

Creative Geographies | Geographies of Creativity

28–30 January 2027

07743 Jena | Fürstengraben 1



Call for Participation

This year, we would like to focus on the relationship between *creativity* and *geography* as the central theme of the New Cultural Geography (NKG) conference. In doing so, we are drawing on a recurring theme in human geography and the didactics of geography, which particularly in recent years, has opened up fruitful conceptual, methodological and emancipatory perspectives on geographical practice (Marston/de Leeuw 2013; Rhode-Jüchtern 2015; de Leeuw/Hawkins 2017; Hawkins 2019; Noxolo 2025a; Mason/Riding 2023). In light of the current, widely diagnosed crisis dynamics and the many arenas of social change (fascism, patriarchalisation, the climate crisis, the care crisis, war, 'Zeitenwende', etc.), the world is perceived as disorientated, bewildered and exhausted (Chaudhary 2024). Through their analyses of crises, the most recent NKG conferences were characterised by a search for appropriate forms of geographical practice and its relevance within academia. As critical geographers, we are called upon to respond to this intellectual (over)burden in our intertwined fields of research. In view of the situation, there is a need to continue reflecting (self-)critically on geographical thought and practice, to seek innovative paths of resistance, and to develop emancipatory horizons. With the NKG in Jena, we invite you to take up and continue these explorations against the backdrop of perspectives on the connection between creativity and geography.

Through the lens of creativity, we can focus on geography and geographical practice itself. Alongside creative forms in applied geographies of resistance (e.g. Bartholl et al. 2025), we as geographers are called upon to practise reflectiveness (Blumenberg 1980, 57f.). Thus, moments of experimentation and rejection, of pausing and of reflexive practice, are necessary in order to develop new practices of further thinking and further action (Hawkins 2019). Such an endeavour may often be associated with a 'disciplinary anxiety' (Hawkins 2019, 974), that is, a sense of unease at having to venture beyond one's own disciplinary expertise due to the far-reaching demands of geography. Yet it is precisely in this unease that a specific form of productivity lies – a productivity of failure and creative reorientation (Hawkins 2019; Hawkins 2015). Through a geography of creativity, spaces for new encounters, collaborative learning and working can be opened up. Against this backdrop, we understand the focus on the concept and idea of creativity as a decidedly practice-orientated and (self-)critical perspective.

Topoi of creativity have long permeated (human) geographical thought and practice. This can be traced back to the assumption of a dialectic between the creative forces of freedom and the constraints imposed by systems of domination in Élisée Reclus' *géographie sociale* (Reclus 1905; Clark/Martin 2013). Creative re-imaginings of the practice of geography have often been pioneering for conceptual and methodological innovations across the discipline (Barnes 2017; de Leeuw/Hawkins 2017; Madge 2017; Kinkaid 2019; Benzon et al. 2021). Within the movements of postcolonial theory and Black Geographies, Noxolo (2025b) has once again drawn attention to the fact that creativity in subaltern communities is one of, if not *the* central, collective resource for survival and thriving. In the geographies of marginalised and underprivileged communities, 'creativity' is not merely 'ornament', but 'the hard bedrock of survival' (Noxolo 2025b, 131). Survival and thriving in this context require collective efforts characterised by mutual care and solidarity, by everyday improvisation and creative forms of repair and regeneration (Puig de la Bellacasa 2017; Graziano/Trogal 2019; Kumar 2021).

Creativity in this sense can open up spaces of possibility to subvert power relations and structural dispossession and deprivation (Singer et al. 2023). However, creativity is not necessarily of emancipatory value. It does not in itself lead to meaningful, responsible or empowering action. Rather, creativity is and has repeatedly been utilised and co-opted for capitalist, racist or patriarchal interests (Reckwitz 2012; Dzudzek 2016; Lundman/Nordström 2023; Noxolo 2025a). Creativity can therefore serve as an analytical perspective for making contested geographies empirically visible and reflecting on them conceptually. Drawing on a reflexive and dialectical perspective on creativity, it is thus also possible to discuss and (self-)critically contextualise the ethics and rationalities of resistance as well as to raise questions regarding the (ir)rationality of emancipatory action and the transformation of power and governmentality within the co-creative human-machine relationships of the present.

