

Re-imagining the futures of geographical thought and praxis

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Abstract

The question of geography's future has recurred throughout the history of geographical thought, and responses to it often presume a linear trajectory from the past and present to a possible future. Yet one of the major contributions that geographers have made to understanding spatio-temporality is reconceiving both space and time as plural, fluid, and co-constituted through multiple space–time trajectories simultaneously. Amidst the ongoing crises of the present, this article opens the current special issue with a call to pluralize geography's futures by diversifying the voices speaking in the name of 'geography' and broadening the horizon of possibilities for the futures of geographical thought and praxis. We have assembled the contributions in this collection with the aim of raising important theoretical, methodological, and empirical questions about how geography's past and present shape the conditions of possibility for its potential futures. In doing so, we seek to demonstrate how the worlding of geography's futures is fundamentally a matter of transforming its disciplinary reproduction in the here-and-now.

Keywords

Futures, geographical thought, imagination, plurality, praxis, space–time, worlding

Introduction

How might we re-imagine the futures of geographical thought and praxis? The question of geography's future is a perennial one and arguably says more about the desires, hopes, dreams, fears, and anxieties of the present than about the future itself. When reading geographical speculations on 'the future of geography' from the past (e.g. Abler et al., 1971; Johnston, 1985; Morrill, 1975; Thrift, 2002), it is clearly evident how much such works were a product of their own time. Today, viewing 'the future of geography' in a singular fashion seems just as implausible as talking about 'the geographical tradition' to characterize geography's plural histories. Indeed, the very idea of 'geography' has meant different things at various times and places. If there is one thing we can reasonably anticipate, it is that the futures of geography – and the geographies of the future – will be plural rather than singular (Graves and Alderman, 2021; Yeo, 2023), emerging from what Massey (2005: 9) describes as the 'contemporaneous plurality' and 'coexisting heterogeneity' of the present.

This presumption that geography's futures will be constituted by a plurality of space–time trajectories is something of a truism in contemporary human geography. Such a starting point could itself be historicized as a mode of geographical thought arising from the historical-geographical specificities of a

post-Cold War, multipolar, media-saturated world of uneven development where linear models of historical time have collapsed. However, plural ontologies alone are not a panacea, since it is 'not enough to celebrate the coexistence of a "plurality of trajectories"', because some of those trajectories are based upon the death, destruction, and erasure of others' (Rose-Redwood, 2021: 3). In re-imagining geography's futures, we therefore envision a discipline that embraces pluriversality but challenges the ongoing legacies of geography in colonial extractivism, militarism, and violence (Forsyth, 2019; Sheppard and Tyner, 2016; Yusoff, 2018). Underpinning this vision is a commitment to 'actively affirming the responsibility of geographers to use our work to enhance the well-being of others, especially for those who are most vulnerable to harm' (American Association of Geographers, 2021). In this special issue, we call upon geographers to *pluralize* conceptions of geography's futures, recognizing that not all geographers will share our own conceptions of plurality or futurity. To put it clearly, this is not merely another embrace of liberal pluralism or an empty promise. Attentive to the power asymmetries inherent in the discipline of geography, this collection serves as a prefigurative act of pluriversal future-making, contributing to the pluralization of geographical futures in the here-and-now.

Pluralizing geography's futures in the here-and-now

The ways we narrate geography's past and embody its present are integral to the processes of enacting potential futures and conceptualizing who constitutes the 'we' of geography (Hanson, 2004). Moreover, which geographies are viewed as 'dynamic' and thus seen as constitutive of futurity, and which voices are centered or peripheralized in debates over 'the future', are key questions at stake in geography's disciplinary reproduction. Whose stories of the past, diagnoses of the present, and visions of possible futures of geography acquire visibility and legitimacy in the discipline are shaped by at least five factors. These include institutional hierarchies; (neo)colonial, imperial, and capitalist relations; racialized, gendered, and class power asymmetries; linguistic hegemonies; and the politics of geographical knowledge production. Such contextual factors not only shape the narratives of temporality within geographical thought but also contribute to the perpetuation of Eurocentric and masculinist structures that frame 'time as linear, white, and heteropatriarchal' (Gergan et al., 2024a: 4). Consequently, re-imagining the futures of geographical thought and praxis fundamentally depends upon *where* you are situated – socially, institutionally, and geographically – as well as *when* the question of geography's futures is posed and in what specific circumstances or contexts.

