

# History and Philosophy of Geography Research Group (HPGRG)

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# NEWSLETTER

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## Message from the HPGRG Chair

Dear HPGRG member

The History and Philosophy of Geography Research Group (HPGRG) elected several **new committee members** at the Annual General Meeting during the RGS-IBG Annual International Conference 2018 in Cardiff.

As the new HPGRG Chair, I wish to thank Paul Simpson (University of Plymouth) for his services to the group as HPGRG Chair from 2014 to 2018; Isla Forsyth (University of Nottingham) for supporting the group as HPGRG Secretary in the same four years; Vanessa Schofield (Durham University) for serving as HPGRG Communications Officer; and Diana Beljaars (University of Cardiff) as HPGRG Postgraduate Representative.

The other two new committee members are Federico Ferretti (University College Dublin) as HPGRG Secretary and Michiel van Meeteren (Loughborough University) as HPGRG Communications Officer. We have enclosed our **election statements** to this HPGRG newsletter and look forward to working together with the other committee members over the next three years (<https://hpgrg.org.uk/committee-membership/>). The role of HPGRG Postgraduate Liaison Officer remains vacant so that we would be grateful to receive nominations for this post.



Heike Jöns

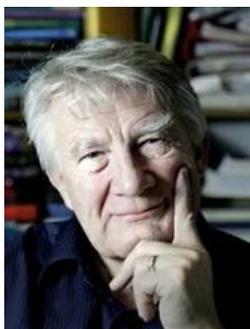
The HPGRG Undergraduate Dissertation Prize 2018 was awarded to Sophie Buckle (University of Bristol) for a dissertation entitled **‘Writing between worlds: an audiencing of Leanne Simpson’s stories as theory for decolonialising academic writing practices’**. Many thanks go to the prize panel, consisting of Pauline Couper (York St John University) and Vanessa Schofield (Durham University), who chose this dissertation out of three submissions and noted:

“The panel were unanimous in considering Sophie’s dissertation to deserve this year’s prize. Her work is a highly impressive, ambitious and thoughtful piece that speaks to very contemporary, emerging and difficult debates in Geography and beyond. In introducing storytelling into decolonisation of knowledge production, the research demonstrates novelty and creativity, along with a critical and nuanced engagement with theory and praxis. Sophie brings together and deploys a breadth of scholarship in a well-structured, coherent and succinct fashion. She is clear about what she is trying to achieve, and about the limitations of both this aim and her capacity to achieve it, paying repeating attention to (and attempting to confront and mitigate) her own ‘entanglement in coloniality’. The interweaving of theory and praxis through poetry is particularly impressive. In sum, this is a highly original, creative, and reflective piece of work that emphasises pushing for change in geographical knowledge production beyond thought and beyond the page, and demonstrates how such change might be approached.”

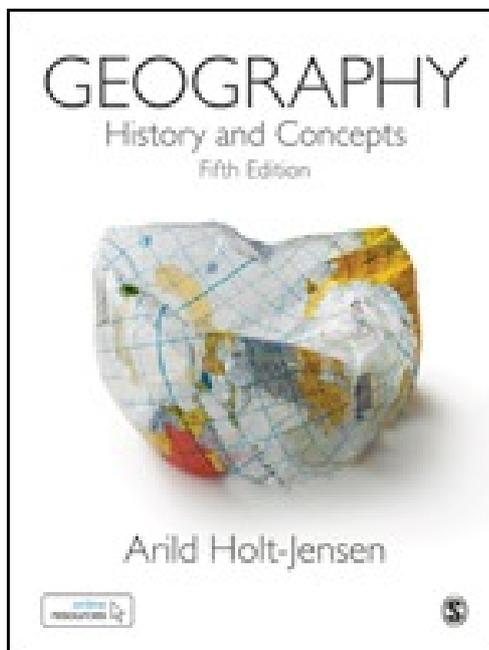
For the RGS-IBG Annual International Conference, HPGRG proposes to sponsor nine sessions, whose call for papers are enclosed. We wish to highlight the planned keynote lecture by Arild Holt-Jensen (University of Bergen) on **‘60 Years in Geography: My Personal Experiences as a Norwegian Geographer’** with a discussion comment by Ron Johnston (University of Bristol). Arild Holt-Jensen published the book *Geography: History and Concepts* in the fifth edition in 2018, which has been reviewed by Michiel van Meeteren for the *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography* (2018: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/sjtg.12277>).



