

# Reflections on the first decade of *Dialogues in Human Geography* and the road ahead

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The year 2020 marks the 10th anniversary of *Dialogues in Human Geography*, and it's therefore an opportune time to reflect on the journal's first decade as well as consider potential future directions. With the start of a new decade, it is a good moment to rotate onto the journal's editorial board a new group of scholars, reflecting the global community of geographers (a change that has taken effect as of January 2020). There are a number of changes to the editorial team in the works as well. In April 2019, *Dialogues'* founding editor, Rob Kitchin, stepped down as managing editor of the journal after a decade at the helm, and Reuben Rose-Redwood began his term as managing editor. Rob will continue as one of the article forum editors of the

journal until June 2020 when Lauren Rickards will take his place, transitioning from a book review editor to an article forum editor. Michelle Buckley will join the editorial team as one of the book review forum editors at that time. We are also grateful for the editorial service of Ayona Datta, who stepped down as one of the journal's editors in December 2019, with Elia Apostolopoulou joining the editorial team as a new article forum editor in January 2020.

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We wish Ayona and Rob all the best in their future endeavors, and we are excited to welcome Elia and Michelle to the editorial team.

With all of these editorial changes taking place, it's clearly an important transitional period for *Dialogues in Human Geography*, which, over the past decade, has become a key resource for stimulating intellectual conversations and debates about theory, methodology, and pedagogy in human geography. The idea for such a journal was first pitched to a publisher by Rob Kitchin more than two decades ago. It was not until 2008, however, that SAGE agreed to move forward with publishing the journal, and the first issue appeared in March 2011. In the inaugural editorial, the journal's editors suggested that there was a need for 'a different kind of geography journal' based not on stand-alone articles but rather on published works that have been 'actively engaged with by others, setting out fresh ideas and departure points' (Kitchin et al., 2011: 3). The purpose of this type of publication, they noted, was 'to achieve something more than simply publishing scholarly papers' by providing a forum which 'endeavours to create engaged dialogue that acts as a catalyst for larger conversation among a community of scholars'.

We've sought to achieve this goal through the forum format, where each article published or book selected for review is accompanied by a set of commentaries, and authors are then given the opportunity to reply. In doing so, *Dialogues* aims to bring some of the liveliness that one finds in an engaging 'author meets critics' conference session onto the printed page. It's also a way of attempting to move beyond the parallel monologues that are so commonplace in academia by opening a space for dialogical engagement and constructive critique. With this in mind, the book review section (which has now evolved to incorporate films) has been conceived and practiced in a purposely postdisciplinary vein, which has entailed transgressing conventional understandings of disciplinary boundaries while retaining a distinctly geographical sensibility. As the inaugural editorial for this section stated, 'geographical books will often be balanced by books published in other domains, with special (but not exclusive) reference to those more concerned with theoretical experimentation such as

Continental philosophy, critical social thought, post-colonial studies, and radical political theory'. The editorial went on to explain that "[p]ostdisciplinary geography" might sound like an oxymoron but it is in fact a definition that arises from a pragmatic understanding of how academic disciplines are changing, intersecting, and often merging' (Rossi and Warf, 2011: 104).

We would be the first to acknowledge that scholarly dialogue itself has its limits (Rose-Redwood et al., 2018), but those limits are not cast in stone. Dialogical exchanges can certainly lead to defensive posturing that reinforces entrenched positions (both intellectually and institutionally). However, there's also the possibility that one might come to think otherwise as a result of such encounters. While not guaranteed, dialogues in and across human geography have the potential to be transformative both for those directly engaged in an exchange as well as for readers and the discipline as a whole. The citation pattern for the journal seems to bear this out. The journal was indexed by International Scientific Indexing (ISI) for the first time in 2018 (based on 2017 rankings), with it being ranked first among human geography journals. In fact, it was the only social sciences journal with a double digit citation score. The journal's most recent impact factor has dipped a bit but remains within the top five journals in geography. Impact factors, of course, don't tell the full story and have themselves become part of the neoliberalization of academia—fueling its obsession with metrics, rankings, and academic entrepreneurialism.

