Rural Geographies in the wake of Non-Representational Theories

i. A short informative containing the major key words.
This paper considers the influence of non-representational theories and associated conceptions of affect and emotion, on rural studies literature, particularly by Geographers. In the paper I argue that the rural studies literature has been led by geographers’ engagement with rural spaces and places. I argue that development can be made by further considering questions of practices, and re-presentation of research into rural geographies using non-representational theories as a mode of thought.

ii. A short running title of less than 40 characters
Rural Geographies and Non-Representational Theories

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Abstract

Non-representational theories have come to exert an influence on rural geographies. Geographers are engaging with rurality not just discursively, but as part of an assemblage of the embodied, practiced and experienced elements of life. This paper reflects on the emergence of non-representational theories and considers what non-representational theories have brought to the study of rural geography to date. This recent work has considered diverse topics, from rural gentrification to an understanding of different demographic conceptualisations of rurality. The paper will consider further trajectories of where an embodied approach can take rural geographies, this includes assessing the challenges researchers wishing to engage with non-representational theories may face, from methodological considerations to the debates surrounding the presentation of research. The paper concludes by considering how rural geography can progress its engagement with non-representational theories, through the expansion of empirical research informed by this theoretical approach.

Key Words

Rural; rurality; non-representational theories; affect; practices, presentations;
Introduction

The emergence of non-representational theories over the last two decades in social and cultural theory has led to a plethora of calls for further engagements with this mode of thought to address specific subdisciplinary topics within human geography (for example, see: Jones, 2011 on the geographies of memory, Skinner et al., 2015 on the geographies of ageing, Andrews, 2017 on the geographies of sport and Hall & Wilton, 2017 on the geographies of disability). The contention broadly sits that engaging with non-representational theories can enliven or respond to contemporary situations in a variety of contexts through a focus on practice, material-social relations and what representations do (Anderson & Harrison, 2010; Vannini, 2015; Anderson, 2018). Indeed, Lorimer (2015) argues that there is now an expanding community of scholars and scholarship engaged with this influential mode of thought, in subdisciplines such as nationalism (Merriman & Jones, 2017), ageing (Herron, 2018), heritage studies (Waterton, 2014), geopolitics and political geographies (Dittmer & Gray, 2010; Muller, 2015) and nursing studies (Andrews, 2016). Within this corpus of work there is, however, minimal engagement with empirical examples, and minimal discussion of how one would go about engaging with non-representational theories.

Rural studies, led by geographical engagement with rural spaces and places, have presented a number of works that respond not only to the call for an engagement with this “contemporary moment’s most influential theoretical perspectives” (Vannini, 2015, p. 2, emphasis added; see: Halfacree, 2012; 2013; 2014), but also partly respond to the lack of empirically driven research. Recent rural geographical research has engaged with non-representational theories, considering the embodied experience of being in the countryside (Carolan, 2008), the practice of driving in the
countryside (Hughes, 2014), pro-rural-migration (Halfacree & Rivera, 2012),
embodied aspects of rural gentrification (Phillips, 2014) and age as an contour of
people’s rural lives, through work on both young (Farrugia et al., 2016) and older
(Maclaren, 2018) people. With this recent work in mind, in this contribution I consider
how rural geographies in the wake of non-representational theories are developing
as a subdisciplinary topic of geography, but also where future research might go.
I first introduce non-representational theories and outline some of the core features
and themes, whilst noting some of the criticisms levied. I then place rural geography
in relation to non-representational theories, where I focus on how rurality has been
previously understood as representational but that contemporary movements have
led to a more material and representational joining, through a focus on the lives of
the rural and the practices of people in rural areas. I end with where rural
geographical thinking could progress with a continued engagement through non-
representational theories, but also by suggesting what can be brought to non-
representational theories from rural geographies.

