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## Abstract

This paper reviews work in geography concerned with the spatialities of 'the subject' after non-representational theory (NRT). The paper looks at what talking about 'the subject' might refer to, particularly amid the aftermath of the decentering of the subject that took place in the latter part of the 20th Century across the humanities and social sciences. The paper then provides an overview of the impacts that NRT has had on how geographers have understood and approached the subject. In particular, the paper focuses on recent work in human geography which takes the subject to be in some way emergent from encounters with various more-than human others / alterity. Reflecting on that work, the paper broaches questions around difference and distribution. Here a range of questions and lines of enquiry which might now be pursued in developing this work further are offered. These are summarised around the need for a 'spacing' of the subject.

Key words: Subject, Subjectivity, Non-representational Theory, Post-phenomenology, Event, Alterity.

## Introduction

Pile and Thrift's 1995 collection 'Mapping the Subject' marked a key milestone in geography's engagement with questions around 'the subject' and showcased the multifaceted decentering of the subject emerging at that time. Put crudely, 'the subject' and its distinctly *human* experience were being increasingly displaced from being the starting and focal points for geographic investigations of people's relationships with the world (see Romanillos 2008). In the decade after 'Mapping the Subject' the ongoing influence of post-structuralism and posthumanism can be seen in various discussions of subjectivation and interpellation (Probyn 2003), performativity (Dewsbury 2000; Gregson and Rose 2000; Nash 2000), non-human agency or 'actancy' (Thrift 2000; Whatmore 2002), affects and feelings (McCormack 2003; Thrift 2004), materiality (Anderson and Tolia-Kelly 2004; Latham and McCormack 2004), amongst others themes (also see Longhurst 2003). This marked a significant departure from the sorts of humanist frameworks of analysis prominent in the 1970s and 80s. Further, as non-representational theories (NRTs) have found traction in relation to a range of areas of human geography (see Anderson and Harrison 2010), such critical considerations of the subject have become established as key areas of concern for geography given our contemporary socio-technical, ecological, and political circumstance (Amin and Thrift 2013; Ash and Simpson 2016; Thrift 2008).

While the subject and its decentering are well established concerns for human geography given the aforementioned two decades or more of scholarship, a number of questions still remain or re-emerge from within this work. These include: 'What remains of the subject and how do we move on with that?' and 'What does such decentering mean in the context of various forms of social relation and embodied encounter (Harrison 2007a; Simpson 2015)?'. Or to put it differently: 'How far down the 'post-humanist lane' do we want to go (Simonsen 2013; Wylie 2010)?'. Furthermore: 'What new means of decentering are emerging now? (Thrift 2008) and 'What registers of experience do such means of decentering operate upon (or beyond) (Ash 2012; Ash and Simpson 2016)?'. The purpose of this paper then is to draw together and work out from such concerns as found in range of recent work concerned with the subject in geography and provide some orientation in thinking further about the geographies of subjects. More specifically, in reviewing such work the paper identifies a series of key matters of concern that subsist within these critical engagements with the

subject – notably, around issues of difference and distribution - and proposes a range of avenues along which these might be pursued further.

In approaching this, the paper begins by looking further at what talking about 'the subject' might actually refer to. The paper then looks in some detail at the impact of NRT on how geographers understand and approach the subject, or rather, the 'composition of subjectivities'. Next, the paper looks to a key development within recent work in human geography on the subject influenced by NRT: that the subject is in some way emergent from encounters with various more-than human others / alterity. In moving towards a conclusion, the paper turns to a series of questions and concerns that emerge from or remain in light of such work. These circulate around the status of this post-encounter subject. In response, the paper articulates a concern for what will be called 'spacing the subject'.

# What is 'the subject'?

There is a complex history to the word 'subject'. Its meaning changes over time and depending on the context. Subject derives from the Latin *subjectum* which literally means 'that which is thrown under'. The subject is "that which is thrown under as a prior support or more fundamental stratum upon which other qualities…may be based" (Critchley 1999: 51). This meaning is often associated with certain metaphysical philosophers (Aristotle, Descartes, Kant) who posit a self-conscious and reflective subject as "the ultimate ground upon which entities become intelligible" (Critchley 1999: 53). This means that "the subject is assumed to be identical to itself; it is the point, the place in the pattern, that endures. It is the centre of identity, stable and unshakeable" (Doel 1995: 229).

