

Introduction

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We live in a world of ecological crisis; a world in which we are witnessing sharpening class differences between a mobile global elite, economic migrants, and an often still largely stationary working population. Shifts in global and local power have seen the nation state, international capital and grounded communities thrown into new combinations and relations. As Arif Dirlik - whose work on 'groundedness' underpins this issue of the journal - argues:

There are different ways to understand globalization. The simplest, and most trivial, is globalization as something humans have been doing since they learned to wander from their place(s) of origin. A more restricted sense is that of globalization as an inherent spatial tendency of the capitalist economy that has led to the ongoing integration of the globe over the last half millennium. (2011: 51)

In response to the myriad socio-cultural aspects of these changes, the research in this special issue of the *International Journal of Creative Media Research* engages with the following key question: how might moving media practitioners and artists communicate, evoke or interrogate 'groundedness', or what Arif Dirlik refers to as a sense of what is included in place 'from within place'? (Dirlik 2011). As editors we encouraged submissions that would engage with this key question in many ways, including, for example:

How might media practitioners and artists explore the relationship between groundedness, the extra-local, and the global?

What aesthetic judgements might media practitioners and artists make, develop or utilise in order to evoke a sense of (or relationship with) groundedness?

How might media practitioners and artists usefully examine how far groundedness and an ecologically-based notion of 'place' might offer a way of resisting the universalising discourse of 'development'?

The work gathered in this collection engages with the notion of 'groundedness' from a range of viewpoints, such as by interrogating indigenous epistemologies and ontologies; cosmopolitanism and aesthetics; exploring landscape representation; exploring groundedness within the contexts of the urban, exurban, suburban and rural; considering phenomenology, memory and embodied knowledge; ecology; examining notions of belonging, home and homeliness; and reflecting on political resistance.

We decided to use Dirlik's theorisation of groundedness as a starting point to get contributors to examine the tensions between globalisation's effect of disconnecting people from their traditional groundedness, and an increased awareness of that dislocation (2011: 48). Dirlik advocates that 'Place as metaphor suggests groundedness from below, and a flexible and porous boundary around it, without closing out the extra local, all the way to the global.' (2011: 57). This idea, we hoped, would encourage researchers to employ creative practice to try to understand and communicate the tensions inherent in the ontology of contemporary places within the contexts of recent developments in globalisation. Furthermore, we hoped some

contributors would explore the relationship between place, ecology, health and wellbeing. As Dirlik argues: 'This is where ecological and indigenous conceptions of place have some crucial insights to contribute by bringing nature into the conceptualization of place. The ecological conception insists that an important aspect of the concept of place is its groundedness in topography.' (2011: 55) We were delighted with the range of work we received. But in the time between us circulating the call and receiving the work, the world suddenly changed.

As contributors worked on their projects in late 2019 and into 2020, the global COVID-19 pandemic unfolded, fundamentally altering relationships between individuals, communities, space and place. Some of the work in this collection was affected by the pandemic, not least in terms of placing a brake on travel required for filming and other collaborative activities. Moreover, it also became clear that the pandemic had placed a brake on the cosmopolitanism of late modernity. We noticed that these events suddenly brought new meanings and tensions to Dirlik's vision of groundedness. After all, as Dirlik argued back in 2011:

Capital as a very condition of its globalization has had to 'place' itself in order to produce and market its products, as is visible in the transnational corporations that assume different names and different guises in response to real or imagined local differences. The people uprooted and transformed by those very same activities have become more keenly aware of the connection between place and livelihood even as they have been forced to trot the globe in search of a living. Sharpening class difference between a mobile global elite and a still largely stationary population sinking ever deeper into abject poverty, hopelessness, and oblivion serves as a call to defend and restore places. (Dirlik 2011: 48)

The pandemic temporarily halted the free movement of the global elite, as well as many of the rest of us. Suddenly we were stationary and effectively 'grounded'; and thus forced to re-engage with the specificities of the local places in which we lived. As we did this, some of us noticed the concomitant recovery of local ecology. Roads were quieter. The air seemed cleaner. Wildlife was becoming more visible. As such, some of us found that this new, enforced groundedness and isolation offered a refreshing pause in our experience of the relentless march of late-capitalist globalisation. But at the same time, of course, the pandemic was deadly. It was killing friends and family. And it appeared to be the result of events in December 2019 in a wet market in Wuhan, China, which felt to many to be a symptom of a global ecological breakdown. In other words, this deadly global pandemic was seemingly a direct result of human activity in a specific geographical location.

