

Call for Submissions: Drawing as Critical Geographical Method

Confirmed themed issue of *Cultural Geographies*

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Abstracts are invited for consideration for the forthcoming themed issue of *Cultural Geographies*: "Drawing as Critical Geographical Method".

Cultural Geographies publishes full length articles of 8,000 words as well as shorter, experimental formats as part of their 'in practice' section. Full details can be found on the [journal website](#). Abstracts should be no more than 250 words and should specify the proposed format. They should be submitted by **30 November 2023** to Felix McNulty (felix.f.mcnulty@durham.ac.uk).

Following this process, invited articles are subject to the journal's usual open submission and peer review process. Optional informal editorial feedback will be available prior to submission. Accepted articles will be published 'online first' in advance of the special issue release.

Call for Submissions

"Drawing is the opening of form. This can be thought in two ways: opening in the sense of a beginning, departure, origin, dispatch, impetus, or sketching out, and opening in the sense of an availability or inherent capacity. According to the first sense, drawing evokes more the gesture of drawing than the traced figure. According to the second, it indicates the figure's essential incompleteness, a non-closure or non-totalizing of form" (Nancy, 2013)

Noting the significant recent interest in drawing as a 'first-hand' method in critical geographical research, this themed issue brings together scholars at the forefront of current methodological experimentation, with a view to grounding and orienting future use of drawing in human geography and beyond. While observation and schematic drawing have historically been significant as methods of surveillance and illustration within physical geography (Sackett, 2006; Hutchings, 1960), and solicited or guided drawing have become well established as participatory ethnographic methods in human geography and the social sciences (Lierat, 2013), relatively little attention has been paid to the possibilities of drawing as an integrated method for 'first-hand' observation, reflection and analysis in geographical fieldwork that treats the "image as an integral component of the inquiry process" (De Cosson and Irwin, 2004).

In this issue, we therefore engage with instances where researchers work 'first-hand' with the drawing process. These are examples in which, as Hawkins (Hawkins, 2015, p. 263) emphasises, the value of drawing as method is "in the doing". In other words, we are not primarily concerned with the use of drawing to produce a record, an illustration, or a mimetic likeness (though these may be secondary functions of the drawing process), but with its use as a method for observing, analysing, and critically reflecting upon research encounters. Crucially, such critical drawing practice invites not only an open engagement with the 'subject' of research, but an interrogation of the research process itself, such that the relationship between the *researcher as subject* and the *subject of research* is itself subjected to critical scrutiny.

As the submissions collected in this themed issue demonstrate, drawing is a practice that incorporates multiple modes of doing, including observation, perception, documentation, reflection, embodied experience, witnessing, imagination, interaction, appropriation, re-purposing, analysis, and pedagogy. Building on new and recent experimentation in the discipline, the seven confirmed contributors address the intersection of drawing with geographical enquiry to discuss the potentials and pitfalls of this growing area of practice. How can drawing expand, deepen, and/or redirect current modes of critical geographical inquiry? How is drawing positioned in relation to text and writing? How can the discipline best integrate drawing's non-binaristic creative-intellectual potential?

As method, drawing thus inhabits the unstable spaces between representation and interpretation, observation and reflection, critique and imagination, creating possibilities for generative engagement with some of the tensions inherent to critical geographical inquiry. We believe these emphases align with *Cultural Geographies'* commitment to foreground research engaged in critical engagement with the cultural politics of environment, landscape, space and place. A critical evaluation of drawn work in geography affords crucial insight into the ways in which worlds are constituted, represented, imagined, and lived through research practice.

Across these papers, we highlight the potential of drawing as a methodological 'opening', following the definition put forth by Nancy (2013) above; drawing as a means with which to open up research encounters to questions of power, representation, presence, absence, and narrative. In this themed issue, the following three threads cut across and between the authors' individual contributions:

1. *Power and representation*

Drawing is simultaneously a primary mode of representation, and a process which, in its very open-ness and vulnerability, exceeds the logics of representation. Drawing is therefore explored here as a tool for interrogating relations of power and their expression in representational regimes. Drawing is taken up as a method for the creative re-imagination of fieldwork encounters; for thinking beyond systems of indexical meaning, beyond dualisms, and beyond text and type. It is deployed as a method for destabilising regimes of what is considered normal, established, and known.

2. *Observing the unobserved*

Though drawing is commonly conceived of as an ocular method, and thus seemingly consonant with the discipline's ocular-centric colonial gaze, drawing in practice frequently exceeds the confines of the visual. This is a method, as Gassner (2021) writes, for "drawing connections and drawing distinctions", but also, as these contributions evidence, for drawing absence, affects and effects, atmospheres, grief, hauntings, imaginings, impacts, orientations, loss, phantoms, piercings, and vestiges. Across this themed issue, contributing authors' uses of and reflections on drawing methods express the tensions between presence and absence. In some instances this tension is material, arising in relation to the presence and absence of objects and bodies within particular spaces or landscapes, while in others it is related to the foregrounding or elision of narratives, stories, and memories. The presence or absence (or the present absence perhaps) of the researcher themselves is also a key focus, such that drawing becomes a means for reflecting not only upon knowledge but upon the processes of knowledge-production (Parikh, 2020).

3. *Interrogating knowledge and skill*

In some instances, the critical sensibilities of drawing are accessed through the exercise and development of skilled practice (Brice, 2018; Causey, 2017). Yet these sensibilities are equally to be located, in the liberatory and pedagogical potential of 'drawing badly'. Indeed, parallels can be drawn between the exclusionary regimes through which drawing is maintained as the prerogative of the few, and those regimes through which the academy continues to reproduce itself as an exclusionary domain of knowledge-production. It is through a

deliberate practice of drawing as a form of methodological vulnerability that drawing here supports critical geographical enquiry.

This themed issue creates space for discussion of contemporary revitalisations of drawing methods as a tool for critical geographical inquiry, presenting reflections on researcher drawing practice alongside and in conversation with one another to highlight the strengths, potentials, and critical implications of drawing as method.

Timeline:

16 October 2023: Circulate open call inviting additional articles and ‘in practice’ submissions

30 November 2023: Deadline for submissions of abstracts to open call

01 February 2024: Deadline for (optional) editorial feedback prior to submission

30 April 2024: Deadline for submission of articles via *ManuscriptCentral*

Works cited:

Brice, S. (2018) Situating skill: contemporary observational drawing as a spatial method in geographical research. *Cultural Geographies*, 25(1), 135–158.

Causey, A. (2017) *Drawn to See: Drawing as an Ethnographic Method*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

De Cosson, A. & Irwin, R. L. (2004) *A/r/tography: rendering self through arts-based living inquiry*, Vancouver: Pacific Educational Press.

Gassner, G. (2021) “Drawing as an ethico-political practice”, *GeoHumanities* 7(2): 441–454.

Literat, I. (2013) “‘A Pencil for your Thoughts’: Participatory Drawing as a Visual Research Method with Children and Youth’, *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, vol. 12, no. 1, pp. 84–98 .

Nancy, J.-L. (2013) *The Pleasure in Drawing* (trans. P. Armstrong), New York, Fordham University Press.

Parikh, A. (2020) Insider-outsider as process: drawing as reflexive feminist methodology during fieldwork. *Cultural Geographies*, 27(3), 437–452 .

Sackett, C. (ed.) (2006) *The True Line: The Landscape Diagrams of Geoffrey Hutchings*, Axminster, Devon, Colin Sackett.