

HGRG Session sponsorship – RGS Conference 2024

Session proposal (1): Reimagining Early Thematic Mapping

Convenors: Philip Jagessar, King's College London; Tom Simpson, University of Warwick; Felix de Montety, Université Grenoble Alpes.

Abstract: Thematic maps – from mapping voting patterns or economic inequalities to climate change and public health crises – are, for geographers, an important and widely used tool for analysing and disseminating data and research. They are also increasingly the principal way the public consumes maps, with the rise of popular cartographic works which illustrate, condense and distort political, economic or social phenomena (e.g., Cheshire and Uberti 2014; Vargic 2015; Wright, 2019). Their contemporary ubiquity is the culmination of over two centuries of uneven progress, with developments in statistical and other sciences, the reorganisation and consolidation of nations and colonies, and innovations in printing technologies during the long 19th century giving rise to many forms of maps which showed the distribution and variation of themes such as disease, environment, geology, race, languages etc.

While many geographers and historians have explored particular forms of thematic maps (e.g. Koch, 2011; Vaughan 2018), in specific national or colonial contexts (e.g., Schulten, 2012), or their influence on cartographic methods more broadly (e.g. Palsky, 2008), our historical and geographical framework for understanding thematic maps remains largely based on Arthur H. Robinson's influential work, *Early Thematic Mapping in the History of Cartography* (1982). Although recognising mappable themes were potentially unlimited, Robinson's broad categories of 'the physical world' (environment, geology, climate, oceanographic etc), 'people and their activities' (population, race, language, trade, economics etc.) and 'the social environment' (crime, health, disease, wealth and poverty etc.) holds today, even if Robinson's focus was mostly on Europe and North America.

We invite submissions that critically revisit, reimagine or expand on the early and the thematic as understood by Robinson, shifting the geographical scope from a European/Western context to thematic mapping in Asia, Africa, and elsewhere, and augmenting Robinson's 19th century focus by tracing the historical geography of thematic mapping into the 20th century. We especially invite papers that consider mapping during the transition from colonies to independent states, exploring how earlier forms of thematic mapping were mobilised, adapted or withdrawn during and after decolonisation. Papers may also address the transition from paper to digital thematic mapping (GIS) in the later 20th century and the diffusion of thematic maps across the sciences and social sciences, as well as the media and popular culture. The panel is also open to papers that engage conceptually with the 'thematic', including explorations of mapping that was not intended for publication (e.g., sketches in scientific notebooks), conventional topographic maps that were repurposed into thematic maps (e.g., through annotations or redesign), or thematic forms of counter-mapping by non-state and non-institutional actors including social movements and private individuals (for example, artists or writers).

Required timeslots: 2

Session delivery: In-person

Session proposal (2): Travel writing and historical imagery for the conservation of bio-cultural heritage

Convenors: Pietro Piana, University of Genova (IT); Charles Watkins, University of Nottingham; Nicola Gabellieri, University of Trento (IT); Arturo Gallia, University of Roma Tre (IT).

Abstract: Geographers have made increasing use of geo-historical sources to read current landscapes and investigate the way in which they changed through time. Since the cultural turn, landscape representations (historical maps, topographical views and photographs, and written reports) have been framed within their cultural, historical, and artistic context (Cosgrove and Daniels, 1988; Barrell, 2013) in order to allow what Moreno (1990) defined as “realistic deciphering”. Scholars analysed drawings and paintings to look at rural and urban history (Daniels 2017), forestry and vegetation analysis (McLoughlin 1999), gender geographies (Rose 1993), history of transport (Piana et al. 2018), physical geography (Piana and Faccini, 2022) and ecological research (Warren et al., 2023).

Such multidisciplinary approaches benefit from the contribution of scholars of a diverse range of fields of humanities, social and hard sciences, often with the use of GIS and other digital technologies (Cooper, Gregory, 2011). In the analysis of Grand Tour travel writings of Trentino (Italian Alps) Gabellieri and Dai Prà (2021) developed a GIS-Based inventory of written documents for their precise topographical restitution in the landscape. In this context, growing attention is paid to the practical value of large-scale studies of landscape using historical imagery and travel writing in conservation and landscape management. The Cherish Project, supported by Historic England (McInnes, 2016) uses many historical images to examine coastal erosion over the last 250 years in southwest England. Other examples (including studies in the context of Italian “contratti di fiume”) relate to the use of historical images and cartography for the reconstruction of fluvial landscapes for current land management.