Non-representational theories

Before exploring current engagements with non-representational theories, it is useful
to consider its emergence within human geography. Non-representational theories
"are concerned, first and foremost, with doings – practices and performances – and
how spaces are made through practical application" (Anderson, 2016, p. 189). The
development of this mode of thought within human geography originally grew out of
the work of Thrift (1996; 1997; 1999; 2000) and his graduate students at the
University of Bristol (Dewsbury, 2000; Harrison, 2000; Dewsbury et al., 2002;
McCormack, 2002, 2003; Wylie, 2002, 2005), with the agenda subsequently taken
up by a wider community (Lorimer, 2005, 2007, 2008; Anderson, 2006; Laurier & Philo, 2006; Tolia-Kelly, 2006). It was a response to the cultural turn of the late twentieth century which was built on the symbolic and the representational. Thrift argued that cultural geography focused on textual representations at the expense of practice and performances, with cultural geographers still “wedded… to the notion of bringing back the 'data', and then re-presenting it (nicely packaged up as a few supposedly illustrative quotations)” (Thrift, 2000, p.3). Non-representational theories thus emerged within geographical thought as a way to “better cope with our self-evidently, more-than-human, more-than-textual, multisensual worlds” (Lorimer, 2005, p. 83). Non-representational theories are about addressing the embodied dimensions of being in the world. Of course, representations play a part in this, they have a force in the world as much as any human or non-human object does. Yet, discourses and deconstruction can only tell so much of the story. There is a need then to appreciate how life is relationally embodied. Scholars drawing on non-representational theories are aiming to address the interrelated nature of being in the world and how lifeworlds are constantly in a state of becoming through our relations with human and more-than human actants (Thrift, 2004). This involves thinking about how life takes shape: “At first, the phenomena in question may seem remarkable only by their apparent insignificance. The focus falls on 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 sensual dispositions. Attention to these kinds of expression, it is contended, offers an escape from the established academic habit of striving to uncover meanings.
and values that apparently await our discovery, interpretation, judgement and
ultimate representation. In short, so much ordinary action gives no advance
notice of what it will become. Yet, it still makes critical differences to our
experiences of space and place”

(Lorimer, 2005, p. 84, emphasis added).

The interrelated concepts of affect and emotion have been used by scholars to
engage with spaces and places in this way and to examine the everyday, embodied
experience of being in the world. There is, however, “no stable definition of affect”
(Thrift, 2004, p. 59), it is “a different kind of intelligence about the world” (Thrift, 2004,
p. 60), associated with how the body moves, walks, touches, senses, feels and
perceives the world around us (Latham et al., 2009). It can be understood in a three-
where:

“affect can be understood in terms of a pre-personal intensity of relation
between bodies, where bodies do not necessarily need to be human…feeling
can be understood as the sensed registering of this intensity in a
body…emotion can be understood as sensed intensity articulated and
expressed in a socially recognisable form of expression”

(Latham et al., 2009, p. 112, emphasis added).

Affect can then be thought of as a critical mode of attunement with the world
(Anderson, 2014) that allows us to question how people interact with everyday
experiences, atmospheres and conditions. Those who use non-representational
theories then are interested in everyday life, and the everyday practices that
constitute the spaces and places in which life ‘takes shape’.
Non-representational theories as a mode of thought have not escaped critique (Rose, 1997; Castree & Macmillan, 2004; Thien, 2005; Pain, 2006; Tolia-Kelly, 2006; Pile, 2010; Wetherell et al., 2015). Castree and Macmillan highlight the risk of a non-representational approach “jettisoning the substantial power of representational acts” (Castree & Macmillan, 2004, p.469) and privileging the non-representational over representations. Wetherell et al. (2015) define themselves as “against non-representational perspectives” in favour of practice-based viewpoints (2015, p.56).

These critiques can, however, partly be considered as being against a singular theoretical approach, which does not represent how different scholars engage with a non-representational perspective. It is arguably better to consider non-representational theories, a plural, as an umbrella term for a series of theories which share common concerns, but have a diverse intellectual history and a multitude of approaches, depending on what specific issue is being thought through. There is no archetypal non-representational theory (Anderson & Harrison, 2010; Anderson, 2016). Critiquing research in this way risks characterising research as singular, but also means that affinities between research epistemologies become harder to find or engage with (Colls, 2012).