This special issue on re-imagining the futures of geographical thought and praxis emerges in the aftermath of the worst global pandemic in the past century and amidst ongoing geopolitical, humanitarian, economic, and environmental crises. The current global conjuncture has been characterized as an era of 'polycrisis' due to the convergence of multiple crises (Albert, 2024), generating complex and often unpredictable outcomes across different spatio-temporal scales. In response to these uncertain futures, there has been a surge of anticipatory action, where envisioning the future serves as both a cause and justification for present actions (Anderson, 2010). Imagining possible futures involves a coalescence of different 'styles, consisting of statements that disclose and relate to the form of the future; *practices*, consisting of acts

that make specific futures present; and *logics*, consisting of interventions in the here and now on the basis of futures' (Anderson, 2010: 793, italics in original). The contributions to this special issue employ various approaches to re-imagining the futures of geographical thought and praxis, encompassing diverse styles, practices, and logics. By bringing these works together, we aim to advance a project of 'worldly futuring' (Dekeyser, 2023) that challenges linear visions of time while also recognizing the ways in which 'multiple future temporalities circulate in, are given form and are acted upon in the present' (Holloway, 2015: 180).

When considering such world-making and future-enacting practices, it is worth bearing in mind Dekeyser's warning that 'worldlessness haunts any project of worldly futuring' (2023: 228). Drawing on the Afro-pessimism of Warren (2018) and Wilderson (2018), Dekeyser (2023) suggests that the idea of a 'world' involves exclusion and the creation of a constitutive 'Other'. Even the idea of a pluriverse (Kothari et al., 2019), which posits multiple co-existing worlds, can prompt questions about who or what remains excluded from this plurality. The question, then, is not how to transcend exclusion altogether in re-imagining geography's futures – itself an impossible task – but rather how best to disrupt and challenge what Cresswell (2024: vi) calls 'geography's exclusions', bearing in mind that any such disruptions will themselves produce their own (more inclusive?) exclusions.

It is for this reason that inquiries into futurity can be 'dangerous' (Smith and Vasudevan, 2017) since they raise questions about *whose* futures matter. Reckoning with how certain lives and the spaces they inhabit are framed as 'superfluous' is thus crucial to addressing questions of geography's futures. In a discussion of 'plantation futures', McKittrick (2013) emphasizes how acts of survival and futurity are intimately linked when particular peoples and places are considered surplus to the future. Grove et al. (2022: 7) argue that futurity is not evenly distributed and that 'de-futuring practices' informed by white supremacy and anti-Black racism violently deny the affirmative possibilities of futurity to 'the racialised Others of the modern Self'. Yet, as McKittrick maintains,

spaces of violence and domination also provoke ‘innovative resistances’ (2013: 5), which can reshape the futures that may become possible.

To counter these and other reactionary de-futuring practices, the contributions in this special issue offer critical interventions into the worlding of geography’s futures. As such, we should be mindful that the future worlds imagined and enacted through these acts of *re-futuring* are necessarily accompanied by their own de-futuring practices. This complex interplay between re-futuring and de-futuring is what makes debates over geography’s disciplinary reproduction so consequential. As a field of study, geography encompasses diverse perspectives and voices, yet courses on the history of geographical thought have often reproduced hegemonic narratives of the discipline that privilege white, male, Anglophone voices from the Global North while excluding diverse ‘Others’ (Kinkaid and Fritzsche, 2022; Oswin, 2020). Questioning these historical narratives highlights how they are directly involved in reproducing ‘the academic subject positions that they appear to merely describe’ (Rose-Redwood, 2021: 1).

There is thus a need for ‘un-disciplining’ our own discipline, whose spatialities and temporalities are embedded in modern ideas of linear time and geometric space characteristic of its imperial pasts. Since the beginning of postcolonial debates questioning these pasts, the very conceptual foundations of geography have been placed under scrutiny (Sidaway, 2000). Un-disciplining the discipline of geography involves not only a reckoning with colonial and imperial legacies but also engaging with theories, methods, and problematics of ‘cognate’ disciplines as well as different ontologies, epistemologies, and praxes. Additionally, it demands that geographers come to terms with our own differential complicity in the very assemblages of Eurocentric knowledge production that are the object of our critiques (Hilbrandt and Ren, 2022).

One of the paradoxes of such critiques is that emphasizing the power of hegemonic disciplinary narratives can have the (unintended) effect of reproducing their centrality in the discipline. This is a key reason why the question of geography’s futures deserves greater attention; by pluralizing the

futures of geographical thought, we can envision the discipline in new ways without consistently centering the sameness of that which came before. Importantly, it also has implications for how we perceive geography’s pasts, challenging the assumption that ‘the history of theory in geography ... is still the same history it was’ when we began our inquiries (Cresswell, 2024: vi). By re-imagining geography’s futures, the discipline’s pasts are likewise cast in a different light, further underscoring the importance of critical memory-work (Till, 2012). Such memory-work can enable us to (re) trace the plural temporalities and spatialities of geographical thought. In other words, reworlding geography’s futures is simultaneously a reworlding of its pasts.

