

Geographies of pragmatism

Gary Bridge

Introduction

Pragmatism is a philosophy that sees life as being defined by the relations of organisms and things in an environment that is ever-changing and uncertain. The nature of these relationships (or transactions, as pragmatists call them) is such that they are persistently co-constitutive, with no rounded-out clearly defined objects or organisms. This relational, processual view of life embeds human organisms in an active environment such that their knowledge of it is primarily acquired through action, in situations, and is only ever provisional, and not based on solid foundations. Situations are contextual, though not necessarily geographically/spatially so. Acquiring robust knowledge to operate in this environment involves persistent experimentation and the testing out of ideas through active intervention in the world. Active experimentation comes about when the habitual relations of organisms to their environment become obstructed or uncertain (in problematic situations), otherwise most organic activity (including that of humans) is non-cognitive and based on habit that is embodied, involving affect. Humans' problem-solving capacities have been expanded by language use, and thus communication takes on an important role as a collective problem-solving capacity (or mind); a type of rationality that exists beyond individual cognitive capacities. The effective functioning of these capacities is the pragmatist's idea of democratic life. This normative aspiration acts as a critique of actually-existing democratic systems, with all their institutional anachronisms, social divisions and obstacles to the realization of individual and thus collective capacities. Pragmatism emerged in the US in the second half of the nineteenth century, involving figures such as William James, Charles Sanders Peirce, George Herbert Mead and John Dewey. It was a philosophy strongly influenced by Darwinian naturalism but also by the traumatic experience of civil war. From both these influences it has taken an assumption of the ineluctable nature of relations all things but also of the dangers of beliefs that separate or deny this interrelatedness. Despite its environmental sensibilities (and some early connections via urban sociology) there have been no consistent relations between geographical thinking and pragmatism. But as an anti-foundational and process philosophy of material things and organisms there has been a flurry of recent engagement through variants of poststructuralist thinking that have been taken into geographical enquiry and critique.

General overviews and reference works

These general overviews and reference works establish the key characteristics of pragmatism: an anti-foundational view of knowledge; an emphasis on an uncertain environment; a focus on the consequences of actions rather than prior abstractions and a rejection of dualisms (between mind/body; culture/nature; theory/practice). Because the uptake of pragmatism in geography has been patchy, this overview section combines key philosophical texts on pragmatism with some of the overviews of its application in geography, as well as some outlets that periodically carry pragmatist-informed articles.

Some key overview texts on pragmatism

These overview texts are of various kinds. Bacon 2012 provides a relatively concise introduction of ideas and key figures for readers new to pragmatism. Malachowski 2013 and Shook & Margolis 2006 are edited collections of commissioned essays that give an overview of the dimensions of pragmatist thought for those a little more familiar with pragmatism. Menand 2001 gives a more in-depth, historical and philosophical account of The Metaphysical Club, which was the group of intellectuals who were the early founders of pragmatism. Focusing on one of these founding figures Westbrook 1991 provides the definitive biography and intellectual history of John Dewey, whose social philosophy has had increasing contact with contemporary geography. Fesmire's 2015 account of Deweyan ideas connects them to a range of contemporary developments in social theory, some of which are also felt in geography. The connections between pragmatism and other schools of social theory is also explored by Bernstein, who looks at the synergies between pragmatism, critical theory and continental philosophy and the way that these inter-relations have developed in various directions. The application of pragmatist ideas in activist politics and institutional reform is discussed by Unger 2007, pragmatist philosopher and politician.

Bacon, Michael (2012) *Pragmatism: An Introduction* London: Polity

An accessible introduction that explores pragmatism via certain key figures in classical pragmatism and neo-pragmatism.

Bernstein, Richard. *The Pragmatic Turn*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010.

This text gives an account of classical pragmatism and its resurgence through neo-pragmatism. The main thrust is the contemporary relevance of pragmatist ideas, especially in the links between pragmatism and continental philosophy and poststructuralism.

Fesmire, Steven (2015) *Dewey* London & NY: Routledge

This introductory text explores the significance and contemporary impact of pragmatist philosopher John Dewey's ideas across a range of disciplinary areas – epistemology, aesthetics, education, politics, ethics and social theory.

Malachowski, Alan (ed) *The Cambridge Companion to Pragmatism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

With contributions from philosophers this text looks at classical pragmatism and neo-pragmatism and its applications.