For geographers, reference to 'the subject' often brings with it connotations of subjectivity, as in: that which is in contrast to objectivity (Sharp 2009). The subject is the ground from which our knowledge of who we are and the world around us is derived (Pratt 2009). Rather than being some kind of transcendent position, such a ground gives a particular and partial point of view when it comes to such knowledge. As Longhurst notes (2003: 284, quoting McDowell and Sharp 1999 [emphasis added]) "'the subject' is a term often used to refer 'to the individual human being / agent, accenting both physical embodiment and the range of emotional-mental processes through which it thinks *its place* in the world'". Connections are also often made between particular subject positions from which that knowledge is generated - which many take to be products of various social systems and inequalities constructed in linguistic, semiotic and / or discursive forms (Blackman *et al* 2008) - and their related (collective) identity positions. Such connections are perhaps most commonly made between masculine and feminine subject position and their respective gendered identities, but this has also increasingly been complicated through the enfolding and intermixing of racial, ethnic, and sexual identity politics into such considerations (Braidotti 2011).

In this paper talking about 'the subject' means talking about our sense of self or selfhood. It is important here to note that this is not the same thing as talking about identity as "Identities are [largely] … imaginary tales, which project a reassuring but nonetheless illusory sense of unity over the disjointed, fragmented, and often incoherent range of internal and external fractures that compose them" (Braidotti 2011: 78). Talking about the subject as selfhood recognises such fragility and change more clearly in that any such sense of self inherently emerges from the unfolding of actions and does not pre-exist us. On a moment-by-moment basis we might find ourself feeling, thinking, or acting differently on the basis of who we are with and where we are. This draws clear attention to the 'internal' differences that exist within us, not to mention the differences between those who might appear to share a delimited identity position with us.

A concern with our sense of self might seem odd for geography given the apparent directionality of focus this implies - a gaze inwards rather than being about the world 'out there'. However,

geographers have asked: "Can we ever conceive of ourselves [this sense of self or selfhood] outside of the space we inhabit?" (Probyn 2003: 290). As Probyn (2003: 290) elaborates: "Thinking about subjectivity in terms of space of necessity reworks any conception that subjectivity is hidden away in private recesses. What we hold most dear, as an individual intimate possession, is in fact a very public affair. Thinking about how space interacts with subjectivity entails rethinking both terms, and their relation to each other". It is evident that the subject is increasingly becoming the 'object-target' of various spatialized forms of intervention and material encounters (Anderson 2014). This can be seen in examples as diverse as: contemporary discourses around and responses to threatening 'others' in debates over austerity, anti-immigration, and anti-globalization (Closs-Stephens 2016; Wilson 2016b); in the context of the rapid expansion of various information communication and biomedical technologies and the ways these question or trouble the boundaries of the human (Fannin 2011; Thrift 2008); and, in the design, securing, and management of various 'public' spaces through the shaping of the sensory experiences of bodies (Adey *et al* 2013; Allen 2006). Throughout these examples, subjects continue to become positioned, differentiated, distributed, rendered mobile, held in place, animated, subdued, and so on, in increasingly nuanced and pervasive ways.

## Non-representational theories and the composition of subjectivities

One of the key drivers in thinking critically about the subject in geography in recent years has been NRT (Anderson and Harrison 2010; Thrift 2008). NRT is by no means the only starting point from which the interrelations of the subject and space have been questioned (see Bonnet and Nayek 2003; Brown and Knopp 2003; and Bondi and Davidson 2003). For example, feminist theories have made significant inroads in rethinking the subject in terms of embodiment and with that "the relations of power that permeate how subjectivities are constructed and experienced" (Probyn 2003: 290). Further, psychoanalytic theories have been engaged with to consider both the spatial logics and topographic conceptualisations psychoanalysis has employed in thinking through the psyche, the unconscious, and so on, but also what utility psychoanalytic theories hold in understanding the subject in relation to various social contexts, structures, and issues (see Kingsbury and Pile 2014). Nonetheless, NRT has had a significant (at times contentious) impact on how geography considers the subject, particularly in terms of the material-relatedness of bodies and their situation within environments that play a part in their taking place. This emphasis on relatedness, and particularly where that has led, will be the focus here.

