

IGU Thematic Conference: Connecting Geographies from the Global South (Quito 15-17 May 2024) <https://www.flacso.edu.ec/ugoglobalsouth2024/>

Call for Papers: Decolonial histories of geography [Conference Topic 5]

Convenors: Federico Ferretti (Università di Bologna) and André Reyes Novaes (Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro), on behalf of the IGU Commission History of Geography

Contemporary scholarship in historical geography and in the histories of geography is increasingly informed by decolonial, pluriversal, feminist, antiracist and anticolonial approaches. However, we still see too many academic and non-academic historical narratives in our discipline that uncritically address past (or worse present) geographies that are strictly associated with colonialism, patriarchy, legacies of slavery or warfare. Indeed, many disciplinary accounts in the history of geography (and cartography) were characterised by a positivistic mindset, eulogising increasing accumulation of knowledge informed to growing ‘accuracy’ and progress. It is well known that these ideas paralleled Eurocentric and racist notions of European, white and male supremacy, legitimising colonialism and later neo-colonialism through ideas of ‘development’ and of what decolonial scholarship defines the colonality of knowledge (and of power).

All attempts to critically transform geography, from the early anarchist geographers at the end of the nineteenth century to the early critical and radical geographies in the 1960s-1970s, have tried to build new and alternative disciplinary histories. Prompted by dialogues with science studies, the historical turn in the 1990s stimulated contextual and situated disciplinary historiographies. Nevertheless, even pointing out geography’s imperial links and colonial pasts, some of these approaches were recently criticised for overlooking ‘other geographical traditions’ and reinforcing geography’s exclusionary practices. In a moment when decoloniality takes centre stage in scholarly debates on geography, seeking to overtake ethnocentrism alongside provincialism and nationalism, new narrations of the history of the discipline are still needed, starting from the idea that organising the past is absolutely indispensable to make sense of the present.

Decolonising geography's histories is not a simple task and raises a series of challenges. It is not just about repopulating the history of the discipline with authors from the 'Global South' and expanding the gallery of 'great' scientists and explorers. It is to challenge essentialist, personalist, linear and mostly male-and-white narrative structures in the histories of geography (and cartography). If decoloniality is not a metaphor but a constant challenge to avoid reproducing geopolitics of knowledge and logics of colonialism, its practices and approaches should be subject to constant scrutiny. Thus, this CFP aims at promoting sessions to share empirical research and methodological challenges in the production of decolonial and pluriversal histories of geography.

To this end, we encourage contributions on (but not limited to):

- Other geographical traditions (in relation to the dominating Anglo-American traditions)
- Histories of critical, radical, feminist and unorthodox geographies
- Anticolonial and antiracist dissidence in the history of geography and cognate disciplines, from and outside the 'core'
- Other ways to make histories/geographies
- Production of geographical and/or historical knowledge outside Western canons: cosmovisions, cosmo-histories and non-(carto)graphic languages
- Histories of geographies from peripheral places/languages
- Troubles with (linguistic, cultural or political) translations
- Indigenous, Afro-descendant and subaltern historical geographies
- Decolonial heritage politics: contesting monuments and other physical or moral remains of colonialism and coloniality
- Geographies from below and/or from outside the academy
- Theoretical reflections on how to decolonise geography and cognate disciplines
- Pluriversal histories/geographies: how to foster dialogues between worlds through their histories and geographies

Please send your abstract (max 300 words) in English or Spanish with a short bio (2-3 lines) to federico.ferretti6@unibo.it and andrereyesnovaes@gmail.com by 17 January 2024