

*Chair: Kevin Grove, Florida International University*

**Presented and Published: Topics at the Political Geography Specialty Group Conference,**  
Benjamin Forest (Department of Geography, McGill University)

The Political Geography Specialty Group has held a “pre-conference” before most AAG meetings since 1988 and has an on-line archive of many meeting programs since 2006. The presentation abstracts from these programs offer a window into the topics and approaches addressed by political geographers over this period. This paper uses Natural Language Processing (NLP) techniques to analyze trends in the abstracts since 2006 and compares them with trends found in the abstracts of papers subsequently published by PGSG conference presenters in peer-reviewed journals. This approach identifies changes in the subfield over time and also assesses the presentation-to-publication pathway to see if the same topics presented at the PGSG conference tend to appear subsequently in disciplinary journals. Preliminary results suggest that since 2006, the pre-conference has seen a declining focus on electoral geography and increased attention to climate change, sustainability, geopolitics, and China.

**Remembering Bunge’s Detroit Geographical Expedition: Implications for the ‘Global South’ Trope,** Alexander (Alec) Murphy (Department of Geography, University of Oregon)

Bill Bunge’s 1968 Detroit Geographical Expedition complicated conventional understandings of the geography of uneven development. At the time, there was a widespread tendency to think of the world in a dichotomized way: a developed world of industrialized countries with high living standards and an underdeveloped world characterized by low levels of industrialization, poverty, and poor infrastructure. Bunge pulled back the curtain on this over-simplified, problematic global geographical imaginary, showing that parts of Detroit could just as easily be termed underdeveloped as countries in the “underdeveloped world.” More than 50 years later, another spatially dichotomized geographical imaginary of uneven development has taken central stage: Global North and Global South. Despite its geographic imprecision and environmentalist overtones, this imaginary has gained traction because of the empowerment challenges facing places with a history of external domination and economic marginalization. Yet its indiscriminate deployment serves to lump together places and peoples characterized by great differences. As such, the current reflexive invocation of ‘Global South’ carries with it the risk of concealing, or at least directing attention away from, the difference that place makes in human affairs—precisely what Bunge and his team were trying to foreground in the late 1960s. For political geographers, focusing attention on something as basic as the nature and implications of the different types of colonial systems that took root in Central/South America and in South/Southeast Asia risks fading from view, to say nothing of the complex, small-scale spatiality of uneven development that Bunge sought to highlight.

**Worlding Geography: decolonizing our discipline by better bridging language gaps,** Sara Koopman (Kent State School of Peace and Conflict Studies)

Colonial patterns continue to shape relations of knowledge production in Geography. The way the discipline is globalizing is deeply asymmetric and shaped by linguistic privilege. Like all privileges, linguistic privilege is often invisible to those who have it (Müller 2021). This often includes being rather careless and haphazard about using language support, if it is used at all. Improving our use of both interpretation (oral) and translation (written) is a way to work against these dynamics, and can

help to world and decolonize Geography. Anglophone hegemony can ironically be eroded with more and better translations into English, and more widespread and savvy use of two-way interpretation. English is the master's tool, but if used cautiously and critically it can be used to dismantle the master's house. We need stronger disciplinary norms for translation in journals and for interpretation in conferences and fieldwork and field courses. This is part of a broader shift needed in the culture of Geography towards worlding our reading and citation practices, which is fostered and supported by the Geography in the World country reports in Transactions. It is important that all of these efforts be understood as building a bigger messier us, rather than a homogenous us, or reinforcing us/them paradigms (Fall 2014). As geographers it is essential that we be more strategic in our use of translation and interpretation so that we can deepen and widen our connections, and weave more transformative and less colonial solidarities that have more power to build the other, more just, worlds that we dream of.

**9:20-10:50 Session II: Building commons, building community**

*Chair: Karen Culcasi, West Virginia University*

**Empowering Change: Refugee Agency in Grassroots Advocacy Organizations**, Kara E. Dempsey (Department of Geography and Planning, Appalachian State University)

In recent decades, scholarly research on displacement and forced migration has increasingly shifted attention from primarily focusing on the legal and structural elements to also include the agency of forced migrants. However, there is less scholarly work that examines how refugees continue to exercise agency after leaving refugee camps. Drawing from in-depth interviews with members of a refugee-led community support organization, this article investigates how this organization supports newly arrived refugees in New Zealand. This organization's locally focused approach emphasizes the establishment of refugee advocacy networks, solidarity, and fostering a sense of belonging. The article also discusses how the organization's locally-focused approach helps it to provide tailored support to address the immediate and dynamic needs of newly arrived refugees.

**Recuperating democratic institutions for territorial defense and self-determination in Mexico**, Fiona Gladstone (Fairleigh Dickinson University) and Bia'ni Madsa' Juarez Lopez

Contemporary social movements often realize power as they "scale up" –convincing ever-larger swathes of population to unite in actions and demands for change from powerful entities. This outward-facing action contrasts with another kind of social movement activity: building and sustaining local institutions for self-determination and self-governance. We call this work commoning. Commoning is particularly relevant for structurally marginalized communities in a neo-colonial world. Comunidades por la Autonomía (Communities for Autonomy) is an informal organization founded in 2023 by Indigenous Mexican activists to assist Maya communities in the Yucatan peninsula in developing robust democratic institutions as a form of territorial defense and self-determination. In this research, we (self-) examine the inward-focused commoning work of Comunidades por la Autonomia. We then relate this inward-focused commoning activism to the outward-facing work of social movement power-building and policy change.

**Housing Commons: Challenging Intersectional Disparities and Housing Precarity**, Brenda Parker (University of Illinois at Chicago) and Isobel Araujo, (University of Illinois Chicago)

Housing precarity is rooted in decades of racist, gendered, capitalist, and colonial policies that elevate housing as an individualized asset for exchange rather than collective and caring infrastructure. Burdens of housing precarity are not evenly shared: gendered and raced disparities shape vulnerabilities and experiences around shelter and survival. These include uneven caring burdens, gender-based violence, income and wealth inequality, and unequal representation and political power. These longstanding disparities and related housing precarity have been amplified in recent years by raced and gendered financialization, a pandemic, political conflict, and environmental crises. At the same time, creative and collective interventions, including housing commons, have also percolated and proliferated and are often being led by BIPOC and feminist activists (e.g., Shenaz Hossein, 2021; Summers and Fields 2022; Schwenkel 2022; Sutton 2019; Gordon-Nembhard 2023). Drawing from qualitative data, this paper explores how such commons are challenging housing precarity and cultivating communities centered in collectivity, creativity, and care

**Youth Distrust and Agency: Florida Curricular Debates, Civic Empowerment Gap, and Study Abroad**, Jessica Flach (Department of Geography, University of South Carolina)

Public schools in the United States face growing scrutiny regarding their role in shaping young people as “citizens-in-waiting” (Osler & Starkey, 2003), with state and non-state actors using curricular debates to cultivate a specific type of citizen. Beyond formal civics education, schools act as public spaces where youth learn to navigate their role in society. This research examines tensions between citizenship ideals promoted by the Florida Department of Education, various political actors, and schools themselves, investigating how political debates over public education shape young people’s civic identities and agency. Additionally, this study explores how study abroad and educational international travel serve as vehicles for ‘global citizenship.’ Through archival research, participant interviews, and participatory photo elicitation conducted in 2024, this research highlights young people’s agency amidst contested efforts to shape citizenship. Finally, it critically examines the limitations of international experiences within civic education, exposing ambiguous narratives from parents, schools, study abroad, and academic organizations in Florida.