Arild Holt Jensen



Ron Johnston



Upcoming RGS-IBG deadlines are as follows (see also <https://www.rgs.org/research/annual-international-conference/key-dates-and-deadlines/>):

**15 February 2019**

AC2019: Deadline for submission of organised sessions and paper proposals for 'open' sessions

**28 February 2019**

Deadline for nominations: RGS-IBG Medals and Awards

**c. 30 March 2019**

AC2019 organisers formally confirm sessions accepted for conference programme

AC2019 registration opens

Please let us know if you plan an event or have any other relevant information to communicate on the remit of HPGRG that we can then advertise via the HPGRG website, Twitter feed and Newsletter: <https://hpgrg.org.uk/>

With best regards  
Heike

Professor Heike Jöns  
HPGRG Chair  
Geography & Environment  
Loughborough University

## Proposed HPGRG sponsored sessions at the RGS-IBG Annual International Conference 2019 (28-30 August)

The HPGRG is proud to announce that we intend to sponsor 9 different sessions at the 2019 RGS-IBG annual conference. Some panels might still have open slots for paper presentations. If you are interested, please contact the session organizers if you have not yet done so already.

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### Starting with endings...

Organisers: Ruth Raynor, Nick Rush-Cooper

### Abstract

Supposedly, we are living in an 'age' of endings: the end of modernity, the end of liberalism, the end of countless species, the end of capitalism or the end of the world? At the same time great scrutiny in the social sciences has been given to the 'impasse': a slow and on-going crisis. This work points to acts of grasping or holding on, and to the collectively sensed impossibility of endings, even as they begin to unfold. This session seeks work that offers theoretical and/or empirically grounded interventions into the ethics and practices of ending (withdrawal, divestment, foreclosure...) This work might include but is not limited to end of life and end of life care, end of conflict and suffering, species decline, catastrophe and disaster, contingency planning, end of exploitation, loss of intimate relationships. It may also consider political and disciplinary endings, such as the ends of (or claims about the end of) certain ways of thinking, doing, and knowing such as the end of the dominance of representational approaches; the end of class; the end of positivism.

The session seeks to engage with and move beyond the rhetoric of ending as threat. It does not assume a direction to the morality of endings: they may both open and foreclose opportunities, they may be both hopeful and troubling, and they will be experienced unevenly and unequally. What does it mean, then, to start with an end? How do endings take place? How are they planned for, or not? What are the temporalities of endings: are they slow, sudden? What labours might be involved in enacting, or accepting an ending? What are the limits to our understanding of the end? And how might those limits become constructive? Who or what names, declares, decides, announces the end and what are the effects of this? Who plans for the end? How are they felt? What lingers and what might be salvaged or reclaimed after the impossibility of returning to business as usual? Please send abstracts of no more than 200 words to [Ruth.Raynor@newcastle.ac.uk](mailto:Ruth.Raynor@newcastle.ac.uk) and [Nick.Rush-Cooper@newcastle.ac.uk](mailto:Nick.Rush-Cooper@newcastle.ac.uk).