The technological innovations that facilitated communication during the national lockdowns brought about by the pandemic - the world of 'Zoom', 'Skype', 'Microsoft Teams - demonstrated that there was an appetite and a feasibility for the 'glocal' in a way in which was not possible before the pandemic (for work on 'glocalisation' see for example Wellman and Hampton 1999; Soja 2000; Roudometof 2016). Moreover, the revolution in global communication via the internet appears to have shown us that the requirement to travel vast distances in order to be able to communicate with people face-to-face might no longer be necessary. If this new behaviour continues beyond the end of national lockdowns, a new 'groundedness' might bring about significant environmental dividends, as travel is curtailed and the concomitant use of fossil fuels falls away. Having said this, many commentators predict a strong swing back to the reinforcement of 'business-as-usual' - what Dirlik calls 'hegemonic ideologies of development and progress' (2011: 48) - which facilitated the way of life many of us enjoyed before the pandemic - as conservative governments attempt to reinforce top-down notions of borders, people movement, and fossil fuel use in an attempt to reboot global capitalism.

So it is clear that the creative work being shared in this special issue of the journal is being shared at a time when the notion of belonging to a specific 'grounded' place - and the specificities of that place - is at a crossroads. The question is, will globalisation continue 'as was', or will positive new relationships between individuals, communities and 'grounded' locations develop in future across the globe?

Anna Ulrikke Andersen's 'X for Methotrexate' looks at the different sites involved in the research, development, production and use of the medication Methotrexate. Initially used to treat childhood leukaemia in Boston in the late 1940s, this chemotherapy proved successful in treating autoimmune illnesses such as rheumatoid arthritis. Based on archival research, oral history, site-visits and film production, X for Methotrexate addresses the theme of groundedness by juxtaposing the chronically ill and disabled body's embodied connection to place, with a global network of pharmaceutical production, experienced and seen from the disabled body.

Alastair Cole's 'Tuinn Cagarach (Whispering Waves) - A sketch of a sound archive led feature documentary film' focuses on the islands of the Outer Hebrides (situated in the north west of Scotland), one of the last strongholds of the Scottish Gaelic language and its culture, and explores the layers of history that are embedded within the ground of the islands, and in the memory and stories of the those who today call them home.

Chris Caines and Bettina Frankham's 'Grounded places: mediating emotion and environment' presents two projects, 'In a Minor Key' and 'Libration Song', which consider approaches to using place, as virtual, mediated and embodied manifestations, with media. They explore visceral embodied and imagined responses to landscape and environmental context as methods for evoking grounded experiences in an audience. These hybridised media forms blend gaming, cinema, sound art, visual arts and extended forms of narrative thereby creating multimodal experiences.

Lisa Mills's 'Regrounding in Place, Regrounding in Truth: The Caste Study of *Son of a Sweeper*' centres on the lingering discrimination faced by India's caste Dalits or 'sweepers', who have been left behind during India's technological growth and global expansion. She explores the works of Dirlik and Tim Cresswell to situate Dalits within global colonialism. Her collaboration with the Dalit education activist Vimal Kumar results in a documentary film that highlights his efforts to bring community transformation through academic excellence. As Mills interacted with documentary subject Vimal Kumar in his community, this physical 'place within a place' became a small, interpretive world in which she and Kumar worked together to make aesthetic filmmaking choices.

Mairi Gunn's immersive video installation 'Common Ground' is designed to highlight commonalities across racial boundaries based on cultural attitudes to land, connection to place, eviction from ancestral lands by enclosure and enduring struggles for self-determination. Gunn recognises that she is a white settler (Pākehā) born in Aotearoa New Zealand, and draws on her experience in order to explore the politics of both places.

Dungala-Baaka River and Catherine Gough-Brady's 'The River and the Filmmaker: a journey towards a meeting place' draws on Agnès Varda's idea of cinécriture in its response both to the ecological crisis the Murray-Darling river faced, and crises in Gough-Brady's own life.

Paul Newland's *Park Avenue & East 53rd Street* is a film about the Seagram Building and a New York City street corner on which it stands. Drawing primarily on the geographer Doreen Massey's theoretical work on space, the film explores the ways in which a specific urban location - or grounded place - might develop a character (or characters) - through a process of 'becoming' (Massey) - that could not have been imagined by architects and planners.

Dafydd Sillis-Jones's *Y Trydydd Masg [The Third Mask]* uses 360 video (via the third mask of the title) to create a virtual documentary about the author's experience of moving from Wales to Aotearoa (New Zealand). The work uses and challenges the emerging orthodoxies around 360 Documentary Video to intensify the idea of location, whilst also conveying the paradox of the author's (dis)connection from his 'native square mile', while at the same time employing Poetic Inquiry and musical improvisation (by Rhodri Davies) as methods through which a critical reading of Dirlik's notion of 'groundedness' can be embodied in the weave of a creative text.

References

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