Spatio-temporalities of geographical futures-in-the-making

Recent geographical scholarship has called for a more nuanced engagement with ‘time’ as an onto-epistemological grounding of geographical thought (Marković, 2024). Gergan et al. (2024a: 4–5), for instance, suggest that radical geographies offer a means to move beyond linear conceptions of temporality, and they ‘ask geographers to consider how time is stratified, folded, navigated, and curated by those enacting liberatory possibilities for the future in the here and now’. This line of critique is all-the-more necessary in the contemporary conjuncture of polycrisis, which is overdetermined by a plurality of space–time trajectories. One pathway out of linear conceptions of temporality can be found in Rose’s (2007, 2016) work on futurity, where the future is not something that lies ahead of us, waiting to be reached or encountered. Instead, the future is always outside of our immediate grasp, constantly unfolding in unexpected ways. Even events that we know will come, such as our own mortality, still retain an element of surprise when they actually occur. Paradoxically, we might say that the future exists both as an imminent reality in the present and as a transcendent yet-to-come that never fully arrives – until it passes us by. Another route beyond linear conceptions of temporality is offered by Koselleck (1988, 2004), who

emphasizes the importance of scrutinizing the complex layers of time that overlap and co-exist as well as cautions against treating time and space as Kantian a priori categories (also, see Elden and Mendieta, 2011). In doing so, Koselleck highlights the need to understand more complex spatialities than classical Euclidean and Cartesian conceptions if we wish to make sense of plural temporalities.

One way to envision future possibilities geographically has traditionally been through the concept of 'utopia' (and its mirror-world double, 'dystopia'), seen as part of the prefigurative potentialities of geographical imaginations. This notion seems especially fit to consider the relations between space and future, since it has conventionally been expressed in the form of an aspatial and atemporal place (literally unbounded, placeless, and timeless), either in imagined futures or imaginary lands. Nevertheless, utopias also have their concreteness, being generally used to stimulate actual political praxes (Anderson, 2006). Although the idea of utopia has a place in the histories of European overseas imperialism and its promise of new environments for settlers (e.g. Martínez, 2019), many political traditions have employed utopian thought as an inspiration for radical social change as well.

In anarchist and Marxist geographies, utopia has tended to be associated with the idea of revolution, underscoring movements toward social change rather than a detailed forecast of how a new society will operate (Ferretti, 2019). Early anarchist geographers such as Reclus and Kropotkin were cautious about ideas rooted in the progressive advancement of society toward a revolutionary future. Although optimistic in their expectations, they refused a deterministic philosophy of history. Instead, they embraced notions of circular time and 'ebbs and flows' in their dialectics of gradual evolution and revolutionary shifts, perceiving these as elements in constant relational tension (e.g. Reclus, 1885).

Marxist geographers have also employed the concept of utopia to envision a future society that transcends capitalist exploitation and class struggle, seeing it not as a distant ideal but as a transformative vision that inspires anti-capitalist movements aimed

at social change (Apostolopoulou et al., 2022; Harvey, 2012; Lefebvre, 1970). By challenging existing power structures, critiquing capitalist ideologies, and advocating for radically different socio-economic systems, utopian thinking in the context of Marxist geography contributes to reshaping the future trajectories of geographical thought and praxis. At the core of this understanding lies a belief that the future should be constructed 'not in some fantastic utopian mold, but through the tangible transformation of the raw materials given to us in our present state' (Harvey, 2000: 191). The 'right to the city', conceived as both a necessity and a utopian endeavor, serves as a prominent illustration of how radical geographical theory can disrupt conventional discourses by framing heterotopic practices through lenses of creative resistance and the pursuit of transformative futures (Santos Junior, 2014).

Both feminist and queer geographers, in their own ways, have made important contributions to re-imagining the futures of geographical thought and praxis by challenging common-sense notions of geographical knowledge, unsettling what is considered fixed, and questioning taken-for-granted world-making practices through 'open-ended invention and the desire to bring a different future into existence' (MacLeavy et al., 2021: 1573). 'Queerness', Muñoz (2009: 1) argues, 'is not simply a being but a doing for and toward the future and an insistence on potentiality or concrete possibility for another world'. Returning to the question of utopia, Brown (2021: 8) seeks to 'radically disrupt the very idea of the future' and instead proposes that 'we see and feel our way not into a future but into an altogether different spatio-temporality ... [that] is not accessible in standard linear time or in normative spaces'. Indigenous, Black, and Latinx geographies, alongside Southern theory and postcolonial geographies, have also contested conventional understandings of spatio-temporality in geography (Hawthorne, 2019; Hunt, 2014; Jazeel, 2019; Latinx Geographies Collective, 2023; Sultana, 2023).