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The first decade of *Dialogues in Human Geography* has led to a wide range of dialogical encounters across different subfields of geography. To date, around half of the article forums published in *Dialogues* have contributed to economic geography or geographical theory more broadly, with the other half contributing to a variety of subject areas, ranging from digital geographies to climate politics (see Table 1). Similarly, book review forums have generously touched on popular interdisciplinary fields during the last decade such as political ecology,

**Table 1.** Article forums by thematic area in *Dialogues in Human Geography*, 2011–2019.

Theme	Number of articles
Economic geography	14
Geographical thought/Socio-spatial theory	13
Human-environment/Posthuman geographies	6
Feminist geography	3
Political geography	3
Urban geography	2
Applied geography	1
Cultural geography	1
Digital geographies/Big data	1
Food geography	1
Public geography	1
Regional geography	1
Rural geography	1
Spatial science	1

**Table 2.** Book forums by thematic area in *Dialogues in Human Geography*, 2011–2019.

Theme	Number of books
Political geography	8
Social geography	6
Cultural geography	5
Human-environment/Posthuman geographies	5
Urban geography	5
Economic geography	4
Political ecology	4
Border studies	2
Digital geographies/Big data	2
Historical geography	2
Critical finance studies	1
Food geography	1
Migration studies	1
Science studies	1
Tourism geography	1

critical finance studies, and border studies as well as established disciplinary subfields that have seen a broad revamping of their research agendas and paradigms such as political geography, cultural geography, and urban geography (see Table 2).

During this period, the journal did not adopt or drive an agenda with respect to article forum focus, with the content largely reflective of the material submitted. The only deviation from this was the introduction of plenary panels at major conferences, institutionalized in 2014, where we invited a scholar to present their work, followed by discussants, and open debate, with the paper subsequently submitted to the journal. More recently, we have also proactively encouraged various scholars to submit their work to *Dialogues*, although each submission must still undergo the regular peer-review process.

Our selection policy has thus been guided by whether a paper successfully navigates the review process. Our prime concern during review is that papers fulfill two key criteria. First, that the paper meets the highest standards of scholarship in terms of the argument developed. Second, that the paper will act as a strong, provocative anchor article for a forum debate. The two are not synonymous. We have often received very high-quality papers that will undoubtedly get published in other journals but are

not suitable for a forum debate. They are either too empirically focused, or too narrow in scope, or fail to set out a provocative idea that challenges conventional wisdom and outlines an agenda for transforming geographical theory and praxis. A good *Dialogues* anchor article is one that seeks to forward new insights, ideas, theories, tools, or methods; that challenges readers to think and act differently with respect to their research; that stimulates open and critical debate on the philosophical, methodological, and pedagogic foundations of human geography as well as the social and political implications of different subfields.

In turn, good commentaries are those that are prepared to build on anchor articles in interesting ways, finding angles that others may not see. This may involve questioning or challenging the anchor article where appropriate, pushing back on or extending the arguments by providing alternatives. Some scholars are reluctant to openly criticize or oppose their peers, while others are reluctant to endorse their peer's ideas. Yet the best commentaries do both: they substantively and fairly engage with the core arguments of an anchor article and set out their own positions or alternative future paths of work. A set of four to six such commentaries around a strong anchor article produces a wonderful,

insightful, even exciting forum. Such forums provide an intellectual fulcrum for future research and thinking on the topic.

Similarly, strong book and film forums are those that foster engagement among scholars that offers important observations and reflections. The aim is to advance discussion and debate about significant issues in and for the discipline. Instead of providing a conventional book or film review, commentators are asked to discuss the book or film from the perspective of their own research and experiences, often stimulating new perspectives not just for themselves and readers but for the book authors and filmmakers involved. In these various ways, *Dialogues in Human Geography* contributes to the ongoing development of the discipline, keeping it abreast of the latest developments and fostering changes within and beyond its boundaries.

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*Dialogues in Human Geography* has come a long way over the past decade. What then might the future hold? While predicting the future is necessarily a risky business, what bold speculations might we consider for the road ahead? When the history of geographical thought in the 2020s is recounted, we shall likely find that what had previously been relegated to an afterthought as ‘geography’s exclusions’ (Cresswell, 2013: Ch. 13)—Black, Latinx, Indigenous, queer, and trans geographies, among others—will become increasingly influential forces in reshaping geographical thought and praxis. Such developments will further upend the ‘traditional canon of geography’ (Hawthorne, 2019: 4), decentering the well-worn conventional narratives of the discipline.

