

# Editorial introduction: Volume 3, Issue 3: The Roots of *Routes*

By Jonathon Turnbull and Liam Saddington, Co-Editors-in-Chief of *Routes*

## 1. The Roots of *Routes*

Since its inception in April 2020, *Routes* has been a pathbreaking geographical journal, bridging the gap between secondary school and undergraduate level geography and beyond. Through *Routes*, students from anywhere in the world are able to have their work peer reviewed by leading academic geographers and geography teachers, published, and then widely read. In 2023, *Routes* articles were read by a global readership comprising over 35,000.

Since 2020, *Routes* has been edited and led by the journal's co-founders, Dr Cyrus Golding and Dr Lizzie Rushton. This current issue of *Routes* is our – Dr Jonathon Turnbull and Dr Liam Saddington's – first issue as the new co-editors-in-chief. We would like to expand our heartfelt thanks to Cyrus and Lizzie for building *Routes* from the ground up into the entity it has become today. We have inherited a brilliant journal and are lucky to be able to continuously draw on Cyrus and Lizzie's expertise as we find our feet in this new role. While giving thanks, we must also extend this to the previous editorial board, our large community of peer reviewers, and, of course, the students who submit their work to the journal. Without this truly wonderful community, *Routes* would simply not exist. We begin from a foundation of support, inclusivity, and passion: core values that we will do our utmost to uphold going forward.

Briefly, we want to introduce ourselves as the new editors-in-chief and custodians of *Routes* before outlining our vision for the future and our inaugural issue itself. Jonathon Turnbull is a postdoctoral researcher at the School of Geography and the Environment at the University of Oxford and a Junior Research Fellow at Jesus College, Oxford. He recently completed his PhD in geography at the University of Cambridge (King's College) and co-founded both the Digital Ecologies research group and the Ukrainian Environmental Humanities Network. Jonny's research interests span the

breadth of more-than-human geography, taking place among urban cows in India, free-roaming dogs in the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone, peregrine falcons streamed online, and beavers in London. As a long-term peer reviewer and editorial board member of *Routes*, Jonny has worked to widen participation in geography since his undergraduate days. He's most excited about working with students to develop new geographical ideas and to involve students from all backgrounds in generating geography's futures.

Liam Saddington is a Teaching Associate in Human Geography at the University of Cambridge, and teaches across the collegiate University. He is a fellow at Lucy Cavendish College. As a political and environmental geographer, Liam's work focuses on the geopolitics of climate change, youth geopolitics, and climate justice. He is the Widening Participation and Outreach Lead for the Department of Geography. Currently, Liam is undertaking two collaborative projects with schools to co-develop materials on climate education. Working closely with students and teachers from across the UK, Liam hopes to expand *Routes'* reach to more students and strengthen its relationship with schools and teachers.

In addition, we are delighted to introduce our new editorial board, which is made up of a mixture of new and familiar faces, all of whom are contributing to geographical education across a variety of secondary and higher education settings. This board aims to reflect the diversity of our discipline who are involved in cultivating and supporting the next generation of geographers. Our new board includes: Chris Dodd, Smriti Safaya, Serhat Ay, Neha Arora, Sam Allen, Gerard Reilly, Oscar Hartman Davies, Beth Greenhough, Sandra Patterson, Rachel Densen, David Preece, and Fay Wilson. We can't wait to get going with this new team and find out where *Routes* will take us all.

There are many routes into geography, and these routes matter for what geography is and what it can become (Rose, 2020). At its core, *Routes* has been, and continues to be, about proliferating and showcasing these diverse routes. The journal, we hope, is one of many foundations to the geographical discipline writ large. Indeed, it is a key root from which geography as a discipline grows and thus, a place from which it can be made anew. It is with this in mind that our role as new editors-in-chief becomes clear.

Firstly, we remain committed to *Routes'* foundation as a journal which is free and an entirely voluntary run publication. Everyone involved, from editors to peer reviewers, are solely motivated by a passion to support, guide, and nurture the next generation of geographers. We are delighted that some of our editorial board first published in *Routes* and are now early career academics within the discipline. Secondly, we seek to ensure *Routes* maintains its claim

to excellence in its contribution to geographical scholarship; with a plurality of voices, topics, and perspectives at the heart of the journal.

## **2. Celebrating and Championing Diversity within Geography**

Geography as an academic subject is thriving in the UK. In a turbulent world, on issues from climate change to migration, inequality to biodiversity loss, geographers are leading the way in exploring these issues and their potential solutions. It is not surprising, therefore, that young people are increasingly choosing to study geography. In 2023, the number of students studying geography at A Level increased to just under 35,000 – up from 28,500 in 2010 (RGS-IBG, 2023). Within *Routes*, we champion the potential of these young geographers by giving them space to write, publish, and share their own thoughts and perspectives, contributing more broadly to geographical knowledge. Key to this is ensuring that *Routes* is accessible and open to all sixth form and undergraduate geographers with submissions from across the UK and internationally. We are striving to strengthen the connections between *Routes* and schools, with a focus on networks of geography teachers.