Roy (2020: 20) cautions against folding these approaches and perspectives into 'the self-narration of geography' without fundamentally altering what

Oswin (2020: 11) calls geography's 'liberal progress narrative'. Indeed, achieving decolonial futures in geography requires more than just a commitment to inclusivity; it demands a profound shift in spatial and temporal frameworks (Bastian, 2011), such that multiple histories, pluriversal futures, and the anticipatory politics of diverse 'otherwises' may co-exist and cross-pollinate. These 'countertopographies' (Katz, 2001) offer the possibility of envisioning alternative futures beyond hegemonic norms by embracing futurity's indeterminacy, unpredictability, and unknowability as the catalysts for prefigurative and transformative action.

Prefiguring geography's futures involves not only conceptual re-imaginings but also calls to action that embody values through everyday practices, improvisations, and institutionalizations (Jeffrey and Dyson, 2020). Such a praxis manifests in various ways, including a commitment to showing support, speaking up, and standing in solidarity with those experiencing inequity and injustice, both within and beyond academia. To truly disrupt the status quo of geography as a discipline, it is imperative to create spaces for deep listening and action with those most affected by geography's futures – particularly early-career scholars from groups that have been marginalized in the discipline on account of their racialized, gendered, and class-based social positionalities and geographical peripheralization.

Given the uneven geographies of knowledge production arising from imperialism, colonialism, racism, and capitalism, pluralizing the socio-spatial positionalities involved with the making of geography's futures in the here-and-now is of paramount importance. Such a turn to plural ontologies and positionalities involves more than simply integrating so-called 'Global South' knowledge into pre-established 'Global North' knowledge systems. Rather, it demands a critical rethinking of the North–South binary itself as a limiting global marker of geographical directionality and socio-spatial identity. Such binary frameworks have historically been complicit in excluding the dynamism and connections produced through 'South–South', 'East–East', and 'East–South' relations, constraining the

potential for envisioning diverse geographical futures (Mawdsley, 2012). Dismantling Eurocentric geographical imaginations (Cruz, 2017; Santos, 1980), and making space for 'other geographical traditions' as argued by Ferretti and Barrera de la Torre in this special issue, provides one among many ways to radically remake the practices of academic knowledge production.

Notably, a re-invigorated engagement with area studies can push geographers to deepen their commitment to creating new possibilities for geographical knowledge production beyond Eurocentric frameworks (Cheng and Liu, 2022). The recent reconsideration of area studies in geography has highlighted 'how a more robust relationship between geography and area studies could assist the discipline in expanding the geographies in which geographical knowledge is produced' (Sharp, 2019: 836). Instead of viewing geographical areas solely as 'objects of analysis' (Sidaway et al., 2016: 780), a re-engagement with area studies can reframe areas as a 'means of transforming knowledge production' itself (Chen, 2010: 216). Such a reframing has the potential to generate dialogical spaces that can stimulate 'a conversation across globally differentiated arts of "world-writing"' (Chari, 2016: 796).

These transformations of geographical imaginations are currently taking place amidst attempts to reframe the contemporary epoch as the Anthropocene (Butler, 2021). The latter concept has significantly influenced how geographers envision the future, with discussions ranging from apocalyptic visions to hopeful calls for pluriversal future worlds. From the ravages of global pandemics, wars, and urbicides to the uneven impacts of climate change and the uncertainties of technological developments in the age of artificial intelligence, the 'apocalyptic' has increasingly come to appear omnipresent, thereby altering conceptions of temporality itself. 'If in modernism time was seen to flow from the present to the future', Braun (2015: 239) observes that 'today we increasingly experience time coming toward us, from the future to the present'. Just as Nietzsche (1980 [1874]: 14) once warned of an 'excess of history' weighing heavily upon contemporary life, we may now be witnessing an *excess of*

futurity overwhelming the present as a ‘revelation of things that are coming toward us’ (Latour, 2013: 12). This may, in part, explain the sheer number of geography conference sessions and publications on themes related to ‘futures’ in recent years, which is indicative of multiple re-orientations toward geography’s futures that are currently underway (Braun, 2015; Castree, 2022; Collard et al., 2015; Gergan et al., 2024a, 2024b; Graves and Alderman, 2021; Grove et al., 2022; Jeffrey and Dyson, 2020; Kurniawan and Kundurpi, 2019; Simandan, 2023).

