cultural contexts. Here I explore this through different communities' views on nuclear power and how the past has shaped different contexts for two communities despite their close physical proximity. Also important to this idea of the past influencing the future is the role that science plays in the creation and development of policy as a direct result of past
generations not listening to scientists about climate change and aggressively recorrecting that by placing them in positions of power to prevent the mistakes of the past.

In the course of writing these stories I have drawn inspiration from a number of ideas from throughout my years of Environmental Policy classes, many reflected in the book *Why We Disagree about Climate Change* by Mike Hulme. It is from this text specifically that I have drawn a lot of my ideas about how this fictional version of the future of the United States might look like. One of the concepts that Hulme includes in his book is that of how differing perceptions of risk can result in further disagreement over the importance of a certain issue, like climate change. Hulme also talks about how risk perception is formed by the ideas and culture in their larger communities through cultural theory, which is a way of looking at how different people perceive risks based on their relationships with those around them (Hierarchists, individualists, fatalists, egalitarians), and that in order for something to be recognized as a risk there has to be either experience or perception of said risk for it to be recognized as real. Another other concept that Hulme discusses that informed my writing is the idea of Duty of Care. Duty of Care is the idea that humanity has a duty to take care of and protect the environment and has a lot of connections to different religious beliefs and specific values. Additional concepts around the role of science in policy and its specific roles were drawn from *The Honest Broker* by Roger Pielke Jr.
The Academy

The platforms in New Seattle were very rarely empty, or so I had thought until now when I found myself on a cold bench alone at 3:00 am on a Wednesday. The only other people around were a pair of haggard looking night shift power workers still in their uniforms on the other platform, probably waiting for the InnerCity Mag train to take them home. No one out partying would be using this station; most of the trains here are on the high-speed lines going out of the city, and with us being the regional transportation hub they never come in or leave this early. Or late - I’ve been off and on debating with myself which it is. I really haven’t had enough sleep the last few days.

Sitting here waiting for this stupidly early train I desperately wish my uncles could have stuck around for longer, but I know they have to be up early. Without me they both need to start getting up to start the printers for the day in their shop. I feel bad for leaving, but I also know I couldn’t stay there. Even if I had wanted to take over, my cousin Hex has already been talking about all they want to do with it someday. And now with this new opportunity, well let’s just say it’s better for everyone that I leave now. Still, I can’t help feeling a strange mixture of guilt, sadness, and anticipation that sits like a hot stone in the pit of my stomach. I’m jolted out of my thoughts by the shaking of my bench, the vibrations signaling the arrival of the train going off. Okay, I
think, here we go. I stand, slinging my backpack over my shoulder and grab the handle of my academy issued trunk as the train pulls in with whooshing sound. The departure board echoes the loudspeaker announcement flashing from blank to reading: Train 001 Arrived.

Oh god, I can’t believe this is happening to me, I think, two seconds ago I was nobody, just another lower school graduate trying to decide what to do with her life and now, now here I am. I steel myself as the car door is opened and one of the porters steps out. “Would you like help with your trunk Miss Aver?” They say in a rough deep voice. It takes me a second to remember to respond, and my face goes red as I realize that I had just been standing and staring at the porter clutching at my backpack straps. “No, I’ve got it. Thanks though.” I mumble, still embarrassed. I pull myself together then grab my bags and climb aboard. The porter directs me up the stairs, pointing out the baggage racks. Unlike other trains I’ve been on, lockers are assigned by name, instead of there being racks open for anyone to set things on. Going further into the carriage the rest of this train only further emphasizes just how different this is from the everyday normal people rail lines.

Where normally the seats on a train were set up with two or three on either side of the aisle, here it seemed more like the pictures I had seen of first-class cars. There were single, incredibly comfortable looking chairs all set up facing out the astonishingly clear, large window which had from the outside looked much more like a simple metal siding like any of the other high-speed trains that came through my
neighborhood. There are so many different kinds of tech that I have only heard about, and never seen. Everyone knows that a lot of the new tech takes longer to get out to most people, most of the time we don't even really know what we're missing but that's how it goes: the people who come up with the ideas for new tech get to use it first.