Over the next three years, we hope to support teachers in their delivery of geographical education. Geography teachers and lecturers are grappling with how to teach difficult and sensitive issues, such as helping students think through the Black Lives Matter movement (Njambi and O'Brien, 2023). We believe student voice is key to this and hope to cultivate a wide range of submissions. Students can write on any geographical topic that interests them, and we hope to see work that engages critically with ideas of diversity within geography, from fields such as Black geographies, Indigenous geographies, and decolonial geographies.

*Routes* gives young geographers a space to share their reflections, understandings, and research on contemporary challenges. Hicks (2018) has argued for the importance of hope when teaching issues such as climate change and ensuring that young people have a sense of agency in working towards a more just, equitable, and sustainable future. Looking back at the scholarship published in *Routes*, we hope to develop the radical potential of the journal to continue creating space for a diverse range of new and emerging approaches to geographical thought.

## **3. *Routes* within the Geography Landscape**

For many of our authors, *Routes* is their first engagement with an academic publication, the peer review process, and the production of geographical

knowledge for a wider audience. As stated on our website, “our main aim at *Routes* is to uplift the voices of students and recognise their validity in contributing to geographical knowledge.” The research and scholarship of young geographers can, and does, contribute to contemporary debates within the discipline. This issue is evidence of that.

We are delighted to open Volume 3, Issue 3 with the winning essay of the 2022 RGS-IBG School Essay Competition, organised in partnership with the Financial Times. The competition asked students to explore and explain the environmental costs of current consumer trends, behaviours, and purchasing decisions. The competition was open to all A Level geography students (or equivalent) aged 16-18, and the judges were looking for clear essays or ArcGIS StoryMaps which were well-evidenced and reached a clear conclusion. We were delighted with the high standard of the entries received and we congratulate everyone who entered. The winning essay is by Pip Booth (Gordonstoun School), whose essay is titled “Extend phone lifetimes to cut environmental threat.” Booth advocates the environmental (and commercial) benefits of extending the lifetime of mobile phones. Second place went to William Stoodley at Clifton College and third place to Nina Aswani from the London Academy of Excellence.

Next in the issue, Constance Geronio (Liverpool John Moores University) presents a detailed street level flood risk assessment of Morpeth, UK, arguing for improvements to the adaptive capacity of the town to ensure a greater resilience against flood events in the future. Carrying on the watery theme, Eleanor Aedy’s (Trinity Academy Sixth Form) research explores the factors affecting access to water around the world. Identifying a global water scarcity crisis, Aedy forwards a strategy for mitigation that meets the most relevant needs of the communities affected.

On 24th April 2013, the illegally constructed eight-story Rana Plaza factory in Bangladesh collapsed, killing 1,134 garment workers. Christie Wanstall (University of Exeter) traces how the collapse was represented, as well as how responsibility for the disaster was attributed, in British newspapers between 2013 and 2020, identifying shifts in both. Wanstall’s work draws attention to the role western consumers play in working conditions around the world. Staying with the theme of consumption and trade, Claudia Caisley (Haberdashers’ Girls’ School) asks whether the legacy of the silk road – a network of routes between East Asia and the West spanning approximately 4000 miles and used by traders around 2000 years ago – should be considered cultural or commercial. Caisley notes that rapidly increasing global interconnectivity is not unique to the 20th and 21st centuries, identifying the cultural prominence of the historical silk road and the future commercial impacts it could have.

Sophie Collingham (Hills Road Sixth Form College) engages the key geographical concept of place using autobiographical reflection to analyse the link between place connection and storytelling in childhood literature, family folklore, and childhood memories. And to conclude this issue Eleanor Luxton (University of Oxford) reviews Ousmane Sembène's most famous film – *Black Girl* (1966) – utilising recent geographic scholarship on the nature of migration and global capitalism.

We hope you agree that this issue showcases the breadth, depth, and importance of geography and geographical education for analysing and proposing solutions for key global challenges related to politics, economics, culture, and the environment.

#### **4. The Future of *Routes***

*Routes* is a space for young geographers; a space in which sixth form and undergraduate geographers can shape geographical debate. We are keen to broaden participation with *Routes* among students around the world and have appointed an editorial board member who is tasked with facilitating this. Under our tenure, we hope to strengthen *Routes*' relationships with both the Royal Geographical Society with the Institute of British Geographers and the Geographical Association.

As editors, we hope to reach and engage with a greater number of young geographers from across the UK and beyond. We would welcome suggestions, ideas, and queries from the ever-growing community of *Routes* geographers. As editors-in-chief, we are keen to have themed issues that feature key conceptual debates in geography, but also contemporary topics which are of interest to young people. In particular, we intend on strengthening our relationships with schools and we hope to produce a special issue working with geography teachers. We are very open to potential collaborations with students, teachers, academics, and those involved in geographical education: our inboxes are open. Most importantly, we look forward to looking back in three years time to see the plethora of student work published in *Routes*. To quote David Preece (2022, 2), a member of our editorial board, "your Geography can change the world."

#### **References**

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**Cite as:** Turnbull, J. and Saddington, L. (2023) Editorial introduction: Volume 3, Issue 3: The Roots of *Routes*. *Routes* 3(3): 149-154.