Given that the contemporary era is often framed as the ‘end times’ (Dittmer and Sturm, 2010), it is important to remember that the end of ‘the world’ does not mean the end of all worlds. The concept of ‘the world’ as a universalizing project, often associated with empire-building, has itself been – and continues to be – predicated on the destruction of multiple worlds and marginalized communities (Danowski and Viveiros de Castro, 2017), leaving many in a state of worldlessness (Dekeyser, 2023). As Brown (2021: 7) reminds us, the end-of-the-world catastrophe ‘has already happened, and continues to happen, for many beings. That we are in a crisis is not news for those already living amid the rubble’. While it is important to acknowledge that grief and loss will likely accompany the socio-ecological catastrophes of geographical futures, it is equally important to imagine and build ‘alternative worlds’ and ‘alternative ways of being alive’ (Brown, 2021: 7). The current special issue explores how these emergent worlds might reshape the futures of geography along diverse spatio-temporal trajectories of geographical thought and praxis.

Enacting plural futures of geographical thought and praxis

The contributors to this special issue have responded to the prompt to re-imagine the futures of geographical thought and praxis from a diverse range of perspectives, raising important questions about how geography’s past and present shape the conditions of possibility for its potential futures. At the outset of this article, we observed that geography’s future will be plural rather than singular, and

this is fully evident in the diversity of voices, broad coverage of thematic areas, and multiple futures envisioned in this collection. Each contributor’s approach to re-imagining the futures of geographical thought and praxis is informed by their own positionality vis-à-vis the discipline and their situatedness in different geographical locales. Yet collectively they contribute to the pluralization of geography’s futures not with the aim of creating ‘a collection of mini-orthodoxies’ but with the hope of inspiring ‘novel syncretisms within Geography’ (Castree, 2022: 9). By bringing these varied prefigurations of geography’s futures together into a single volume, our goal is not to create a unified vision of geography or to predict the geographies of the future; rather, it is to encourage dialogues across difference, thereby enacting plural futures where different forms of geographical thought and praxis might intersect in new, fruitful, and unexpected ways.

In total, the collection consists of 39 contributions written by 66 contributors – many of whom are early-career scholars – who span the globe from 16 countries across multiple world regions and thus presents a wide variety of perspectives on geography’s futures. Following the present introductory article, this special issue begins with a commentary by **Eden Kinkaid** on queering geography’s disciplinary reproduction, which gets straight to the heart of the matter by insisting that having a place in geography’s future depends upon surviving and thriving in its present. If one is truly concerned with building a more progressive and inclusive future for the discipline, Kinkaid argues that it is imperative to make change in the ‘here-and-now’ rather than waiting for such changes to ‘come upon us’ in an always deferred future.

Federico Ferretti and **Geronimo Barrera de la Torre** contend that such contemporary re-imaginings of geography’s futures can also benefit from reconsidering the histories of geography as a way to engage with ‘other geographical traditions’ beyond the hegemonic ‘Western’ origin stories of geographical thought. In their respective commentaries, both **Archie Davies** and **António Ferraz de Oliveira** likewise call attention to the history of geographical ideas as fertile ground for

broadening the horizons of geographical imaginations in the present and future. In particular, Davies advocates for an anti-disciplinary, recursive history based upon two key foci: tracing the history of geographical ideas both within and beyond the academic discipline of geography and acknowledging that as the field of geographical inquiry broadens, so too do potential connections that can be traced across different intellectual communities. Ferraz de Oliveira brings such a sensibility to rewriting the intellectual history of geopolitical thought by pluralizing the 'canon', deepening the historical study of different geopolitical traditions through digital methods and interdisciplinary approaches as well as reconsidering such histories in light of the 'futures present' in the contemporary era.

Michiel van Meeteren observes that geography's role as a K-12 school subject in many countries offers both constraints and possibilities that will shape the future trajectories of geography as an academic discipline. To advance this vital educational relationship, van Meeteren calls for a renewed commitment to geographic education based upon an 'open pluralist pedagogy'. **Niiyokamigaabaw Deondre Smiles** also highlights the importance of pedagogical praxis as a key arena for unsettling geographical ways of knowing and being-in-the-world, thereby creating spaces in which Indigenous geographers can creatively transform the field and thus produce geographic Indigenous futures.