**9:20-10:50 Session III: Humanitarian and post-conflict responses**

*Chair: Reece Jones, University of Hawai’i at Manoa*

**Smokescreens and Strangleholds: How Host Governments Obstruct Humanitarian Response**, Anne Della Guardia (International Relations Department, London School of Economics & Political Science)

Why do some humanitarian crises and affected regions receive more than others that are also deserving of response? This research examines a puzzle of the responsiveness of the humanitarian sector to different displacement situations, where comparable regions receive starkly different levels of response and face greater constraints in aid operations. Drawing from a comparative ethnography of aid in three crises in Cameroon, I build an argument that host government political incentives, shaped by subnational political dynamics, contribute to a dialogic relationship between humanitarian organizations and governments that leads to divergent outcomes in distinct crisis zones. I argue it is the government’s calculated threat potential of different contexts that predicts how assistance is funneled, and it is these domestic security interests that shape its decisions to either facilitate, obstruct or deny aid. I identify four mechanisms through which governments block or hinder humanitarian assistance to align with their interests.

**Humanitarian geographies of migrant return: Assisted Voluntary Return and Europe's migration 'crises'**, Austin Crane (Walker Institute of International & Area Studies and Department of Geography, University of South Carolina)

This presentation addresses an important convergence amidst recurring moments of crisis around migration: the intertwined spaces and politics of humanitarianism and migrant return. It advances a framework of “humanitarian geographies of migrant return” through analyzing the role that Assisted Voluntary Return (AVR) policies played in managing Europe’s migration ‘crisis,’ beginning in 2015. Across Europe, AVR is promoted as a humanitarian alternative to forced removal in that it allows for undocumented migrants and appeals-rights-exhausted asylum seekers to voluntarily return to their country of origin with counseling, travel booking, and financial assistance. AVR is therefore framed and implemented as a humanitarian policy of migration management – rationalized as a voluntary, dignified, and humane alternative to deportation. This article draws on interviews with AVR practitioners at a range of organizations across Europe (NGOs, the International Organization for Migration, and state actors) to analyze the spaces and politics of this humanitarian policy of migrant return. Through unpacking the discursive justification and practical implementation of AVR in moments of political crisis, this paper argues that institutions, discourses, and practices of humanitarianism remain integral to Europe’s management of migration and asylum through migrant return today.

**Slow Sacrifice Zones?: Rural post-conflict landscapes and explosive risk**, Ruth Trumble (Department of Global Studies and Geography)

This paper explores the work that decades-old minefields do in the long aftermath of conflict. I build on geographic scholarship on landscapes to think through how the production and maintenance of these landscapes reshapes risk for humans and non-humans who move through them. In the context of unexploded ordinances (UXO), such as landmines, in Bosnia-Herzegovina, I illustrate the dynamics of landscape. UXO, when well-placed—put into the ground in a way so that the UXO blends in to its environment—create a landscape of deception. The land looks as if it is safe to traverse. If those who placed the landmines did their job correctly, then the mine is difficult to see; thus, the landscape looks risk-free. While hiding certain kinds of labor, a landscape contaminated with UXO also reveals different kinds of labor, along with different types of risk. Risk of UXO harm can be simplified, wrongly, as the same to all who potentially trigger a UXO, for the explosive “does not care” about who it harms. Yet, by focusing on this relationship between actor(s), UXO, and the landscape, we can further unpack the politics and priorities that shape how powerful actors, such as the state and international organizations, unevenly value both land and people.

**The "Land Question" in the Russian Geopolitics of Territorial Occupation**, Vera Smirnova (Department of Geography and Geospatial Sciences, Kansas State University)

This paper uses the "land question" as a lens through which to trace the evolution of the concept of the state and territorial sovereignty in Russian geopolitical thought. The practice and idea of land ownership encapsulates a complex and overlapping entanglements between nature and state territoriality that have played a crucial role in shaping key conceptual milestones in the field, from Slavophilism's conceptions of the boundless world to Eurasianism's analysis of nomadic land relations. Some used the imaginary of land to argue for the dynamic expansion of a pan-Slavic nation-state based on the unity of the people and their collective ownership of all-Slavic soil, while others theorized the

preservation and enrichment of an "ethnos" grounded in natural conditions. By analyzing these intersections, this study reveals how land functions not only as a physical resource, but also as a powerful ideological and geopolitical construct in Russian history, hence problematizing its re-colonial implications in today's geopolitical landscape.

**11-12:30 Session IV: Border enforcement and governmentality**

*Chair: Kenneth Madsen, Ohio State University*

**Spanish Border Externalization & The Necroborder**, Fernando Lopez Oggier (University of Hawai'i at Manoa)

The Global Approach to Migration (GAM) functions as the EU's organizational framework to manage migration through interregional collaboration between origin, transit, and destination countries. In 2006 Spain spearheaded European border externalization with the implementation of the Seahorse project: transnational police operations focused on pinpointing and halting 'irregular' migration in the Atlantic Ocean and West African coastline. After the conclusion of the Seahorse project, Spain continued its border externalization efforts through the development of the West Sahel and Blue Sahel projects, incorporating migratory land routes in North and West Africa into their purview. The Spanish border was re-spatialized as an itinerant, extra-territorial political institution to systematically intercept 'irregular' migrants. This paper conducts a policy analysis of the Seahorse, West Sahel, and Blue Sahel projects as well as a review of migrant mortality and disappearance data from different migratory routes to evaluate the surveillance, detention, and violence levied on 'irregular' migrants. Drawing on the work of Achille Mbembe in *Necropolitics* (2019) and by examining the politics of migrant (un)desirability, this paper argues that Spain uses necropower to preserve neocolonial spatial hierarchies of class, race, and gender where certain lives are expendable. The EU's continued political influence over former colonized territories occurs concurrently with a restriction of former colonized peoples' mobility, fencing off the resources within EU member states. Despite migrants challenging these spatial hierarchies, Spain's border externalization projects transformed the Spanish border into a peripatetic 'deathworld' where the life and death of migrants are controlled by the sovereign.

