

More-Than-Representational Political Geographies

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It all began inconspicuously enough. The eight pages of Nigel Thrift's "It's the little things" (2000) were tacked onto a weighty tome that explored the representations of geopolitics ranging across 100 years and several continents. Thrift framed his propositions as a modest afterthought, yet they were anything but that. What was to form the closing thoughts of a book about geopolitical traditions came with the ambition to stake out a new agenda. Thrift (2000: 381) lamented what he called "representationalism," "the mesmerized attention to texts and images" in political geography, and especially in the subfield of critical geopolitics. This fascination, he claimed, occluded the fact that geopolitics was made of a myriad of non-textual practices:

some of the most potent geopolitical forces are, I suspect, lurking in the "little" "details" of people's lives ... [for example] the deep, often unconscious aggressions ... behind so much geopolitical "reasoning". (Thrift 2000: 384)

With this short intervention, Thrift threw down the gauntlet at political geographers' feet: He challenged the discipline to become more than representational.

What does it mean to be "more-than-representational"?

But what are we to understand by "more-than-representational"? At its most basic, the term refers to what people (and indeed animals or things) *do* and thus squarely engages with practices. More specifically, more-than-representational styles of research are united by an interest in

how life takes shape and gains expression in shared experiences, everyday routines, fleeting encounters, embodied movements, precognitive triggers, practical skills, affective intensities, enduring urges, unexceptional interactions and sensuous dispositions. (Lorimer 2005: 84)

With this focus, more-than-representational research seeks to displace an exclusive concern with humans as the prime movers and shakers of the world and to disturb the preoccupation with cognitive processes of the production of meaning (Lorimer 2005, 2008; Thrift 2008; Anderson & Harrison 2010). As such, it positions itself against a purely semiotic understanding of the world, predicated on the analysis of human-made meaning. This semiotic understanding had been the founding rationale of the influential critical geopolitics, analyzing the writing of global space (Müller 2013). Critical geopolitics had emerged from the turn toward examining symbolic meaning production, which human geography underwent from the late 1980s and which spawned the new cultural geography (Cosgrove & Daniels 1988; Barnes & Duncan 1992). Yet, *more-than-representational* research does not abandon the representational entirely, but maintains that the more-than-representational – practices, affects, things – is intertwined with the production of meaning.

The theoretical inspirations feeding into more-than-representational research are diverse and eclectic. Among the most prominent are contributions on hybridity and vital materialism (Haraway 1991; Ingold 2000; Latour 2005; Bennett 2010), affect and assemblage thinking (Spinoza 1677; Deleuze & Guattari 1987; Deleuze 1988; Massumi 2002; Barad 2007), phenomenology (Merleau-Ponty 1962), feminist theory (Sedgwick 2003; Ahmed 2004; Grosz 2008), and practice theory (De Certeau 1984; Schatzki 2002; Wetherell 2012).

If we were to boil down more-than-representational research to a set of propositions, these could be:

- *The world is made through performative practice.* Practices are the basic unit of analysis. Their performative quality lies in constantly bringing into being new socio-material associations.
- *The world is always in the making.* There are no fixed stable states. The aleatory and the unexpected reign supreme.
- *The world is affective.* The lived immediacy of experience becomes present through our bodies. Affect underscores the importance of registers that exceed the cognitive and the conscious.
- *The world is more than human.* Things and animals partake in it as more than mere passive objects. They become enmeshed, tied up in hybrid, socio-material assemblages of humans and non-humans, and they co-define human experience.
- *More-than-representational research is experimental.* Attentiveness to multiple registers of sensation requires novel modes of presenting and presencing research to tackle the more-than-representational.

The term “world” here refers not to a pre-existing entity but to the continuous enactment of relations that produces action. For more-than-representational research, action emerges through the interplay of cognitive deliberation and meaning-making as well as embodied affordances and habits. The relation between humans and their surroundings is thus a two-way street: Humans act as much as they are acted on. They are always already “caught up in the fabric of the world” (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 256; cf. Anderson & Harrison 2010) and not detached from it or above it, as social constructivism would claim. It is this emergence of relations between very different elements to which more-than-representational research devotes its attention. It is important to emphasize that a more-than-representational approach does not understand practices as a product of discourse, but as constitutive of the world in their own right.