Unsettling and challenging narratives of colonial extractivism and liberal futurity, **Penelope Anthias** draws upon experiences with documentary filmmaking in Southern Bolivia to argue that the 'countertopographies' of women-led struggles for environmental justice in the Global South provide a powerful counterpoint to the 'worldly futuring' gestures that geographers in the Global North commonly espouse. Also speaking from a Latin American context, and based upon current trends in Brazilian geography, **Rodrigo Dutra Gomes** suggests that the futures of Brazilian geographical thought will be multidimensional in emphasizing the 'differences, dialogues, and mixtures of geographical knowledges' as geographers aim to provide solutions to socio-environmental challenges and embrace decolonial critiques of the

Eurocentrism that has long pervaded the history of Brazilian geography and society. **Sofia Zaragocin** advances such a decolonial critique of global geographical imaginations by calling into question the very ontological distinction between 'Global North' and 'Global South', highlighting the emerging spatial imaginaries of the 'hemispheric' in decolonial thought and praxis.

Arnisson Andre Ortega maintains that the effort to transform our geographical imaginations is not merely an academic exercise but can serve as a basis for creating positive social change in the world. Ortega envisions a future where more geographers embrace 'community geography' to develop praxis-oriented approaches to community-engaged geographical research as a form of resistance to the neoliberal imperative in academia that values research productivity over relationship-building with the community. Similarly, **Suraya Scheba and Andreas Scheba** see significant potential in the contributions that scholarly activism and engaged scholarship can make toward cultivating a prefigurative politics, building bridges across community and policy divides, and creating institutional changes within academia itself. **Mohammed Rafi Arefin and Carolyn Prouse** consider the praxis of biosecurity as one such arena in which geographers can build 'counter-collaborations' across traditional disciplinary divides – in this case, between those in the fields of bio-medical science, on the one hand, and anti-colonial and anti-racist research, on the other – to foster 'alternative bio-securitizations' that place care at the center of attempts to construct 'liberatory futures'.

Geographers have often speculated upon – and advocated for – particular future trajectories of the discipline and society more generally. However, **Elizabeth Nelson** urges us to prioritize the hopes, dreams, and desires of research participants themselves to ground the narration of speculative futures in the embodied experiences of those reshaping the future through everyday practices in the present. Encounters with research participants are generally framed as occurring in the 'field', which has been a primary site legitimizing the production of colonial geographical knowledge and a fraught

inheritance from colonial practices that have long influenced who does fieldwork and what types of knowledge are produced. **Johanne Bruun and Anna Guasco** critique the assumptions and values embedded in fieldwork and argue that re-imagining the ‘field’ through experimental and collaborative methods is necessary to work toward equitable and inclusive futures for geography.

In response to the ongoing planetary upheavals jeopardizing the promise of tomorrow, **Martin Savransky** turns to geophilosophy as a means of questioning the modern faith in the future-as-progress and potentially offering pathways for reconceiving the future immanently in relation to the Earth. **Rachael Squire** explores life on the edge of environmental catastrophe and the possibility of finding one’s ‘place’ in a world of extremes. Squire’s commentary directs our attention to everyday place-making practices during environmental crises and encourages the development of geographies that account for both the catastrophic and mundane effects of the climate crisis.

Michael Simpson and Alejandra Pizarro Choy also underscore the need to address the climate crisis, yet they insist that such efforts should avoid further reinforcing the very institutional structures of racial capitalism and colonialism that have brought about the crisis in the first place. Highlighting four key tensions – the institutional, scalar, incommensurability, and temporal – they pose important questions to decolonial climate justice movements, including: ‘Is it possible to do this work without imposing one’s own visions of a decolonial future upon the frontline communities one seeks to support?’ Drawing upon in-depth fieldwork in Ghana, **Jemima Nomunume Baada, Bipasha Baruah, and Isaac Luginaah** document how climate change is already affecting agrarian and structurally marginalized communities in the Global South, leading many to turn to migration as a coping strategy that may replicate in the destination sites the unsustainable conditions from which migrants are seeking to flee.

In a ‘time of trouble’, where environmental crises are compounded by geopolitical conflicts and (post) pandemic politics, **Han Cheng** maps the

‘possibilities of internationalism’ and envisions a future in which geographers across the East/West and North/South divides engage in ‘traveling geographies’ that re-imagine geographical thought and praxis beyond the conventional borders – epistemic, ontological, physical, and geopolitical – that have come to define the contemporary world. Reflecting upon the spatial, affective, and environmental turns that have shaped critical thought across the social sciences and humanities, **Madhumita Roy** argues for a revitalized postcolonial literary geography that can help examine global interconnections while still keeping local specificities in mind, trace how affect is culturally situated in different places, and remain attentive to the more-than-human world as both a ‘lived space’ as well as a site of resource extraction and exploitation.