**Malicious compliance: How Rights-Based Frameworks Have Enabled the Development of Border Technology**, John Nightingale (Geography and Environment, University of Hawai'i at Manoa)

With the border industry expected to exceed \$65 billion by 2025, the development of border technology advances at a pace that exceeds our capacity to effectively monitor these developments. Resistance from academia and civil society has primarily relied on rights-based critiques grounded in GDPR, fundamental rights and human rights. Despite these efforts, the proliferation of technology in migration governance continues to escalate. Following Zuboff's instructive call that "every vaccine begins in careful knowledge of the enemy disease", there is a crucial need to conceptualise the logic of operation that enables the development of border technology (2019; p.20). As an exemplary case study of Horizon 2020 border technology research, I examine the application of rights-based frameworks in the development of NESTOR – a €5 million project that developed a next-generation holistic border surveillance system. Through the analysis of 44 project reports obtained via FOI requests, Nestor pays meticulous attention to the compliance of rights – but I argue this is a superficial presentation of compliance, or "malicious compliance". First, these considerations are contained within the constructed 'bubble' of the research trial, which limits accountability and ignores the intended application of the technology beyond the funding period. Furthermore, NESTOR demonstrates a

significant verbal commitment to rights and external accountability whilst the implementation of these practices is either grossly exaggerated or systematically undermined to ineffectiveness. This leads to the conclusion that the logic of rights has been co-opted for its antagonistic purpose, as rights-based frameworks have enabled the research and development of border technology

**Refugee Camp Territories in Jordan**, Karen Culcasi (Department of Geology and Geography, West Virginia University)

Jordan has the second-largest refugee population per capita in the world. While the majority of refugees in Jordan have remade their lives in towns and cities, there are seventeen official refugee camps in the state. Focusing on two Palestinian camps and one Syrian camp, this paper examines camps as co-existing in relation to four different forms of territory. First, camps are their own discrete entities that mirror conventional territories. Second, they are networked, dasymetric territories that blur and seep into other communities. Third, camps exist relationally to Jordan, Syria, and Palestine. And lastly, they have evolved into small Syrian and Palestinian territories. Ultimately, this paper highlights the complex camp-scape in Jordan and the myriad forms of territory that exist in relation to it.

**A visiting nurse: women's mobility and professionalization and the geopolitics of consumptive care and control**, Kyle Evered (Department of Geography, Environment, and Social Sciences, Michigan State University)

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, empires and nation-states expanded investments in medical science and public health, aligning with Foucault's concepts of biopolitics and governmentality. This shift marked a transition from territorial expansion to population control, but many country-specific factors were also at play in the promotion of wellness. For both state and civil society leaders, tuberculosis was one of the most significant concerns. Despite the era's growing centralization in medical care, as Mooney noted in England, hospitals and sanatoriums could not accommodate all TB patients, necessitating home-based solutions. Dispensary systems were established to track cases and provide treatment, but women would also play crucial roles in connecting these institutions to urban neighborhoods and private homes. As nursing and social work became academic disciplines and formal professions, the concept of a tuberculosis nurse—trained in both fields—gained prominence. Supported by states and women's organizations, these nurses could dispense treatment. However, they primarily focused on information; both education and surveillance. As teachers, they informed communities, especially women and girls, that TB was preventable and treatable. Simultaneously, they identified existing cases, at-risk individuals, homes, and neighborhoods, and reported noncompliance with medical instruction and emerging public health regulations. In my paper, I examine these multifaceted and often conflicting geopolitics of how states, women's organizations, and individuals rendered care/control within a complex of disease, health, private homes, impoverished neighborhoods, disparities in class, culture, gender, race, religion, and schooling, and assistance and treatment amid surveillance and policing.

**11-12:30 Session V: Energy, conflict, and climate change**

*Chair: Ruth Trumble, Hofstra University*

**Contested mineral ecologies: Mining formalization, ethnic communities and territorial struggles in Chocó (Colombia) and Madre de Dios (Perú)**, Gisselle Vila Benites (Global Development, Cornell University)



In Latin America, the engagements between ethnic communities and informal mining are varied yet little explored. In this presentation, I examine ethnic communities' claims for mining formalization in their territories and the reasons for their different fates, recognition and misrecognition. Working with a comparative case study, I present Chocó (Colombia) and Madre de Dios (Peru). In both areas, ethnic communities practice alluvial mining and have demanded their formalization with expressions such as Black Peoples mining zones and indigenous community mining, however recognition is achieved only in the first case. I argue that the contrasting outcome can be explained with the notion of mineral ecologies. Drawing from discussions on the geosocial formations of mining, adaptation in artisanal and small-scale mining, and ethnic territories, mineral ecologies are conceptualized as ethnic peoples' understandings of socio-ecological changes driven by mining, and their adaptations to these changes. The findings suggest that claims for mining formalization combine perspectives to advance ethnic territorial projects through mining and understanding of a range of mining-driven socio-ecological transformations in aquatic bodies. This range affects the types of formalization that ethnic communities claim -between artisanal and mechanized mining practices. The findings stress that formalization processes open parallel but reciprocal territorialization processes. Moreover, formalization is found to be a process whose purpose exceeds mere rights allocation but one where socio-ecological conditions and updated governance and livelihood arrangements seek to be codified, legitimized, and protected.

**Mining Their Own Business: Everyday Power Struggles Between Informal Miners and State Officials in Turkey**, Mehmet Eroglu (Department of Geography, Environment, and Spatial Sciences, Michigan State University)

In the Zonguldak coal basin, located in northwestern Turkey, coal mining is conducted by three groups: the state-owned coal company, private companies, and informal miners. While private companies operate under formal agreements with the state, informal miners, as the term suggests, extract coal without authorization or documentation. Officials from the state coal company, in coordination with the forestry department and gendarmerie forces, work to monitor and suppress informal mining activities. Despite these efforts, informal miners persist in extracting coal in the mountainous and forested areas of Zonguldak, frequently relocating to evade raids. Drawing on fieldwork conducted in Zonguldak during the summers of 2022, 2023, and 2024—which included interviews and participant observation—this paper examines the ongoing, everyday power struggle between informal miners and state authorities. I argue that this struggle centers on the control of space, specifically the territorial control of the Zonguldak basin and, by extension, its coal resources. Throughout the paper, I explore how this power struggle manifests through shifting alliances and tensions among informal miners, private companies, and various groups of state officials. In conclusion, I contend that while informal miners exercise agency in contesting the dominant power of state forces to sustain their livelihoods—particularly in light of the state's failure to provide alternative economic opportunities—their actions ultimately reinforce and perpetuate precarious working conditions rather than transforming the existing power dynamics or labor structures.

**The Proliferation of National Security: renewable energy technology in the U.S.**, Lindsay Naylor (Department of Geography & Spatial Sciences, University of Delaware)

New geopolitical discourses are proliferating in the emergent era of the green energy transition, where environmental disasters, global climate change, and access to strategic resources are increasingly being framed as issues of national security. While it is argued that discourses of climate security and energy security are less likely to move the needle on climate change adaptation and mitigation, the adoption of

renewables under the guise of national security is increasing. In this paper we examine the ways in which energy independence has driven new discourses of national security. We argue that newer desires to control and compete in renewable technology development to protect U.S. interests sit alongside conventional applications of national security where military readiness and renewable technology, specifically wind energy generation, compete. Using the development of rare earth mining and manufacturing in the U.S. and wind turbine siting restrictions by the Department of Defense we draw out the reframing of renewable energy technology as an issue of national security.

**Unlocking the Hidden Vault: Harnessing the Power of Untapped Government Data for Safeguarding Biocultural Diversity in Mexican Maize or Government Data and Biocultural Diversity in Mexican Maize**, Jimena de la Fuente Ramirez (Genética de la Conservación, Jardín Botánico, Instituto de Biología, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Ciudad de México, México and School for Environment and Sustainability, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI, United States; Laboratorio Nacional de Ciencias de la Sostenibilidad, Instituto de Ecología, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Mexico City, Mexico) and Javier Pérez-López; Leonardo Calzada; Gonzalo Martínez-Herrera; René Cerritos; Valeria Alaveza; Ana Wegier.