To be sure, the key tenets of more-than-representational research were not completely new or unheard of in human geography before Thrift's intervention. In its attention to the mundane, lived experience and the body, it shares many common concerns that feminist political geography already raised in the 1990s (e.g., Kofman & Peake 1990). In German-speaking geography, controversial engagements with phenomenology also foreshadowed many of the key claims of more-than-representational research, for example in the aesthetics of nature (e.g., Hasse 1993). However, language barriers being what they are, this minor knowledge went unacknowledged. Last but not least, the tradition of humanistic geography also placed emphasis on human everyday experience (e.g., Entrikin 1976; Tuan 1979). Yet, there are also important differences, as we will see in the following sections.

Although more-than-representational research entered human geography via cultural geography and its intellectual roots remain there, after some initial hesitation reception in political geography has been gathering speed. In recent years, the field has seen a growing number of contributions that seek to push political geography beyond the representational in different ways. Along three key axes, this contribution surveys how political geographers have taken up the more-than-representational challenge. First are questions of affect and emotion, which have commanded much attention, not least because they have always been central to feminist geography. Here, a key dispute revolves around the issue to what degree affect and emotions are shaped through differential social positionings and thus not entirely prediscursive or precognitive. Second are socio-material assemblages and the process of relating human and non-human elements into larger wholes. This focus has helped to develop a more processual perspective on entities such as the state or organizations and to bring non-human forces back into the analytical fold. Third, finally, are experiments with new ways of presenting or *presencing* – that is, making present – research that are called for if we take the first two axes seriously. The separation into three axes follows the main focus of the studies reviewed and helps to make the material less unwieldy. It goes without saying that there are, multiple interrelations between the three axes. The chapter concludes with an outlook toward a future research agenda for this nascent field of inquiry. In so doing, it suggests four lines of further engagement: the politics of the more than representational, the link between the representational and the more-than-representational, the move from micro to macro, and the vitality of matter.

Affect and emotion

Early modern philosopher Baruch Spinoza (1677) posited the existence of what he called the three primary affects: desire (*cupiditas*), joy (*laetitia*), and sadness (*tristitia*). From these three affects, he claims, all other affects can be derived. Spinoza lists 45 in addition to the three primary ones, among them wonder, contempt, love, hatred, devotion, fear, despair, envy, shame, and anger. A short definition could describe affect as intensities of feeling that influence behavior. While there is no shortage of debates on the definition and delimitation of affect in human geography (e.g., McCormack 2003; Thrift 2004; Thien 2005; Anderson 2006; Tolia-Kelly 2006; Lorimer 2008), “intensities of feeling that influence behavior” conveys two important notions. First, affect is something that *works in and through the body* and bodily experience. Second, affect *drives action* and produces visible conduct.

This takes us some way, but not all the way, toward an understanding of affect. A further two features are important. One is that affect is distributed and *exceeds the subject*. For it to come into existence, the human body must be entangled in a whole set of relations:

Affect is distributed between, and can happen outside, bodies which are not exclusively human, and might incorporate technologies, things, non-human living matter, discourses or even, say, a swathe of noise or swarm of creatures. (Lorimer 2008: 552)

Affect thus means the capacity to affect manifold others and, in turn, to be affected by manifold others. Last and most contentious, affect is said to be *precognitive, preconscious, and irrational*. It is untainted by measured reflection and discursive symbolization. It has been characterized as “that indescribable moment before the registration of the audible, visual, and tactile transformations produced in reaction to a certain situation, event, or thing” (Colman 2010: 11). Affects are thus continuously emergent and fleeting.