Menand, Louis. *The Metaphysical Club: A Story of Ideas in America*. New York, NY: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2001.

A foundational and accessible text on the rise of pragmatist ideas and their impacts.

Shook John R and Joseph Margolis (eds) *A Companion to Pragmatism* Oxford: Blackwell, 2006.

Commissioned essays from leading pragmatist philosophers encompassing core pragmatist thinking and its engagement with other disciplines and approaches.

Unger, Roberto Mangabeira. *The Self Awakened: Pragmatism Unbound*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009.

A non-technical exploration by this Harvard philosopher and practicing politician of the revolutionary possibilities of pragmatism in the pursuit of social justice.

Westbrook, Robert B. *John Dewey and American Democracy*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991

Journals and other research resources

Up to now pragmatism has not been taken up in geography in the same whole-hearted way as, for instance, Marxism, or certain streams of poststructuralism. Nevertheless, there are increasingly complex traces of pragmatist thinking in geography. Also, there are parallel lines of enquiry in geography and pragmatism that lead to what we might call implicit pragmatist geographies.

Journals discussing pragmatist philosophy

For researchers interested in the current state of pragmatist thinking there are journals that focus exclusively on pragmatist philosophy, especially *The European Journal of Pragmatism and American Philosophy*, *The Transactions of the Charles Sanders Peirce Society* and *Contemporary Pragmatism*, as well as journals that regularly publish pragmatist-inspired articles, such as *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*.

Contemporary Pragmatism, 2004-

An interdisciplinary quarterly peer review journal with an emphasis on applying pragmatism broadly understood to today's issues. It takes an interdisciplinary approach with articles that connect to a range of philosophical and social science issues.

European Journal of Pragmatism and American Philosophy 2009-

An online peer reviewed journal published twice a year with a focus on the relationship between pragmatism and European philosophy and interdisciplinary issues and approaches which intersect with social sciences.

Journal of Speculative Philosophy, 1987-

A quarterly peer-reviewed journal with a focus on the relationship between American and continental philosophy and on the relevance of historical philosophers to contemporary thinkers. Often contains articles influenced by pragmatism.

Transactions of the Charles Sanders Peirce Society, 1965-

Named after the founder of pragmatism but dealing with the work of all pragmatist philosophers from classical pragmatism to the contemporary period.

Geographical Journals that contain articles with a pragmatist approach

In geography there is no pragmatist influenced journal as such but there are journals that occasionally publish articles containing pragmatist arguments: - *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*; *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*; *Progress in Human Geography* and *The Annals of the American Association of Geographers*.

Environment and Planning D: Society and Space, 1983-

An international peer reviewed journal featuring papers that look at the relationships between society and space. Occasionally publishes papers influenced by pragmatism.

Progress in Human Geography, 1977-

An international peer reviewed journal publishing reviews and developments in human geography. Occasionally publishes papers influenced by pragmatism or with pragmatist strains (such as papers on non-representational theory).

Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers, 1935-

A quarterly international peer reviewed journal published on behalf of the Royal Geographical Society. Occasionally carries articles influenced by pragmatism.

Annals of the American Association of Geographers, 1911-

A bimonthly international peer reviewed journal, originally founded in 1911 as the *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* this journal carries occasional pragmatist-influenced articles.

Overviews of pragmatism and geography

There are summaries of pragmatism in geography handbooks and encyclopedias, such as Smith 2009 and Barnes 2009. Both provide very good summary overviews of pragmatism with some of the limited examples of pragmatist-influenced research and writing in human geography.

Barnes, Trevor "Pragmatism" in *The Dictionary of Human Geography* Edited by Dereck Gregory, Ron Johnston, and Geraldine Pratt, 577-79. London: Arnold, 2009.

Summary of background to pragmatist philosophy and the key themes of anti-foundationalism, contingency, pluralism and consequentialism.

Smith, Susan J (2009) "Pragmatism/Pragmatist Geographies." In *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography*. Edited by Rob Kitchin and Nigel Thrift, 421-5. London: Elsevier, 2009

Provides a thorough summary of the theoretical assumptions of pragmatism, classical and neo-pragmatism and the connections between pragmatism and geography.