Agro-industrial seed systems favor the genetic homogenization of crops. Preserving the processes that generate and maintain the diversification of crop complexes is therefore fundamental to ensuring food sovereignty, environmental change and meeting the needs of the world's population. This will be jeopardized if the mechanisms that enable crop diversification allow gene flow from genetically modified varieties (GMOs). Maize is a crop of worldwide importance due to its multiple uses. In Mexico, maize possesses incommensurable political, cultural, economic, and biological significance. For this project we consulted the Mexican government's transgene monitoring data ranging from 2004 to 2019. Then we matched specific gene traits such as herbicide tolerance and insect tolerance, to specific transgenic events. Finally we constructed visualizations that reflect the geographic extent of transgenes. This study revealed the presence of transgenes in 23 Mexican states. More than half occurred within states that lacked the planting authorization granted from 2009 to 2012 (55.24%). In addition, 15 novel genetic stackings were identified (6.02%) (not allowed by the Mexican legal framework). The distribution of transgenes reflects high long-distance dispersal rates favored by the agricultural dynamics inherent to local seed systems. It also exhibits presence in vulnerable areas where maize sustains significant social and ecological interactions. Our work engages political ecology debates by rethinking the effectiveness of biosafety policies and territorial governance. Due to legal and ecological implications, GMOs generate new ways of producing environments by transforming the social and ecological processes that allow the cultural and environmental reproduction of subsistence agriculture

**11-12:30 Session VI: Colonialism, knowledge, and anti-colonial practices**

*Chair: Mark Ortiz, Penn State University*

**Race and the British Colonial Imaginary**, Gerry Kearns (Department of Geography, Maynooth University, Ireland)

The geographical imaginary of British identity very often treats colonialism as beginning with the Caribbean islands. This ignores the earlier colonial activity in Ireland. This framing of British history treats race as a category that preceded colonialism. A more complete historical geography of colonialism highlights the social construction of race in the contact zone of empire. This has



implication for how settler colonialism and its legacies is thought about in our present times, and for the Irish blindspot in the British geopolitical imaginary.

**The decolonization and feminization of pre-field missionary training**, Jill Thornton (Department of Geography, University of South Carolina)

In the wake of decolonization movements in the Global South, pre-field training for Western, Christian missionaries has undergone a steady ideological and curricular transformation in an attempt to distance itself from historically imperial attitudes and objectives. Even so, contemporary training course curriculum is still limited to predominantly Western authors shaping mainstream Christian literature (such as Georges' "The 3D Gospel" [2014] and other training resources) that attempt to universalize the particularities of "cultures" by assigning them to large, monolithic categories. Course leaders and staff members attempt to offset these cultural generalizations and stereotypes by infusing their training with elements of "the personal", which include the relational, emotional, and spiritual experiences and challenges of individual missionaries working cross-culturally. Based on data gathered from semi-structured interviews, content analysis, and participant observation of two US-based missionary intercultural training courses, I argue that this feminization of contemporary missionary "intercultural" training is an ideological and affective response to lingering styles and strategies of historically colonial/imperial missionary practices. Additionally, I note the ideological and curricular "shifts" in the past two centuries of missionary training and mobilization, including "civilizing" nineteenth century indigenous cultures, twentieth-century anti-communist objectives, and the current centering of missionary roles and challenges related to gender, family, and multicultural community structures in foreign settings. Crucially, this paper highlights the salience of using feminist geopolitical approaches to examine how the evangelical Christian missionary enterprise has shifted its focus from the global-imperial-national to the individual-family-community in its pre-field training, while persisting in its colonial-era homogenization of different "cultures".

**Anentaim-Sa-Tin-Nunka (Thinking Earth) for planetary health: Listening to Mother Earth's Wisdom through Indigenous Shuar Science**, Martina Jakubchik-Paloheimo (Department of Geography and Planning, Queens University) and Shuar Kakaram de Buena Esperanza

This paper identifies the critical connection between Indigenous place-based knowledge and the relationships with the more-than-human embedded in the Shuar landscape of the Ecuadorian Amazon. We speak to those non-human potential agents for knowledge production within and with Shuar science. We highlight Shuar's relational epi-ontology of the Ecuadorian Amazonian landscape by drawing from a conceptual framework that includes the more-than-human and framing of interconnected Indigenous theoretical determinants of planetary health by examining the interrelations between human-non-human nature and Indigenous knowledge systems that understand how to listen to the wisdom of Mother Earth. This communication can help aid in biodiversity conservation and restoration. Based on informant interviews, we explore the current crisis that is dispossessing Shuar peoples from their lands and the concurrent dispossession of Shuar science. The term 'Thinking Earth,' from the Shuar phrase 'Anentaim-sa-tin-nunka' or in Spanish 'Pensamiento de la Tierra' untangles this idea of embodied knowledge within ancestral territories and is helpful to articulate the web of relationships with the more-than-human world for the Shuar. We conclude that the disruption of this knowledge is detrimental to the health and well-being of the Shuar and our planetary home.

**Climate Extremes, Civil Unrest, and Natural Resource Extraction: Understanding Multiple Exposures in Sofala and Gaza, Mozambique,** Lauren Herwehe (Department of Geography, University of Colorado Boulder)

In the past decade, Mozambique has suffered from three of the most devastating cyclones in African history as well as the country's worst drought in nearly half a century. In tandem, this period has seen the onset of significant political unrest fueled by grievances over socioeconomic and political inequality, including a civil conflict in the Cabo Delgado province and violent post-election protests throughout the country. This presentation will focus on my proposed dissertation research at the intersection of these climate extremes and civil unrest, based on 70 preliminary fieldwork interviews with farmers and government officials in the Sofala and Gaza provinces. These provinces were chosen for comparative purposes due to differing cyclone and drought vulnerability as well as historical socioeconomic and political privilege. I propose to use remote sensing paired with interviews to illuminate how these concurrent shocks correlate with agricultural land use change and adaptations and in turn how these agricultural changes correlate with resource disputes. Preliminary fieldwork revealed that the most common adaptations that farmers make in response to climate extremes and change are cultivating different crops, at different times, and at multiple different elevations—all behaviors that are detectable with remote sensing. Regarding resource disputes, farmers reported that they have increased significantly in recent years in part due to increasing land scarcity due to climate change, including reports of government land grabbing. This research is situated within the broader literature on climate change and conflict and aims to contribute to filling several of its methodological and conceptual gaps.

**1:45-3:00      Session VII: Border theories and thinking across borders**

*Chair: Benjamin Forest, McGill University*

**The corridor is a positive space that eliminates the negative space of the frontier: security and development contemporary Tibet,** Andrew Grant (University of Tampa)

Western China's border provinces' domestic economic corridors are positive spaces that erase the negative spaces of the frontier. Frontiers, understood as spaces of incomplete sovereign control, threaten Chinese governance and the success of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). An analysis of sinophone writings on corridors and frontiers demonstrates how bridgehead economic corridors, such as the Tibet-Yi Economic Corridor, are theorised to eliminate frontiers through development. Within a context of uneven and combined geographies, leapfrog development is an indeterminate social process that has shaped both corridors and frontier spaces through new resources and mobilities. I draw from fieldwork on the Tibetan Plateau to show how the agency characteristic of Tibetans in a state-challenging 'frontier of manoeuvre' has been affected by restrictions on practices of everyday life and religion, including checkpoints and fire restrictions.