It is primarily this last point that has provoked critical reactions. Feminist geographers in particular have pointed out that conceptualizing affect as prediscursive risks reinstating the body of the subject as a blank slate, unmarked by unequal differentiations such as race, gender, sexual orientation, or class (e.g., Thien 2005; Tolia-Kelly 2006; Colls 2012; see also Sharp 2009; Pile 2010). Yet, these discursive significations matter a great deal in how bodies experience affect: “a body that is signified as a source of fear through its markedness cannot be free to affect and be affected similarly to one that is not” (Tolia-Kelly 2006: 215). Not taking into account the multiple discursive subject positions would amount to a blindness to power and present a disembodied, ahistoricist stance on affects. Feminist geographers have productively employed the notion of emotion, closely related to affect, to describe precisely the interplay between the symbolic positioning of subjects and the intensities of feeling that it affords or denies (cf. Anderson & Smith 2001; Davidson, Bondi, & Smith 2007; see also Fluri this volume). In other words, the concept of emotion moves affect from a non-representational to a more-than-representational register and thus acts as an important corrective. In more concrete terms, a political speech can affect a person, but whether it incites joy, hate, or pride has much to do with whether this person is male or female, white or black, belongs to the minority or the majority ethnicity, and so on.

The political relevance of affect and emotion is as striking as it is manifold. An explicit engagement with the politics of affect has taken place both outside of human geography (e.g., Connolly 2002; Massumi 2002; Ahmed 2004; Protevi 2009) and within it (e.g., Thrift 2004; Barnett 2008; Pain 2009; Ruddick 2010; Anderson 2012, 2014). The consideration of the link between affect and politics has focused on a variety of arenas, where affect intervenes in decision-making or is even consciously engineered to serve political or economic goals. These different realms of affective politics, Thrift (2008: 248) claims, work against democratic expression, since they contribute to a style of democracy that is consumed but not practiced and bypass channels of rational, communicative deliberation. If affect is irrational and unable to be signified, it is also difficult to intervene in its workings.

Urban and public spaces are more and more designed to evoke affective responses through the use of design, lighting, events, music, or performance, providing “a new minute landscape of manipulation” (Thrift 2004: 66). Political campaigns make use of affects to create support for one or the other candidate (Thrift 2008; Schurr 2013). The visceral effects of rhythm and sound can help buttress political activism and mobilize people into action (Waite, Ryan, & Farbotko 2014). The cultivation of fear to garner support for military interventions or new

security measures has become particularly strong after the attacks of 9/11 and is an integral part of a geopolitics that divides the world into us/them (Hyndman 2007; Sparke 2007; Pain & Smith 2008; Pain 2009, 2010; Anderson 2010). Affect is involved in forms of bio-power, where affective lives become targets to achieve control and coordination of individuals and populations (Anderson 2012). The ubiquitous mediatization of most societies worldwide also calls attention to the imbrication of the media with affect and the implications for politics (Carter & McCormack 2006). Whether in films, newsreels, or images, the media are saturated with affect that is linked to symbolic content. Of particular interest has been the affective power of images to touch the body (MacDonald 2006; Carter & McCormack 2010).

One of the earliest explicit engagements with affect in political geography is still one of the most original. Gearóid Ó Tuathail's (2003) “Just out looking for a fight: American affect and the invasion of Iraq” puts forward the hypothesis that the United States' military intervention in Iraq was driven to a large extent by gut feelings of rage and pride after the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 that brought about an “affective economy of revenge” (Ó Tuathail 2003: 868).

The affective tsunami unleashed by the terrorist attacks of 2001 is a broad and deep one that has set down a powerful somatic marker for most Americans. “9/11” is its shorthand, a phrase that has instant meaning for millions of Americans but more estranged resonance overseas. The calendar digits memorialize a moment in time that has become an affect-imbued memory bank for the media and political class in the United States and, consequently for the media-incited nation. (Ó Tuathail 2003: 859)

US television networks transformed 9/11 into a collective trauma of loss, multiplying the feeling of pain and stoking public outrage. As a result, a large part of the public in the United States, Ó Tuathail argues, experienced the events of 9/11 in a visceral way, as though they had been present on the spot. This affective economy allowed affect to overpower deliberative discourse and rational discussion. The war against terrorism in Iraq rested on dubious claims, lacked rational justification, and had thin support in the United Nations, yet it managed to enthuse a large part of the public and of the leadership of the United States – “a triumph of affect over intellect,” as Ó Tuathail (2003: 863) puts it. What Ó Tuathail's piece manages particularly well is the upscaling of the microgeographies of affect from the level of the body to that of the globe. In so doing, he makes affectual scholarship relevant for an analysis of global geopolitical questions.