Early and (re)emergent pragmatisms in Geography

Pragmatism had influenced the Chicago School of Urban Ecology of the early 20th century and it was a geographical reappraisal of the significance of the Chicago School by Jackson and Smith 1984 that started to re-introduce pragmatist ideas into contemporary geography. Jackson and Smith discussed the idea of situated knowledge from pragmatism and its importance for geographical qualitative research methods as well as the importance of the pragmatist idea of 'experience' and its links to the then burgeoning field of humanistic geography. The links between pragmatism and physical geography were explored by Wescoat 1991 in the links between Dewey's approach to uncertainty and the work of Gilbert F White on natural hazards and resources. An early reference to pragmatism and geography is the interpretation of the fallibility of knowledge and the importance of experimentation in applied geography by Frazier 1981. One key intervention in the relationship between geography and pragmatism was a themed issue of *Geoforum* (2008) on 'Geography and Pragmatism'. This collection of papers with an editorial by Nichola Ward and Susan Smith (Wood and Smith 2008) captured several key themes in the connection of geography to pragmatism. Barnes explored the historical context for the rise of pragmatism, and then of neo-pragmatism and how a pragmatist approach to geographical ideas, like 'place', through what place does, or how much it is invested in by a community (Barnes 2008). Cutchin 2008 showed how John Dewey's process philosophy and 'metaphysical ground map' can be applied to geographical ideas where place for instance would be seen as constantly emergent and in process revealing a continuity between

experience and nature. Hepple 2008 looked at the ways that pragmatism and geography have intertwined historically and of the radical potential of pragmatist thinking in developing geographical research and to social science more widely. Hepple's concerns have been developed more recently in looking at 'the power of pragmatism' to transform geographical research and radically engaged social science (Wills and Lake 2020). Other themes from the *Geoforum* collection are covered in other sections of this review: on pragmatism power and space; on pragmatist ideas in urban geography; on the importance of a pragmatist idea of context in economic geography; on the relationship between pragmatism and non-representational geographies. These are themes that have been developed in various ways by subsequent pragmatist-inflected work in human geography that is explored in the themes that follow.

Barnes, Trevor J. "American pragmatism: Towards a geographical introduction." *Geoforum* 39.4 (2008): 1542-1554.

This article provides the historical background for the emergence of classical pragmatism and considers its implications for geographical scholarship.

Cutchin, Malcolm "John Dewey's metaphysical ground-map and its implications for geographical inquiry" *Geoforum* 39.4 (2008) 1555-1569.

This article examines Dewey's 'metaphysical ground map' on nature and continuity, contingency and change, situated sociality and transaction to show how this process philosophy can affect geographical thinking.

Frazier, John W (1981) Pragmatism: Geography and the real world. In *Themes in Geographic Thought* Edited by Milton Harvey and Brian Holly, 61-72. London: Croom Helm

An early example of the application of pragmatist thinking for methods in geography. He discusses reality as a mix of knowledge and error necessitating pragmatist methods of experimentation.

Hepple, Leslie "Geography and the pragmatic tradition: The threefold engagement." *Geoforum* 39.4 (2008) 1530-1541.

Looks at the rich possibilities for geography of further engagement with pragmatism – in terms of using pragmatist ideas in geography, relating geographical research to the wider arena of concerns in pragmatism, and in re-examining some of the historical links between pragmatism, social science and geography (and of its contemporary radical potential).

Jackson, Peter and Susan J Smith. *Exploring Social Geography* London: George Allen and Unwin, 1984.

This text revived pragmatism and Chicago School sociology in terms of its contemporary relevance to geography, particularly in acknowledging the significance of situated knowledges and the implications for geographical method through in-depth qualitative research.

Wescoast Jr, J L "Common themes in the work of Gilbert White and John Dewey: a pragmatic appraisal." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 82 (1992): 587-607.

An article that is significant as both early application of pragmatist thinking in geography and that application being aimed at physical geography. It looks at the synergies between John Dewey's emphasis on the precariousness of existence, experience and inquiry and Gilbert White's approach to risk and resources and environmental hazards.

Wills, Jane and Robert W Lake "Introduction: The Power of Pragmatism" In *The Power of Pragmatism: Knowledge Production and Social Inquiry*. Edited by Jane Wills and Robert W. Lake, 3-54. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020.

This text explores key pragmatist themes of pluralism, contingency, melioration and situation and their implications for research in human geography and planning, and in the social sciences more generally.