**The Art of Not so Being Governed: Territory and Citizenship for the Nepalese Bianmin across the Liminal Himalayan Borderscapes,** Baichuan Liu (Department of Geography, Durham University)

At the backyard of the Himalayas, over the zig-zagging borderscapes between Nepal and Tibet, centuries of historical, cultural and religious exchanges made these corridors key sites for the trades and migration. Today, the Nepalese bianmin (border inhabitants) travel, live and work internationally

without passports and visa. While the bianmin enjoy a relative degree of autonomy of crossing the international borders in a flexible and permeable way, they are confined to 30km away from the crossings, established in the form of subnational borders that rigidly stops further mobilities. Between the international and subnational borders, there lies a flexible and mobile yet liminal and marginal space of interactions for the bianmin to live, work and entertain. Thus, an exceptional borderscapes emerge to the centre of living for the bianmin with borders on both sides and (un)governed (in)formally by both the Chinese and Nepalese states. Yet, they navigate the borderscapes in generative and productive ways and negotiate the meanings of the liminal spaces in creatively. I study the bianmin and the liminal borderscapes they inhabit to explore the ways in which their living, working and (un)belonging shape the meanings of territory and citizenship. Through ethnographic work grounded on the everyday geopolitical praxis across two specific border towns, this research first problematises and contributes to the theory of borderscapes by offering a unique case study characterised by liminality. Following an engagement with liminality, I argue that the borderscapes occupied by the bianmin offers a way of (re)thinking governmentality, territory and citizenship beyond long-standing binaries.

**Walking Alongside: The Hot Girl Walk**, Devika Ranjan (Performance Studies, Northwestern University)

This creative and critical essay expands the TikTok phenomenon of the Hot Girl Walk -- characterized by its focus on "goals, gratitude, and hotness" -- into a radical and necessarily political practice. So far, the extensive discourse around the Hot Girl Walk -- like most feminized exercise -- has been about the health benefits, productivity boosts, or products that one needs to buy to achieve the requisite "hotness" for the walk. Yes, it is sort of silly, a momentary fad. But the Hot Girl Walk was born in the pandemic; it is a testament to the ways in which all walks are political, and all walks have radical potential, and the stakes are life or death. Recently, my walks have been borne out of the frustration of stillness, anger, and the inability to do enough in the face of genocide. Through these walks, I invoke the Hindu goddess Kali. Kali is the divine manifestation of rage. She herself had a mythological "Hot Girl Walk," in which she roamed the earth drinking the blood of demons to save the universe from destruction. Kali walked in her anger, in pursuit of justice, in pursuit of community care that she enacted through her own body. The worship of Kali points to the necessity of engaging with death -- the ultimate unproductivity, the extreme opposite of wellness culture, the liminal space in which we must come to terms with mortality -- through walking. In this experimental autoethnography, I call for a radical reimagining of walking. As protesters march for Gaza around the world and refugees flee their homes with tanks at their backs, I consider the ways in which a walk is always political -- and how the Hot Girl Walk (when freed from constraints of empty gratitude and wellness) is a practice of self-reflection, acknowledgement and embrace of difficulty, and political and physical solidarity.

**An Adornian Critique of Categories, Borders and Boundaries**, Daniel Rogers (CUNY Graduate Center)

Reece Jones's 2009 Progress in Human Geography article "Categories, borders and boundaries" was a provocative synthesis of strands of thought from poststructuralism and cognitive science, depicting both the inevitability and the danger of fixed categories and divisions, in the realm of thought but also in the real world. The article called for further work on the "complex bounding process of categorization," and posited human geography as a front line of research and reflection into the fundamentals of society. It has not yet, however, instigated much further work in this vein, either by Jones or by others. His subsequent books have featured empirical research on political borders and the

violence they catalyze, enhancing a burgeoning and important literature. But this literature does not foreground theory, and as such, is limited in what it can contribute to a project of societal transformation. Largely unaddressed in Jones's article, though intrinsically related to his themes, are the notions of concept and identity, not to mention Theodor Adorno's philosophical-sociological work on these notions. I will argue that Adorno's account of identity thinking and reification in his "negative dialectics" points the way to a more comprehensive understanding of our bordered world of nation-states, and also helps ground the project of overcoming it.

**1:45-3:00      Session VIII: Environmental justice and the city**

*Chair: Brenda Parker, University of Illinois - Chicago*

**One-Dimensional Climate: Los Angeles at the Crossroads of Climate History**, Benjamin Weinger (Department of Geography, University of California, Los Angeles)

This presentation examines the development of urban climate planning in Los Angeles, drawing on two years of sustained participant observation in the Los Angeles Office of Energy and Sustainability. Examining the rise of an ostensible low-carbon urban polity, I extend the implications of a burgeoning normative climate politics beyond the boundaries of this city. In challenging the perceived neutrality of climate governance, this dissertation uncovers the contested nature of the city's transition to a low-carbon polity. While local adherents (politicians, planners) tend to present climate governance as objective, inevitable, common sense, unquestionably advantageous or even post-political, the pursuit of climate governance and the transition to a low-carbon polity is far from neutral, apolitical, or technical. My research among municipal climate actors and activists indeed reveal that there are multiple sustainabilities in circulation, and in competition. The daily practices of urban climate planners inform a series of questions around the implementation of the city's climate plans. My hypotheses center around 1) the territorial and distributional politics of climate transitions, seeking to complicate normative modes of accounting, spatially delimiting, and addressing the carbonization of governance; 2) understanding the geopolitical ecological implications of local climate transitions including impacts of ecologically unequal exchange, carbon leakage, relocation effects, and resource shuffling; and 3) examining whether the urban measures taken by the City of Los Angeles to combat climate change significantly alter or reconfigure the methods through which carbon enters or exits the city. The rise of urban climate governance in cities like Los Angeles is a story not of triumph but of a continuing battle over which ideals will shape our climate futures.

**Fantasies, Fabulation, and Phantoms in the 'Magic City': A Hauntology of Environmental Injustice in Birmingham, Alabama**, Mark Ortiz (Department of Geography, Penn State University)

This paper turns to the lenses of hauntology and fantasy to understand the contours of environmental injustice in the city of Birmingham, Alabama. I illustrate how the urban landscape of contemporary Birmingham is a palimpsest of material-semiotic layers, from the spatial and infrastructural remnants of white supremacist fantasies of the 'New South' industrial regime to the post-industrial and rapidly gentrifying city of today. I illustrate how these layers and spatial formations interact, materializing the tensions between divergent white supremacist and liberatory fantasies that have lasting legacies in various hauntings. I engage with the theoretical and analytical framework of 'hauntology' (Good, Chioyenda, and Rahimi, 2022) and Whyte's notion of "ancestral fantasies" (2018) to read across the layers of the city, arguing that it is critical to attend to hauntings, fantasies, and stories as constitutive aspects of environmental (in)justice today. Methodologically, I interweave oral histories of workers

who labored in the mines and furnaces of a rapidly industrializing Birmingham with historical newspaper reports and digital media describing the ghost stories and hauntings of the city, to illustrate the utility of a hauntological perspective for characterizing the long-term sedimentations that shape enduringly uneven environmental exposures.