While Ó Tuathail examines affect from a critical distance and considers its significance for war and peace, Pain et al. (2010) move close to the emotional experiences of young people in the United Kingdom and New Zealand with the help of participatory research. This piece stands in the emerging tradition of an emotional geopolitics (Pain 2009) – probably the most vigorous reception of more-than-representational ideas in political geography (e.g., Smith 2012; Cuomo 2013; Faria 2014). Pain and her co-authors consider how geopolitical events and discourses are recast and trigger feelings in the everyday lives of their research subjects, focusing particularly on emotions of fear and hope. Their study drives home the point that emotions are refracted through the prism of dominant power relationships that characterize people's everyday lives. Emotions do not just trickle down from big geopolitical events – wars, terrorist attacks, financial crises – but are renegotiated: “closeness to or distance from sites of geopolitical risk has some relevance, but is generally less important than young people's own structural and social positions” (Pain et al. 2010: 980). Pain et al. thus destabilize dominant

hierarchies of local/global and near/distant and show how symbolic meanings interact with and shape bodily experience. This kind of more-than-representational research seeks to occupy a promising middle ground between the extremes of a wholly precognitive, transhuman affect and the meaning-saturated discursive subject position.

Assemblages

Affects are an important force in the emergence of assemblages. Assemblage is the English translation of Deleuze and Guattari's (1987; see also DeLanda 2006) French term *agencement*. Deleuze defines assemblage as "a multiplicity constituted by heterogeneous terms and which establishes liaisons, relations between them" (Deleuze 2007: 52). It refers to the process of arranging and organizing heterogeneous materials to hold together for some time and create new actions. When Deleuze and Guattari write of "heterogeneous materials," they exhibit a broad conception of the social, encompassing both non-human and human elements. These could be mundane objects, animals, bacteria, plants, a sticky note, and so on – Thrift's "little things" taken literally. Assemblages result in a coalescence of forces and are productive of new realities. According to Deleuze and Guattari, what holds assemblages together is the force of desire, producing connections between initially separate elements. In other words, affects glue assemblages together. Similar to the notion of the actor-network, the concept of assemblage places an emphasis on emergence and multiplicity, acknowledging that the "world has to be built from utterly heterogeneous parts that will never make a whole, but at best a fragile, revisable, and diverse composite material" (Latour 2010: 474).

The notion of assemblage has become very much en vogue with human geographers over the past few years; see the edited collection by Anderson and McFarlane (2011) and the handbook article by Robbins and Marks (2010) for just two examples. This proliferation, however, has also resulted in an increasingly diffuse usage of the term. Within political geography, the ideas associated with assemblages have been put to several uses. One is that assemblages draw together distant locales and fold scales into each other in creating a topological space of relations. This argument links into the debate on the production of scales and proximity/distance as effects of networked relations: "scale is what actors achieve by *scaling*, *spacing*, and *contextualizing* each other through the transportation in some specific vehicles of some specific traces" (Latour 2005: 183–184). Thus, authors have examined the distributed organization of social movements across sites (McFarlane 2009; Davies 2012), the contested production of scales by international organizations and governments (Legg 2009), and the topological reach of state power, mediated through multiple connections that draw together dispersed elements (Allen & Cochrane 2010).

A second interpretation of assemblage thinking has resulted in greater attention to the role of the material world, the more than human, in shaping the spaces of politics (Latour 1994). No longer considered inanimate, passive matter, materiality is accorded a more active role in assemblages than social constructivist research would allow (Braun & Whatmore 2010; Meehan, Shaw, & Marston 2013; Dittmer 2014). "Matter matters" is the clarion call. Materials participate in the construction of information (Barry 2013), nature co-constitutes agency (Bakker & Bridge 2006), objects extend state power (Meehan 2014), citizenship is assembled in relation to other species and living organisms (Barker 2010), close encounters between bodies and objects can reinforce or disrupt geopolitical narratives (Sundberg 2008). What all these studies have in common is that materials experience an emancipation from their role as passive objects of political deliberation and prostheses of human agency. They

co-articulate agency and shape political practices, the art of governing, the constitution of sovereignty in crucial, often unexpected ways.

