Call for Papers

Annual Symposium of the Digital Geography Research Group, RGS-IBG
19-20 June 2025, online

Global Digital Geographies: Digitalising the Territorial / Territorialising the Digital

The Digital Geography Research Group of RGS-IBG invites submissions for its annual symposium 2025 on the theme "Global Digital Geographies: Digitalising the Territorial / Territorialising the Digital."

By **global digital geographies**, we aim to foreground two interconnected dimensions of the global. First, we engage with geography's long-standing critique of the binary conception of territory and network in the context of globalization—a debate that has gained renewed urgency and complexity with the advent of digitalisation and information technology. Second, we envision this as a global platform for scholarly exchange, bringing together diverse perspectives and insights on these topics from different regions around the world. With that in mind, the online symposium will be organized across three regional sections—Asia, Europe, and Africa—to better accommodate global participation.

Confirmed speakers

- Paul C Adams, University of Texas at Austin
- Azadeh Akbari, University of Twente
- Jordan Branch, Claremont McKenna College
- Mirjam de Bruijn, University of Leiden
- Ayona Datta, University College London
- Iginio Gagliardone, University of the Witwatersrand
- Georg Glasze, Friedrich-Alexander-Universität
- Sam Kinsley, University of Exeter
- Alexandru-Codru Preda, Lingnan University
- Norma Möllers — Queen's University
- Carwyn Morris, University of Leiden
- Luke Munn, University of Queensland
- Jiang Xu, Chinese University of Hong Kong

Theme and Focus

In 1998, Stephen Graham (1998) posed a provocative question—*"The End of Geography or the Explosion of Place?"*—to explore how flow-oriented information and communication technologies (ICTs) challenge our conventional understanding of territory. Nearly two decades

later, Milton Mueller (2017) raised the opposite question—*"Will the Internet Fragment?"*—reflecting growing concerns about digital sovereignty and state practices of enclosure, fragmentation, and governance.

These contrasting perspectives reveal the non-linear evolution of digital geographies—oscillating between flow and fixity, circulation and enclosure (Barabasi, 2002; Glasze et al., 2022; Zhang & Morris, 2023). While early imaginaries of an open and networked world emphasized fluidity and deterritorialization, the recent buzzword "digital sovereignty" exemplifies the assertion of nationalist logic of territory, wherein geopolitical rivalries, regulatory enclosures, and cyber securitization strategies reinforce spatial boundaries even as open data movement proliferates (Glasze et al., 2022; Lambach, 2020; Schindler et al., 2021).

Studies on digitalising the territorial demonstrate how digital technologies transform our society (Van Dijck, 2021; van Dijck et al., 2018), from socioeconomic relations to material landscapes (Luque-Ayala & Neves Maia, 2018; Wang & Tomassetti, 2024). Geospatial technologies (Latour et al., 2010; Leszczynski, 2012; Luque-Ayala & Neves Maia, 2018), drones (Gregory, 2011; Jackman & Brickell, 2021; Yao & Wang, 2024), and computational mapping practices (Atkins, 2021; Woods et al., 2024) not only represent but actively produce territories. These processes operate as sociotechnical assemblages that reshape ethnical, urban, regional, and volumetric spatialities (Adey, 2010; Datta, 2024; Yebra López, 2021).

Conversely, territorializing the digital entails examining how states, corporations, and communities inscribe territorial logic into digital infrastructures, data and prosumer-citizens (Lambach, 2020; Lehdonvirta, 2022; Möllers, 2021). The digital infrastructures --- from cable and data hubs to platforms and prosumer-citizens --- which were initially envisioned to support and channel the open flow of data, may concurrently serve as the very foundation for embodying the ideas of enclosure and demarcation (Lehdonvirta, 2022; Möllers, 2021; Munn, 2023).

Digital geographies are thus not immaterial or abstract but grounded in terrestrial politics, the operation of which depends on terrestrial resources—metals, energy, and labour—implicated in global extractive economies (Latour, 2011). Such an understanding is crucial for unveiling the patterns of digital neo-colonialism in the Global South (Fraser, 2019; Mouton & Burns, 2021; Tait et al., 2022). A better understanding of digital-territorial dynamics cannot be achieved through an isolated focus on any single region. Instead, it must be situated within a global arena, where practices of "digitalising the territorial" and "territorializing the digital" across different areas and regions can be introduced, discussed, and used to inform conceptual efforts.

This symposium aims to serve as a global platform for such exchanges, emphasizing the importance of scholarly dialogue across diverse parts of the world. We invite papers that investigate the mutually constitutive processes of digitalising the territorial and territorializing the digital, as these unfold across different scales and are shaped by a variety of actors. Contributions are welcome on, but not limited to, the following themes:

- Digital sovereignty, cybersecurity, and data governance
- Digital technologies and their re-presentation of territories
- Digital infrastructures
- New patterns of territorial development (circulation, logistics, and enclosure) shaped by digitalization
- Techno-nationalism and digital statecraft on all fronts, from the jurisdiction of data and digital infrastructure to citizen-subjects
- Ontological approaches to digital territories and (geo)politics

Call for contributions

We are seeking the following types of contributions to the symposium:

- Individual Paper –please compose your abstracts of **250–300 words** that outline the paper's core arguments, methods, and contributions. Please include the paper title, author name(s), and affiliations.

- Practice-based Session – An opportunity to showcase innovative and alternative approaches. These may be interactive, skills-based, practical or workshop-type contributions.

- Pre-organised Panel/Session – Three to five individual papers speaking to a coherent theme concerning digital territories. Or combined Practice-based Sessions, run by three to six attendees.

- Digital shorts – digital shorts are short videos (between 2 and 5 minutes in length) that introduce, or summarise, an aspect of your research. Your recorded video could discuss:

  - Recent research findings

  - An emerging research idea or interest

  - A new or upcoming research output, publication, creative work, etc.

  - Research methodology

  - Approaches to teaching

  - Uses of digital technologies within academia

  This format has been deliberately designed to require limited preparation, so is ideal for postgraduates, early career researchers, those with caring responsibilities, or other commitments. You can view examples of digital shorts on the <u>DGRG YouTube channel</u>. For accessibility purposes, please provide a transcript when submitting a digital short so that your video can be accurately subtitled.

Deadline for Abstracts/sessions/digital shorts: April 30 2025, Monday
Notification of Acceptance: May 15 2025, Monday
Symposium Date and Venue: 19-20 June 2025, online

Symposium Organising Committee of DGRG

June Wang, Tess Osborne, Sammia C Poveda Villalba, Adam Packer, Harrison Smith, Sam Kinsley, Olivia Fletcher

Submissions and Inquiries:

Please submit your abstract to the link below:

<u>https://qualtricsxmn4sh2rv6f.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_9YuL5yhVu5fhhyK</u>

Please send questions to <u>June.wang@cityu.edu.hk</u>.

For more information, please check the link below:

<u>https://digitalgeographiesrg.org/digital-geographies-research-group-annual-symposium-2025-cfp</u>

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