To explain, "a recognisable early and abiding trait of non-representational work … was a concern for the practical, embodied 'composition' of subjectivities" (Anderson and Harrison 2010: 8). One key point of distinction here lies in the way that NRT emerged within the context of a discipline heavily indebted to social constructivist ideas. As mentioned earlier, notions of performativity, discourse, interpellation, and so on, held significant sway in terms of geographic engagements with the subject during the mid-1990s and onwards. Here it was made clear how "we experience ourselves [as] deeply structured by historical processes that make us into subjects" (Probyn 2003: 290). These processes shape us through their manifestations in and through social spaces and the meanings they come to hold. Developing such insights, NRT sought to develop a 'radically constructivist' notion of the subject whereby "It is from the active, productive, and continual weaving of the multiplicity of bits and pieces that we emerge" (Anderson and Harrison 2010: 8). Within these weavings our inhabitation of space is taken *not just* to relate to our situation *vis-a-vis* various social formations and the symbolic structures *but also* the quite literal material-situatedness of bodies within spaces which are themselves occupied by variously scaled, agentive objects and things (Ingold 2000; Thrift 1996).

Important to NRT's rethinking of the subject has been the influence of actor network theory (ANT) and its arguments both for non-human agency / actancy and "a distributed and always provisional

personhood" (Thrift 2008: 110). A variety of objects or things - anything from molecular chemical compositions to information communication technologies (Latham and McCormack 2004; McCormack 2007; Thrift 2005) - are seen to be increasingly active in decentering the human subject. This means that "I do not have experiences, they are not mine" and rather that "Experience is trans-subjective" in being bound up with such more-than human actors and agencies (Dewsbury *et al* 2002: 439). Further, various conceptualisation of affect have featured prominently in non-representational accounts of practices and the subjectifications that unfold within them (Anderson 2006; McCormack 2003; Thrift 2004). Here attention has been drawn to the non-cognitive, pre-personal, and trans-human aspects of embodied experience (Ash 2010; Simpson 2011; Thrift 2004; though see Barnett 2008), as well as the sharing and transmission of such pre-personal feelings amongst various more-than human collectives and populations (Anderson 2014; McCormack 2014; Barry and Thrift 2007). Amongst such work, again, "the concept of subjectivity is [largely] replaced with a focus upon bodies, where bodies are not singular, bounded, closed and fixed, but rather open to being affected and affecting others. Within this formulation attention is shifted to what bodies can *do*, and what relational connections change and alter bodies as they move and sense the world" (Blackman *et al* 2008: 16). However, there have also been arguments for "a need to develop tools for thinking about the way in which the affective and the subjective registers operate through each other and are constitutive of each other" (Dawney 2013: 629).

A third key conceptual framing through which a non-dualist, processual understanding of the subject has been pursued in NRT is that of 'the event' (Dewsbury 2000; 2003; 2007; Mould 2009; Shaw 2010). The emphasis again here shifts away from pre-existing, already constituted subjects. Instead, events unfold in the relations of bodies, both organic and inorganic, human and non-human, physical and ideal, where it is the relation itself that is important (Dewsbury 2003). These events extend significantly beyond any (apparently) individual subject both spatially and temporally. While these events might be associated with 'notable' space- and time-delimited events (such as a football match [see Dewsbury 2000; Latham and McCormack 2004]), they are also very often much more banal and / or background happenings (a passing interaction in a cafe (Laurier and Philo 2006), a moment spent looking at a landscape (Wylie 2006), an encounter with recorded music (Anderson 2005), and so on). What such relations leave us with is a "minimal subjectivity" which "cannot be anything other than a process of becoming" (Dewsbury 2000: 480). Such minimal subjectivities are "provisional, relational, and enacted outcomes" (Harrison 2000: 507) that come about through the unfolding of events. Subjects find themselves in a differential movement, a movement of subjectification and desubjectification, "movements towards and away from the self" (Dewsbury 2003: 1920).