## Geographies of alienation/alienating geographies

Organisers: Jay Emery, Katy Bennett

### Abstract

This session aims to initiate a geographical research agenda focussed on the concept of alienation. We are often told by the media and political figures that certain demographics and the places they inhabit are alienated, and that political institutions, societies or spaces are alienating. Moreover, these alienations are claimed to be generative of the populist politics and democratic ruptures of recent times. Harvey (2018), in a Marxian framework of alienation (or estrangement), has recently argued that alienation is so widespread as to be 'universal,' suggesting that neoliberal political economies are at the root of this malaise. Conversely, geographers often use alienation as a descriptor for the opposite or absence of belonging. Like belonging, alienation has affective and emotional dimensions, as a feeling or sense of being 'out of place,' excluded or 'othered' (TenHouten, 2015). However, alienation is rarely defined or theorised, and little is understood about how alienation is formed, its affective intensities or its relationship to belonging. Despite the nebulosity of the concept, alienation has clear geographical dimensions, capacities and framings and geographers should have plenty to contribute in developing understandings of alienation, working toward its alleviation.

Empirical, analytical and theoretical papers are invited for a paper session, possibly ending with a short panel discussion between presenters. Abstracts could include, but are not limited to:

- critical genealogies of alienation in academic inquiry.
- the politics of alienation.
- analytical and empirical papers on geographies of alienation or alienating geographies.
- alienation and race, gender, class and/or sexuality.
- a working toward a geographical conceptualisation of alienation.
- the affective dimensions, dynamics and intensities of alienation.
- how is alienation, perceived or tangible, being operationalised within political and social movements.
- the relationship between memory, lived experience and alienation.

Session organisers: Katy Bennett (University of Leicester) & Jay Emery (University of Leicester)

Please send paper titles, contact information and abstracts of no more than 250 words to Jay Emery ([jde7@le.ac.uk](mailto:jde7@le.ac.uk)). Questions or queries on the session theme or potential abstracts are welcomed and should be sent to Jay Emery ([jde7@le.ac.uk](mailto:jde7@le.ac.uk)).

## Through troubled times. The birth and path of two texts: *Geography & Geographers* (1979) and *Political Geography: World-Economy, Nation-State, and Locality* (1985)

Organisers: Colin Flint, James Sidaway, Michiel van Meeteren

### Abstract

First appearing within six years of each other, both *Geography & Geographers: Anglo-American Human Geography* since 1945 (1979) and *Political Geography: World-Economy, Nation-State and Locality* (1985) have each since gained a co-author and each are now in a seventh edition. The panel opens with presentations by Ron Johnston and Peter Taylor who recall how the books came to be published and reflect on the moments in which they appeared, within wider disciplinary shifts. Next, the panelists will discuss the contributions of the books, their role in the development of human and political geography, their impact across generations of geographers, provide critiques, contextualization and suggestions.

We are interested in the contexts to each book, their relationship to wider scholarly fields and as a starting point, propose that both might be placed in what Feruson et al. (2010) and Villaume, et al. (2017) term the “Long 1970s” a period that saw both revolutions and counterrevolutions, crisis, techno-social shifts and the re-animation of neo-liberalism. Their subsequent editions, however, might belong more squarely to its aftermath, what Aikens et al (2018) call the “Long 1980s”. The panel will consider these questions, the birth and travels of the two texts and the wider lessons that may be learnt about textbooks, disciplinary histories and political geographies from such reflections.

## Book Launch: *Non-Representational Theory and the Creative Arts*

Organisers: Candice Boyd, Christian Edwardes

### Abstract

The official launch of *Non-Representational Theory and the Creative Arts* edited by Candice P. Boyd and Christian Edwardes and published by Palgrave Macmillan. This book presents distinct perspectives from both geographically-oriented creative practices and geographers working with arts-based processes. In doing so, it fills a significant gap in the already sizeable body of non-representational discourse by bringing together images and reflections on performances, art practice, theatre, dance, and sound production alongside theoretical contributions and examples of creative writing. It considers how contemporary art making is being shaped by spatial enquiry and how geographical research has been influenced by artistic practice. It provides a clear and concise overview of the principles of non-representational theory for researchers and practitioners in the creative arts and, across its four sections, demonstrates the potential for non-representational theory to bring cultural geography and contemporary art closer than ever before.