The session seeks to gather contributions on the use of historical imagery and written sources for the analysis, conservation, and management of bio-cultural heritage in rural, coastal, mountain and urban areas in Europe and worldwide. It welcomes both methodological approaches and the presentation of practical case studies where such documentation can be used to implement current landscape management policies.

Required timeslots: 2

Session delivery: In-person

Session proposal (3): Navigating Collaborative Doctoral Partnerships with Cultural Heritage Organisations

Convenors: Adele Kramber- third year Human Geography PhD student at University of Edinburgh, with National Library of Scotland and BBC Scotland; Puravi Kumar- third year Human Geography PhD student at University of Edinburgh, with Historic Environment Scotland.

Abstract: Collaborative research is now actively encouraged as a mode of inquiry inside all areas of the academy. This trend is reflected in the still growing number of doctoral studentships funded through collaborative award schemes (Hill and Meek 2020; Peck 2021). A decade has passed since HGRG Collaborative Geographies (2013), which reflected on the opportunities and complexities these doctoral projects encompass. Collaboration between human geographers and cultural heritage organisations has now metabolised and there is value in returning and adding to these discussions around processes, strategies, issues, and returns. Borrowing from Peck's (2021) encouragement to incorporate a reflective pedagogy within collaborative doctoral research, the session will reinitiate conversation and comparison about the rewards and challenges of the collaborative process for students and heritage partners. Providing a forum for exchange and shared experience will, we hope, deepen the collaborative process collectively and specifically.

The COVID-19 Pandemic and Black Lives Matter Movement has prompted the heritage sector to shift their needs and priorities - for instance, decolonisation, the climate emergency and calls for sustainable and socially just futures. These partnerships provide an opportunity to encourage new futures and possibilities for doctoral researchers and heritage partners.

The session welcomes postgraduate students, supervisors and researchers (university, partner or industry-based) to present on collaborative research ventures between academic and heritage organisations, ranging from museums and libraries, to galleries and community organisations, and more. We welcome papers discussing or critically analysing/theorising any part of the collaborative process, from establishing partnerships and securing funding to conducting research and disseminating knowledge. The session also invites papers that reflect on experiences or collaborative strategies, from resource sharing and funding to experiences of support for fieldwork and community engagement.

Required Timeslots: 1

Session Delivery: In-person

Session proposal (4): Charting a future for departmental map collections

Convenors: Elaine Watts, University of Nottingham; Philip Jagessar, King's College London.

Abstract: Outlining his Chair's theme on mapping, Stephen Legg listed 'University and broader institutional map collections and their futures' as an important topic for review. We invite map curators, mapmakers, and academics, to participate in a panel discussion of the state and future of departmental collections.

If some are an accidental occupier of space, others have been viewed as a dispensable resource in constrained expanding departments. The use of computing software in teaching and the online provision of maps (such as by the National Library of Scotland and Edina's Digimap) might seem to render redundant the retention of large paper map collections. Yet there are examples of large map collections still in regular use. We invite panellists to analyse the changes that have reshaped collections and consider their future.

What has happened to department collections? Have they retained, sold off or slimmed down, or diversified? How are they perceived within departments and the wider geographical community? What noteworthy maps and other archival materials remain in collections? How are they used within the curriculum and research projects? What cartographic support exists within departments? What role might collections retain in the teaching and the experience of spatial literacy? What might their origins reveal about the histories of geographical practice, and therefore how might they be used in efforts to reshape geographical teaching? How are they promoted in public engagement activities?

Whether you wish to apply for co-sponsorship with another RGS-IBG research group: Yes, the Historical and Philosophy of Geography Research Group (HPGRG).

Required Timeslots: 1

Session format: Panel session

Session proposal (5): The implications of the historical geographies of Christian mission for geographies of contemporary faith-based social action

Convenors: Dr Ruth Slatter, Institute of Historical Research (University of London); Dr Stephanie Denning, Coventry University.

Abstract: Over the past decade, geographies of religion and austerity have paid increasing attention to the role of faith-based social action in contemporary British society (Shannahan and Denning, 2023). However, this research has rarely acknowledged that contemporary faith-based social action has origins in and links to eighteen-, nineteenth-, and early twentieth-century foreign and domestic mission practices. Furthermore, no research has been conducted into how or why contemporary faith communities and faith-based social action organisations have engaged with these histories or the impact this has had on their contemporary contributions to Britain's social and economic infrastructure. This gap is surprising given historical geographers' contributions to explorations of the relationships between Christian mission and Empire. Their mapping approaches played an essential role in establishing narratives about Christian missionaries' contributions to the development and control of western empires (Lehr and Katz, 1995). While more recently, they have contributed to the development of more nuanced discussions about the complicated and shifting relationships between (early) modern Christian mission and empire (Vallgård, 2016).