As the forum on Oswin’s (2020) ‘An Other Geography’ in the current issue of *Dialogues* suggests, the time is ripe for a critical reappraisal of how criticality itself has been framed in the historiography of geographical thought. The reassessment of ‘the critical’ and ‘the radical’ in human geography is especially timely at a moment when it has become evident that some of those who have long proclaimed a critical geographical ethos have—in

practice—embraced neoliberal ideological positions as they have risen within the administrative hierarchies of higher education institutions (Callard, 2018). We thus foresee a period of critical collective reflection on the premises, aims, and politics of critical and radical geographical scholarship and its connection to both praxis and academic institutions in the years ahead.

As part of this critical reevaluation of the discipline, the revival of radical geographies will, no doubt, continue to spark geographical debate over its legacies and future directions during the 2020s. Recent contributions in the pages of this journal have already explored these issues in some depth (Harvey, 2017; Springer, 2014, 2017). While such debates have been contentious, they have also been *generative* in stimulating a deeper appreciation for the differences—epistemological, ontological, and political—within contemporary critical-radical geography circles. Yet while anarchist and Marxist geographers have debated what a radical geography ‘must be’ in the 21st century, a wave of right-wing political movements and demagogues has swept the globe. The latter will certainly be a major focus of critical scholarship and activism in the foreseeable future, and geographers have much to contribute to this work.

Geographies of activism, and activist geographies, will likely be a continuing theme of geographical scholarship, especially in light of the recent faculty strikes in the United Kingdom to oppose draconian cuts to pensions, unsafe workloads, and precarious employment in academia (Weale and Pidd, 2019). The neoliberalization of higher education continues to undercut the research and teaching activities—not to mention the overall well-being—of geographers and other scholars, as well as the learning environment for students, on university campuses. Campus geographies and the geographies of higher education more generally thus have much to contribute as important arenas of geographical analysis and critique. As a result of the #MeToo movement, there has also been growing momentum to address issues of harassment within scholarly organizations, including the American Association of Geographers (AAG), which implemented a new anti-harassment policy in 2019 (Luzzadder-Beach

and Dowler, 2019). Additionally, other AAG special committees on climate change and the ethics of geographers' engagements with the military/intelligence communities give some indication of where scholarly activism in the discipline may be heading in the upcoming years.

Of course, politically engaged and action-oriented approaches to geographical scholarship are not universally embraced by all human geographers. Consequently, we anticipate a broad spectrum of approaches to be published in future volumes of *Dialogues in Human Geography*. There will likely be a significant focus on what human geographers can contribute to many of the immense societal challenges of the 21st century, such as climate change and social-environmental justice, war and peace, global migration and xenophobia, growing social and economic inequalities, and the rise of authoritarianism globally, among other topics. One of the greatest strengths of geography as a discipline is the diversity of theoretical and methodological approaches employed to tackle such challenges. Ongoing methodological developments—ranging from the use of, and critical engagements with, big data to creative methodological work in the geohumanities and auto-ethnographic approaches in feminist geography—show considerable potential to extend geographical scholarship in exciting new directions.

We also welcome contributions to *Dialogues in Human Geography* that explore the pedagogies of human geography both within and beyond the classroom. Most pedagogically oriented geographical studies typically appear in publications such as the *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, the *Journal of Geography*, and *Teaching Geography*, which have as their primary focus topics of geographic education. These publications are important resources for those of us who teach geography. However, most geographic education journals tend to publish stand-alone articles, and occasionally special issues or symposia. It is quite uncommon to find *dialogical* exchanges on geographical pedagogies published in scholarly journals. We encourage such exchanges in *Dialogues in Human Geography* to allow for important in-depth discussions of diverse pedagogical approaches and techniques in geography that consider the comparative

strengths and limitations of different pedagogies. In this way, we hope to advance conversations and praxis on the pedagogies of geography and the geographies of pedagogy.

Over the last decade, *Dialogues in Human Geography* has become a significant forum for human geographers to engage in intellectual debate, consider disagreements and points of convergence, spark new ideas, and revisit longstanding questions. Our aim over the next decade is to continue to help shape geographical thought and praxis in valuable ways and thereby enhance geography's contribution to working toward a more socially and environmentally just future.

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