The porter waved me towards one of the empty chairs on the left side of the carriage, “Enjoy your trip Miss Aver, and good luck.” With those ominous parting words, the porter left the carriage, and I was alone. Except, technically I wasn't. While the carriage wasn't exactly full there was still a good number of other kids who looked to be about my age. Each of the others looked so much more like they belonged here, they all had hair dyed in mossy or earthy colors and had long button up coats draped over the sides of their chairs. All of these were styles that might have been emulated at my public city-funded upper school near street level, but never executed in the way that upper levels would. They looked like the kind of people who were meant to go to the Academy. My stomach roiled with anxiety. I was so very much the opposite of who all my classmates would be expecting me to be. I know I'm not the first from my part of town to be invited, but it doesn't happen very often, and they were definitely not in the habit of inviting girls who had been born in a community to defector parents and had lived in that community for 10 years. The academy was where the best and the brightest or as it often panned out, the most well connected, went to study to become the scientists and engineers that governed each of the
Great Cities around the US. Sometimes graduates even went on to be members of the president’s Council, or in developing the newest waves of tech.

“Welcome to the United Academy of Science first year students!” Dean Weston’s booming voice filled the relatively small room where we had all gathered as we debarked from the train. “Here we hope to prepare each and every one of you, our cities best and brightest, for the incredibly important tasks of becoming the next leaders of our great nation, developing new technologies, working on our great nuclear facilities providing energy to us, or guiding the decision-making process of our government to protect us from the dangers we might otherwise bring upon ourselves.”

Of course. I thought, the typical “it was our fault that we let the climate crisis get as bad as it did when we didn’t listen to the scientists, so now we can’t do anything without multiple experts telling us it’s right” speech. Maybe it was kind of cynical, and more than a bit hypocritical of me but I had never quite been able to fully shake the ideas my parents and their community had taught me about the failures of depending on just this exact kind of institutionalized science. But now here I was, and I had to drop this way of thinking, sooner rather than later.
The Dean continuing his speech extolling the values of the Academy and its role in society, I struggle to remain focused, my early morning catching up to me.

"Whatever role each of you take in your life, be a member of our nuclear engineers developing new technologies, researching the mysteries of the universe, or working with our government, remember that you are our future; and only we can make it better than it would be." Concluding his speech with a flourish of his arms the room broke out into applause, the rest of my class clapping and cheering at his final remarks. Another faculty member took the Dean’s place as he sat down in an empty seat in the line of faculty and staff to the left of the small stage.

“Now, your room assignments are posted on your school netbooks which can be picked up from staff members at the doors back into the hallway. These assignments are only temporary, in several weeks we will administer a series of tests to each of you based on which cohorts you express interest in, which will assign you to a specific field of study. After which you will be reassigned a room in the buildings assigned to your specific field for the next several years as you complete your studies here,” they said before dismissing us and joining the line of staff to the doors, presumably to hand out said netbooks. Very quickly the room began to fill with the chatter and movement of the hundred or so first years standing up and moving about the room, filing out into the hall together.

The first thing I see when I turn my newly issued netbook on is my assignment and set up instructions. Putting that aside for now, I make my way up to my assigned floor
where I make my way down the line of doors searching for my name plate. I make my way down the hall dodging the other students walking up and down, finding their own names and their friends, yelling back and forth, and laughing with each other. I finally found my own name, right between Jin Vera and April Jones, Missy Aver. Even as I enter my fingerprint to the doors lock, I can feel my eyes beginning to droop, and as soon as I can I fling myself down onto my new bed, feeling like I’ve just been run over by one of New Seattle’s electric trolleys. Just a minute, I think, I’ll close my eyes for a second and then I’ll suck it up and go meet some new people.