## 60 Years in Geography; The disciplinary memory of a Norwegian Geographer.

### Keynote by Arild Holt-Jensen (University of Bergen)

Commentary and reflection by Ron Johnston (University of Bristol)

Organisers: Michiel van Meeteren and Heike Jöns

### Abstract

Writing histories of geography generally means substantial archive work through which the authors become bearers of its disciplinary memory. But such work has often been limited by the researcher's national background and influenced by the episteme of their society. We are all more or less locked into this 'academic cage'. A plain encounter about the development of Norwegian geographical research would gather limited interest in the RGS/IBG audience exceeding exotic curiosity. My approach to the history of geography is different. Work in historical archives was of no use, rather encounters with fellow geographers. As an MA student starting fieldwork in a Norwegian mountain farm area, I required a practical sense of the disciplinary identity. Supervision was limited, but I had picked up some fieldwork methods. My traditional regional approach was soon challenged; new ideas and the spatial science school and model thinking provided alternatives. As a young lecturer in 1968 I got a chock by the positivism debate and critical philosophy introduced by sociologists and philosophers at our university. The spatial science approach to my PhD project had to be adapted, maybe discarded. I needed to trace the identity of the discipline and find myself a secure platform from which to approach the students. This meant reading of major works within the discipline, mostly in English and German, and following up on research trends to present date. The keynote is intended to synthesize the disciplinary identity and approach as experienced through 60 years of living history as geography teacher.

## A Non-Representational Historical Geography? Archives, Affects and Atmospheres

Organisers: Steve Legg, Ivan Markovic

### Abstract

Over the last 20 years 'Non-Representational Theory' (NRT) has emerged from within, and transformed, human geography. While not all sub-disciplines of human geography have embraced NRT, few have not been shaped by the questions it has posed. Nigel Thrift, the main architect of the theory's emergence, identified it against many of the chief tendencies of the 'cultural turn' to representational analysis in the 1980-90s (Thrift 2000). NRT came to emphasise, as one 'interested sceptic' has put it: the practical and processual fluidity of things; meaning emerging through action; relationality; habitual interactions with the world; the possibility of surprising emergences; and an all-inclusive materiality (Cresswell 2012). Beyond the bounds of a nameable 'theory' this body of work has inspired a much broader attunement towards that which 'words cannot capture, that texts cannot convey' (Nash 2000), including work on: more-than-human encounters; atmospheric, emotional and sensory experiences; and affects which blur the boundaries between body, language and text.

At the time that NRT was emerging within (mostly British) academia, historical geography was continuing to work through the cultural turn. Many of the analytical questions and philosophical developments within NRT have been taken up by (cultural-)historical geography, including studies of past performances, sensory environments, political affects, atmospheres, and automobilities. Yet questions persist over the recoverability of non-representational matter and performances from representational archives, of the language in which NRT communicates, of the political implications of NRT thinking, and the methodologies with which historical geographers might put NRT in to practice. This session will pursue the questions.

## Re-presenting Economic Geography

Organisers: Nick Phelps, Michiel van Meeteren, Jana Kleibert

### Abstract

Once upon a time, Peter Haggett described the core of geographical praxis as “the art of the mappable”. Back then, the notion of cartographic or figurative representation and generalization of common geographical features was not controversial, but something to aspire to. These days, there has been somewhat of a pushback against mapping and abstracting economic geographic phenomena through representation as geographers have focused on the non-representable aspects of geographical praxis and the perils that arise from the performative power of representations. This RGS-IBG session raises the question whether a lack of representations is a cause for concern in economic geography - where is the geography in some economic geography? This relates to worries about having lost something distinctive that characterized old-school economic geography: the explanatory power that can be derived from spatial figures. Moreover, distrust of the visual might have caused the loss of distinctiveness of economic-geographical approaches vis-à-vis sister disciplines in heterodox economic studies. Perhaps the lack of images has tainted economic geography’s image? Is there a need to ensure we make the effort to re-present economic geography? Of course, the use of spatial figures in geography has not been without its problems. Spatial figures, think of icons such as networks, enclaves, mosaics, webs, archipelagos, or corridors, simplify reality. Their abstractions allow focusing on common aspects of disparate geographical phenomena. They can be rendered as overly crude simplifications of complex realities. Worse, their use and misuse over time can see these simplifications further distorted to the point where an original figure can become downright misleading or unhelpful. Ironically, the most successful spatial figures can gain something of a life of their own – travelling far out of geographical and historical context. This brings both fame and notoriety to the economic geographer: as the spatial figure spreads, the criticisms levelled at it might become valid as it unreflexively applied in an unsuitable context. We invite contributions that discuss the potential and pitfalls of spatial figures and representation in economic geography. This could be case studies on particular spatial figures; the potential of spatial figures in bolstering economic geography’s visibility in the world; how spatial figures enable knowledge mobility and conceptual stretching; and the politics of spatial figures.

