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The Third Half: My Life, Singapore, and Climate Change

On planning, belonging, and the quiet audacity of a city-state that decided to trade in the future of forests.

By Juan Carlos

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Je suis arrivé en France à 20 ans, en cherchant à devenir sociologue de renom. J'ai rêvé du Quartier Latin, de Paris, de devenir Sartre ou Aron.

Ayant été déclaré "non-admis" à la sélection internationale de l'École Normale Supérieure (Rue d'Ulm), j'ai débarqué à l'été 2005 à l'Université de Bordeaux pour continuer mon parcours en sciences sociales. Ce deuxième choix était délibéré. À Bordeaux, Émile Durkheim avait inventé la sociologie, et bien d'autres sociologues de renom y étaient passés, comme François Bourricaud, libéral toquevillien, spécialiste de l'oligarchie péruvienne, celle que le Pérou de mes grands-parents connaissait comme propriétaires de terres et d'hommes.

J'ai passé des années de rêves à Bordeaux. J'y ai rencontré des amis qui le sont encore aujourd'hui, dont mon épouse, Anna.

Quand j'ai mis les pieds en France pour la première fois, j'ai senti que le lien avec cette terre était ancien, et qu'une nouvelle étape de ma vie commençait. *La deuxième moitié.* J'y ai été extrêmement heureux. Vingt et un ans se sont passés depuis. J'ai aujourd'hui 42 ans.

[For readers who prefer English: I arrived in France at 20, dreaming of becoming a sociologist of renown, dreaming of Paris, of the Latin Quarter, of becoming Sartre or Aron. Rejected by the École Normale Supérieure, I landed at the University of Bordeaux, where Durkheim had once invented sociology. I spent years of dreams there. I met friends I still have today, including my wife, Anna. From the moment I first set foot in France, I felt the bond was ancient, and that a new chapter had begun. The Second Half. Twenty-one years have passed. I am 42 now.]

Singapore – June 2026

I arrived in Singapore last month. After thirteen hours on a plane, watching new landscapes and oceans unfold beneath me for the first time, I stepped off with a strange feeling. I had a packed week ahead—the GenZero Climate Summit, Temasek’s Ecosperity events, meetings with government officials, potential business partners, and investors. It was my first time in Asia. And yet, from the moment I landed, I had the unmistakable sense that another chapter of my life was beginning.

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The Third Half.

How can a short visit carry such emotional weight? I have been turning that question over since I returned. I arrive at three answers.

First: Singaporeans plan, and they plan for the long term.

In a world where everything seems chaotic, where people feel pessimistic about the present and the future, where we as individuals sense we have lost control over what is happening around us, Singaporeans stand apart as deliberate optimists. They imagine the future they want, and then they build it.

Second: Singaporeans embrace multiculturalism.

At a moment when some proclaim the clash of civilisations and sow division, Singapore thrives on its diversity. One can say, with very little risk of being wrong, that diversity is one of Singapore’s core strengths, perhaps the deepest reason why we can speak today of a global Singapore.

Third: Singapore embraces trade and innovation, and it has made climate change central to both.

This is the aspect that struck me most deeply.

Singapore takes climate change and biodiversity loss seriously, not as an unbearable burden, but as a strategic frontier and opportunity.

Despite its physical constraints as a small island state, Singapore’s theatre of operations is global. Trade and investment allow it and the climate industry is no exception. Biodiversity markets, I suspect, will follow.

In Singapore, government and business alike are treating carbon as a physical commodity and climate mitigation and adaptation as an industry in its own right. They are issuing regulation, signing international agreements, deploying capital, and actively promoting trade in climate markets.

I witnessed this directly. A few months before my Singapore trip, I was in Peru when the Singaporean delegation arrived. The bilateral agenda included a poultry and pork export agreement, and other trade and investment matters between our two countries—Singapore and Peru share a free trade and investment protection agreement. But the centrepiece of that visit was carbon. More than fifteen Singaporean businesses and investors had travelled to Peru specifically to negotiate carbon import deals, sourcing

credits for Singapore's carbon tax market. Nature-based carbon, from Peru's forests and ecosystems, was what they had come for.

“This is not a peripheral story. It is a signal of where the climate economy is heading—toward sovereign carbon markets, bilateral trade frameworks, and the commodification of nature as a serious asset class. Singapore is already there.”

As a climate entrepreneur working to reduce and capture CO₂ through nature, I found Singapore's orientation genuinely galvanising. The climate transition demands not just technology and capital—it demands countries willing to build the market architecture. Singapore is building it.

Thank you, Singapore. Very deeply. I will be back very soon—to continue the third half of my life.

Juan Carlos is an impact entrepreneur and amateur writer based between France and Peru. He is the founder of Fronterra and *The International Climate Tribune*, an hobby publication covering the global climate economy and entrepreneurship. Born in Peru, educated at the University of Bordeaux and Paris-Dauphine University, he writes at the intersection of personal biography, climate, biodiversity and rural development policy, and the emerging architecture of nature-based carbon and biodiversity markets.