I’m woken up from a deep sleep, my dreams of the soft light through trees slipping away from me with the blaring of an alarm clock that I was sure I hadn’t set the night before. Reluctantly I open my eyes to the strange, empty room. I hadn’t felt up to putting any of the decorations I brought with me up after dinner, and despite my earlier nap I was still exhausted and fell back into bed almost immediately, so all of the walls are still bare. Of course, now that I know this is only a temporary room, I’ll likely be waiting to do any kind of decorating, but for now the stark difference between this plain, empty room and the riot of color that was my room at my uncles’ place leaves my sleep addled brain momentarily confused on where exactly I’ve woken up, and why. The alarm, coming from a clock on the bedside table I hadn’t noticed in my daze the night before, stopped when I heaved myself out of the bed wiping the sleep from my
eyes. That's definitely something I can already tell I'm going to have a hard time adjusting to here, there is just so much more advanced tech that I have never seen before, for things that really don't need it, like the train windows yesterday morning, the stupidly fancy netbooks and now the strange automatic alarm clock.

I head back down to the hall's dining room for breakfast. Right now, only other first years are here in the building but even still it almost seems like most of the other first years are already in established groups and cliques, never mind the fact that we've all just come here from all over the country. I guess that's just what happens when most of your classmates come from the same upper levels of society. Just one more way to make me feel like I don't belong. But, looking around from my seat at the edge of the room there are a few other first years that I can see with the same fish out of water look that must be all over me. We might be the minority, but there is more than one student selected out of the public schools every year.

My first class was an introduction to the policy of the United States. Tomorrow we would take a class in nuclear science, then engineering, and so on in each of the disciplines for a few weeks before we made our final decisions and did the testing to assign us a cohort. The buildings where the classes were held were the same mix of modern tech, lots of automatic sliding doors, projectors, and other bright chrome built-ins within the kind of older style brick buildings that wouldn't look out of place in those really old movies from the eighties about college students.
“Hey, is it okay if I sit here?” One of the girls I had seen this morning in the shared bathroom asked me from where she stood hesitantly by the open seat at the two-person table I had chosen.

“Sure.” I felt bad about my non-verbal-ness, but my stomach had been in knots since I had woken up this morning and that was all it seemed I could manage at the moment.

“I’m Jin, I think we’re on the same floor!” She chirped brightly. I guess my sullen attitude hadn’t completely driven her off. Yet.

“I guess so, I’m Missy.” I said, trying to sound more enthused than I did before, “it’s nice to meet you.”

“I can’t believe we’re finally here! I’d heard so much about this place from my parents, and my older sib is in their apprenticeship year, so I’ve been getting so many stories for so long isn’t it just the coolest!” She grinned at me, her teeth a perfect white, all straight and even without a gap or a chip to distinguish them.

“Yes—” I started to say when the door swung open and in came one of the faculty members that had been introduced yesterday, Professor Orgiano. They were tall, thickset, and had a long mane of dark, curling salt-and-peppered hair. They stalked to the front of the room and surveyed those of us gathered in the rows facing forwards.

“If you are in the correct class right now you should all be aware of who I am, but for those of you who have somehow stumbled into this room and are unaware, my name is Professor Orgiano, no I will not be telling you my first name that is privileged information, and this is Introduction to US policies in the post Climate Emergency world.” Throughout their lecture it seems as though they have a permanent scowl on their face, an intimidating thing to see first thing in the morning. “A little about me,
before I became a professor here, I was elected on the Country representative panel for the Northwest quadrant several times, and I studied in Upper Orleans near the floating city of old New Orleans. Any other questions about myself and my history shall remain unanswered." Despite their harsh gaze a ripple of laughter went through the class, and right before the professor turned around, I caught a glimpse of laughter in their eyes.

“For our first class we will be jumping right into the history of how our science councils, community councils, and representative panels came to exist following the Climate Emergency. Who knows where the original split between our two types of councils came from?”

The girl next to me, Jin, doesn’t even raise her hand before she begins her explanation of the standard story, we have all heard before about how when the floods and fires got so bad all those years ago everyone finally agreed to work together to change how we were doing things, until the disagreements got so bad and things got split up again.

