

Gareth Weather Talk2

Fri, 5/14 1:58PM 21:54

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

wind, weather, people, geography, sense, area, places, santa ana, bit, research, centre, blowing, gareth, called, meteorology, study, measure, surprised, feels, create

SPEAKERS

Gareth Hoskins, Cassie Phoenix



Cassie Phoenix 00:11

Welcome to the weather talk podcast series produced by Cassie Phoenix as part of the weather lives project. Okay, so it's really lovely to welcome Dr. Gareth Hoskins here today, Gareth is a senior lecturer at the University of Aberystwyth in the Department of Geography and Earth Sciences. Welcome, Gareth. Thank you for coming on to the call. Okay, Cassie,



00:39

all right.



Cassie Phoenix 00:41

Can you start off just by telling me a little bit about your research and how the weather features within it.



Gareth Hoskins 00:48

So my kind of area is cultural geography, cultural, historical geography. And my like, sort of topic interest has been around kind of environmental history and the politics of memory. And I've been kind of working a lot on kind of California and California history.

So so the weather sort of comes in off the back of a, of a ahsc grant, I was looking at on mine in memories on kind of the heritage of kind of industrialization, and looking at a particular case study up in the mountains of, of Northern California. And particularly at some kind of some archive stuff around the guy, who is the keeper of this down this thing called the Bowman dam, which was like involved in hydraulic mining. And so I came across this correspondence where he was just like reporting, with these little kind of kind of spidery handwriting and these little notes, he was reporting all the weather for about 18 months at about 18 months worth of letters that he would send down to the company, and they would kind of know how much water was in the dam, and what the weather conditions were like, and, and whether there was kind of threats from sort of wildfire and things. And this is like in 1880, so it's just a really fascinating way to, like, get a sense of who this person was, like, stuck on his own up in his heart, on the mountain, right, and, and kind of these weather records. So then I just started getting into and being interested in different ways, we kind of relate to the weather and, and how we're kind of, we conceive of ourselves and kind of build ourselves through these ideas of weather, and relate to each other through weather. So So I published something in the Journal of historical geography on that. And then yeah, just so that was a couple of years ago. And then since then, I've been, and I'm interested in, in the wind, particularly the centre on a winter, I mentioned this kind of previously, but but that kind of provided me with a way to like it provided just is really interesting case study, to think about various kind of debates that were kind of going on. And it's still going on in cultural geography and historical geography around kind of atmosphere and effect. And kind of the elemental and stuff. So. So I used to just do in a kind of historical and archive research on on this particular wind, in Southern California, and it kind of LinkedIn, to kind of a method, I guess, that I was familiar with, like a research design that I was familiar with, which is doing kind of archive, historical kind of work on California and the development of California. So so then again, we're just starting to kind of get into that into into the weather stuff through this just correspondence on Bowman down. And then, you know, it's just like a rabbit hole, really, you start to kind of find out all the kind of early studies of, of kind of weather and meteorology in the United States, but then also kind of more broadly. So it's been fascinating. And I've, you know, I've been kind of building things up and going off on different tangents. And so the thing I presented in that in your conference in November was about a Windchill which was, which was just going to be a kind of a little aside, to kind of make a broader context about the difference between the way we registered the weather scientifically and the way we, you know, experienced the weather, like through kind of our bodies, but then that kind of was taken on a bit of a life of its own. So I'd like to kind of follow that up a little bit more.



Cassie Phoenix 04:41

Yeah, that was really interesting, that presentation about the, the feels like you so often

see feels like but there is a phrase for weather forecasting. And I thought that came through really well in your presentation.

G

Gareth Hoskins 04:54

Yeah. And you see that like when you know, in the kind of the early days of trying to measure Temperatures and wind direction and wind speed how like up for grabs all words, you know how they were just kind of figuring out what to do and what kinds of measures and registers would work. And so there's this guy, I don't know if you're familiar with him, Edwin grant Dexter, who wrote a book called, I was a weather in society in 1904. And it was quite a, like an important sort of psychological, sociological study of the way kind of, you know, people interact with the weather, and he talks there about, you know, a kind of a temperature on a thermometer is extremely, you know, it's very different to the way you know, different people experience the weather, as it kind of happens to them. I'm always interested in that kind of that that kind of connection and the disconnection between, like, knowing it scientifically, and then kind of feeling it. And then all that effort, then to try and make it relevant. I know a lot of it's down to just like the way the different ways we count things like when So, like, in the 19th century, they used to like, talk about how they'd measure wind speed by like, how many miles a day it would kind of cross, you know, it's just like a completely new way of thinking about what that thing or that wind is, you know, if you say start and finish point, or, you know, this was like winds of 10 miles a day, or travelling 100 miles a day, you know, have a different effect on ones that, that you know, that don't only travel like one mile a day, you get more of a sense of it being like an object, then you know, like a pocket of air like travelling around. Rather than this kind of, you know, when we get this miles per hour, on and on, on all matters much more like you get a sense of me in a flow. So

C

Cassie Phoenix 06:55

what have you found particularly challenging in all of this work?

