

# **Geographical thinking and restless methodologies**

## **7 sessions:**

### **1. The Challenge of Applying Post-Foundational Geographies**

**Session organiser:** Joe Blakey, University of manchester, United Kingdom, Matina Kapsali, University of manchester, United Kingdom, **E-mail:** matina.kapsali@manchester.ac.uk

Post-foundational geography is concerned with the contingency, partiality and provisionality of all spatial orders, differentiating between those *orders of politics* that regulate and delimit the parameters of social possibility, and the ever-present *political* potential for things to unfold otherwise. Doing so, it foregrounds the tensions between established power relations and alterity, structure and agency, and constraint and possibility. The field has moved beyond earlier preoccupations with post-politics (Dikeç, 2005; Swyngedouw, 2011) considering the contingencies of social, spatial, and political life, opening conversations with allied fields (Blakey et al., 2022; Landau, Pohl, Roskamm, 2021), and exploring repoliticisation (Blakey, 2024). Consequently, productive exchanges with feminist, environmental, affective, relational, and negative lines of thought are developing (Kapsali, 2020; Kenis, 2025; Landau-Donnelly and Pohl, 2023; Nelson-Owens, 2025).

In this session, we aim to consider the challenges, possibilities, and responsibilities of applying post-foundational geography in practice, especially around making novel disciplinary links, becoming more attentive to diverse positionalities and political differences, and translating post-foundationalism's assertion of absent grounds into modes of social intervention. In this regard, we also aim to explore how post-foundational geographers can respond to depoliticisation, right-wing populism, and ongoing social, environmental and economic crises. In this invitation to dwell on the *doings* of post-foundational geographies, we also invite reflections on its methodological and ethical challenges.

We are interested in interventions exploring:

- The state and future trajectories of post-foundational geography;
- How we carefully apply post-foundationalism to channel its theoretical basis for geographical purposes;
- Ways of engaging post-foundationalism in applied or activist settings;
- Methodological and ethical challenges in practicing post-foundational geographies;
- The potential benefits, challenges or concessions necessary to bring other theoretical and conceptual arenas into conversation, such as feminist and post-colonial perspectives, minor and weak theories, everyday-situated (political) practices, care, affect, and embodied spatialities;
- Failures, limits, and moments of 'negativity' in post-foundational geographical studies;
- The contingency of post-foundational praxis itself and when, how and if we ought to defend contingent grounds;
- How we relate and respond to emergent political change that we might not support or agree with;
- The responsibilities and risks of working within the ontic world we can sense and analyse against the ontological backdrop of the political that is beyond grasp; and
- The positionalities of researchers and participants, and how these shape knowledge production, ethical engagement, and the enactment of post-foundational practices.

We welcome contributions that experiment with creative methodologies and formats —video, performance, spoken word, or other non-traditional presentations.

## 2. Restless Methodologies for Urban Discovery and Critique

**Session organiser:** Emil Pull, University of Agder, Norway, **E-mail:** karl.e.pull@uia.no

Cities have always been restless—shifting, vibrating, accelerating, and continually re-made through human, non-human, and material forces. As scholars and practitioners seeking to understand these dynamics, we find ourselves returning to old methods, experimenting with new ones, and rethinking what “urban discovery” can mean in an era of digital saturation, planetary urbanization, and post-human entanglements. The contemporary city demands methodological approaches capable of tracing, revealing, and challenging layered and increasing inequalities and injustices that uneven urban development bring forth. This session invites contributions that explore methodological innovation for interpreting, sensing, and critiquing contemporary urban life.

We welcome papers that experiment with novel approaches, whether derived from emerging technologies, creative practices, or hybrid research traditions. How might digital platforms, sensor data, immersive media, or AI-assisted ethnography, digital visualities and ethnographies, open new pathways into the lived and material textures of the city? At the same time, we encourage reflections on the revival or re-working of classic geographical and urban methods like mental mapping, psychogeographical interventions, rhythmanalysis, flâneuring and street phenomenologies.

We also welcome contributions engaging with post-humanism, post-colonialism, new materialism, feminist methodology, and other frameworks that destabilize traditional categories of the human, the observer, and the city itself. How do these perspectives alter how we document, represent, and critique urban spaces? What methodological challenges arise when attending to multispecies relations, infrastructures, atmospheres, or emergent forms of agency? We also invite reflections on how these methodological shifts shape *the teaching of urban geography and planning*: How do we introduce students to restless, multi-sensory, or more-than-human cities, and what new pedagogical tools or experiments are emerging? What challenges arise when guiding students to document, represent, and critique complex urban spaces?