“Thank you, Miss Vera,” the professor says, “This is the generally understood path of our history. What we are going to be talking about here however are the reasons behind those disagreements. As Miss Vera said everyone agreed to a certain degree that the way we were living could no longer continue in the same way. However, coming to this agreement took close to 50 years and the partial collapse of our capitalist systems and the flooding of many major US cities, including New York and Washington D.C, the former capital city.” As they lectured, they clicked through a number of slides on the screen at the front of the room, showing old photographs of the world as it once was with sprawling suburbs and water rushing through the streets of large cities.
“At this time a very large portion of the population believed that only those scientists who had been aware and warned the rest of the world were the ones that could save us. From this belief the science councils were born, and they directed us to begin the switch to primarily nuclear power from the fossil fuel dominated landscape that had led to the Climate Emergency in the first place.”

As they paused to switch slides when another student from the back of the class spoke up and asked, “Not to sound like a complete know it all but isn’t it common knowledge that the split was over that switch to using nuclear? I mean it’s still such a big deal now even.” At that Professor Orgiano raised one bushy eyebrow.

“Is it about using nuclear power or not or is it about a difference in understanding around risk and the dislike of the kind of culture necessary to adopt and protect the number of nuclear facilities?”

Under their harsh gaze the student shrank back slightly in their chair. “There are a lot of theories around what really led to the split in our country,” they continued, “and each essentially boils down to the central idea that because of the ways that individuals are influenced by their communities, values, and beliefs, their perception of things like risk are incredibly different. In this case referencing the ways we are working to address the changes we have and continue to make on our climate.”

I had truly never been in a class like this before. The way Professor Orgiano was

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1 In Mike Hulme’s book *Why we Disagree about Climate Change* he discusses the impact that risk perception can have on creating and furthering the disagreement between people around how much they care about climate change. Nuclear power is something that has often caused a lot of division partially because of this fact that some people see it as a much bigger risk than others. This issue also connects to ideas of cultural theory, which is also explored by Mike Hulme, where the nature of nuclear power is that it requires a hierarchical culture which is likely unappealing to those whose beliefs do not align with this like egalitarians and individualists.
explaining these things felt like they were rummaging around in my brain and reorganizing the very way I thought. Orgiano flipped through their slides again and when the next picture showed up on the screen, I was startled. It was showing the professor shaking the hand of another person on the front steps of a home I recognized from my childhood home of Madrone. "Communities like this one, which I was lucky enough to visit in my tenure as an elected representative, were set up with the intention of experimenting with alternative methods of governance and in the process became a sort of haven for those who wanted to live in a different way from the increasingly tech focused cities. It was from these experiments that we got our councils and the remnants of it remain in the myriad of ways things are done in each different community today." Barely ten minutes into my first class at the Academy and already I felt like everything that I had been taught previously just barely scratched the surface of everything that there was to know. Of course I knew the basic story Orgiano was telling us, but throughout the rest of their lecture they continued to throw out so many new ideas and explanations for why things were the way that they were, not just regurgitating the standard here is the basic timeline of events. If this is how well my first class here is going, I really can't wait for the rest of it.
At lunch I tentatively took my plate and sat with Jin. After our first class this morning we hadn't had much of a chance for much more conversation, but she was still the only person I even somewhat knew and she was also sitting by herself.

"Hey, do you mind if I sit here?" I asked.

"Of course," she replied, gesturing for me to sit by her. "I'm glad you asked, your kind of the only one I've even sort of talked to here." She grinned at me across the table as I sat down and started in on my sandwich.

"So, how's your day going so far?" She asked me in her increasingly familiar bright chirpy tone.

"Oh, you know, good, overwhelming, really really interesting."

"Oh My God I understand that professor Orgiano's class this morning is definitely changing my life, I can already tell!" I couldn't help but let out a little giggle, Jin was just so expressive and effortlessly hilarious.

Grinning at her I couldn't help but agree with her, "I wonder how much they were able to learn on that trip to the communities, they're the first instructor anywhere that has had that many actually interesting and good things to say about those communities."