Wood, Nicola and Susan J. Smith. "Pragmatism and Geography" *Geoforum* 39.4 (2008) special Issue: *Pragmatism and Geography*, 1527-1529.

Looks at the range of connections between pragmatism and geography that the paper in the special issue represent, especially emphasizing the themes of pluralism and non-foundationalism.

Pragmatism, nature, environment

For a discipline centrally concerned with the environment Geography has had a difficult relationship with Darwin's ideas, understandably so, given the malign influence of social Darwinism and environmental determinism in early interpretations of Darwinism in geography. Classical pragmatism was deeply influenced by Darwin's ideas, but in the intellectual history of the take-up of Darwinism, rather than competition and the struggle of existence, pragmatism absorbed most strongly the ideas of the interrelatedness of all living things. Dewey 1910 takes this ecological approach from Darwin and emphasizes the philosophical and social implications of that chance variation in evolution putting uncertainty as a condition of all life. Inter-relatedness is conveyed by Dewey's idea of transaction and the co-constitution of organisms and environments in his major environmental work *Experience and Nature*. The implications of a pragmatist, transactional approach to organisms in an uncertain environment were pursued in significant but sporadic ways in geography by Emel 1991 and Proctor 1998. In many ways there are significant synergies between a pragmatist, transactional, co-constitutive view of organisms and environments and contemporary more-than-human-geographies.

The intellectual roots of the latter owe more to bio-philosophy, science studies and phenomenology, but synergies with pragmatism are being acknowledged more and more. More-than-human-geographies (although again not explicitly) explore another element of pragmatist naturalism: the naturalization of experience across species (rather than it being an interiorized condition of humans). It also parallels the pragmatist idea of 'situation' as a milieu of the transactional relations of humans, nonhumans, and objects. Nevertheless, as Honnacker 2020 argues, despite more-than-human geographies placing humans more modestly in their ecological relations, the fact of human environmental influence (now so marked as to represent a distinct geological era – the Anthropocene) means that the nature of human activity and action still represents a pressing concern. The role of humans in environmental change and in its amelioration has been the focus of a distinct branch of pragmatist research: environmental pragmatism, the dimensions of which were originally explored in Light and Katz's 1996 edited collection. Norton 1984 and Weston 1985 exemplify how environmental pragmatism has long been concerned with resolving ethical dilemmas in an environment in which humans are just one component, but also in resisting ideas of the intrinsic value of nature, to argue for the importance of pluralist democratic deliberation in dealing with environmental change. From a geographer's perspective Hobson 2006 has shown how these ethical sensitivities can be enhanced by the persistent practice of environmental advocacy in research initiatives that explore the bearing of environmental questions on everyday life. Holden 2020 shows how these interventions can help test peoples' worldviews and different orders of worth over environmental sustainability in a process of democratic engagement.

Dewey, John. "The influence of Darwin on philosophy" in *The Influence of Darwin on Philosophy and Other Essays*, 1-19: NY: Henry Holt, 1910.

This publication marks a speech given by Dewey in 1909 on the centenary of Darwin's birth.

Dewey argues that Darwin's discovery of chance variation as the mechanism of evolution puts uncertainty at the heart of life and therefore overturns 2000 years of Western philosophy in its striving for certainties and absolute truths.

Emel, Jacque "Ecological Crisis and Provocative Pragmatism." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 9 (1991): 384-390.

This article is an early call for a form of pragmatism inspired by pragmatist philosopher and activist Cornel West that looks for a set of progressive interventions that, at the same time, acknowledges where we are in any interventions in dealing with the environmental crisis.

Hobson, Kersty. "Environmental responsibility and the possibilities of pragmatist-oriented research." *Social and Cultural Geography* 7(2) (2006): 283-298.

Taking its inspiration from pragmatist William James's 'radical empiricism' this article looks at the critical role of researchers and research interventions in people's re-evaluations of their everyday practices and in taking responsibility for wider environmental issues.

Holden, Meg. "The quest for an adequate test: Justifying the sustainable city as an order of worth." *Sustainability* 12.11 (2020): 4669 doi:10.3390/su12114670

This article uses French pragmatist school of the pragmatic sociology of critique to show how different tests of orders of worth in public can be turned to environmental advocacy. The paper develops a strand of thinking from her book *Pragmatic Justifications for the Sustainable City: Acting in Common Place*. New York: Routledge, 2020

Honnacker, Ana "Environmentalism and Democracy. Pragmatist perspectives on a precarious relation." *European Journal of Pragmatism and American Philosophy* [online] XII, 2020.