A final avenue has emphasized the processual and composite aspect of assemblages. Although the concept of assemblage is not used in each instance, there is a clear alignment with its principal ideas. Such research has foregrounded the ways in which different elements are brought together so as to generate the capacity to act. An important strand has sought to combat reifications of the state as a unified entity and refocus attention on the mundane practices, bodily performances, and multiple objects through which states come to acquire the agency that defines them (Painter 2006). Such work is particularly illuminating in contexts of emergent state formation, such as in the post-Soviet republics (Schueth 2012). In a similar vein, other research has questioned the treatment of organizations as black boxes in political geography, and proposed to unravel how the actorness of organizations is constituted through continuous processes of ordering (Müller 2012). Such ordering is often temporarily stabilized through affective binds, such as when humor ties together the participants in a Model United Nations Session, aligning them with each other and providing a common orientation (Dittmer 2013).

Andrew Barry's (2013) monograph *Material Politics* is an excellent example of both the strengths of an assemblage-oriented approach and the ways in which it connects representational with more-than-representational modes of research. It revolves around the controversies connected to the construction of the 248 km stretch of the Baku–Tbilisi–Ceyhan oil pipeline passing through Georgia on the way from Azerbaijan to Turkey. Barry asks how and why particular materials and sites along the pipeline gained transnational significance, while others did not. He contends that this had much to do with the modalities of the assembling of information about materials and sites, which performatively enacted those materials and sites. The wide-ranging transparency initiative accompanying the construction process sought to delimit what belonged and what did not belong to the political space of the pipeline, thus making certain issues visible and others invisible. Whether an issue escalated or not depended on the stability of the assemblage. Controversies arose when materials or people behaved in unforeseen ways and thus necessitated the redefinition of the boundaries of the assemblage. In the course of this, the formerly delimited spaces of knowledge production became destabilized and had to be renegotiated. The pipeline as socio-material assemblage was thus mutable and assumed different forms and spatial extents, transforming, as a consequence, what issues could be bound up with it, what could be known about it, and what could be contested.

Presenting and presencing the more-than-representational

Affect, emotion, and socio-material assemblages are ways of conceptualizing more-than-representational political geographies. Yet, how are we to present the more-than-representational? Since academic work is commonly predicated on representational modes of communicating and evidencing research – texts, graphs, pictures – more-than-representational geographers are faced with a methodological dilemma here:

the leanness of descriptive language comes up short of the manifold affective events and textures it seeks to speak up for. Or, dare I say it, meaningfully represent. Rather than glorying in the ringing refrain, often I am left keening for more varied words to express and explain geography being done otherwise. (Lorimer 2008: 557)

The “crisis of representation,” diagnosed by anthropologists in the 1980s (Clifford & Marcus 1986), might well be called the starting point for the debate about the limits of descriptive language. It held that no account could be given of an objective reality to be discovered independently of our narratives and interpretations (Geertz 1973: 20, 23). This observation started to open the social sciences to more creative forms of constructing research narratives and to experimentation.

For more-than-representational geographies, there are two principal avenues of dealing with the limits of representation. One is to remain in a representational mode and attempt to *describe* the more-than-representational; the other is to *evoke* it. The first variant is similar to the classic interpretive-hermeneutic approach, only that it takes as its object the more than representational. It reports on emotions observed, socio-material networks assembled, and the consequences for the research question at hand. These paths were followed by the studies reported in depth earlier – Ó Tuathail’s (2003) examination of affect in the invasion of Iraq, Pain et al.’s (2010) study of young people’s fears and hopes, and Barry’s (2013) tracing of the pipeline assemblage. Another approach in this vein employs minute descriptions of fleeting encounters and ordinary situations that call attention to embodied practices and language use beyond explicit meaning production. Inspired by ethno-methodology, the key point here is that many aspects of language in routine situations are anything but representational, but fulfill a variety of other functions, whether to create empathy, start conversations, or express belonging (Laurier & Philo 2006).