This session will bring these fields of research together via a round table discussion between geographers of religion, historical geographers, and leaders of and archivists within contemporary faith communities and faith-based social action organisations. This session will specifically focus on how and why faith communities and faith-based social action organisations have used the histories of Christian mission to establish their reputations, inform their practices, and motivate their members and volunteers. By doing so, it will begin to explore how insights gained from historical geographies of mission could complicate contemporary geographies of religion and austerity. Furthermore, it will facilitate discussions about how academics, faith communities, and faith-based social action organisations could collaborate to critically reflect on how the histories of mission have been – and could be – used.

References:

Lehr, J.C. and Katz, Y. (1995). Crown, Corporation and Church: the role of institutions in the stability of pioneer settlements in the Canadian West, 1870-1914. *Journal of Historical Geography*, 21.4, 413-429. Doi: doi.org/10.1006/jhge.1995.0028

Shannahan, C. and Denning S. (2023) Politics, Poverty and the Church in an 'Age of Austerity'. *Religions*, 14(1), 59, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14010059>

Vallgård, K. (2016). Were Christian Missionaries Colonizers?: Reorienting the Debate and Exploring New Research Trajectories. *Interventions*, 18.6, 865-886. Doi: doi.org/10.1080/1369801X.2015.1131179

Required timeslots: 1

Session Delivery: In-person

Session proposal (6): New and Emerging Research in Historical Geography

Convenor: Beth Williamson (RHUL)

Abstract: This sessions provides a space for postgraduate students undertaking research in Historical Geography to present at a major conference in a supportive and relaxed setting.

We welcome papers from postgraduate at any stage of their research, that discuss initial research aims/design; engage with methodological and/or theoretical questions; or that draw upon empirical findings. There is no chronological or geographical limit to papers and the sessions will be designed to encourage audience questions, as well as the sharing of experience and advice. In short, this session will demonstrate the vibrance of postgraduate contributions to Historical Geography.

Timeslot: 1

Session delivery: In-person and online

Session proposal (7): Historical Geographies of the Caribbean

Convenors: Professor David Lambert (University of Warwick); Dr Joanne Norcup (University of Warwick and Open University).

Abstract:

In but not of the West – CLR James (1966)
Caribbean ... a whole world in itself - Petrine Archer Straw (2012)

As the entitling quotes from James and Archer-Straw suggest, the historical and contemporary geographies of the Caribbean hold geographical and historical connections and resonances which span the globe in multitude complex ways (Beckles 2021). Studying Caribbean histories interleaves and entangles European imperial and colonial global histories, mobilities, and infrastructures that serve to inform and challenge geographical imaginations of the diverse societies that make up the region (Sheller 2003, Thompson 2006). Simultaneously, Caribbean historical geographies also resist and defy external definitions to be self-identifying and replenishing: mapping in-situ linguistic, cultural, religious, geopolitical, demographic, historical confluences that are unique. Geographical concepts of time, space, mobilities, and scale gift capacity for more rigorous and critical interrogations of histories of the Caribbean, enabling engagements with the histories and geographies of slavery, abolition, power, race, gender, moralities, environmental interactions, historical humanities, and scientific research (see, for example Greer et al 2018). The interconnectedness and historical and geographically contingent nature of where, who, and how contemporary geographies of the Caribbean are made and the future legacies of these circumstances in communicating, uncommunicating, making and unmaking, mapping, and un-mapping, securing and in-securing how the Caribbean is understood, engaged with, created, and recreated: all have deep roots and historical geographies as touchstones (see, for example, the work of UCL Centre for the study of Legacies of British Slavery, and Noxolo 2018).

Exploring contested geographical ideas of, from, within, and beyond the Caribbean contribute to both the broadening and deepening knowledge and understanding of Caribbean histories, and speak to wider conceptual, empirical, theoretical, and methodological discussions for interdisciplinary researchers, but remain especially pertinent to historical geographers, historians, and geographers. While the geographies of the Caribbean are a vital part of broader discussions of global geography spanning economic, social, cultural, geopolitical, and environmental entanglements (for example, Caribbean Geography Speciality Group), the historical geographies of these aspects of geographical research on the Caribbean oftentimes become lost in favour of contemporary discussions, and as such have been rarely spotlighted beyond specialist monographs (for example, see Lambert 2005, Ogborn 2019) or specialist historical focused sessions at Society of Caribbean Studies (SCS) events. Yet there is a vast array of interdisciplinary researchers, writers, creatives, and scholars working across and beyond academia whose work engage centrally with these historical geography themes at their core. There has never been an explicit session at the annual conference of the RGS on the historical geographies of the Caribbean, and as such, this session – comprising of two timeslots - endeavour to begin to give space and time to centre and attend to such work.