Against this backdrop, by focusing on the theme of *creativity* at the NKG 2027 in Jena, we wish to explicitly provide a counterpoint to the current 'crisis score' and to discuss the resistant and emancipatory potential of a **creative geography** and of **geographies of creativity** from theoretical-conceptual, methodological, practice-orientated, ethical and critically reflective perspectives. Specifically, we identify five areas that invite further exploration and reflection:

1. **Theory – Critical Geographies of Creativity:** How do *new things* come into the world in creative ways? When is a practice creative, and how does it differ from other practices of innovation? What characterises the collective nature of creativity, and what, in

particular, distinguishes subaltern creativity? How are creative practices co-opted by powerful actors? How does creativity itself become a resource for oppressing others? In what ways are creative geographies capitalised upon and exploited within cycles of capital?

2. **Practice – Geographies of Creative Resistance:** How can creative potential be harnessed to counter the current dynamics of fascisation and authoritarianism, multiple planetary crises, neo-feudal capitalism, rampant patriarchy, war and violence? How can creativity be defended against illiberal and machine-generated co-optation? How can creative practices be utilised in anti-fascist struggles? What role does creativity play in shaping utopian spaces? How does creativity become a resource within social movements?
3. **Methodology – Creative Methods in Geography:** What significance does creativity hold in academic geography? How can we understand that creative, scientific methods reveal something new? How do creative methods relate to our understanding of the discipline and our self-image as academics? How does the creative act relate to methods that impose a framework and limitations? How can creativity be preserved (in research and teaching) in the face of generative machines?
4. **Ethics – Responsible and Meaningful Action:** Against which (scientific) theoretical or philosophical backgrounds can creative work be justified? To what does the ‘new’ – brought about through creative practices – refer? Which ethical models can be invoked to legitimise the valorisation of creativity or the dialectic between creativity and rationality? Do we need reference points from the Enlightenment or Romanticism – such as reason, rationality and humanism – for this, or specifically not? What arguments speak for or against grounding geographical research in ethics?
5. **Reflexivity – self-affirmation of geographical-creative practice:** What role does creativity play within the discipline – both historically and in the present day? To what extent can creativity be understood as a constitutive component and resource of geographical practice? Which creative approaches, practices and ways of thinking have shaped the history of geography, what traces do they leave today, and how can we utilise them in the future? What significance does creativity hold in processes of disciplinary self-affirmation?

We look forward to making the conference ‘*New Cultural Geography*’ in Jena a forum for **new** conversations within and **new** creations in **g**eography. The conference theme is an invitation to reflect, encourage, and discuss together. Naturally, the conference is also open to contributions from all areas and subjects of geography.

Papers should be submitted via the University of Jena’s conference system ‘*indico*’ (<https://indico.rz.uni-jena.de/event/324/abstracts/>), accompanied by a detailed abstract (250 words) and, preferably, *co-authored*. **The deadline for submissions is 30 September 2026**. In order to submit a paper, at least one of the presenters must create a user account on the indico platform (<https://indico.rz.uni-jena.de/register/>). This procedure makes it easier for us to communicate with contributors and finalise the programme.

To keep the programme more flexible – given the complex room availability at the university during the lecture term and with the aim of facilitating greater exchange across specialisms at the conference – we will *not* be organising *any* pre-planned thematic sessions this year. You may submit talks, posters and interactive formats (workshops, panel discussions, book presentations, etc.). We naturally intend to consider all individual submissions for the final conference programme. However, to keep the programme streamlined, we ask you to consider whether contributions could be presented in tandem.

We look forward to receiving your submissions!

The organising committee of the NKG 2027 in Jena

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