## Human Geography Today: Then and now

Organisers: Phil Emmerson, Catherine Oliver

### Abstract

Published in 1999, the book *Human Geography Today* (Massey, et al. [eds]), offers a tentative “manifesto” for “certain very broad ways of doing human geography.” As an edited collection, it presents a series of snapshots into what were emerging themes, concepts, ideas and approaches within the discipline. Each chapter was authored by scholars who were then, and continue to be, ‘household names’ within the discipline of geography and academia more widely. Indeed, many of the ideas presented in the book have also become staples of contemporary human geography, forming the bedrock of geographic work as many of us still know and do it. The aim of this session is thus to connect the manifesto and ideas set out in the book to the discipline of Human Geography today, reflecting on why and how some ideas in the book have been taken up, adapted, and furthered; whilst others have somewhat faded into the background. It also aims to question what ideas might have been missing from the book at its time of publication but have since emerged as forceful drivers of contemporary human geographic thought. The panel will feature a number of the original authors of the book, who will each offer a brief reflection on the ideas that they and the book presented, as well as offering insights into the future of the discipline as they see it.

## Author meets readers: “Holocaust Escapees and Global Development: Hidden Histories” (2019) by David Simon

Organisers: Miles Kenney-Lazar, Felix Mallin, James D Sidaway

### Abstract

This panel session will bring together readers of David Simon’s 2019 book *Holocaust Escapees and Global Development: Hidden Histories* (University of Chicago Press and Pluto Press). The author will respond to their comments. Description of the book from the publisher: “The thousands uprooted and displaced by the Holocaust had a profound cultural impact on the countries in which they sought refuge, with numerous Holocaust escapees attaining prominence as scientists, writers, filmmakers and artists. But what is less well known is the way in which this refugee diaspora shaped the scholarly culture of their new-found homes and international policy. In this unique work, David Simon explores the pioneering role played by mostly Jewish refugee scholars in the creation of development studies and practice following the Second World War, and what we can learn about the discipline by examining the social and intellectual history of its early practitioners. Through in-depth interviews with key figures and their relatives, Simon considers how the escapees’ experiences impacted their scholarship, showing how they played a key role in shaping their belief that ‘development’ really did hold the potential to make a better world, free from the horrors of war, genocide and discrimination they had experienced under Nazi rule. In the process, he casts valuable new light on the origins and evolution of development studies, policy and practice from this formative postwar period to the present.”

## Introduction of new committee members

Nomination statements for the HPGRG AGM 2018

### HPGRG Chair

Dr Heike Jöns, Loughborough University

<https://www.lboro.ac.uk/departments/geography/staff/heike-jons/>

My interest in becoming Chair of HPGRG is motivated by my experience of serving as HPGRG Secretary from 2007 to 2014, when Richard Powell served as HPGRG Chair. Having published on both the history and the philosophy of geography, most recently the Professional Geographer Focus Section on Gender and the Histories of Geography, co-edited by Janice Monk and Innes Keighren, and two papers on triadic thought, my first aim is to keep the group as active as the previous HPGRG chairs Richard Powell and Paul Simpson have done in such an exemplary manner. Secondly, I wish to pursue the research group's aims and objectives together with the other HPGRG committee members in a way that takes account of both aspects that define this research group, the history and the philosophy of geography, as well as their many connections. Thirdly, I plan to organise a one-day symposium on the 35th anniversary of HPGRG in August 2020 before the RGS-IBG Annual International Conference and, as a result, potentially edit a book on British history and philosophy of geography from diverse national and international perspectives.