By way of a summary, this marks an appropriate point to shift the terms of discussion slightly. In light of the work discussed so far it becomes more appropriate to talk of 'subjectivity' than 'the subject'. *The* subject sounds too definite, presents too much of a finished sense of the situation given the direction of the work discussed thus far. Subjectivity, on the other hand, suggests something more provisional, emergent, and potentially open to change. Our subjectivity, our sense of self in relation to a whole host of social and material situations, formations, and processes, is something that emerges over space and time. And as such, subjectivity is, in many ways, always intersubjective (or inter-objective (Morton 2013)); an ongoing situation of being-in-relation with what one is not (Harrison 2007a; Simpson 2015).

## Post-phenomenological Subjectivities: Absence, Passivity and Alterity

It is important to note that not all those associated with NRT's early development have come to embrace conceptual positions such as ANT or Deleuzian understandings of the event. For example, ANT's 'flattening' of the world and the agencies that reside within it has been questioned

(see Rose and Wylie 2006). The spatial ontology of ANT is "profoundly topological" through its articulations of a flat world of networks and connections and with that, it is argued, misses the world's topography, its surfaces, folds, textures and differentiations (Wylie 2006: 521). Or as Romanillos (2015: 574) explains further in relation to Deleuzian work, such forms of "vitalism might work to erode the status of an individual as a finite singularity by way of their sublimation within a plenum of trans- or pre-individual creative forces". While holding short of proclaiming a new humanism, "specifically human capacities of expression, powers of invention, of fabulation, which cannot simply be gainsaid" have been retained by some in their accounts of a variety of practices and performance (Thrift 2008: 111). In this sense it has been suggest that "The subject … is of course in no simple sense either eliminated or re-asserted by non-representational approaches, rather it continues to haunt contemporary geographies in a way that *is* potentially creative and productive" (Wylie 2010: 101). There have been attempts to develop "a humanist politics for the posthuman age, which, while decentering the subject, acknowledges it and the processes through which the subject emerges as such … a participant in a relay of forces, materialities, and affects that can be used as a gauge for exploring the conditions for the emergence of the subject" (Dawney 2013: 633).

As part of such critical reflections, recently there has then been something of a re-turn to phenomenological ideas amongst various geographers. This engagement with phenomenology both echoes but also diverges from those that occurred in the 1970s and 1980s when humanist geographers sought inspiration from phenomenology and so has been described as 'post-phenomenological' (Ash and Simpson 2016; Lea 2009; Rose and Wylie 2006; though see Simonsen 2013). This seeks "a significantly less internationalist and less-subject-centred phenomenology" than that which has emerged previously (Wylie 2006: 522). Again, the emphasis moves to subject (and world) *formation*.

Within such work a key conceptual tension has emerged in thinking about subjectivity: the ability of a subject to be self-present to itself and, from that, the constitutive role of alterity / being in relation for that subject. In such work, there is "no complete, coherent, and self-present subject who speaks, acts and senses" (Wylie 2010: 107). Rather, the subject does not coincide with itself; it is haunted by an outside or constitutive absence / alterity. The subject both emerges from its relations in / with space and is 'unworked' by them (Romanillos 2008). The work of Derrida and his deconstruction of phenomenology's 'metaphysics of presence' has figured strongly here, particularly in the context of discussions of cultural landscapes. Here it is argued that the cultural landscape should be understood "as an unfolding place of sensory, affective, or perceptual markers registering and, thus, effecting the emergence ('miraculation') of subjectivity" (Rose 2006: 547). However, this has been approached in terms of the constitutive role that *absence* plays for subjectivity (Wylie 2009). In contrast to early NRT work influenced by Merleau-Ponty and the focus on 'reciprocation', 'connection' and 'immersion' therein (see Wylie 2005; 2006; also Derrida 2005), here the self-world encounter is considered in terms of 'absence', 'distance', 'loss', and 'non-coincidence' (see Wylie 2009 for a discussion of this in relation to memorial benches). The focus falls upon non-coincidence as a "constitutive absence" (Wylie 2009: 283) and so something that both plays a part in the formation and deformation of subjectivities (though see Simpson 2015).