Pile considers the hypocrisy of scholars, through the production of written research, re-presenting what they are defining as non-representational. He describes the approach as “fundamentally a representational practice that is, importantly, unable to recognise itself as such” (Pile, 2010, p. 17). This critique that befalls non-representational theories is also part of the wider consideration around emotional geographies and psychoanalytic geographies of whether researchers can truly lay bare emotions, both felt and multiple feelings and relations during research. Indeed, the ineffability of affect as a pre-cognitive state does present a valid critique; how can
we know it in the first place, and then in particular even attempt to represent those
affects? Responding to this critique remains a key challenge for researchers
engaged with non-representation theories. We cannot literally feel through words.
We can however articulate encounters (Laurier & Philo, 2006) and attempt to attend
to people’s feelings and gain an insight into their lifeworld (Carolan, 2008). To not
try this ignores the embodied dimensions of being in the world and presents a
partial perspective of everyday life, and thus risks ignoring a fundamental part of our
everyday experience.

As Colls outlines, although there are of course limitations to any body of knowledge
or epistemological perspective, we should rather ask “how might non-
representational [theories] allow us to think…differently and to think differently
as…geographers?” (Colls, 2012, p. 442). This I see as the challenge and inspiration
for engaging with non-representation theories. Not out of novelty (Castree &
Macmillan, 2004), but to think differently and offer different perspectives, for
example, when considering rurality, and how rural spaces and places form a
significant part of people’s everyday lives.

Most recently the expanding community of scholars and scholarship engaged with
non-representation theories has been challenged by Lorimer (2015) who asks
three interrelated questions of practices, pedagogies and presentation: “what is the
nature of praxis” (ibid, p.181) of non-representation theories?; how might we not
forget students who are keen to learn and engage but are often “foxed by the
prospect of venturing out alone” (ibid, p.184)?; and how have non-representation
theories affected the way geographers write and present their research? Of these
three concerns, practices and presentation are interesting to consider against the
many calls for an engagement with non-representation theories. How do we
practice non-representational theories and how do we write or present non-
representational theories? Before engaging with these questions directly within the
context of rural geographies, I turn now to the development and growth of rural
scholarship, to consider how rural geographies have responded to the growing
influence of non-representational theories.

**Rural Geography: from the representational to the non-representational**

Mapping the changing interpretations of rurality closely follows the evolution of
geographical theories, characterised through a "shifting theoretical lens" (Cloke,
2006, p. 19), reflective of the *turns or paradigms* within geographic thought. Rurality
has previously been considered in terms of functional characteristics that could be
quantified and through which differences between ‘rural’ and ‘urban’ identified (c.f.
Cloke, 1983). The expansion of critical geographies within post-modernism and post-
structuralist perspectives involved a move to consider the social constructions of
rurality (Halfacree, 1993; 1995; Cloke, 2006), where rurality is considered through an
expanded notion of discourse and social constructivism (see, for example: Halfacree,
1993; 1995; Marsden *et al.*, 1993; Cloke & Thrift, 1994; Jones, 1995; Cloke & Little,
1997; Murdoch *et al.*, 2003; Cloke, 2003a, 2003b; Cloke *et al.*, 2006). Rurality came
to be understood as an outcome of socially constructed and deconstructed
representational practices, through and from different actors, whether political, lay,
academic or otherwise.

Whilst there have been difficulties in and critiques of defining what is ‘rural’ (c.f.
Hoggart, 1990; Mormont, 1990), there is a general acceptance of the socially
constructed nature of ‘rural’. This notion of a social construction of rurality presents
the ‘rural’ as “a category of thought that each society takes and reconstructs”
(Mormont, 1990, p. 40–41). With that, each consideration of rurality is discursive and therefore a representation contextualised to specific times and spaces (Halfacree, 1993; 1995; 2006). Such a view of rurality meant that the representations that came to be known as rural became detached from their original geographic space (Cloke, 1997; Woods, 2011).