"I have always wanted to be able to go out there," Jin gushed, "I think it's just so stupid how little we mix between us, outside of the representative panel and, like, business transactions we just don't have any kind of connection to each other."

I feel like this is when I should mention who I am. Someone who did live there for a while and then came back to the city, someone with the connection to both. I've always tried to keep it quiet in the past- you just never really know how someone is going to react- but based on the rant Jin has just started, she seems like she would relish it rather than
think it's embarrassing. Oh well. Only one way to know, I guess I just have to go for it, I thought. And clearing my throat a little and trying to shake off my nerves, I went for it. “You know, I actually lived out there for a while, I really understand what you mean by that lack of connection, and you know what, I’ve actually been thinking a lot about how to fix it.”
The Exchange

To whom it may concern,

My name is Florence Elden from New Seattle. I just this past month graduated from Carson Lower School and before I join my trade training next year, I would like to do something to help our country. My guidance counselor gave me a flier for the New Seattle-Madrone Community Cultural Exchange Program, and I am writing to you now to apply for this program. Like many people in New Seattle, I have had very little interaction with people from these communities. It is because of this that I would like to be a part of this exchange. I believe that in order to move forward as a whole country we must bridge the gap that has grown between us. The way things are going now there is so much resentment and ignorance of each other, and this is impacting our ability to cooperate internationally and grow from the isolation we currently find ourselves in.

While my role here may be on the surface a small thing it is my opinion that by taking this one small step to begin bridging this gap, we can make great change and I would love to be a part of that.

Thanks for your consideration,

Florence Elden
Greetings- Councilwoman Aver,

Thank you for collaborating with us here in the Madrone Community Council to create this cultural exchange program.

We would be delighted to accept Florence into our community for the next year. She seems like an excellent fit for this program. For our side of the exchange, we would like to send one of our young adults, Wren Miller. Wren is already experienced in this kind of Program having Spent time traveling between our Sister Communities. And their parents, who you might remember from their terms as the Ore-Washington State community representatives several years ago, have passed their knowledge onto Wren.

It is our belief that Wren is most qualified to take this opportunity and make the absolute most out of it.

We look forward to working with you to bridge the gap between our ways of life.

- Best,

Madrone Community Council
Dear Florence Elden,

We are pleased to accept your application to the new year long Cultural Exchange between the City of New Seattle and the Madrone Community. We will forward your travel itinerary and housing assignments to the corresponding accounts in the coming days. Congratulations once again on being one of the first participants in this new program courtesy of Councilmember Missy Aver and the Madrone community council. The Madrone Community looks forward to welcoming you into their homes. We have arranged for you to live with a host family here and will be forwarding you your travel and learning itineraries in the coming days.

- Jin Vera, New Seattle director of Culture and Cohesion
Hey Rosie,

So, I have officially made it several weeks into my year in the city. Apologies in advance, I am definitely going to spend a lot of this letter complaining, but I also called you the other day and that was all happy so I think it basically evens out (leave me alone, I miss you :(). I knew that there was a lot that would be tough about this, especially right at the beginning but knowing a thing and actually living it are two very different things. The novelty of the City definitely wears off so quickly, everything here seems too clean in an artificial sort of way, especially the gardens around town, everything is so carefully landscaped and it's all kept so separate. I went to the park with my host family the other day and it reminded me way too much of the trip to the zoo they took me on in my first week here. No one was out climbing any of the trees or picking any of the (very plentiful) fruit. I asked Mx. Veli about it and let me tell you I almost couldn't believe it. She said that no one picks the fruit from these trees because that would be messing with "the natural image of the park", and most people thought that was more important than using the fruit produced and not just letting it rot on the ground. God, I really miss you, and all of our friends back home. Everyone here keeps treating me like a child. I don't know what they've been taught about how we live but clearly, they don't think much of us. Like how the other day one of my classmates asked me if I had ever used a netbook before, like we don't have access to the same exact tech that they do. And everyone including the teachers keeps expecting me to be so far behind on anything worth knowing we don't even do school all that differently, like all of my classes lineup with what I was doing before, have they never heard of the national education standards that need to be met everywhere? Some people really just cannot think critically at all. Sorry about the rant, I really am having a good time I promise, there are some people here who aren't so sucky. I've actually had some really productive conversations with this girl, Carrie, in my history lessons. We got to talking the other day about the things I've been doing in the city, and I mentioned how much I miss the forest and how weird all of the nature stuff is here she said
something about how her parents had taught her that it was their duty as humans to protect nature by leaving it alone and impacting it as little as possible outside of places like parks in the city\(^2\). I had never thought about our relationship at home as being something we do out of some kind of feeling of duty, but it honestly makes so much sense to me for why things are the way that they are here and it really has made me think more about why we do things the way we do back home. Okay, I should probably wrap this up now, they give out so much useless homework out here. Please write back soon. I would love to know what you all have been up to back home, let me know what all the gossip!