Several scholars, however, have sought to push beyond the representation of the more-than-representational in a second avenue, which can be described as seeking to *evoke* the more-than-representational. This avenue is less about presenting than about presencing – about bringing something into being (cf. Law 2004: 11–12; Dirksmeier & Helbrecht 2008). It starts from the assumption that “representations of affect can only ever fail to represent affect itself” (Pile 2010: 8). In other words, the more-than-representational is irreducible to the meaning that we seek to give to it, when we decide to describe and interpret it (Harrison 2007).

Hence, efforts have attempted to push the boundaries of traditional formats and experiment with other forms. Some have opted to stay with writing as a genre, but engage with different forms of creative writing – something that geographers have been exhorted to do for quite some time (cf. Meinig 1983). Some geographers have mobilized the expressive force of poetry (e.g., Cresswell 2014) and creative prose (e.g., McCormack 2003; Cook 2004; Wylie 2005), often with an autoethnographic component, to capture and convey the passions and lived intensities of the more-than-representational. Arundhati Roy’s novel *The God of Small Things* is an enthralling illustration of how writing can interweave big *P* politics with the emotional lives and desires of ordinary people – connecting Thrift’s little things to the big ones. She captures power relations in the fleeting moment of their instantiation with an exceptional sensuous sensibility that does not fail to capture the reader. Consider this evocation of love and fear of its loss:

“D’you know what happens when you hurt people?” Ammu said. “When you hurt people, they begin to love you less. That’s what careless words do. They make people love you a little less.”

A cold moth with unusually dense dorsal tufts landed lightly on Rahel’s heart. Where its icy legs touched her, she got goose bumps. Six goose bumps on her careless heart. (Roy 1997: 112)

Even without knowing the context of these lines, the powerful image of the moth with the icy legs cannot fail but grip most readers. It may send a shiver down one’s spine, or perhaps even

create those goose bumps on some skins. The affective, corporeal reaction takes place after a remark by 7-year-old Rahel on love and marriage, considered inappropriate in the religious and sociocultural context of postcolonial Kerala in which the novel is set. As such, the small things of embodied experience are embedded in broader societal concerns and prescribed roles tethered to gender, religion, and caste.

Instead of working with a density of words to get at the more-than-representational, another option is to examine the opposite: the absence or loss of words. The more-than-representational begins where research subjects fumble for words and established codes of communication break down. “How shall I say it...?” as a response in an interview, for example, then does not so much hint at the inability to put things into words, but at the different, more-than-representational registers at work that disrupt the smooth sheen of meaning production, but cannot be entirely separated from it at the same time (Hyams 2004; Harrison 2007; Proudfoot 2010).

A final path for presencing the more-than-representational is inspired more by the performing arts (Thrift 2008: 12; Lorimer 2010). It relies on moving images or performances to engage audiences, often in a more visceral way than would be possible with texts or talk. Film is one good way of offering an immediate window on embodied and non-textual performances and addressing different sensory registers, including the visual and the aural. Political geographers have used video clips embedded in text, for example, to examine how emotions are linked to hegemonic discourses in politicians’ campaign performances (Schurr 2012). Performances – dance, music, theater – could create a more immediate sense of presence and being affected, but in most cases remain the objects of research that are then again cast into a familiar textual mold (cf. Pratt 2000).

Looking at the existing research, one cannot but diagnose that political geographers have been rather timid in abandoning the seductive security and comforting conventions of the cherished academic paper for livelier forms of presencing research that more-than-representational political geographies would warrant. Yet, many of the themes of political geography are open to this presencing. Rage, anger, fear, or pride are part of the mix in many kinds of political action, whether in the annexation of Crimea, the local protests against nuclear reprocessing plants, or the fervent articulation of nationalism. Video snippets or audio recordings can go a long way here and could indeed spice up the reciting of presentation manuscripts at conferences. Evocative field notes, such as when out doing research on protective accompaniment (Koopman 2012) or on the imbrication of bodies and territory (Smith 2012), can serve a similar purpose, as can the writing or indeed performing of plays (cf. Johnston & Pratt 2010). Material things, extracted from assemblages, can be brought home from fieldwork into the conference room or sketched for paper publication: the contentious pipeline coating (Barry 2013), the test tube and petri dish for the assisted reproduction of the nation (Schurr 2014), the invasive species (Barker 2010), the belongings left behind by migrants in the Sonora desert (Sundberg 2008), the standardized test as a tool of state power (Meehan et al. 2013), the mobile Zimbabwe bush pump (De Laet & Mol 2000), or indeed the manifold odors that create attachment and aversion to places (Hoover 2009). After all, these are the things that our research subjects encounter on a daily basis and so do we when we are on fieldwork. Reducing them to mere words on paper unnecessarily truncates their extensive materiality.