However, this socially constructed reality and deconstructive approach to rural spaces and places has been called into question for leaving out the embodied and sensuous aspects of the everyday lived experiences of ‘rural’ places (Carolan, 2008). Representations, discourses and social constructions can have “very real material geographical and socio-political consequences” (Halfacree, 2012, p.390).

Yet, discourses and deconstruction can only tell so much of the story, where these consequences exist in everyday practices and performances. Halfacree (2006) set in motion this interest to get back to the practices and performances of everyday lives via Lefebvre’s (1991) work on the production of space. Halfacree (2006) proposed a conceptual framing where rural space is conceptualised as a triad, consisting of a rural space’s locality, for example what is in a rural space, be it rolling hills, sparse population; representations of the rural, images, writings, descriptions; and lives of the rural, as the rural is not just a backdrop for life that happens but the practices and everyday lives of human and non-human actors influence the nature of a rural space.

Over time the focus in rural studies, against this conceptual framing, has shifted from locality to representations to everyday lives.

The everyday is important in shaping our understandings of rurality, as otherwise conceptions of rural spaces or places would solely be considered “products of a mind devoid of corporality… To ignore how understandings of the countryside are embodied is to cut from our analysis a major (indeed the main) source of
understanding” (Carolan, 2008, p. 408-409). Indeed, Cloke has echoed this in relation to performance and practice where he articulates that “much more needs to be known about [conceptions of rurality and their] precise importance in relation to how people perceive, practice, and experience being-in-the-rural” (2013, p. 229).

There is a desire to re-materialise rurality (Woods, 2009) and take forward an engagement with the practices and performances of humans and non-humans, material and immaterial in rural spaces and places (Edensor, 2006; Halfacree, 2006).

This movement towards engaging with embodied practice has come at a time when the growth of scholarship engaging with non-representational theories has come to exert an influence on rural studies through the work of a number of rural geographers, as well as through cultural geographers studying rural spaces and places. I turn now to expand on how this use of non-representational theories has contributed to the study of rurality, before moving on to contemporary questions of where such an engagement might go and what challenges scholars might face in their research.

**Non-representational theories in rural spaces and places**

Carolan’s (2008) work in rural Iowa, USA, is one of the first papers to draw explicitly on non-representational theories in rural studies (although see Thrift, 2003). Carolan argues that “mind is body; consciousness is corporeal; thinking is sensuous… To ignore how understandings of the countryside are embodied is to cut from our analysis a major (indeed the main) source of understanding” (2008, p. 409). This trajectory of thought has inspired others to engage with rurality in such a way.
Carolan’s research, through considering the practices of different individuals in rural Iowa, highlights the different performative and thus embodied relations individuals have in rural spaces, dependant on where they encounter the rural, such as the difference between a farmer driving a tractor through a field and a non-farmer who sees the same field from the road. This focus on the practice of driving and encountering rural space has been traced by Hughes (2014) who describes an engagement with the embodied nature of rurality not through walking, as Wylie (2002; 2005) and Macpherson (2007; 2009; 2010; 2017) have done, but from being behind the wheel of a car. Hughes (2014) argues through the act of driving rural spaces are (re)produced through social practices, that are in turn influenced by how spaces are shaped by practices.