In these discussions of subjectivity being perpetually troubled by such alterity, another key set of themes that has emerged relates to the passivity, finitude, and susceptibility of bodies (see Bissell 2011; Harrison 2007b; 2008 Romanillos 2008; 2011; 2015). Much of the literature interested in body-subjects and their affective encounters discussed earlier focuses on the 'body-in-action' (Harrison 2008). Such work has been "abuzz with passion, performance and affect, infused with a sense of playfulness and a spirit of optimism and experimentation" (Popke 2009: 81). In response, Harrison (2009: 1006) asks "What if … we were to define subjectivity or individuality *not* through its potential for self-willed action and presence but, rather, through its *adynamia*, its impotentiality, its intermittence, misalignment, dislocation, and withdrawal?" Such states are taken to be *inherent* conditions of existence. Such a "thinking through vulnerability could affect how we think about embodiment and, indeed, subjectification, signification, and sociality in quite fundamental ways"

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(Harrison 2008: 424). In this work bodies (and so subjects) are recast, moving from being the generative sources of meaning and signification or that which is active in the disclosure of worlds and instead are reclined, have suspended their comportment or disposition, or hold no focus or reflexive attention (Harrison 2009). Taking up these concerns, a range of work has emerged on bodies which are in pain, sleeping, troubled by alterity or events that befall them, and so on (Bissell 2009; 2010; Carter-White 2012; Harrison 2007; 2009). One key feature of this is the challenge of relating these experiences; sleep and death, for example, distinguish themselves through the way they extend beyond the realms of human consciousness and so knowing. As Romanillos (2011: 2534) notes, "Finitude, death and absence are not 'presences' phenomenologically at hand that can be simply documented, categorised, and represented" (also see Romanillos 2015). As such, they present us with the challenge of relating the nonrelateable (Harrison 2008).

Such an understanding of vulnerability in its emphasis on the body's inherent susceptibility to what it is not echoes the fundamental sorts of sociality involved in the discussions of presence / absence outlined above but again is one which is not about the sociality of identity politics. Rather, as Harrison (2008: 425) notes, "It is … a sociality of proximity, a sociality primarily described by a non intentional and differential rapport or relation with alterity that *is* the event of exposure". This is a relation of difference and deferral, "a sharing which is a partition, a sharing of partition" and not one of self-presence or coincidence with that which is encountered (Harrison 2008: 438; also see Harrison 2007b).[1]

## What Encounters? Difference, Distribution, and Spacing the Subject

Within these discussions of subjectivity in and emerging from NRT a recurring feature is that subjectivities appear after or out of encounters. There is significant emphasis on becoming, change, deferral, and so on. However, as discussed earlier, such an emphasis leaves us with questions about how to move forward. Moving towards a conclusion, and borrowing a phrase from Pile and Thrift (1995), the paper here suggests that this requires a concern for 'spacing the subject'. As should be clear from the preceding discussion, such a spacing is less about trying to position or place a subject in space and time and fixing it there amongst a matrix of other subjects, bodies, objects, actants, identities, or discourses. Rather, 'spacing' is taken as an active and ongoing process, a movement of differing and deferral, where 'the subject' is always already in relation to what it is not, always emerging from these relations, but where such relations are by no means fixed or certain. In thinking through such a spacing, though, a range of critical considerations do need to be worked through and developed further in future work. This section will focus on two of these: the politics of the subject in terms of difference and the distribution of the subject amid a range of object and technologies.

### *Difference*

There is a risk that many of the accounts of subjectivity discussed thus far fall back into the trap often associated with social constructivist positions whereby subjectivity is reduced to a 'subsidiary element' of an encounter (Blackman *et al* 2008). It is possible that very little is left of 'the human' and, with that, concerns have been raised over where this 'post- or anti-humanist lane' leads (Simonsen 2013). Further, the degree to which non-representational accounts of subjectivity attend

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[1] A third (nascent) body of work in geography that could have been discussed here if there was more space is that variously concerned with the 'phenomenology of life' and the 'phenomenology of givenness' as they are found in the work of the phenomenologists Michel Henry and Jean-Luc Marion, respectively. In some way, this poses path between the ANT-Deleuzian and post-phenomenological trajectories discussed here in that it focuses on the unfolding of 'life' and impersonal givenness but also the appearance (or coming to presence) of such 'life' (see Dewsbury and Cloke (2009); Ash and Simpson (2016); and James (2012)).