Love, Wren

P.S Please send some pine candy when you can. No one here has ever heard of it and my stash is not going to last long!

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\(^2\) This connects to the ideas of duty of care and how the things that people believe shape their relationship to climate change from the book *Why We Disagree about Climate Change* by Mike Hulme
So, I’ve made it to Madrone! The trip wasn’t bad, the station isn’t all that far from the town and they definitely make it easy to get back and forth. Everything here is set up for pedestrians and bikers, there are almost no cars present. The only ones that I’ve seen are communal transport trucks or those belonging to people who live way out far from the main community to drive in. There aren’t any buses or anything, except to go between the different communities. And everything’s so green too! I’ve never seen anything like it. All of the buildings are right up in the forest. It’s absolutely so incredible. The people I’ve met have all been nice, but I kind of get the feeling they don’t think I’m really capable of the hard physical labor here, and I don’t know, maybe they’re kind of right. The other day I was trying to help out at their apple picking festival. There are a bunch of different varieties planted all around the town for everyone to be able to access, which really startled me at first. I joined in because everyone was and it was incredibly difficult, I wasn’t able to get nearly as many as my host siblings were and both of them are much younger. I thought I was in fairly good shape but none of our school drills must have worked these kinds of muscles. It definitely didn’t help how hot and sunny it was. Coming into this I guess I had a lot of preconceived notions, I genuinely thought that people here didn’t use any kind of tech at all, but that really isn’t true at all. Sure they don’t use nearly as much as we have available to us in the city and I kind of feel bad about all the cool new things they miss out on out here, but their medical center gets power from our nuclear stations and is very well stocked, and every household here has their own turbine and solar panels to run power in their homes, just like a lot of people in New Seattle. They have the same fabricators using waste and recyclers that we have but even before stuff gets to there, they seem to have a hundred other ways to use whatever thing it is. It’s honestly pretty cool to see. I’m also learning a lot about the natural world and how they live with it here. I actually got invited to join one of their nature talks, which is where they go out into the old growth grove and tell stories about all about the plants and animals and how
they came to be where they are. I can already tell I am going to have the most marvelous time
learning here this year!