Halfacree (2012) has taken forward this call in a broader discussion of an “affective rurality” (p. 395) in line with considering the non-representational aspects that rural spaces and places provide. Indeed, Halfacree cites the “nature of rurality’ [as] hold[ing] the key to [rural spaces’] affective power” (2012, p. 396), thereby demonstrating that “nature…adds value to culture” (Cruickshank, 2009, p. 104), and that the “experiential” (Halfacree, 2012, p. 396), affective natures of rural spaces can thus add to more discursive understandings of the countryside (see also: Bunce, 1994). Halfacree, with Riviera (2012), has also applied non-representational theories, affects and affordances to rural migration, to understand migration beyond solely the discursive reduction of individuals’ movement to rural spaces and places by paying attention to “everyday entanglements with (rural) place[s]”. They foreground the “affective and affordance-based dimensions of rural living” which can “assume special prominence” in individuals’ lives (Halfacree & Riviera, 2012, p. 107).
Phillips (2014) furthers considerations of the affective and affordance-based natures of individuals’ lives by drawing on Thrift’s (2003) notion of baroque rurality, where ‘baroque’ is considered in an ontological rather than aesthetic sense, as “nature should be seen as a set of elements or actants that whilst often connected to one another do not constitute some all-encompassing whole” (Phillips, 2014, p. 57).

Ultimately Phillips considers the complexity of individuals’ experience of a rural space, taking into account affective responses to rural natures, such as flora, fauna and various other phenomenological attributes such as quietness and openness, but also how long an individual has resided in the space and their relative positioning to the space, whether walking, from the seat of a tractor or from an armchair in a house.

Philo (1992) cited a need for rural studies to move away from solely considering homogenous conceptions of rurality from privileged white, male, middle class perspectives and to take into account “neglected rural geographies [of] ‘other’ human groupings” (p.193) beyond the previously narrow focus that he identified. Within non-representational rural research Philo’s call has been taken up by Farrugia et al. (2016) and Maclaren (2018) who focus on the demographic difference of age, by respectively considering the experiences of younger and older people. Age is an important contour of people’s lives to consider within this embodied framing. Farrugia et al. (2016) highlight how young people’s relationship with the rural and the city is linked to a future they imagine for themselves and the associated mobilities.

Maclaren (2018) argues that due to rural areas experiencing demographic ageing faster than urban areas, there is an increasing need to understand not just demographic changes on an aggregate, quantitative level, but to also seek an
embodied consideration of older people’s lives and the complex interdependencies
of people and place that ageing brings.

As this brief overview shows, rural studies scholars, and particularly geographers,
are developing non-representational theories in their consideration of rural spaces
and places. Rural geographers have taken the lead in presenting empirical work that
deploys non-representational theories as a mode of thought, and this influential
theoretical perspective (Vannini, 2015) has certainly made an impact on rural
scholars, whether by revisiting previous research using a non-representational lens
(Carolan, 2008; Phillips, 2014; Farrugia et al., 2016), by considering a new approach
to topics already under study, such as rural migration (Halfacree & Riviera, 2012), or
by expanding the focus of rurality beyond normative homogeneity into aspects such
as rural ageing (Maclaren, 2018). What follows now is a brief turn to support where
rural studies, and geographers in particular, might develop the use of non-
representational theories, through a consideration of the practices and the
presentation of non-representational research.

Moving rural geography forward in the wake of non-representational theories

Burgeoning research in rural studies has contributed to the expansion of scholarship
engaged in non-representational theories as a mode of thought. However, as
highlighted by Lorimer (2015), there remain questions around the practices and the
presentation of non-representational research. Lorimer challenged scholars to
consider how non-representational theories can be deployed and to consider the
different ways of presenting non-representational research. Whilst rural geography’s
engagement with non-representational theories is expanding, there is still a lack of
clear guidance on how to do non-representational rural research. If more rural
scholars are to engage with this mode of thought, the practice and presentation of non-representational theories within rural geography are challenges that need to be addressed. This final section might not answer all the questions but will give an explicit idea of how I see rural scholarship informed by non-representational theories moving forward and might offer guidance to those wanting to explore non-representational perspectives.

Practices

How you undertake, or ‘do’, a study with non-representational theories is probably the most fundamental question emerging from much of the work calling for non-representational theories. Non-representational theories are a mode of thought, a way of attending to the research. A mode of thought captures fully the intentions behind using or drawing from this perspective, whether directly as Maclaren (2018) or Hughes (2014) did in their research design or as others did post-hoc reviewing completed research and applying a new lens to analyse their findings (Phillips, 2014; Carolan, 2008).