The lived and imagined spaces of urban world-making have been the focus of considerable speculations on the ‘urban future’ in academic, policy, and popular discourses over the past few decades. Inspired by recent re-imaginings of the ‘urban’ in the field of urban studies, **Asa Roast** advances a democratized approach to the co-production of geographical knowledge beyond conventional academic and professional boundaries, emphasizing the need for collaboration with urban residents and solidarity with educators and researchers excluded from mainstream academia. **Jessie Speer** questions the epistemological exclusions at play in urban geographical scholarship on homelessness in the Global North. Emphasizing that informality and precarity are vital theories emerging from the Global South, Speer contends that incorporating Southern urban theory into geographical thought can help construct more intricate, robust, and globally relevant frameworks for analyzing the futures of homelessness.

The next two commentaries turn their attention specifically to urban spaces as sites of creative experimentation and alternative modes of urban place-making that are activating potential urban futures in the present. **Yanheng Lu and Junxi Qian** consider the dynamic role of situated experiments within real-world contexts in shaping alternative urban worlds. They advocate for integrating experimental knowledge into critical and progressive geographies to challenge epistemic monopolies

as well as champion collective and socially relevant knowledge production. **Rachael Boswell** delves into the contributions of artists' practices of city-making, exploring how urban experimentation can unveil hopeful, surprising, and imaginative urban encounters. By proposing a connection between hope, imagination, and the right to the future city, Boswell argues against taking the city for granted as prefigurative politics operate in the 'here and now'.

In an attempt to work toward a more accountable economic geography, **Emily Rosenman and Priti Narayan** argue that economic geographers should rethink who is envisioned as having 'expertise' when it comes to the economy. They maintain that publicly minded scholarship should hold itself accountable to diverse publics and the 'infrastructures of care' upon which they depend. **Salene Schloffel-Armstrong** discusses one such form of social infrastructure – the public library – and avers that geographical engagement with 'infrastructural futures' necessitates a commitment to the spaces of community-building and knowledge production.

Any discussion of geography's futures would be incomplete without accounting for the increasing pervasiveness of digital infrastructures globally. **Isaac Rivera** calls upon geographers to make techno-scientific knowledge production more accountable to the communities and places from which geographical knowledge arises. Given geography's entanglement in empire, Rivera makes a case for a praxis of *#databack* (along the lines of *#land-back*) – particularly for Indigenous communities – in a bid to actually (not merely metaphorically) decolonize pedagogy, knowledge production, and governance. **Weiqliang Lin** highlights the ubiquity of technoscience in the present and the emerging 'technical worlds' that will continue to transform the futures of geographical thought and praxis. Given the integration of the 'technical' into nearly all facets of everyday life, Lin proposes a research agenda centered on developing greater techno-scientific expertise and acquiring new technical vocabularies, tracing the spatio-temporal trajectories of non-human 'things', and taking the need for genuine interdisciplinary collaboration seriously.

In a data-intensive society, **Bo Zhao** imagines a future of GIScience that is informed by the insights of postphenomenological inquiry and examines the interrelations of geospatial technologies, GIS users, and the place-based contexts in which such encounters occur. In doing so, Zhao develops a more expansive conception of GIS and articulates an ethic of care for GIScience. **Clancy Wilmott** takes inspiration from critical cartography/GIS as well as Black, Indigenous, and queer studies to argue that the futures of digital geographical thought and praxis should contribute to the interdisciplinary field of critical computation. This line of thought, Wilmott argues, should focus not only on the development of new computational techniques and software, but also on the entanglements of computational praxis with the politics of racialization and techno-capitalism. Drawing upon Kitchin's (2023) notion of a 'progressive sense of time' and Datta's (2022) work on 'thick time', **Debangana Bose** examines the chrono-geo-racial politics of digital platformization in the northern Indian city of Darjeeling to develop the idea of a 'progressive sense of thick time', which 'disrupts the notion that individuals are temporally anchored in the present and appreciates the *relationality of time* across past, present, and future'.

As digital mediation becomes ever-present in an age of ecological crisis, **Adam Searle, Jonathon Turnbull, Oscar Hartman Davies, Julia Poerting, Pauline Chasseray-Peraldi, Jennifer Dodsworth, and Henry Anderson-Elliott** argue that future scholarship should forge more linkages between the subfields of digital geographies and more-than-human geographies through the analytical framework of 'digital ecologies'. In contrast to narratives of 'techno-apocalyptic despair' and 'techno-utopian futurism', they contend that a more constructive path forward would involve what they call 'technonatural histories', on the one hand, and 'more positive, hopeful and "glitchy" accounts attentive to the digital mediation of more-than-human worlds', on the other.