Missing you, Ma, and baby Ed,

Flo
Dear Family,

Well, here we are! My last letter before the end of my time here Madrone. I'm so going to miss this place when I need to leave. These past months have just been so incredibly amazing. I genuinely believe that I have learned so much more about the things that set us all apart and why we are at the place that we are. As part of the program, I got to observe one of the council meetings. It just so happened that it was one where they were selecting their community reps for the next year. I had initially assumed that it would be the same as how we do it back home, with a bunch of speeches and then everyone sits down and writes their votes out. Really, I should have known better after all the things I've learned out here. Instead it was what they called a "random selection", people who had not been sent as representatives were randomly called out to either accept the role or explain why they would be unable to do so. The whole process was so different to the way our systems work in the cities where the only people running are those who have a desire to do so, I don't know if I really think that this is a better way of doing things, but I can see how it works for them. After that everyone on the council and the new reps sat down and talked about current policies that were in the works, including some really interesting stuff about the conflict over using any kind of power or tech that connects back to any nuclear power, especially with the news coming out about New Seattle’s plans to build another nuclear power plant. I knew one of the council members from the other classes I had been taking this last year. I had never quite understood what it was about nuclear energy that had scared people out here so much, so I asked her why they hate it so much when moving to nuclear power is what helped us move towards plentiful green power. I don't think that I ever forget what she told me, “We’ve had the scientists come out and explain it to us, they say it's safer than all those old stories from Three Mile Island, Fukushima, and Chernobyl, but they’re always saying that, look at all those disasters throughout history. Everyone is always so sure it's safe, but we can’t know everything and human error can have such a big impact on these things,
you just never know. And that's not even getting into the danger that other people could do and the social systems that we need for nuclear energy to work.” Then I asked why they still use it all then, and she told me “Well, we don’t use as much as you might think. Mostly we rely on our solar panels, turbines and other localized power sources but sometimes in emergencies that’s all we can get, and no matter how much we distrust it we know sometimes it’s the only thing between one of us living or not, and here we protect and care for our own even if it might make us a little uncomfortable.”\(^3\) I know you wrote the other week talking about all your plans for when I get back home and while I cannot wait to go to Ed’s dance recital in a couple of weeks, but I think I should let you know now so you have time to prepare that I’m not currently planning on being at home for that long. Once I’m done here in Madrone, I’ve decided that I no longer want to go ahead with my trade program, I think I want to do more traveling and meet so many more people from these communities and learn more about why we can’t ever fully work together. But don’t worry, I’ll still be coming home to stay for a while first, and don’t worry, it won’t be forever. As much as I want to learn more out here, New Seattle will always be my home. I’ll see you soon!

Lots of love,

Flo

Hey Rosie,

\(^3\) The way that people perceive risk differs based on their cultural context, in chapter six of Mike Hulmes’ *Why we disagree about Climate Change* he writes “It is in the differential perceptions of risk that the scope for ultimate disagreement lies. And it is cultural, social and psychological conditioning that will have the greatest influence on these individual risk perceptions.” and “External definitions [of danger] are usually based on scientific risk analysis performed by experts on the system characteristics of the physical or social world. Internal definitions of danger recognise that to be real, danger has to be either experienced or perceived – it is the individual or collective experience or perception of insecurity or lack of safety that constitutes the danger.”
I can't believe you actually went through with that date; you have to know when I get back next month I'm not going to let you off the hook! I mean they are your ex for a reason, something you seem to have forgotten! You asked last time about my trip to New Seattle’s council meeting, honestly it really wasn’t that different from how council meetings at home go. Sure, the topics are different and everything but it is a lot of people with their own opinions and agendas trying to make the best possible decision for the most amount of people. I did notice that the power structures are really different here, there are much clearer attempts to get on top for selfish gain. They also get way too into debating kinda irrelevant things like whether or not the kinds of tech they want to use are considered safe to use based off of tests that have been done by different people. There were a lot of factions forming based on one specific desire which I guess kinda happens at home too. Also! I actually got to meet Councilwoman Avers! She just so happened to see in town that day and was at this meeting and I even got to talk to her for a bit, I asked her if all of their meetings are this with the kind of stupid arguments (I didn’t actually call them stupid to her face but that's definitely what I was thinking) get this, she said she likes to watch them argue for a bit, and once they've wasted enough time she brings up the fact that this isn't actually their job, and what they are meant to do is be coming up with different kinds of information to present to the elected City Council who will actually make the real decisions. 4

Who knew the famous Missy Avers was so chaotic! As for your other question I can, without a doubt confirm I will definitely be coming home at the end of this year. As cool as this trip has been, everything here is just so disconnected and big, I really miss home and our whole community there, and I can't wait to be back as soon as possible!

Love, Wren

4 The role of the science council is being drawn from Roger Pilkes’ explanation of the role that science should play in policy with the role of the science broker in his book the Honest Broker.