Here I focus on using non-representational theories as part of the research design within a rural setting, where there is a desire to focus on the emergent, affective and embodied aspects of the lifeworlds in rural spaces and places. The research questions drive the practices but, for the types of knowledges under consideration, the practices will be drawn from the qualitative suite of research methods, such as ethnographic methods, defined as “participant observation plus any other appropriate methods/techniques/etc. . . . if they are appropriate for the topic” (Crang & Cook, 2007, p. 35; emphasis in original). This means being in the world, whether the world of those who participate in your research project, using interviews, walking
or ‘go-along’ interviews, focus groups, and/or ethnography of just being in and experiencing the rural locale. The aim is to not just be a participant observer in the spaces of the interview or the rural place under study but an *observant participant* (Thrift, 2000; Dewsbury, 2010). By this I mean that you, as a researcher, are immersed in the rural spaces and places under study. As Dewsbury articulates:

> “gather a portfolio of ethnographic ‘exposures’ that can act as *lightning rods for thought* . . . [where you] set upon generating inventive ways of addressing and intervening in that which is happening, and has happened, as an academic, that such a method produces its data: a series of testimonies to practice[s]. . ., embodiment[s] and materialit[ies].”

(Dewsbury 2010, p. 327, emphasis added)

These *lightning rods for thought* may come from reading about the place you are in, the materialities of the surrounding, the emotions vocalised by participants in an interview or the affective capacities of a moment. This means in practice maintaining a research diary, for example, that records the multiple textures of the rural spaces and places you are in, by attending to: the images of a space or place you are in as well as those associated with it and their affective capacities (Roberts, 2016); the materialities of a space and place; the everyday performances and practices ongoing in a space and their associated temporalities (c.f. Lager *et al.*, 2016 on rhythm); any implicit or explicit rules a space or place may have; and the interrelated affects, feelings and emotions (Anderson, 2006, 2014) that a space and place has. Within rural spaces, a research diary could record the daily social routines of greeting on village high streets, paintings depicting a rural idyll in contrast to derelict buildings, the feelings and emotions of interview participants about their bond to their rural
space, and the feelings experienced by the researcher when immersed in their rural locale of study. For example, sitting in a café in a rural village, I might make notes related to the materiality of the café itself, full of rustic style furniture that is ‘quintessentially’ rural, with walls covered in paintings and images depicting the local fields, at harvest, in the autumn, with landscapes depicting idyllic scenes of past agricultural practices, prior to mechanisation. I might note groups of people sitting in the café discussing the world around them, sitting reading, with a fire crackling behind them. This example might situate itself in representing the embodied aspect of the rural idyll, of a ‘community’ centre where people come to meet, and are reminded in their everyday lives of the longer history of the place. This research diary technique affords a way for a rural researcher to gain and build a layered perspective of the space and place under research.

Research that draws on non-representational theories as a mode of thought is thus inductive and involves being present in the world (Macpherson, 2007; Carolan, 2008; Hughes, 2014; Maclaren, 2018). The analysis of such a methodological practice does not therefore happen at a discreet stage of the research process but is iterative. Throughout the empirical moments of being in the field, reflecting on the notes taken during interviews, reflecting on the contents of transcripts, diaries, pictures, books, readings and thus starting to pull together emergent themes and their associated stories from the research, that can be sorted and organised as simply as piles on the desk or floor, to highlighting with pens, or on computer assistive software such as Nvivo or OneNote. The (re)presentation of these and how you draw out the stories to be told is considered next.

