



El Niño and its (flaming) sea in the era of the Great Acceleration

We are breaking records with an increasingly unnatural naturalness: 40°C in Siberia, historic fires and the slowing of ocean currents essential for sustaining marine life.

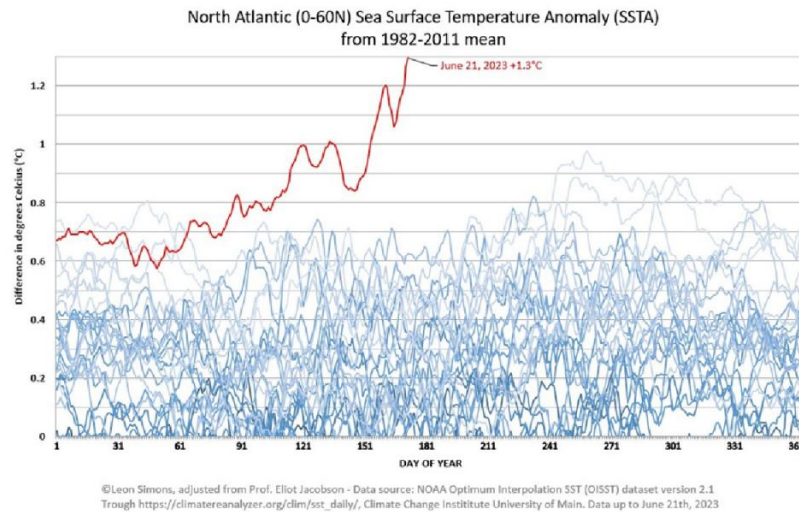
Juan Bordera

There are moments in a person's life or the world itself when it seems like time speeds up. In just ten days, changes take place, lasting for decades or even centuries. On those days, one feels there is more to tell, yet time is not enough. Not even to understand what is happening. Even less to describe it. Marguerite Duras said that to write is to try to know what we would write if we wrote. So, let's at least try.

I could write about the robust thermal equilibrium provided by the oceans, those life-filled wonders that store more than 90% of excess heat, and I would have to tell how that equilibrium, that ancient robustness, is vanishing before our eyes at an incredible speed. Ocean surface temperature records are being shattered in a way that [reason cannot comprehend](#). The values in the North Atlantic look like an impossibility, a mistake. But there is no error in the graph. The error, as we shall see, lies elsewhere.



An image of the Perito Moreno glacier in Argentina. / Christof Berger



Although the anomaly is more dreadful in this area, the global average is almost equally rampant. While both will eventually slow down, the fact that such an exponential change has occurred needs to be investigated because we may be looking at the breakdown of something quite dangerous. A host of different causes interact simultaneously for these anomalies to occur so abruptly. There is probably still some time to react, but the best options are already evaporating.

The melting and ice creation anomalies in the Arctic, especially in Antarctica, are leaving scientists stunned, with a look of terror and incomprehension.

Perhaps I could go on writing about how oceanic heat waves - possibly the most dangerous of all - with irreversible consequences for the marine life that literally sustains the rest, are proliferating off the coasts of half the world: Ireland, Mexico, Ecuador, Japan, Mauritania, Iceland and [the list sadly goes on](#). Like almost all extremes, these phenomena are becoming more frequent and abrupt.

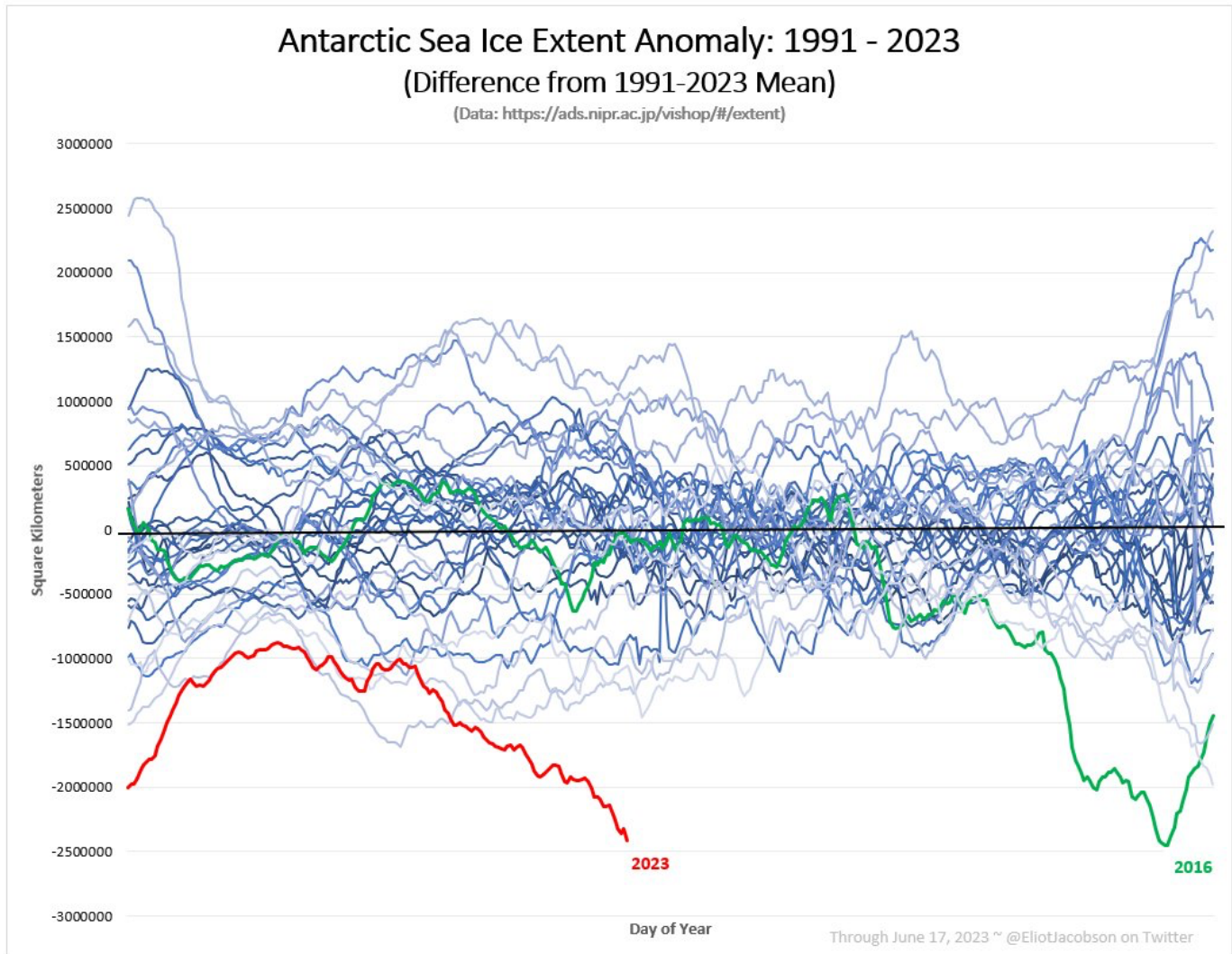
I could also write about how the melting and ice creation anomalies in the Arctic, especially in Antarctica, are leaving scientists stunned, with a look of terror and incomprehension.