References:

AAG Caribbean Geography Speciality Group (CGSG)
<https://www.aag.org/groups/caribbean-specialty-group/>

Archer-Straw, P (2012) Curatorial Practice. <https://petrinearcher.com/curatorial-practice>

Beckles, H McD (2021) How Britain Underdeveloped the Caribbean: A reparation response to Europe's Legacy of Plunder and Poverty. University of West Indies Press.

Centre for the Study of Legacies of British Slavery <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/>

Greer, Kirsten, et al. "Historical Geographies of Interdisciplinarity: McGill University's Caribbean Project. *Historical Geography*, vol. 46, 2018, p. 48-78.

James, CLR (1984) "African and Afro-Caribbeans: A Personal View, *Ten8*, No16. Cited in Hall, S (2002) *In but not of Europe: Europe and its myths in Soundings 22*: p58. Also see Lambert, D (2011) *In but not of the West: Caribbean geographies and histories*.

David Nicholls Memorial Lecture <https://dnmt.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Lambert-David-Nicholls-2012-lecture.pdf>

Lambert D (2005) *White Creole Culture, Politics, and Identity during the age of abolition*. Cambridge Studies in Historical Geography, 38. Cambridge University Press.

Noxolo, P (2018) Caribbean in/securities: An introduction. *Small Axe*, 22(3), 39-46.

Ogborn, M (2019) *The Freedom of Speech: Talk and Slavery in the Anglo-Caribbean World*. The University of Chicago Press.

Sheller, M (2003) *Consuming the Caribbean: From Arawaks to Zombies*. Routledge.

Society for Caribbean Studies <http://community-languages.org.uk/scs/>

Thompson, K (2006) *An Eye for the Tropics: Tourism, Photography, and Framing the Caribbean Picturesque*. Duke University Press.

▪ **Timeslot 1: Historical Geographies of the Caribbean 1**
Session chair: David Lambert

The first timeslot of our session comprises a panel of invited discussants whose work on the historical geographies of the Caribbean make significant contributions to the field. Each discussant will take a personal approach to explore a range of perspectives that inform and affect the making of historical geographies of the Caribbean including such areas as historiographies, methodologies, theoretical approaches, empirical content, conceptual engagements, and the practical, pragmatic realities of researching and studying this field across contemporary challenges.

These contributions and reflections will enable broader questions and discussions to be had regarding contemporary research in this field in the UK, Europe, the Americas,

and Caribbean, and consider the legacies and potentials for research work on historical geographies of the Caribbean now and into the future.

▪ **Timeslot 2: Historical Geographies of the Caribbean 2**
Session chair: Joanne Norcup

The second timeslot of the Historical Geographies of the Caribbean is a paper-focused session which aims to secure the presentations of contemporary historians and historical geographers working across themes pertaining to the historical geographies of the Caribbean and its global diasporas.

Proposed papers are welcomed and encouraged from scholars across careers stages, working independently and especially from the Caribbean and its diaspora. Themes discussed may include but not be exhaustive of:

- * Historical geographies of slavery, abolition, and independence in the Caribbean.
- * Histories and geographies of Caribbean mobilities and diasporas: ideas, intellectual traditions, cultures.
- * Historical geographies of Caribbean uprisings and revolutions.
- * Representing, reimagining, rewriting, remapping, and remaking the geographical imaginations of the histories and geographies of the Caribbean.
- * Historical geographies of Caribbean creolisation.
- * Historical geographies of Race and the Caribbean.
- * The historical geographies of Caribbean archives and artefacts.
- * Environmental historical geographies of the Caribbean.

Required Timeslot: 2

Session delivery: In-person and online

Session proposal (8): Curating disciplinary heritage – collecting, storing and sharing geography’s educational pasts

Convenors: Dr. Mette Bruinsma, Assistant Professor in Cultural and Intellectual History Utrecht University (The Netherlands); Dr. Michiel van Meeteren, Assistant Professor in Human Geography Utrecht University (The Netherlands).