(Re)Presentation
With non-representational theories’ development, a focus on writing has come to the fore, and in particular the styles of writing scholars consider to be ‘academic’ (Vannini, 2012; see also: MacDonald, 2014). However, it is this full appreciation of writing, and indeed other presentation methods, as part of research, rather than an afterthought, I turn to now (see also Crang & Cook, 2007). The re-presentation of work that alludes to be non-representational may seem ironic: how can someone re-present the feelings and affects, materialities of a moment? Carolan provides us with a contextual use of this critique in that “we cannot literally feel in these pages what respondents truly experienced in their lived experience. But this does not mean that we cannot at least get a taste of their world through their words” (2008, p. 412), or indeed our own descriptions, taken with the necessary positionalities of such research.

I focus on re-presentation here, not just on writing, as scholars do more than just write, we talk about, present, discuss and represent our research in increasingly diverse ways, including conference presentations, photo essays (Swanton, 2012), interactive articles (Vannini & Taggart, 2013) and monographs (Vannini, 2012). The ambition then of re-representing the non-representational, emotional and affective is still not “an unproblematic procedure to someone claiming to adopt an epistemology that is non-representational…. [but rather it is an] attempt not to represent but to reveal, to enliven, and animate…through a (hopefully) evocative and impressionist rendition strategy” (Vannini & Taggart, 2013, p. 228). This becomes the key ambition of non-representational scholarship, not only in representing such work, but in taking these different representations seriously, as performative practices in themselves. A researcher might not explicitly draw from non-representational theories in their work but the lifelines and underpinnings or “blueprints” (Lorimer, 2015, p.186) of a piece of
work may be drawn from such a body of knowledge to enliven it (see for example:
Lorimer, 2012; Lorimer & Wylie, 2010). We might begin to experiment and move
toward more embodied and affective descriptions of places both from the author’s
and research participants’ perspectives, weaving narrative and references together
to give a rounded context of place for those engaged with a research paper,
presentation or otherwise. There are of course examples of the types of writing
(Cloke et al., 1994) and representation this can take (Vannini & Taggart, 2013), as
well as works that can act as inspiration for types of writing beyond solely academic
frames for rural studies.

**Conclusion**

In this paper, I have argued that in order to move forward with non-representational
theories there is a need to consider not just what research has been done, but where
research using this mode of thought might go. Lorimer’s (2015) articulation of
practices and presentation offers a useful base for work that still needs to be done
and conceptualised by those engaged with non-representational theories.

There is also value in considering, adapted from Colls (2012), how non-
representational theories might allow us to think and/or write differently as rural
geographers? And what does rural geography have to gain from adopting non-
representational perspectives? It provides a mode of thought through which to
engage with the embodied and sensuous aspects of the everyday lived experiences
of the rural space. How life interacts with the rural is central to our understandings of
rural spaces. They do not exist in a vacuum; human interaction and engagement
with rural spaces defines rural geographers’ interest in the rural. For rural
geographers, an engagement with non-representational theories means continuing
to re-materialise their engagement with the dynamics of rural life in all its diversity, by getting out there, into the fields, hills, valleys, villages, hamlets, crofts, tundras, forests, coasts, and engaging with how these rural places in all their variety are bound up in economic, political, ethical, moral, social, cultural and environmental concerns, what associated representations do in place, how emotions and affects play a role in wider lives and how at its heart these come to be practiced through the interdependences people have with their rural places.

References


Non-representational theories though, as describing it as a mode of thought implies, are not the only way to address the affective and emotive lifeworlds. The wider affective turn (Wetherall, 2012) in social and cultural theory has seen the development of other geographical engagements including 'emotional geographies' (Bondi et al., 2004) and 'psychoanalytic geographies' (Kingsbury & Pile, 2014). All three, non-representational theories, emotional geographies and psychoanalytic geographies, share overlapping underlying perspectives (Pile, 2010).

It is beyond the scope of this article to consider the pedagogical questions of how to teach students and others interested to use and think with non-representational theories in their research. Halfacree (2012, p. 395-397) offers some useful questions to consider around rural geographies specifically. Cloke et al. (2004, p. 299-305) and Couper (2015, p. 98-103) present accessible descriptions and introductions (see also Vannini, 2012, 2015) that are as much use to those practicing already, as those keen to learn.