

# Flying in the face of reason



Illustrations by Paola Reyes

We can clip the wings of the aviation industry and build a just transport system, writes **Calum Harvey-Scholes**

**A**ir travel is the most greenhouse-gas-intensive form of travel, in addition to causing toxic air pollution. The construction of new airports, terminals and runways almost always involves land grabbing and ecosystem eradication. Most crucially, there is no way to make flying green – no way to reduce these impacts and make mass air travel compatible with a liveable climate and ecosystem restoration within the urgent time frame demanded by climate science. We must therefore limit air travel and build a just, sustainable transport system.

Aviation contributes more carbon dioxide per passenger mile than any other form of direct transport. This contribution is exacerbated by

the fact that burning fossil fuels at altitude has a much more potent heating effect as a result of non-CO<sub>2</sub> effects. This means that every litre of kerosene burnt by an aeroplane causes at least twice as much heating as a litre burnt at ground level, and perhaps even five times as much.

It is occasionally mistakenly argued that as air travel represents a small single-digit percentage of global carbon emissions, it is not a priority. However, looking at air travel globally distracts from the enormous inequity of who benefits from it and who is causing the emissions. In the UK for example, air travel makes up an average of 12% of household emissions (predicted to reach around 30% by 2050 on conservative estimates).