**Humans and concrete in Albuquerque's International District**, Ramona Malczynski (Department of Geography and Environmental Studies, University of New Mexico)

This paper is part of a larger dissertation project on the complex relationship between humans and concrete, an example of what urban political ecologist, Swyngedouw, calls *socionature*. The research considers three sites in Albuquerque, New Mexico – a cement plant, the concrete-lined arroyos that serve as the city’s drainage system, and the International District neighborhood. This paper focuses on the International District, the most marginalized neighborhood in the city with the highest rates of homelessness, poverty and environmental bads. Historic Route 66 runs through the neighborhood and the construction of Interstate 40 disrupted Black and Latino communities in the area. For decades, the neighborhood has been the initial community for many immigrant families. In addition, community members have been organizing around urban green spaces, food sovereignty, and sustainable urban planning. This research aims to answer questions about how the production and use of concrete contributed to environmental racism and privilege as well as how knowledge politics played into decisions about urban development using concrete in Albuquerque. It also examines how concrete affects the racialization of space and spatialization of race in the city. The International District is an interesting place to inform these questions relevant to the broader discussion about environmental racism and privilege. Residents of this neighborhood have diverse demographics and Albuquerque’s context is unique as the largest city in a majority-minority state with one of the lowest median incomes in the country and a colonial history much different than other parts of the U.S.

**1:45-3:00**      **Session IX: Eurasia - Knowledge making**

*Chair: Megan Dixon (The College of Idaho) and Ariel Otruba (Virginia Tech Institute for Policy and Governance and Arcadia University)*

**Geographies of Resistance: Kurdish Autonomy and the Politics of Land in Rojava and Bakur**, Dillon Foster (School for Environment and Sustainability, University of Michigan)

In 2012 Kurds in Syria proclaimed a self-administered “ecological democratic confederalist” society in northern Syria along the Turkish border in a region known as Rojava. Autonomous Rojava sharply contrasts the political situation in neighboring Bakur, a Kurdish-majority region in southeastern Turkey where, for nearly four decades, the Kurdish Workers’ Party has waged a guerilla war seeking autonomy from the Turkish state. This paper situates the divergent political outcomes of the autonomy movements in Rojava and Bakur within the socio-ecological context of their occupying nation-states. Following the historical relationship between the development of the nation-state world system and environmental exploitation, outlined by Kurdish revolutionary leader Abdullah Öcalan, I trace the ways in which land transformation served as a structural process of state formation in Syria and Turkey. Utilizing Antonio Gramsci’s theory of historical conjuncture and Immanuel Wallerstein’s world-system perspective, I show how the geohistorical process of state formation created diverging political conditions shaping and constraining the geopolitical contours of Kurdish movements. Despite a rich history, the complexities of the Kurdish autonomy movement have gone largely unnoticed in contemporary anti-system discourse reflecting a broader trend of undertheorizing non/anti-state social movements seeking alternative forms of governance and production. Therefore, the goal of this paper

is twofold. First, the articulation of an analytical framework useful in approaching anti-state movements from a world-system perspective. Second, I show how long-term geohistorical processes of land transformation shape the contemporary strategies of social movements seeking autonomy from the nation-state system.

**Albazino across Narrations and Imaginations: A Comparative Spatial History of a Far Eastern Eurasian Borderland**, Liao Zhang (Global Perspectives on Society Postdoctoral Program, NYU Shanghai)

Albazino is a historical village in Russia's Amur Oblast, located on the left bank of the upper Amur River, part of an international waterway border between Russia and China. It holds great significance in both Russian and Chinese historiographies. It was the Russian Empire's first foothold in Manchuria in the seventeenth century, and it symbolized Qing China's victorious defense and eventual humiliating loss of Outer Manchuria to Russia in the nineteenth century. This paper examines how local historians, archeologists, and museum curators on both sides of the upper Amur River, namely the Russian Far East and Northeast China, have constructed various iterations of Albazino's spatial history and imagination over the past century. It also explores how these differing and often conflicting constructs of Albazino's history and spatial imaginary aligned with the Russian and Chinese states' interpretations of their colonial pasts in Northeast Eurasia respectively. Furthermore, they fueled the discursive bifurcation of the two Eurasian states' politicization of their positions vis-a-vis the broad Eurasian history and geography. Two key themes underpin my discussion of the construct of a borderland site's spatial history. First, the production of historical geographical knowledge has been instrumental in justifying modern Soviet, Russian, and Chinese states' political compartmentalization of Eurasia. Second, as the case of Albazino demonstrates, contesting interpretations of shared Eurasian history and geography has deeply influenced ordinary people's mental mapping of cultural heritage, social belonging, and political sovereignty all along national lines.

**Building Socialism, Synthesizing Eurasianism: The 1934 Ferdowsi Millennium in the Soviet Union**, Diego Benning Wang (Department of History, Kean University)

In 1934, the millennium of the birth of the Persian-language poet Ferdowsi was celebrated in Moscow, Leningrad, and across numerous culturally Persianate ethno-territorial entities of the Soviet Union, most notably in Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Tajikistan, and Tatarstan. Albeit labeled the Tajik national poet in the later decades, Ferdowsi was still officially considered an Iranian poet at the time of the jubilee (and until the early 1940s). Owing as much to the enthusiastic instigations of Soviet linguist Hovsep Orbeli, who was then director of the Hermitage, as to friendly relations between two rapidly modernizing neighboring states—the Soviet Union and Iran, the grandiose jubilee involved the active participation of Soviet leaders, prominent Soviet scholars, and the wider Soviet public on an unprecedented scale. Taking place in the immediate aftermath of the First Congress of Soviet Writers, the Ferdowsi jubilee marked a watershed in the Soviet approach to the pre-Bolshevik literary and cultural heritage of the non-Slavic nations of the Soviet empire. The foreignness of Ferdowsi notwithstanding, the jubilee set the ideological and organizational paradigm for the official promotion of the cultural connections among the culturally Persianate Soviet nations.

**3:10-4:40 Session X: Geopolitics and violence**

*Chair: Kara Dempsey, Appalachian State University*



**Violent Confluence of Peace and Geopolitics in the Pacific**, Tatsuki Kohatsu (Department of Geography and Environment, University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa)

Geographers have been instrumental in demonstrating how peace and violence are place-specific. However, the critical examination of peace has been limited in island and oceanic contexts, especially in the Pacific. Drawing insights from critical geopolitics and island geographies, this article examines peace and security treaties along with islanders' experiences in the Western Pacific during the first half of the twentieth century, when a notion of collective peace took prominence. I argue that the logic of geopolitical containment constituted the discourse of collective peace. The discourse conceived negative peace (i.g., absence of direct armed conflicts) through hierarchical othering and spatial control, informing the arms control and collective deterrence as means of imagining peace in the Pacific. In doing so, imagining peace legitimized control over islands in the Pacific and (re)produced conditions where lives on the islands were rendered secondary to the interests of metropolitan states while foreclosing different ways of thinking about peace. I focus on the case of Okinawa and Pacific Islands in the Western Pacific as a window to explore a different imagining of the Pacific, further shedding critical light on the need and possibility of engagement with peace attending to islands and perspectives that are often marginalized in order to deepen the discussion of peace. This article contributes to critical peace studies and critical geopolitics by demonstrating how peace is a reflexive practice that carries a range of everyday and state level geopolitical implications.