This session aims to bring together geographers, planners, and interdisciplinary researchers to rethink how we discover and make sense of cities today. We seek methodological provocations, reflective interventions, and grounded experiments that respond to our contemporary moment—one in which geographies are more restless than ever.

## 3. Giving back, research impact, or the ‘third mission’? Exploring the institutional role of the geographer in interesting times

**Session organiser:** Björn Nordvall, Stockholms universitet, Sweden, **E-mail:** bjorn.nordvall@humangeo.su.se

In a particularly turbulent and polarised political and social climate, what can geographers offer society? Rather than enter into a disciplinary existential crisis, in this session we respond to this question by exploring how geographers communicate and present their research beyond the academy. The university entangles itself with the wider public in many different ways, either through formal processes of knowledge exchange, or individual engagements. These complex relations of power inform how the academic geographer perceives themselves and how their work should be presented (Bourdieu 1988), and are worthy of empirical attention.

Knowledge exchange is conceptualised in a number of ways. Considered as a ‘third mission’ (e.g. *tredje uppgiften, samverkan*), it captures a perceived tension between the separation of the university from society and the need for the university to explain society (Pinheiro, Langa and Pausits 2015), a role sometimes even contextualised as commercial or entrepreneurial (Compagnucci and Spigarelli 2020). Considered as ‘giving back’, knowledge exchange is understood as a relationship between the university and those whose knowledge is produced (Hammett, Jackson and Vickers 2019), framing research as extractive and as having an ethical

obligation to be beneficial to those studied. Equally, the role of the university is sometimes framed more directly, as shaping and informing public debate to produce knowledge for social ends (Frickel and Moore 2006).

Broadly seen, these conceptions are indicative of the nuanced, complex and contested entanglements of the university with society at large. Being attentive to the role of the university and engaging responsibly with the notion of research communication is especially relevant in today's political climate of anti-intellectualism, not least given the unique relationship between the state, the private sector, and higher education in the Nordic context.

This session invites scholars to contribute thoughts, reflections and good examples of: (1) how geographers can communicate their research responsibly, creatively and effectively to society at large, and/or (2) what role geographers might play in contributing to favourable and trustworthy views of the university at a time when its role is questioned and its budget squeezed. We particularly welcome contributions committed to the disciplinary project of geography that account for the unique, specific and critical role geographers play in knowledge production.

Abstracts of max 300 words should be submitted to [tom.ward@kultgeog.uu.se](mailto:tom.ward@kultgeog.uu.se) and [bjorn.nordvall@humangeo.su.se](mailto:bjorn.nordvall@humangeo.su.se)

#### 4. Knowledge-Making as a Spatializing Process

**Session organiser:** Raine Aiava, University of Helsinki, Finland, **E-mail:** [joseph.aiava@helsinki.fi](mailto:joseph.aiava@helsinki.fi)

Geographic knowledge is never produced *from nowhere*. It takes place — it is **situated, relational, and spatial**. This session invites contributions that explore how **knowledge-making itself functions as a spatializing process**: how thinking, sensing, modelling, and learning practices shape and are shaped by spatial relations, environments, technologies, and bodies.

In times of intensified datafication, algorithmic reasoning, and planetary uncertainty, the question of *where* and *how* knowledge takes form has renewed urgency. From AI-driven spatial analyses to embodied fieldwork, from classroom learning to multispecies dwelling, from digital cartographies to the affective atmospheres of everyday knowing — each instance of knowledge-making configures particular spatial imaginaries, inclusions, and exclusions.

In this session we ask:

How do different practices — scientific, artistic, pedagogical, algorithmic, Indigenous, embodied — produce distinct spatialities of knowledge? In what ways do technologies such as AI and spatial data infrastructures *re-spatialize* knowledge itself? How can learning and education be understood as spatial and more-than-human processes, rather than solely cognitive ones? What kinds of ethical, political, and material relations are enacted through situated acts of knowing?

This session encourages **conceptual, empirical, and creative contributions** from across the geographic disciplines and beyond. We welcome papers that engage with topics including (but not limited to):

Critical data studies, AI and digital infrastructures of knowledge  
Pedagogical and educational geographies  
Fieldwork, sensing, and embodied or affective epistemologies  
Indigenous, feminist, or decolonial ways of knowing  
Knowledge-making and participatory practices  
Artistic, performative, or experimental methods in geography  
The spatialities of expertise, science, and institutional knowledge  
Learning with nonhumans, environments, and technologies

We aim to bring together researchers interested in **rethinking knowledge as a spatial relation** — a practice that unfolds through environments, technologies, and encounters — to collectively reimagine what it means to know and learn in geography today.