to issues of power and social difference have been called into question (though see Rose 2010). There is a concern here that non-representational geographies are "still troubled by … a tendency to talk about 'the subject' either in some universal unmarked sense or as a very specific kind of individual subject" (Cresswell 2012: 102). Also, Nash (2000: 657) has raised concerned about "The asocial implications of this idea of non cognitive embodied practices" found in NRT and how this is "somewhat at odds with the deeply social character of coded performances of identity within theories of performativity" (also see Thien 2005; Tolia-Kelly 2006). What such critical concerns are getting at is that "whilst encounters 'exceed the boundaries of reified identities', which demands that we focus on the contingent nature of identity, belonging and power, they also demand that we keep hold of how societal attitudes, discourses and categorisations shape and constrain them" (Wilson 2016a: 5).

Such questions and concerns are important when it comes to the decentering of the subject enacted by NRT and to the spacing of the subject suggested here. It needs to be made clearer where continuity amid change exists, how and where patterns become established and can take hold, and where the subject finds itself as a result. Working with such concerns, a number of points are worth considering from this.

While Deleuzian inspired discussions of events do very much emphasise events, becoming, transience, emergence, and on (Dewsbury 2000; Harrison 2000), it is important not to forget when working with such ideas that events have a complicated temporality to them; they are not devoid of context. Such events, and the subjectifications that unfold throughout them, take place at differing degrees of speed and slowness, across differing durations, and so with varying impressions of obduracy for those entities that find themselves caught up in such happenings (Dewsbury 2000). Equally, discourses and representations are not ignored as points of potential productivity / constraint when it comes to all non-representational accounts of the compositions of the subject (see Ash 2009; 2010; Dewsbury et al 2002). While there is becoming and a vital body with varied capacities to affect and be affected, subjectivity is by no means pure fabulation. For example, habits and their role in organising these bodies have been shown to both play an important part in "the maintenance and creation of something we call a 'self'" (Harrison 2000: 506) *and* retain some 'plasticity' (see Dewsbury and Bissell 2015). Evidently, various social stratifications do come to be bound up with the way that bodies differentiate and become differentiated *through* such events or the practices they take part in. It is important, then, that if subjectivity is to be taken as something that emerges from such encounters it should be understood as "performed, fluid, and momentary, whilst retaining a critical eye on structures, histories, and subjectivities that constrain and shape them, but also allow them to live on" (Wilson 2016a: 14).

Taking this further, a range of interesting work has appeared recently that generously engages with non-representational accounts of subjectivity in working through such questions around social difference. For example, Colls (2012) has shown how a conversation between NRTs and the sexual difference theory of Irigaray, Grosz, and Braidotti might both provide feminist geographies with a route into non-representational work and allow NRT to engage with a body of work that it has thus far largely overlooked. In particular, Colls (2012) develops an account of sexual difference using the concept of 'force'. Here:

> "Forces … can pass through and inhabit bodies (metabolism, circulation, ovulation, ejaculation), they are intangible and unknowable and yet are sometimes felt by the body and travel between bodies (fear, hope, love, wonder, hate, confidence) and they are produced by and active in the constitution of wider social, economic and political processes and structures, for example capitalism, democracy, deprivation, emancipation and discrimination" (Colls 2012: 439).

Or further, and in a similar vein, Saldanha (2010) has discussed the relationships between various conceptions of affect and theories of racial difference. In particular, Saldanha explores this in terms of how various bodies 'aggregate' into racial formations rather than them simply being acted *on* as

targets of various racial socializations. Here aggregation refers to how affects 'add up' and so both increasing the size of the collective of participants and at the same time move up through a hierachy of scales. And from that, the key question becomes "How does [such] collective embodiment in a racial formation subsequently constrain and distribute its bodies?" (Saldanha 2010: 2241). Within such work we find a range of ways to further re-think subjectivity in terms of a difference that is understood as not pre-given, oppositional or hierarchical but rather that emerges from a contextual set of forces and aggregations that take place in, between, across, and through bodies.