### HPGRG Secretary



Dr Federico Ferretti, University College Dublin

<https://people.ucd.ie/federico.ferretti>

Since my earliest experiences in the discipline, I always engaged with the history and philosophy of geography. Already very active in the IGU Commission on the History of Geography, I am ready to collaborate with the other HPGRG committee members in order to develop scholarship and international networking in this field, putting my multilingual skills and worldwide contacts at the service of the group. Willing to contribute to the projected 35th anniversary of the HPGRG in 2020, I am especially committed to securing the collaboration of the RGS-IBG for organising a major international conference for the centenary of Peter Kropotkin (1842-1921) in Spring 2021, possibly at the RGS-IBG in London.

### HPGRG Communications Officer



Dr Michiel van Meeteren, Loughborough University

<https://www.lboro.ac.uk/departments/geography/staff/michiel-vanmeeteren/>

I grew into the history of geography organically. As my practice of writing contemporary geography became more and more a dialogue between different philosophical eras of geographical thought, I increasingly became convinced about the necessity to couple this with deepening our historiographical understanding. I observe that I am not the only one in that trajectory and to my joy I see a whole new generation of early career scholars emerge that all desire to deepen and refine the understanding of our discipline's contested and at times troubling

historiography. That generation is visible both within the UK context where I am a 'new arrival', and outside, in other (inter)national geographical communities. My ambition as a communication officer is twofold. First I wish to be instrumental in strengthening our HPGRG communications platform, be able to offer an online megaphone for our members and get visibility for our research topics. Secondly I wish that platform to offer resources to (aspiring) historiographers of geography, creating a repository on the grants that are available for this hard-to-fund work and start working on a database of known resources (archives). I hope we all will pool our knowledge of such resources to make a head start. Together, I will hope that such a platform will foster collaboration and communication with our sister societies all over the world and the IGU as a multinational forum.

## Call for input to the HPGRG network and knowledge bank

An important goal for the current term of the HPGRG research group is to increase both our internal visibility within the RGS-IBS as well as the external visibility with sister organisations all over the world. We want to achieve that not only by ramping up our activity but also by communicating about our activity more vigorously. A goal is to start building a network of institutions and organisations that are engaged in issues around the history and philosophy of geography worldwide. Part of that effort is to start building up a resource base (information about grants, collections, events, institutions) to the benefit of the membership and our worldwide peers. All these initiatives will considerably speed-up with active input and creativity from the membership. In particular, we are starting to collect information on the following.

1. What are relevant sister organisations and institutions (in different countries for instance) that the HPGRG should establish contact and exchange information with (for instance, the IGU Commission on the History of Geography, the AAG History of Geography Specialty Group, the Archiv für Geographie at the Leibniz-Institut für Länderkunde).
2. What are relevant events we should advertise on our website and Twitter feed (conferences, symposia, summer schools, writing retreats etc.).
3. What are relevant grant opportunities for scholars interested in the history and philosophy of geography?
4. What are relevant academic prizes for scholars working in the field of the history and philosophy of geography?
5. What are relevant archives available to historians of the geographical discipline (personal archives of geographers, institutional archives)?

Once we have gathered a significant amount of connections, ideas and leads on each of these topics we will start featuring them at <https://hpgrg.org.uk/>, our research group's website. Moreover, it is our ambition to start building a worldwide database of interested parties to exchange newsletters with.

Therefore, if you have any suggestions, ideas or relevant information. Please contact the Communications Officer Michiel van Meeteren ([m.van-meeteren@lboro.ac.uk](mailto:m.van-meeteren@lboro.ac.uk)).