Future paths

If the recent swirl of interest is any indication, more-than-representational modes of research are going to be a major influence in political geography in the coming decade. They have the potential of opening up new lines of inquiry and shining new lights on established

ones – both desirable attributes for a new paradigm. In the state of flux in which the more-than-representational engagement of political geography exists at the moment, four issues appear to be of particular relevance.

What is the politics of the more-than-representational?

The engagement with more-than-representational forms of doing research originated with cultural geography and was initially concerned with the everydayness of life. As a political agenda is gradually etched out, it should be the prime task of political geographers to weigh in on the debate and demonstrate that more-than-representational research is not *l'art pour l'art*. Who or what shapes assemblages? Why and how do assemblages nevertheless hold together, despite all the insistence on multiplicity and flux? How are injustices the result of assembling elements in a particular way? What political aims and purposes do affects and emotions buttress? How can the instrumental management of affect be critiqued and resisted? These are the sorts of questions that political geographers would be well placed to ask in order to move the agenda forward.

How are the representational and the more-than-representational tied together?

In the fascination with more-than-representational modes of research, care needs to be taken not to throw out the insights of representational research. It is perhaps an inevitable process that in establishing a new agenda, stark, sometimes caricaturing dividing lines need be drawn to distinguish it from the dominant paradigm. In so doing, the more-than-representational has sometimes been positioned in too strong an antagonistic relationship with the representational. Many social theories, however, have a place for both: Foucault with his concept of the *dispositif*, actor-network theory with the concept of material semiotics, Haraway's material-semiotic actor, the discourse theory of Laclau and Mouffe with the concept of dislocation, or psychoanalysis with the concepts of the Symbolic and the Real. Indeed, for giving the more-than-representational a political edge, exploring how the representational is tied up with the more-than-representational is critical (e.g., Barad 2007; Wetherell 2013).

How do we move from the micro to the macro?

More-than-representational research started from work on the microgeographies of the body and the object. Its attention to practices links it to the concrete and close at hand. However, how can it be harnessed to analyze the state, geopolitics, the media, nationalism – topics that are at the heart of political geography? To be sure, the opposition of micro and macro is to some degree artificial. After all, what appears to be macro is just a composite of many smaller assemblages (Callon & Latour 1981). Upscaling from the micro to the macro would then involve following the relations that tie elements together, considering how, why, and when they make more extensive associations durable.

How can we do justice to the vitality of matter?

With its emphasis on the material world, more-than-representational research comes with the great promise of recovering a more vital sense of what seems to have increasingly fallen by the wayside of political geography: nature and materials. The challenge of becoming

more-than-representational thus offers the potential of reinvigorating the link with political ecology (see Meehan & Molden this volume). It calls on political geographers to acknowledge that nature and things can push humans in unexpected directions and affect them deeply in corporeal ways. Humans are bound up with the material world in a reciprocal relationship, which asks us to rethink the terms in which political geography has traditionally thought of animals, plants, resources, or objects (Braun & Whatmore 2010; Fall 2010).

The big task ahead for more-than-representational research, then, is perhaps not so much to push forward, for much has already been achieved there. Rather, it would be well advised to look around and look back. Where can connections be made? What of political geography has it left behind in the initial euphoria that could be useful along the more-than-representational journey? If that happens, the next edition of this *Companion* will not have to feature a separate chapter on more-than-representational political geographies – instead, all of political geography will have become a little more than representational.

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