Taking a slightly different approach, such a concern for social difference and distinction can also be pursued further when it comes to the more (post)phenomenologically inclined work discussed above. Again, though based upon a fundamental sort of sociality that is in some sense 'asocial' (Harrison 2008), there is some 'minimal humanism' that subsists within that work (Wylie 2010). Rather than coming out of nowhere, such subjectivities hold some kind of disposition as they are, and have been, always already *with* human and non-human others (Simpson 2009; 2015). That said, this does at times risk a position whereby such a post-phenomenology "does not altogether do justice to, or sufficiently account for, the way in which the sharing of being is unequally distributed or divided" (James 2012: 49), meaning that this requires further consideration. Expanding the conceptual frame of reference here to include authors like Roberto Esposito might bear fruit. Though little engaged with by geography thus far, Esposito's work offers a more overtly political account of the emergence of subjectivity in a way that is, from the start, both focused on co-existence but also implicated in issues of social differentiation. His discussions of the community-immunity tension at the heart of subjectivity potentially allows for a consideration of how social relations are both constitutive and expropriating on the basis of the emergence / troubling of borders and boundaries between us (see Esposito 2013).

## *Distribution*

Extending these question around what encounters and the significance of social difference when it comes to the spacing of the subject, it is clear also that NRT's interests in the decentering of subjectivity in light of its focus on non-human agency and distributed personhood also needs to be considered further. This becomes clear, for example, when considering the range of significant socio-technical developments taking place today and the "proliferation of objects, bodies, databases, and software stacks" (Crampton and Miller 2017: 2) that increasingly act as "technological prosthesis that cocoon and extend human subjectivity" (Shaw 2017: 3). Such 'technics' – "the [on-going] co-constitutive relation between 'the human' and 'the technical'" (Kinsley 2015: 164) – raise and complicate the status and composition of subjectivity. When it comes to such technological developments, the question: 'who comes after the subject?' or 'what remains of the subject?' must be refigured (Cadava et al 1991). We need to ask instead '*what* is com*ing* after the subject?'. We are spaced, perpetually, in a time where the means through which the world is disclosed is frequently radically changing (Thrift 2008).

To illustrate, a number of geographers have begun to show the significance of contemporary networked technologies and the like to the emergence and functioning of subjectivities. This has included, for example, considerations of the 'attention economy' how the technologies that support this act as "prosthetic devices for the capture and retention of data about our lives" (Kinsley 2015: 156) and act upon our embodied registers of experience and perception (Ash 2012; Wilson 2011, 2015). These technologies – anything from mobile phones to mass media marketing to computer games – seek to intervene into our capacities to attend and so our "attention is being continuously modulated by a series of conditions and factors, which emerge from mixtures of voluntary and involuntary, conscious and unconscious action" (Ash 2012: 9). The "pervasiveness of attention-control technologies" then place "intense demands upon thought and action" (Wilson 2015: 178).This leads to concerns about attention disorders (Stiegler 2010) and so around how we might

relate to each other in a care-filed way where our attention is so often on other things (Wilson 2015).

Developing such concerns further, a range of work has also recently shown how the emergence of 'big data', cloud computing, and the sorts of algorithms that are used to work with such data increasingly play a role in re-figuring the limits of human perception and so enacting the 'datafication of subjectivities' (Crampton and Miller 2017). In identifying patterns / trends / relations within data that simply would not be possible through direct human engagement (Kwan 2016), emerging forms of data analytics act as 'instruments of perception' (Amoore and Piotukh 2015) that bring "something into being for us, whose existence would otherwise exceed our capacities" to read or make sense; they produce "more than human forms of perception acting beneath thresholds of observability" (Amoore 2016: 16). Such perception not only relates to the data itself but also "inscribes the very perception of the world in which we live, govern and are governed" (Amoore and Piotukh 2015: 344). Such data and its analysis are being used in the governance of the future through increasingly nuanced ways of "governing uncertain human actions and behaviours through the relations between data elements" (Amoore 2017: 1; also see Kaufman 2017, Shaw 2017). This provides various organizations and actors further techniques for differentiating between bodies based on the relations that come to appear within the data itself rather than just on the grounds of the terms that enter into the relation (race, gender, etc.), and at times in a moment-by-moment way (Crampton and Miller 2017). Given the unrelenting pace of change within such technologies and their analytics, there is much work to be done here (Wilson 2015).