The heat map before us depicts a situation close to being terminal. And no one who understands what is happening can understand why this is barely mentioned in the mainstream media. Day in, day out. With special programmes, such as those that some communicators dedicate to such crucial issues as squatting or chemtrails.

I could write, and underline, that records of all kinds continue to be broken with an increasingly unnatural naturalness. 40°C in Siberia. 50°C in Mexico. Historic fires in Canada, with their resulting postcards in an orange, post-apocalyptic New York. Record rainfall in Japan. Massive fish kills in Texas.

I could go on writing about how the French government has launched a courageous media campaign to prepare its population for a scenario of a 4°C rise in temperature compared to the pre-industrial period: "[We cannot escape reality](#)," said Environment Minister Christophe Béchu. But France's dark counterpart is very dark: on 21 June - the day when spring symbolically ends to give way to a summer that will be historic - the [decree to dissolve Les](#)

[Soulèvements de la Terre](#) (SLT), perhaps the most transformative organised movement in recent European environmentalism, was confirmed.



In the meantime, I could write about how here, in a territory with more obvious risks, due to desertification and climate chaos - a matter of latitude - parties that propose putting a flowerpot on every balcony and that make pacts with science, human rights and crushing reality deniers, obtain absolute majorities.

To conclude, I could perhaps write and point - without the precision that only time will give us - to the possible reasons why these improbable events are coinciding in time: the El Niño phenomenon - the oscillation between warmer and colder waters (La Niña) in the Pacific - is back and in a big way. [Some very reliable forecasts](#) make it clear that this is likely to be a powerful phenomenon, that it has formed very quickly, and that it will continue to warm the Earth's oceans for months.

But there are other possible suspects that are also causing chaos: [the eruption of an underwater volcano in Tonga](#), which released a good deal of extra water vapour into the atmosphere; the weakness of some atmospheric currents

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that have circumstantially left some areas free of Saharan dust; as well as the impact of a substantial change in fuel legislation for ships, which are now obliged to run with less sulphur

emissions, which warms the planet - and the ocean surface in particular - by eliminating the barrier effect caused by the aerosols of these emissions. In this way, the real warming we have already caused is unmasked.

Finally, the icing on the cake: we could witness the beginnings of [the disruption of some ocean currents essential to the planet's homeostatic equilibrium](#), which would be terribly problematic. [The Gulf Stream has been the slowest for at least 1,600 years](#). And in the south, in Antarctica, more of the same,

Let's understand this well because it is vital. The melt water from the ice caps is fresh and cold, and by increasing the amount of water entering specific points of the circuit, the currents are slowed down, which are also affected by an increase in the general ocean temperature. Without denying that in some areas the opposite happens on an ad hoc basis, the general trend is towards slowing down. With this slowing of the conveyor belt, heat is accumulating at the ocean surface, as the waters do not "mix" as much as before. This could lead to effects in the future that are difficult to foresee, which is why there are ongoing debates on the subject, and few dare to take a position on the issue.

In the end, what is behind it all is something straightforward to understand; it is called global warming, climate chaos, emergency, call it what you will. And NASA certified a detail that has gone unnoticed by the general public: [the radiative balance has doubled in little more than a decade](#).

I could write much more about terribly important things, such as the demeaning [sentencing to prison](#) of scientists like [Mike Lynch-White](#) - 27 months for a peaceful protest - or [heavy fines like Professor Nikolaus Froitzheim](#). Brave activists protesting against this planetary emergency, which - make no doubt about it - will have an impact in the form of extreme phenomena, aggravated this year. The question is no longer yes or no. The question is where [the roulette](#) wheel falls, which has more and more fatter prizes.

Perhaps the time has come to stop writing so much and take action. Because in this situation and in the face of the inertia of inaction, we need more than words. We need to organise ourselves to empathise with those who don't think exactly the same way to be enough to bring about change. But at the same time, we have to assume that we live in the [era of the Great Acceleration](#), and when challenges and problems accelerate, the political response cannot be moderate; it cannot be to cower because that would be the actual and fatal mistake.



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❖ **About the author: Juan Bordera** is a scriptwriter, journalist and activist at Extinction Rebellion and València en Transició.



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Portal on the net: <https://www.jussemper.org/>
e-mail: informa@jussemper.org