G

Gareth Hoskins 07:02

I think the challenge I'm having at the moment is, is kind of a kind of an, a need, or a desire to like, to work through the kind of the colonising aspect of knowing the weather and trying to attend a little bit more to kind of indigenous, like, experiences, you know, so so for, if I'm, you know, writing a paper about kind of the history of, like a wind centric history of California, you know, most of the kind of archive stuff starts in like, 1860 1880, you know, where they're, like, they're engaged in kind of massive, like genocide of the indigenous population, or the, the removal of them, or the kind of assimilation of the

Native Americans, you know, into, into kind of Spanish Catholicism stuff. And so, my kind of story so far, the way I've been telling, it starts a little bit later on, you know, with kind of early days of agricultural development of Southern California, and it was tended to kind of miss a lot of those kind of indigenous ideas of weather and notions of weather, it's just because it doesn't end up in the records that I'm familiar with looking at, you know, and so I'm just trying to incorporate that in a way that's not just like, tokenistic or, or kind of virtue signalling, but, but trying to figure out a way to, to work through that. I think that's, that's been quite difficult. Trying to figure out a kind of a position from which to kind of tell a story that isn't just all about kind of white people and the way they kind of tame the landscape and their engagement with their kids, I suppose one of the things that like really interests me about weather is how, how often like, how kind of amenable it is to like in printing. So like, if you know, a secular community, like let's say, the kind of way you Europeans that wanted to settle in California, you know, in, say, the 1920s and 1930s one very good way to think yourself into that landscape is by kind of, you know, creating your own sort of folklore stories about the wind and the weather and the seasons and things because, because that almost seems as if it's like politically neutral, you know, rather than saying, you know, this is the place where there was a kind of a big massacre of Indians or this is that kind of river that we repossessed, you know, for housing and stuff. You can, you can kind of create settler communities seem to be able to create these. This kind of folklore, invent this folklore. That's that kind of em have, you know, like, anchors them into the land, but also kind of erases all this kind of previous human history. So I'm trying to kind of deal with that tension, I guess, trying to think about how I can access data and generate kind of research that's more kind of sympathetic to kind of indigenous people that were there before all of this



Cassie Phoenix 10:26

Yeah, certainly science are really important line of inquiry. And incredibly timely, I mean, that the follow up question to that is always what surprised you the most about the research. But I don't know if your answer all my stuff. I assume with the previous one.



10:47

Um,



Gareth Hoskins 10:49

I think Yeah, so so that was, yeah, like a surprise really, it's like, and we mentioned this just before that the talk the recorded bet, but um, but Alec how amenable and like open, the

weather seems to be for all kinds of study from all sorts of different directions and points of interest. So like, the way I've been kind of tracking it, in terms of the way the Santa Ana wind becomes a kind of, first of all becomes a thing that gets labelled the Santa Ana wind, and then it becomes kind of subject to scrutiny by all these different people. And it just gets used by like, people doing criminology to try and think about how it affects behaviour and makes people violent. It gets kind of used to talk about kind of regional identity, it gets used, this wind gets used as a sort of a character in crime fiction and unromantic fiction, as something that kind of sets the scene obviously, but also like, kind of provides, you know, provokes different events and stories. And so, and it gets used as well for like things, like people have tried to compare it, you know, days, days, when there's lots of this centre on the wind, they've been trying to kind of compare it to, to crime rates and stuff, but also to like stock market trading, and like industrial production and things. So solid, because it's so like, ambiguous, and difficult to pin down. like everybody's just desperate to do it on there trying to cover the mechanisms, kind of make it legible. So So the thing that surprised me the most is how, how many different ways there are to try and know the wind or to try and kind of imprinted with meaning.



Cassie Phoenix 12:40

Yeah, absolutely. And I know, you know, one of us others that question. The sort of what surprised you? What are the biggest challenges? It is almost how wide to cast your net? Almost, you know, where do you draw the boundaries? the bit that you can look at? I mean, I think in that sense, it lends itself really well, doesn't it to involvement of people from so many different disciplines and practitioners, community activists, and all the rest of it lends itself well to



13:08

that? tension isn't there between, like the need to draw a boundary and the need to contain, but also, I guess I'm interested in just that, that compulsion to continue.



Cassie Phoenix 13:21

When I'm talking about containing, I'm just thinking, pure logistics of how much time you've got a particular topic in a given lifetime.



Gareth Hoskins 13:31

With something like the wind, so there's often a critique about, you know, the, you know,

what is it the Donovan song, you know, I might as well just catch the wind, or there's like the the Greek messed about alias. And as the Ulysses tries to put all these winds into a bag, and they escaped the bag, that is this kind of constant effort for something like the wind is so elusive to just try and know it and container. And so you can sort of say the same of like meteorology, and of people who kind of measure the wind particularly and in that case, study area, where the Santa Ana wind blows in the, in the kind of the Central Valley and through the mountains there. There's so many different monitoring devices and CCTV cameras, because one of the reasons why it's like watched so carefully, is because, you know, it creates a lot of condition for wildfire and funds these wildfires so so there's this kind of vague sort of surveillance system there to check you know, any little gust of wind and how it might kind of all of a sudden cascade into into the sunshine, a wind down one Canyon, and then the next Canyon over there wouldn't be anything at all, or it could even be blowing in the other direction. So so when you got something as kind of elusive as that, which is Yeah, is this kind of fascinating pursuit to try and make sense of it to try and give it meaning? Yeah,

C

Cassie Phoenix 15:00

Then you talk about how the Santa Ana wind has been used as a scapegoat or the dangers of using it as a scapegoat to sort of mask these other structural inequalities in that particular area.