Emma Fraser also speaks to the ongoing intensification of digital space, particularly as it relates to digital games, virtual world-making, and the metaverse. Fraser observes that many of the key geographical theories of space and place

were developed prior to the digital age, yet there is considerable potential for them to be reconfigured for a ‘metaversal future’. However, **Taylor Shelton** highlights a significant irony of the big data era, which is that the data needed to address contemporary issues of socio-spatial inequality are, in many cases, becoming *less* accessible to researchers and the broader public. Shelton argues that geographers should respond to this opacity – in its intentional, structural, and neoliberal forms – by ‘embracing fuzziness’ using proxy measures to map and critically analyze spatial patterns and processes of unequal social relations and structures of economic power that would otherwise remain hidden from view.

The final four commentaries in this special issue direct our attention to the mundane, the speculative, and the (im)possible. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, **Chris Lizotte** discusses the importance of mental health in academia and the need for an everyday praxis of ordinary and unremarkable acts of kindness in fostering a culture of care for each other as the basis for geography’s futures. Taking a different turn, **Julian Brigstocke** envisions the future of the discipline by writing a speculative genealogical commentary from the standpoint of a future observer on the period of 2020–2043, inviting us to imagine the futures of geography in the here-and-now and to consider experimenting with written forms of geographical scholarship. Next, **Lucas Pohl** discusses how the ‘impossible’ is already increasingly taking place. For Pohl, geographers must grapple with the uncertain ontological status of the impossible as well as its dystopian and utopian spatial imaginaries to create space for new possibilities to emerge. Lastly, the special issue concludes in the spirit of dialogue with a conversation among **Kafui Attah, Craig Dalton, Emma Fraser, Jim Thatcher, and Jeremy Crampton** in which they explore the fictions and futures of speculative geographies.

Conclusion: Encountering the multiplicity of stories-to-come

In a time marked by multiple crises, cultivating dialogical spaces for re-imagining the futures of geographical thought and praxis is more important

than ever. Although dialogue across difference has its limits, it is full of possibilities to forge new collective subjectivities based upon mutual care, compassion, reciprocity, and relational accountability (Rose-Redwood et al., 2018). Dialogue offers spaces for collaborative thinking and collective becoming, paving the way for re-imagining geography’s futures and challenging monolithic ways of understanding and existing in the world. Dialogical thinking is itself a form of action – a praxis of worldly futuring and envisioning alternative futures – that can lead to unanticipated convergences of space–time trajectories, relationalities, and worlds-in-the-making. Where will these intersecting trajectories take geography and its futures? How might the pluralization of geography’s futures in the here-and-now transform its ‘stories-so-far’ (Massey, 2005: 9) into encounters with the multiplicity of its stories-to-come? And whose futures will be empowered or curtailed by these transformative processes?

These questions, along with the issues raised by the contributors to this special issue, have implications not only for what types of geographical scholarship will appear in the pages of future geographical publications but also for the organizational work of building academic programs and planning for their futures in ways that remain open to new possibilities. Re-imagining geography’s futures is thus not a theoretical concern alone. Rather, its latent potentialities rise to the surface each time a geography department considers which area of geographical inquiry to prioritize when filling a faculty vacancy, rethinks its curriculum, or strives to diversify its faculty complement to make space for scholars from historically marginalized groups.

Moreover, the futures of geography programs themselves are not a given since there are some institutional contexts where geography might not have a future at all – as budget cuts lead to administrative mergers or even closures of entire programs. On pragmatic grounds, Graves and Alderman (2021: 297) maintain that ‘a focus on futures can help build the discipline in the eyes of others’. They urge geographers to view ‘future analysis as a professional responsibility’ since it can play a crucial role in informing public decision-making

and improving the responsiveness of geography to addressing global inequalities and challenges (Graves and Alderman, 2021: 291). When debating the ontologies of spatio-temporality and futurity, it is important to acknowledge that the issues at stake extend well beyond academia to influence future-making practices in broader contexts. As geographers, we therefore have a professional responsibility to consider how our work can contribute to shaping these possible futures.

The question of geography's futures is thus not simply a matter of prediction or extrapolating future paths based on current trends. Rather, placing the future into question is a means of problematizing the present – and thus reckoning with the absent presences of the past in the present – in order for difference to emerge amidst the apparent sameness of geography's disciplinary reproduction. As 'radical' and 'critical' variants of geography have been mainstreamed in the discipline, they run the risk of becoming normalized as part of 'the geographical tradition' and its linear narratives of disciplinary history (Oswin, 2020). As important as these histories are, the repetitious narration of geography's pasts can weigh heavily on contemporary thought and praxis, necessitating some form of forgetting the past – if only momentarily – to bring about change in the present. Much the same could be said about geography's futures: forgetting the future at the right time and place is just as important as remembering why pursuing these futures is worthwhile despite all the struggles involved in their re-imagining and remaking.

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