Finally, such concerns for the technical compositions of subjectivities in relation to various technical objects become more complicated still when we start to consider how such interactions happen independently or beyond the perceptions of subjects. This in many ways ties into the recent influence of 'Object-Orientated Ontologies' (OOO) on recent geographic work (see Ash 2013; Ash and Simpson 2016; Shaw 2012; Shaw and Meehan 2013). While multiple in its concerns / approach, a central theme of OOO is that it seeks to "investigate relations between non-human objects without reducing these relations to how they appear to human beings" (Ash and Simpson 2016: 60). There is, instead, autonomy for such objects and their force-full inter-objective relations (Shaw and Meehan 2013). Linking to the discussion of technology above, for example, the argument here is that "technical objects are not lifeless mechanisms but actively produce spatio-temporal atmospheres, which shape the humans who are immersed in these atmospheres" even if those humans aren't in fact always (or ever) conscious of that immersion (Ash 2013: 20). Such concerns can relate to anything from the functioning, interactions, and 'perturbations' of the constituent elements of ICT networks (Ash 2013) to the more diffuse more-than human 'objects' like 'the climate' that extend far beyond human perception, comprehension, or even existence (Morton 2013).

This interests in OOO might seem unusual to raise here given that it could be taken to constitute a move away from a concern for the spacing of the subject entirely. If the work discussed in this paper has been attempting to 'resituate something which might be still called subjectivity within a pre-symbolic/[pre-]linguistic and material dimension' (James 2012: 13), where does such a focus on objects and "the 'world-in-itself'" leave us (Shaw 2012: 614)? Such intra-objectivity as evident in the range of technologies discussed above might take place independently of the human subject which cannot necessarily access them, but those interactions still "pattern sociopolitical life" and so *are* still active in the composition of subjects (Shaw 2012: 614). The challenge becomes: how do we attend to the fact that subjects are doubly spaced here: once *from* the relations themselves and secondly *by* them. And it is such double-spacings that present significant uncharted terrain for human geographers interested in decentered / decentering subjectivity.

# Conclusion

Questions around the subject and its decentering have become increasingly established as matters of concern for human geography. In particular, this has intensified in recent year through and in light of the development of NRT. Through its attention to practice, materiality, events, affect, and the like, NRT has articulated a radically constructivist understanding of the 'composition of subjectivities'. However, despite such advances, a number of key questions either remain within or emerged from within such discussions. This has included concerns over what is left of the subject in the face of such more-than human frames of reference – what of agency, difference, history, the social, and so on. This paper has suggested a range of responses to such concerns and avenues through which they might be developed further, collected together under the idea of 'spacing the subject'.

Within such a response a range of aspects of NRT's accounts of the composition of subjectivity are retained to some degree - more-than human materiality, affective relationality, emergence, becoming, and so on, remain prominent. However, a concern for spacing the subject also clearly draws specific attention to the ways in which subjects come to be differentiated and distributed through such relationally and becoming. Within such spacings we multiple ways to further re-think subjectivity in terms of a difference that is not pre-given, oppositional or hierarchical but rather emerges from a contextual set of forces and aggregations that take place in, between, across, and through bodies. Such spacings are intersubjective and interobjective given our emergence from within various material circumstances. Such a concern for spacing of the subject then provides opportunities for recognising both the internal and relative differentiation of subjects from themselves, but also the significance of the differences between individuals and collective when it comes to the opportunities that they have / recognise / act on. It allows us to recognise that subjectivities co-appears but also withdraw, come to be posed but are also dis-posed, develop attachments but also separate, and so perpetually undergo movements of subjectification and de-subjectification in the unfolding of their encounters in the world (Simpson 2015). In short, while attending to the excessive nature of bodies and their affective relationally and becoming / appearance, thinking through the spacing of the subject can help accounts of the composition of the subject after non-representational to "do justice to … the way in which the sharing of being is unequally distributed or divided" (James 2012: 49) between a range of subjects and objects.

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