



University
of Glasgow

Lorimer, H. and Winders, J. (2018) Reflect – renew – refresh. *Cultural Geographies*, 25(1), pp. 217-219.

There may be differences between this version and the published version. You are advised to consult the publisher's version if you wish to cite from it.

<http://eprints.gla.ac.uk/156226/>

Deposited on: 19 February 2018

Enlighten – Research publications by members of the University of Glasgow_
<http://eprints.gla.ac.uk>

Cultural Geographies in Practice

Editorial: Reflect – Renew – Refresh

Seventeen years, and sixty-eight issues, ago, Philip Crang and Don Mitchell – co-editors of what then was entitled *Ecumene: a journal of cultural geographies* – introduced a new feature section, ‘Cultural Geographies in Practice’:

Cultural geographies in practice creates a space for acknowledging, presenting and discussing how the cultural meanings of nature, environment, space and place are being engaged with intellectually and practically beyond narrowly defined academic institutions and genres. It will provide critical reflection on how practices within the artistic, civic and policy fields inform and relate to the journal’s cultural geographical concerns. As well as academic reviewers it will include pieces from practitioners beyond the academy or from collaborations between academics and other individuals and groups. It is also open to a variety of styles of presentation, including for example artworks, interviews and accounts of work in progress as well as discussions of cultural projects, practices and events.¹

Their editorial stimulant worked. The first Cultural Geographies in Practice (hereafter CGiP) pieces to appear in print differed from standard-length, peer-reviewed scholarly articles. They were shorter on words, more experimental in form, sometimes personally expressed, even a touch playful in tone. Where most covered themes immediately recognisable to an existing readership, CGiP pieces did so through a widening range of writing and presentational styles. The section served as an outlet for exploratory efforts with voice and form, and position too, carefully conceding the partiality and contingency of knowledge making.

This re-setting of academic practice involved challenging received wisdoms about how to document and narrate the great variety of things that get done in the name of research or fieldwork, and posing questions about the limits of cultural representation. In respect to topic and content, CGiP articles, essays and commentaries ranged widely across the cultural realm. A handful of early contributions signposted newer terrains: of media ecologies where the advent of

spatial, locative technologies altered the realities of landscape experience; and, of sensory-embodied registers, as the means to encounter particular sites and tune-in to everyday situations. Quickly, other CGiP hallmarks were established. When authors wrote of shared or collaborative ventures, often they did so dialogically, the better to show up differing, even contrasting, practitioner-positions and specialist skillsets, or by consciously striving to acknowledge the distributed efforts of collective endeavour.

From its inception, CGiP also treated visual appearance as a constitutive element of design, welcoming authors' efforts to foreground non-textual material – maps, photographs, drawings, film stills, embedded video footage – so as to push at what can be done creatively with composition. As capacities for formatting continue to undergo change in academic publishing, that appetite for invention can be fed yet again. Appropriately, the CGiP essays appearing in this anniversary issue – by Sage Brice and Darren Umney respectively – evidence an especially close level of attention paid to the placement of printed matter on the page, and the visual aesthetics of arrangement and production.

Across the years, and in very healthy number, card-carrying cultural geographers have continued to produce the work that is a staple of CGiP. A great many other submitting authors share a taste for cultural themes and geographic ideas but hold their primary affiliation with cognate academic subjects (across the social sciences, and arts and humanities), or are practitioners from the creative and performing arts, and occasionally representatives of the cultural and heritage sectors. Such operational interdisciplinarity continues to be a defining feature of CGiP. Editorially speaking, there remains a keen appreciation that the very practice of transforming and transcending disciplinary domains is itself a creative exercise, producing new forms of knowledge and conduct.

The active *un*-disciplining of academic tradition, assumption and hierarchy can also offer rich reward. Part of the original CGiP mission, restated in a 2007 Editorial, involved pushing the praxis of cultural geography ‘out beyond narrowly defined academic institutions and genres’ to include a diverse community of communities.² Authors’ efforts to engage publics, exchange knowledge, and commit to social justice causes through participatory research practice, will continue to matter and are welcome as the source material for future submissions. New areas of associated activity are also surfacing. The long-standing tradition of extension and outreach in academic practice has recently been reframed by the push for “impactful research”, a new critical idiom in the life of geographical scholarship; principally, though not exclusively, embedded in UK universities. Institutional mechanisms and sector-wide frameworks have been introduced as a means to evaluate the depth, degree or reach of research-led academic engagement beyond the academy.

Casting forward, CGiP can serve as a forum for reflection and commentary on the part played by creative geographical practice in contributing to the ‘impact agenda’, in a variety of civic, policy and artistic settings. These ongoing developments raise interesting challenges. How far is it possible to ensure the integrity and meaningfulness of practice, while seeking to attain general benchmarks for measuring success? Within a formalised structure of evaluation and attainment, is it possible to acknowledge that failure is a conceivable outcome from creative or experimental approaches? Might there be new opportunities emerging for creative practitioners of greater confidence and experience ready to share their know-how about design, delivery and co-production? Is the prospect of, what might cautiously be designated, ‘applied cultural geographies’ something to relish, or resist?

What will most surely provide CGiP with a core and continuing sense of purpose is the value of learning-by-doing. In short: making still matters. Whether offering commentary on artistic practice (from film to performance to sculpture), assorted media, museums and exhibitions, cultural landscapes, heritage sites, situated politics and social protest, or field method, this section is a dedicated space for giving expression to the creative and material conditions of production, rather than the reception of cultural products in passive or isolated mode. Reports from the midst of practice can also encompass cultural geographies in the classroom, or learning settings beyond it, where novelty and originality take expression through pedagogy. The findings derived, and the lessons learned, from practice-led or practice-centred work can be variously theoretical, methodological, ethical and site-specific. In 2018, they must, of necessity, also be digital. As more and more aspects of cultural lives, objects, and worlds are made and mediated through mobile, technological interfaces CGiP can serve as a host space for reports from the frontier of fast-evolving digital habitats.

With *cultural geographies* marking its first quarter century in existence, this anniversary issue also sees CGiP pass a notable milestone of its own with the publication of our 125th ‘in practice’ piece. We wish to place on record thanks to four editorial predecessors, Catherine Nash, David Matless, George Henderson and Deborah Thien, whose earlier service played such a significant part in ensuring continuity of presence for the journal section. In our capacity as current co-editors we look forward to receiving and reviewing future submissions that both reaffirm and renew the tradition of cultural geographies in practice.

HAYDEN LORIMER
JAMIE WINDERS

¹ P. Crang, and D. Mitchell, 'Editorial', *Ecumene: A Journal of Cultural Geographies* 7(1) 2000 pp. 5-6.

² P. Crang, and M. Domosh, 'Editorial' *cultural geographies*, 14(5) 2000 pp. 5.