G

Gareth Hoskins 15:13

Yeah, so one of the, one of the things that I'd like to follow up on, when I can get back over there is, is to look at, like, some of the places where the wind is, is strongest, this particular kind of dry in kind of wind causes a lot of danger is, is, is San Bernardino County. And that's, you know, a kind of a really sort of poor area, we kind of far out from downtown Los Angeles. And it's, yeah, it's kind of exposed by the wind. And there's really kind of high crime rates and you know, struggling populations there. So, so, the kind of, like, exposure to the dangers of the wind is like really unevenly distributed, sort of socially and economically. Actually, like when you, if you look at the kind of the history and the archival history of, of how Los Angeles developed, a lot of it was kind of organised and oriented around like, areas that were sort of in the wind shadow. So like housing developments and communities would kind of expand and be oriented and have road networks, in places that were kind of out of the wind, and the most expensive housing was, you know, in places out of the winter, even the kind of before that when they when they arranged the kind of orchards and put in the, the kind of the tree breaks and things that was all kind of, you know, to prevent kind of damage to the crops from the wind. So it is really interesting about that, but yeah, yeah, it is. It's a difficult thing that but I think

something that there needs to be done there something that needs to be kind of looked at. Yeah.



Cassie Phoenix 17:01

So my final question, I feel like we could just talk about this for so long, but I'm always mindful that there is a perfect length, I think for podcasts, it doesn't seem to be very long for academics once they get going on something. But what do you think living? Well, with weather involves? That's been the question I've, I've tried to ask everybody.



Gareth Hoskins 17:21

Yeah, so I was trying to think about how I could link this to kind of intellectual scholarship and then maybe like my own experience, but for me, anyway, it's the thing I get kind of most out of, sort of research in the weather as an academic, but then also somebody who likes to, you know, spend a lot of time outside in their free time is like, being aware of, of how it kind of plugs you into bigger systems and stuff. So So, you know, I live in kind of Mid Wales and my house is kind of at the bottom of a valley facing north. So you don't get much kind of, of the prevailing wind, but you do get a bit of easterly wind, when, when the direction is, is in the right way, we don't get much sun at all. So I've not got we don't get sun back on the house until I February the 15th. So sometimes, sometimes I'm like, actively seeking out you know, Sunny parts of the valley, and there are places that you can drive to and park up and just get shined on. So, so I think so I like that sense of kind of negotiating my activities in relation to the weather, whether it's kind of temperature or daylight, or this the strength of the sun, or the wind direction, kind of, can sort of dictate what I do and when or where I take the kids and, and what kinds of activities that we do. So I quite like that idea of so living well with the weather for me, it kind of involves, like, being sort of aware of, of how you know, you operate and what you want to do kind of factors into, like this bigger major logical system, whether it's a kind of a low pressure or whether it's the wind being blown from inland from like Birmingham and Newtown and things or if it's coming off the coast, you know, from kind of Southern Ireland and, you know, bringing lots of moisture with it. It's quite nice to be able to appreciate that, especially with something like the wind, right, so see so often when we think about wind, and you've written about this as well, Cassie, it's like, we think about it as as it as it like kind of pushing against us so often as like we're walking forward and it's this thing that we're kind of battling against. I remember one time last year I was I was on the coast just north of Aberystwyth and and there was all this wind Kind of blowing se stream which kind of creates, you know, a really nice sort of flat scene because it's sort of offshore. And I just got the sense of, of it being like part of this wind being part of like a bigger system. So there was like a storm, a hurricane that was over in like, northeast style. North, northeast

Island, right. And so this wind that I was getting was just being kind of hoovered into the centre of this deep depression, and you just got more of a sense of you feeling like this, this, this 300 miles weather system that you're kind of on the tail edge of, and instead of the wind kind of being, you know, pushing against you, it's just being like, sucked across the land, and to this kind of the centre of the depression. So, so that's quite nice to get a sense of being part of this kind of planetary system, I think. Yeah, I'm glad. Yeah. And the researchers helped me kind of do that and kind of appreciate and realise that. Yeah.



Cassie Phoenix 21:05

That's great. That's a great response. Thank you. Okay. Well, I'll just say thank you for your time. And that's a really thoughtful things there. And, again, I come off each of these calls with my brain going crazy and all these connections and links and ideas to explore so



Gareth Hoskins 21:24

well, there's so much in there. Yeah, love to do it again. So



Cassie Phoenix 21:27

we'll follow up. Off the recording. Right. Thank you for listening to today's podcast.