**The Reconfiguration of Geopolitical Imaginations in Times of Rupture. A Critical Geopolitical Analysis of Political Debates in the German Bundestag on the Russian War against Ukraine**, Lilly Anjana Lautermann (Department of Geography, University of Muenster) and Paul Reuber (Department of Geography, University of Muenster)

Russia's military invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 has had a profound impact on international politics, marking one of the most influential disruptions since the end of the Cold War. While the focus of political debates is currently on the political and social impact of the war, questions arise from a discourse-theoretical perspective as to how foreign and security policy discourse logics are shifting in the face of the invasion. This shift may result in permanent changes to the political geographies of international alliances and their power geometries. In light of Germany's evolving role as a security partner and a pivotal reference point for the EU's stance in this conflict, our paper examines the war-related geopolitical discourses within German politics. Analyzing the respective debates of the German Bundestag, the paper discusses two dynamics of the ongoing discursive shifts: On the one hand, historically rehearsed geopolitical representations that resurface from the archives of geopolitics are once again gaining importance for the rationalization of conflict trajectories. On the other hand, war also signifies a discursive rupture, which may challenge the interpretative power of “classical” framings from the geopolitical archive, thereby questioning hegemonic narratives and potentially reshaping future geopolitical imaginations.

**A critical reflection on tourism geopolitics: research progress and future agenda**, Yan Huang (Geography School, South China Normal University) and Yungang Liu

Tourism and geopolitics are intrinsically linked. However, current studies on the geopolitical facets of tourism are insufficient. This article first reflects on the diversified understandings of geopolitics and how these different interpretations are reproduced in existing tourism geopolitics scholarship. We then elucidate the multiple complicated and intimate entanglements between tourism and geopolitics and highlight the often underestimated geopolitical agency of tourism. Following this, we evaluate the state

of the extant research on this topic. Finally, we suggest three directions for future research: (1) deepening theorisation and operationalisation, (2) attending to agency, mechanism, and non-state actors, and (3) adopting a spatially sensitive perspective. In summary, we argue that further conjoining the relatively isolated tourism and geopolitics terrain benefits both disciplines of tourism geography and political geography, and calls for the development of innovative interdisciplinary, theoretical, and methodological approaches to advance the field.

**The Dictator’s Rocketeer: Lutz Kayser and His Extraordinary Dream of Commercial Spaceflight**, Chase Womack (Department of Geography, Environment, and Sustainability, University of North Carolina at Greensboro) and Corey M. Johnson

In the late 1970s, a West German private aerospace firm founded by Lutz Kayser wanted to be the first private company in the world to launch rockets into outer space. Kayser was an entrepreneurial and idiosyncratic rocketeer who was trained and mentored by Ex-Nazi rocket scientists. More than four decades before Elon Musk, Richard Branson, or Jeff Bezos sought to commercialize space flight, Kayser nearly succeeded in his desire to send “Billigrakete” (cheap rockets) into space. Ultimately, OTRAG, Kayser’s company, was derailed as much by growing opposition from the governments of West Germany, East Germany, the USA, and the Soviet Union, than any technological shortcomings. Cheap commercial rockets would have broken the superpowers’ oligopoly on space flight, but there were also geopolitical implications of Kayser’s activities in what was then the country of Zaire under the brutal dictatorship of Mobutu Sese Seko that caused OTRAG to become enmeshed in Cold War wrangling. What unfolded in the jungles of southeastern Zaire is a remarkable tale of neocolonialism, geopolitical intrigue, thrilling techno-optimism, and, ultimately, Kayser’s abandonment of his dream in the face of state-based opposition. This paper seeks to understand the origins and legacies of Lutz Kayser’s rocketry dream and examine what it means for contemporary space geopolitics.

**3:10-4:40      Session XI: Abolition and liberation thinking**

*Chair: Sara Koopman, Kent State University*

**Border Walls and Mass Incarceration**, Kenneth Madsen (Department of Geography, The Ohio State University at Newark)

This paper considers the parallels between fences and walls at international borders and the fences and walls that comprise and shore up prisons, with a focus on the United States as a global leader on both fronts. Perhaps one of the most dramatic similarities is who benefits compared to who pays a price for these restrictions on movement. Both sets of structures tend to restrict movement by those already marginalized and disempowered while those of greater economic means are not typically caught up in either justice system, have more resources at their disposal to fight such a possibility, and more easily traverse international boundaries. At an even more fundamental level, border and prison walls are both about who belongs and who does not, whose lives are valued and whose lives are dismissed. Both also support the ongoing exploitation of capitalism by reducing social and economic mobility and thereby disciplining labor. While both types of structures promise greater security, they fail to deliver in practice. Walls do not establish security but rather the illusion of security. Migrants are diverted, not stopped. Incarcerated individuals are punished and forgotten, not rehabilitated. In both cases, abolitionists have pushed back against this new normal to urge society to consider alternatives to these structures.

**Expanding horizons: Closing toxic prisons and a just transition,** Sonja Dahl (Department of Geography, Environment, and Urban Studies, Temple University)

Since at least the early 2000s, prison abolition and environmental justice movements have worked together on campaigns that focus on the overlap between carceral systems, environmental damage, and human health. Some organizers fighting carceral systems are beginning to consider wider horizons in their struggles to close toxic carceral facilities, through borrowing the concept of “just transition” from climate and environmental movements. In this paper, I build from a larger collaborative research project involving case studies of campaigns that have protested toxic conditions in prisons and used environmental arguments as they sought to close carceral facilities. Grounded in perspectives from Black geographies, abolition geography, and abolition ecologies, I outline the ways in which New York City and California organizers explored visions and practices of a “decarceral just transition.” Further building our understanding of what a decarceral just transition can look like, and what stands in the way, helps to widen political possibilities and inform movement strategies.

**Placing the Global Struggle for Black Liberation in East Tennessee,** LaToya Eaves (Department of Geography & Sustainability, University of Tennessee, Knoxville) and Brian Boyce, Gabrielle Chapman, Caleb Gore, Annie Liu, Lutfiyah Madyun, Mary McMillan Terry, Cole Thornton, Anne Victoria, Margaret Walton

Ruth Wilson Gilmore declares, “A geographical imperative lies at the heart of every struggle for social justice.” Scholars have considered this imperative across multiple sites and at varying scales. However, few explorations consider the interconnections of Black placemaking, Appalachia, and Black liberation. This paper places the Appalachian region as a site of social justice, particularly in terms of Black liberation struggle. The paper considers the following questions: 1) What has been the role of east TN in the global struggle for Black liberation; and 2) How does a Black geographies lens help us read the east TN landscape differently? To answer these questions, we use a case study approach, and we view Black liberation from three disparate sites in the region - Highlander Research and Education Center (New Market, TN); Children’s Defense Fund - Alex Haley Farm (Clinton, TN) and BattleField Farm and Gardens (Knoxville, TN). The paper uses a range of archival, field-based, and qualitative methods to explore the disparate liberatory placemaking practices at these sites, all through a Black geographies lens. We position this work in studies of the Appalachian South, arguing that the complicated formation of region must be placed in dialogue with structures of power and that the field of Black geographies offers an opportunity to understand these structures, and the region, anew. Consequently, we emphasize the region as a place of liberatory possibilities.

