

Towards an intersectional postcapitalism

Callum Sutherland 
University of Glasgow, UK

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Abstract

In this reply, I reflect on the various ways in which the ‘Fisherian’ spatial imaginaries I develop in the original article can engage conceptually with my respondents’ constructive criticism, as well as posing a range of questions to their variegated postcapitalist concerns. Particular attention is paid to the ways in which Fisher’s spatial imaginaries and politics must be brought into closer conversation with intersectional imaginaries of communist futures.

Keywords

Accelerationism, degrowth, horizontalism, intersectionality, situationism

Introduction

I want to begin by thanking my respondents for their – in different ways – generous engagement. In this final response, I want to begin by briefly addressing the pieces from Anitra, Benedikt, and Oli, before giving Margaret’s critique more sustained attention (Mould, 2023; Ramírez, 2023; Nelson, 2023; Schmid, 2023). Although all of the responses connect my piece – and Fisher’s work – to vital arenas of postcapitalist thought and practice, Margaret’s urgent critique reframes the article in such a way that it might be useful – although, as she highlights, *it doesn’t need to be* – in the creation of a more polyvocal postcapitalist politics.

Degrowth and strategy

Anitra makes a notable critique of Fisher’s ‘harking on’ the lost futures of the 1960s and 1970s. She argues that ‘many postcapitalist prefigurative hybrids that exist today are ... more advanced than the counter-cultures

of the 1960s and 1970s’, referencing degrowth and real valuatist activism. These activisms are infused with spatial imaginaries that resonate with Fisher’s postcapitalist politics, especially the idea of ‘open relocalisation’ which offers the possibility of combining local management with more extensive chains of co-ordination. Encouragingly, Anitra links these spatial co-ordinations to ethics of decoloniality, autonomy, and care. As Massey’s (2022) work on power geometries argues; democratic control does not emerge from simply widening participation in a power structure – the *quality of relation* must also be transformed. For a truly postcapitalist transition, relations of exploitation must be replaced with those of polyvocal co-operation.

Postcapitalist geographers should be in dialogue with Anitra’s work in order to explore how the

Corresponding author:

Callum Sutherland, East Quad, Main Building, University of Glasgow, G12 8QQ, UK.

Email: callum.sutherland@glasgow.ac.uk

‘prefigurative hybrids’ she works with ‘*expand* their practice and influence’ (my emphasis). She argues that these movements speak ‘as if they need to be, and might become, mainstream futures’, and that perhaps one of the outcomes of their activism is that ‘[n]umerous conferences ... [and] publishers’ are now foregrounding postcapitalist discourse. However, this apparent rise in postcapitalism’s popularity is a way off the cultural mainstream. How might degrowth strategy judiciously tack back-and-forth between ‘local’, concrete expressions of autonomy and interventions in broader cultural imaginations?

Horizontal co-ordination

Whilst thinking about broader cultural imaginations, it is appropriate to turn to Benedikt’s response. Although connecting the initial piece to a wider range of concepts, Benedikt adds to a characterisation of Fisher’s work, highlighting his ‘unease’ around horizontalism. Fisher clearly did not believe in horizontalism for horizontalism’s sake (Fisher, 2018: 543). But to argue that he was totally against it would be a mischaracterisation. Fisher’s clear penchant for cultural and political experimentation means – as Oli’s response highlights – that there is certainly room in his politics for horizontal forms of organising. It is just that he felt that it should not be the *only* kind of organising going on. At the level of strategy, Fisher’s watchword is *co-ordination*. As Anitra highlighted in her response, small political experiments can generate desires and visions for alternative futures. However, there must also be an emerging – collective, trans-local – sense of how these postcapitalist experiments might support one another, generating an alternative system that might render capitalism obsolete. As Benedikt points out in his example of ECOLISE, this alter-system has ‘not yet come together in actuality’ (Fisher, 2018: 758) as a self-sustaining postcapitalist economy. What libidinal strategies might enable such co-ordinations to take form?

Decelerate to accelerate the weird

Oli reflects on slowness as an anticapitalist ethic and the resonances between Fisherian and Situationist praxis. An ethic of slowness – or rather, one of velocity – is

pertinent to Fisher’s work, given its association with accelerationism (Xenogothic, 2019). There are ongoing debates about Fisher’s association with accelerationism and the philosophical and political content of accelerationism itself, but speed is relevant to his work. Fisher’s interest in accelerationism is aligned with Deleuze and Guattari’s call to accelerate ‘the process of destratification that capitalism cannot but obstruct’ (Fisher, 2014b). In other words, for every social stratification that capitalism ‘melts into air’ (Marx and Engels, 2018: 10) it creates a new one. In this sense, capitalism can be characterised as a ‘failed escape from [the socially stratified world of] feudalism’. Far from accelerating ‘any or everything in capitalism willy-nilly’, an accelerationist politics might concern accelerating desire, which Deleuze and Guattari define as the human tendency to disrupt social stratification (Fisher, 2014b). A paradoxical, prefigurative step in the direction of accelerating destratification might be – as Oli suggests – embracing slowness. In his unfinished introduction to *Acid Communism* (Fisher, 2018: 753), Fisher advocates a reappraisal of 1970s anti-work politics, of unplugging from the drudgery of meaningless work and its concomitant experience of fastness, the feeling of time slipping through your fingers. Might accelerating desire for *decelerated* lives of leisure and lingering be a way of accelerating desire for a postcapitalist world?