## 5. From the South to the North, or the opposite?

**Session organiser:** Fernanda Oliveira de Almeida, Stockholm University, Sweden, **E-mail:** fernanda.almeida@humangeo.su.se

This panel seeks to engage researchers from the Nordic academic environment in discussions about the theories and practices of conducting research in the so-called Global South. As the field of geography offers opportunities for theoretical and methodological experimentation, this panel will reflect on the existing tensions of thinking of the South from the Nordic region. What are the possibilities and contradictions of researching the South from the North? Are there power asymmetries, such as from theory foundation, positionalities or language barriers, shaping research in and from spaces and places in the South? What can be the advantages of doing research about the South from the North? And the disadvantages, if so? These and more questions will guide the reflections on the dialectical processes of conducting research about elsewhere.

Speakers will present and challenge concepts and theories used in their own doctoral research to further reflect upon knowledge production and the ways it can shape the research's outcome and the researcher's own trajectory. The reflections encompass the origin of concepts, their applications and their reach beyond academia.

The panel will be split in two main rounds of discussions (speakers to be confirmed):

The first part of the panel will cover the researcher's choice of theoretical framework and the audience these choices might reach. The starting point for discussions are findings and experimentations of a doctoral research on informal labour in Brazil.

The second part of the panel will reflect upon the ideas of positionality(ies) and care during the research operationalization. Based on research conducted between July and October 2024 in Cali and Candelaria, Colombia, about environmental and socio-political challenges, presenters will reflect on the lived contradiction that intertwines a personal and professional journey (Anzaldúa, 1987; Rivera Cusicanqui, 2018). In regards to the ethics of care, panel presenters will reflect on the ways fieldwork can be transformed by the presence of researcher's own child-and family-, continually reshaping the ethnographic approach by combining care work with wage work (academic research).

Finally, by the end of the panel, our goal is to provide reflections (and perhaps problematizations and counterideas) about research processes in and of the South, while being part of a Nordic research context.

## 6. Restless Knowledge - Geographical Thinking in Nordic Education

**Session organiser:** Erlend Eidsvik, Western Norway University of Applied Sciences, Norway, **E-mail:** erlend.eidsvik@hvl.no

Ideological and political ideas influence which knowledge is emphasized and taught in schools. Geography is an old school subject, but it has gained new significance and partly new content as a result of new societal challenges. In a Nordic context, the subject of geography and geography didactics have taken on a significant role, particularly in questions concerning sustainability education. In recent years, especially within education and geography didactics, we have seen many contributions addressing powerful knowledge, powerful geography, geographical thinking, and geographical Bildung (formation) in various educational contexts. This session invites contributions from a Nordic (and international) context that wish to illuminate or problematize different forms and approaches to geographical thinking in schools and education. We welcome both subject-didactic and classroom-oriented contributions, as well as theoretical and classroom-remote contributions.

## 7. Histories of geographic thought and practice in the Nordic countries

**Session organiser:** Peter Jakobsen, Uppsala University, Sweden, **E-mail:** [peter.jakobsen@kultgeog.uu.se](mailto:peter.jakobsen@kultgeog.uu.se)

There has been an upsurge in historical analyses of geographic thought and practice. Such analyses, often from critical perspectives, bring out rich historical and geographical variations in the academic field of geography. Not only does this help to situate past and present geographic thought and practice; probing historical-geographical trajectories can also uncover how geographers produce and reflect material power relations as well as scientific and ideological disputes. Nordic geographers participate in this endeavour, but our notions of historical-geographic lineages in geography have generally been, and still are, heavily dominated by experiences in specific places, notably in Germany, France, Great Britain and the United States. Influences from these knowledge topographies should not be neglected, of course, but one would be ill-advised to dismiss those 'minor' geographic traditions and practices commonly relegated to the margins, for they have left their mark on the Nordic countries and, occasionally, entered the 'international' currents that tend to overshadow them. This session seeks to bring together contributions on the histories and geographies of geographic thought and practice in past and present Nordic university geography. Furthermore, we also seek contributions on the historiography of Nordic geography, including reflections on how the stories of the discipline has been told, who has told them, what has been omitted, and what might need to be added or restored. 'Nordic' should in this respect be treated as an open label. Place and space matters, and contributions set at (and across) all spatial scales – ranging from individual practitioners to the (supposedly) Nordic – are warmly welcomed.