**Fix the Cops? Framing the circumvention of qualified immunity as a scalar ‘expression of collective social action,’** Troy Brundidge, (Department of Geography, University of Oregon)

Qualified immunity (QI) is a Supreme Court of the United States (SCOTUS) doctrine shielding police from financial liability for civil rights violations. For an officer to be liable, the alleged violated right must be ‘clearly established’— meaning prior, factually ‘on-point’ case law must show an officer’s conduct was similarly ruled unconstitutional in the past. In practice, this stringent and ultimately subjective standard leads to irrational outcomes, effectively enabling police to infringe federal civil rights, so long as the act is unprecedented (hence, not clearly established), or is not facially unconstitutional. Recently, a bipartisan coalition of reform advocates has criticized the doctrine as a key obstruction to police accountability. However, due to Congressional gridlock on police reform, QI is legislative anathema. Yet, U.S. legal scholars insist that states need not wait on SCOTUS or

Congress to enforce civil rights. Heeding these calls, since 2020, two states and one municipality—Colorado, New Mexico, and New York City— have banned QI in state court, via ‘causes of action’ mirroring federal civil rights and remedies. In Colorado, the Enhance Law Enforcement Integrity Act (SB20-217) is a national model as the first QI ban and the first law to create personal officer liability. Drawing on insights from economic and legal geography, I argue that efforts to shift QI reform to sub-federal legislative venues should be seen as a spatial remedy, or fix. Moreover, because of its widespread implications for policing, organizing for and against SB20-217 transcended Colorado, and featured nationally-mobilized non-government actors in key influencing roles. Thus, SB20-217 is a unique example of how conflict reveals the dynamic political-legal utility of geographical scale.

**3:10-4:40      Session XII: Eurasia - Infrastructure**

*Chair: Kate Shields (Rhodes College) and Evangeline McGlynn (Harvard University)*

**Bare life Resistance: Emerging Oppositions to China in the Global South**, Davide Giacomo Zoppolato (West Virginia University, USA)

This paper examines emerging forms of resistance to China’s growing influence in the Global South, focusing on infrastructure-led development under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Using the cases of Shari Baluch, a schoolteacher and the first female suicide bomber of the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA), and the bombing of a bus carrying Chinese engineers in Dasu, the study investigates “resistance”. Both attacks targeted Chinese nationals and infrastructure associated with CPEC, which is perceived as a tool of dispossession and exploitation, fueling grievances tied to colonial, settler colonial and neocolonial legacies. My article positions these violent acts within broader debates on resistance and infrastructure as a form of spatial fix for global capital. While infrastructure-led development has been analyzed as a method for expanding economic power and domination, less attention has been given to the resistance it produces, particularly in areas that serve as frontiers of extraction. Bare life resistance highlights the agency that arises when populations are excluded from legal and political orders. I identify three key axes of this resistance: the agency of bare life in rejecting domination, the spatial reclamation of identity and space in opposition to infrastructure-led development, and the invocation of the dead to reclaim humanity in the face of violent and dehumanizing power structures. Through these axes, I examine how the most marginalized communities are increasingly mobilizing both symbolic and violent forms of resistance, challenging national and global forces of exploitation.

**From Tianxia to Huoban: Transnational Embeddedness and the Remaking of China’s Neighborhood Diplomacy in Asia**, Xiaobo Su (Department of Geography, University of Oregon)

Interstate relations between China and its neighboring countries have existed for thousands of years. Different from realist practices which focus on the actual rather than the ideal, China’s neighborhood diplomacy is mixed with reality and obligation. China’s engagement with Asian neighbors has undertaken some changes. During the premodern period, the tributary system represented a prevalent mode of the Chinese ancient diplomacy in relation to neighboring regimes to foster a Tianxia (天下, literally, all-under-heaven) order. Today, China establishes various partnership (huoban) with neighboring states. Both tianxia and huoban reflect China’s different modalities of embeddedness within the Asian context. Drawing on Polanyi’s work on embeddedness, this paper proposes the concept of transnational embeddedness to understand neighborhood diplomacy between China and

Asian countries. My analysis of transition from tianxia to huoban refuses to inflate Western power and influence as the origin of history regarding interstate interactions in Eurasia. By attributing political agency to Asian countries, this paper offers a historical-materialist perspective to think about the deep implications of China's changing neighborhood diplomacy for Asia and even the whole world.

**Revisiting the Geographies of Obdurate Infrastructure in Eurasia**, Corey Johnson (University of North Carolina at Greensboro)

Over a decade ago, I published a chapter on the obduracy of networked infrastructure in Eurasia, focusing primarily on natural gas pipelines, in which I argued that "existing and planned networks energy infrastructure, particularly natural gas pipelines, shape interdependencies that extend well beyond the imagined borders dividing Eurasian space. Networked infrastructure provides a useful entry point because it encapsulates the material, social, economic, and political relationships that, when examined closely, pose serious challenges to the classic regionalizations that continue to shape our thinking about Eurasia." In light of Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine, and subsequent disruptions, I wish to revisit the argument to see what, if anything, is left in tact of Eurasia as an integrated energy system.

**Penetration of Light: The Intersection of Border and Light in the 21st Century**, Kai-Yang Huang (Department of Geography, National Taiwan University)

Historically, borders were considered to be manifestations of the existence of modern states. Whether a country wanted to launch aggression or pursue independence, borders consolidate the Rousseauian "sovereignty-territory-people" structure (Elden, 2013: 10-12), bounded as geographical container, and ensure the existence of modern state (Agnew, 2003: 53). Today, under neoliberalism, borders have evolved into an anthropogenic issue, not only emphasizing the securitization of bodies through new surveillance technologies but also addressing critical geopolitical ecology from a more-than-human perspective. This paper examines the Matsu Dark Sky Project to explore how affect reshapes borderworks, driven by a contingent network of light penetration, institutional inertia, and social memory on border islands. As the frontline between the Kuomintang (KMT) and the Communist Party of China (CPC) following 1949, Matsu Islands is the Cold War legacy and its people have not enjoy the freedom of movements, speeches, etc. until 1992 the abolishment of Matsu Military/Civil Government. By adopting a more-than-human perspective, the paper analyzes how the unquantifiable and elusive nature of light becomes a central medium for among actors including government agencies, non-human entities like the protected sika deer species on Daqiu, and marine blue-tears phenomena, not only reflecting a challenging and pivotal issue in borderland governance, but also grapples with the contradictions of local governance in responding to intensifying international competition for natural resources in post-Cold War geopolitics and global ecological challenges.