Abstract: Although geographers may rely a lot on archives and heritage sources, disciplinary practitioners have not always been very judicious in preserving their own, particularly when it comes to educational materials, student work and old curricula documents and debates. Universities, as centres of academic knowledge production, have traditionally emphasized the preservation of research heritage, often overshadowing the equally valuable but overlooked contributions made by generations of student-geographers. This panel adopts a dual focus to debate the need and practicalities at curating geography’s educational heritage. The first half of this session centers on the epistemological significance of (re)collecting, re(archiving), and opening up the many small local geographies produced by student-geographers. Despite their often intricate studies of diverse localities, the academic community frequently neglects these small yet serious contributions to disciplinary knowledge. This panel aims to shed light on the perspectives embedded in student-geographers' work, highlighting the need to incorporate their insights into broader disciplinary narratives.

The second part of this session addresses the practicalities of curating university and disciplinary heritage in the digital age. Emphasizing the material heritage of student-geographers, here, we explore innovative approaches to digitization and curation, ensuring accessibility for academics and the general public alike. By bridging the gap between theoretical considerations and practical implementation, this panel seeks to encourage collaborative efforts in preserving and making visible the rich tapestry of university and disciplinary heritage, ultimately contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of the history of geography.

Required Timeslot: 1

Session delivery: In-person

Session proposal (9): Writing Lives, Writing the Earth

Convenors: Diarmid Finnegan (Queen’s University Belfast); Innes M. Keighren (Royal Holloway, University of London).

Abstract: The myriad connections between biography and geography have received significant scholarly attention over the past two decades (e.g., Baigent, 2004; Barker and Wainwright, 2020; Daniels and Nash, 2004; Hasty, Forsyth, and McGeachan, 2012; Hodder, 2017; Kilian and Wolf, 2017; Thomas, 2004). Meanwhile, a sustained interest in geographers’ lives has seen the publication of a steady stream of book-length biographies (Davies, 2023; Johnson, 2024; Klinke, 2023; and Withers, 2022 being notable recent examples). This session aims to provide an opportunity to reflect on these twin trends and on the wider interplay of life writing and earth writing. To explore this theme, we welcome papers that consider the productive conjunctions between geography and biography as genres of writing and as forms of knowledge making. We encourage contributions that address the following indicative questions:

- How can biography be conceptualised as a form of geographical writing?
- Beyond an attention to space, place, and scale, what does geography bring to biographical writing?
- How do geographers approach the task of writing the lives of non-geographers?
- What role does biography play in geography, as a focus of research and as a written form, beyond its centrality to writing disciplinary history?
- With current debates about decolonising history and/or geography in view, how might the biography of geography and the geography of biography be rethought, critiqued, or reworked?
- In what ways could a ‘more-than-human’ approach inform or reconceive the task of the biographer?
- How might the idea of metabiography contribute to the spatialising of life stories?
- How might portraiture, and other figurative representations, be approached in both biographical and geographical terms?

References:

- Barker, J. and Wainwright, E. (2020) ‘Geography matters: spatiality, geography and auto/biography’, in Parsons, J.M. and Chappell, A. (eds.) *The Palgrave MacMillan handbook of auto/biography*. London: Palgrave MacMillan, pp. 229–40.
- Baigent, E. (2004) ‘The geography of biography, the biography of geography: rewriting the *Dictionary of National Biography*’, *Journal of Historical Geography*, 30(3), pp. 531–51.
- Daniels, S. and Nash, C. (2004) ‘Lifepaths: geography and biography’, *Journal of Historical Geography*, 30(3), pp. 449–58.

- Davies, A. (2023) *A world without hunger: Josué de Castro and the history of geography*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press.
- Hasty, W., Forsyth, I., and McGeachan, C. (2012) 'Certain subjects? Working with biography and life-writing in historical geography', *Historical Geography*, 40, pp. 169–85.
- Hodder, J. (2017) 'On absence and abundance: biography as method in archival research', *Area*, 49(4), pp. 452–59.
- Johnson, N.C. (2024) *Empire, gender, and bio-geography: Charlotte Wheeler-Cuffe and colonial Burma*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Kilian, E. and Wolf, H. (eds) (2017) *Life writing and space*. London: Routledge.
- Klinke, I. (2023) *Life, earth, colony: Friedrich Ratzel's necropolitical geography*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.
- Thomas, N. (2004) 'Exploring the boundaries of biography: the family and friendship networks of Lady Curzon, Vicereine of India 1898–1905', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 30(3), pp. 496–519.
- Withers, C.W.J. (2020) *Majestic river: Mungo Park and the exploration of the Niger*. Edinburgh: Birlinn.

Required Timeslot: 1

Session delivery: In-person