

Introduction

It was a grey and rainy Tuesday morning in the near future, when the North-West University lifted off. It had been coming for a long time, yet it arrived as a sudden surprise to most. Those staring at their monitors, trying to detect the latest and most notable numbers, hardly detected it. It happened slowly, but distinctly. The numbers on the monitor got too complicated, and the scientists got up to fetch a coffee. This was when they noticed. They glanced out of the windows and instead of students and cars passing by, saw treetops, planes, and low-hanging clouds. The university was hovering. The floor moved below them, many felt nauseated.⁸

They looked at each other. How to land? They were in this together, yet all in different ways. Their actions had provoked the planet to respond in unforeseen ways, disrupting the very structure of the university, unsettling its underlying political order. What was happening now had long seemed just a metaphor of not being grounded in planetary conditions. As if passing a tipping point, the very materiality of the university had actually taken off.

8. Nicolaj Schulz (2023) describes the emotional state of humans in the Anthropocene having the land under them destroyed as nausea.

The university left the
ground, ascended,
and everything shook.
Sykes didn't notice.

Someone knocked
on the door. It was
the delivery he'd
been waiting for.

It was the newest laser.
Now, the project can really
take off.