Oli’s comments on the resonances between Fisher’s work and Situationism are apposite. Fisher had a significant interest in psychogeography as a potential practice of resistance. His introduction to Ford’s *Savage Messiah* (2011) underscores how psychogeography can be used to retell the stories of working class communities scrubbed from the map in East London. Furthermore, his audio-essay/album with Justin Barton, *On Vanishing Land*, uses psychogeographic excursions in East Anglia as a ‘micropolitics of escape [from capitalist reality and] ... of waking the faculties’ (Hyperdub, 2019). Furthermore, Fisher’s work has inspired a host of experimental psychogeographic interventions. This ranges from the Newcastle (UK) based collective *Incursions* (<https://www.incursions.co.uk/>) and their ‘socio-graphic’ walking forum, to the more wide-ranging *Urban Wyrld Project* (<https://folkhorrorrevival.com/>), which has produced two large volumes of weird fiction,

psychogeography, and cultural criticism. Fisher's work suffuses both of these projects, which draw on explicit references and implicit exploration of his spatial sensibilities and aesthetic appreciation of the weird. Resonating with this trend is recent work by Turnbull et al. (2022: 1207) on 'a new weird geography', exploring what sci-fi and other fictions can do to prepare imaginations for radical change. They too are inspired by Fisher's work although in less directly spatial terms.

Tying Oli's comments together, perhaps 'waking our faculties' to weirdness might require a certain deceleration. How might desire for these two different ethics – of slowness and weirdness – amplify one another? I would argue that some of the most cutting edge work in this regard is flagged in Margaret's work (Best and Ramirez, 2021), and it is to her piece that I now turn.

Fisher and polyvocal power geometries

The palpable frustration of Margaret's response is entirely justified. My article does not discuss the uneven structuring and differential experience of capitalism across variegated marginalisations other than in abstract class-based terms. In an era when it is increasingly urgent that geography must radically advance polyvocal understandings of power geometries, I understand completely how my article could be received as an eye-roll-inducing, even angering, throwback in terms of its silences with regards to Black and Indigenous geographies. As Margaret underscores, there are racial and colonial cultural maladies – intertwined with capitalist exploitation – with deeper roots than capitalism's present precorporative phase. Black and Indigenous activists, artists, and scholars have resisted (and continue to resist) these maladies by desiring and imagining the future *iteratively*. The paper does not engage with these vital knowledges or genealogies, and this shortcoming should be clearly and prominently stated. I thank Margaret sincerely for doing so.

Therefore, there are two ways in which this article can address these silences and hold out for the promise of Acid Communism: a co-ordinated, democratic, and *polyvocal* collective subject.

Firstly, the contribution of Black and Indigenous people to Fisher's work must be recognised. Apart

from some references to grime and dub music, I did not adequately underscore the significant influence particularly of Black artists and thinkers on Fisher. Funnily enough, a previous version of the article reflected on Fisher's (2014a) piece on Little Axe's *Stone Cold Ohio*: an album about the US's roots in Black and Indigenous enslavement, dispossession, and murder. Fisher was influenced by and engaged with the music of Tricky (Fisher, 2014a), interracial workers movements (Fisher, 2018), and the politics of indigenous dispossession inherent in *The Shining* (Fisher, 2014a). He was aware of the longer genealogies that underpin precorporation. Indeed, in a 2013 article, he shifts his cultural diagnosis of hauntological music from that made largely by white musicians, to the musical pioneers of 'studio as instrument' originating within the dub tradition of largely Black artists like Lee 'Scratch' Perry (Fisher, 2013). He suggests that the more recent embrace of musical time-warping techniques by white artists might be indicative of capital finally catching up to white culture more broadly. Time and place are now rendered out of joint in white people's experience of capitalism, *as has been the case for Black and Indigenous people for some time*.

Secondly, connections can be drawn between Fisher's work and contemporary Black and Indigenous art and activism. Indeed, the reworked Situationist impulse for which Oli advocates is best lived-out by Black and Indigenous women artists, some of which are foregrounded in Margaret's work (Best and Ramirez, 2021; Ramirez, 2017). For example, Margaret considers Faustine Isabel's 'excavation' (Best and Ramirez, 2021: 1046) of Black women's exploitation in the formation of property relations, disturbing these relations' supposed neutrality and allowing troubling ghosts to make to their presents/presence felt in the urban environment. Many such contemporary artistic and activist practices of Black and Indigenous people resonate strongly with the grotesque stratigraphy inherent in Fisher's work (e.g., Adura Onashile's *Ghosts* – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=crkk7LM53v0>), cracking the consumerist veneer of the urban to highlight its oppressive substrate.

Any Fisher-informed geography should be actively intersectional in its rendering of

communist futures. I regret not making this clearer in the original article. Indeed, an intersectional rendering of a communist horizon is perhaps one of the driving forces behind Fisher's *Acid Communism* project before it was sadly cut short. Geographers building on Fisher's work should be aware that his attunement to the haunted, the grotesque, and the psychedelic is about approaching the world in a way that is sensitive to the Real; that which daily life depends upon – yet if encountered directly – destabilises that which relies on it. What do you do when you find out a place you love and/or rely upon is haunted by trauma? How do we live with one another's ghosts (Bobbette, 2022)? A degrowth, trans-local, slow, and weird postcapitalism will not suffice, we need an intersectional postcapitalism too.


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ORCID iD

Callum Sutherland  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1040-460X>

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