This paper explores green arguments critical of the capacity of democratic processes to intervene in the problem of climate change (which in turn lead to these arguments being seen as anti-democratic). Honnacker responds with the pragmatist idea of democracy: not just as collective problem solving, but as a form of life with intrinsic value. She argues for this ecological democracy and ecological meliorism as a response to environmental dilemmas.

Light, Andrew and Eric Katz (eds) *Environmental Pragmatism*. London and NYC Routledge, 1996.

This is a foundational text in environmental pragmatism. It brings together key contributors that apply pragmatist thinking to environmental change and environmental ethics.

Norton, Bryan G. "Environmental ethics and weak anthropocentrism." *Environmental Ethics* 6 (1984): 131-148.

An important article in environmental pragmatism that argues for a weak anthropocentrism in environmental ethics that avoids treating nature as a separate intrinsic value but one that also avoids the individualism of certain anthropological approaches to environmental questions.

Proctor, James D. "The social construction of nature: Relativist accusations, pragmatist and critical realist responses." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 88(3) 1998, 352-376.

This article explores social construction of nature arguments via critical realism and pragmatism in their understanding of wilderness. It suggests how a social constructivist view of nature can avoid strong versions of relativism.

Weston, Anthony "Beyond intrinsic value: Pragmatism in environmental ethics." *Environmental Ethics* 7 (1985): 321-339.

This is another classic article in the environmental pragmatist canon. This paper critiques approaches to nature that treat it as an intrinsic value. It points to the interdependent structure of values and respect for others in addressing environmental questions.

Pragmatism, problematization and method in geography

As a philosophy that puts practice at the heart of epistemology methods of enquiry are central to both empirical practice and theoretical critique in pragmatism. Enquiry issues out of problematic situation in ordinary life as much as scientific endeavor. This means that there is a pluralization of problematization from a pragmatist perspective, which militates against the separation of expert and lay knowledge and sees critique as dialogue, rather than the critical distance of intellectuals (Barnett and Bridge 2016). The significance of pragmatism for method was realized in its early revival in geography where Smith 1984 looked to the influence of pragmatism on the Chicago School of urban ecology in the 1920s, with their emphasis on context and ethnographic research in understanding situated knowledge and recognized in more recently in sociology in terms of ethnomethodology, which Emirbayer and Maynard 2010 see as pragmatism's fieldwork. Whilst the Chicago sociologists of aimed for scientific universalism (Wills and Lake 2020) the different strains of pragmatist influenced methodology more recently have more in common with the settlement advocate Jane Addams's action-oriented community embedded approach to problem-solving. Indeed, Addams's approach saw laboratory experimentation as a narrow version of experimentation proper: a contextual, community-based process of trial-and-error initiatives to address social problems Gieryn 2006. Dealing with uncertainty and contextuality as a condition of geographical (and indeed all social research) has been explored in Deweyan mode by Cutchin 2004, where metaphysics itself becomes an ongoing journey, and exploration and mapping. Cutchin 2004 has also applied these insights to research in health geographies. Dewey denied absolute truths for the more contingent and fallible idea of 'warranted assertability'. Rorty's later neo-pragmatist approach to contingency and inquiry as ongoing conversation informs critical dialogue and critique of more conventional representations of social reality. Such experimental insights also inform what Harney & Wills 2016 call the 'process pragmatism' of participatory action research approaches in geography. The contextual approach to pragmatist method in geography has tended to emphasize qualitative approaches but not exclusively so. Barnes 1991 and Sunley 1996 have both stressed the significance of context and contingency rather than cross sectional variables and universality in their account of method in economic geography. This also relates to the contrast between the search to isolate endogenous variables in neoclassical (micro)economics and the acknowledgment of the inevitability of endogeneity in economic geography. These developments all chime with different forms of pragmatist analysis of tests and experimentation in social science more generally discussed by Marres & Stark 2020.

Barnes, Trevor J. "Conversation and metaphors in economic geography. Richard Rorty and the gravity model." *Geografisker Annaler* B 73 (1991): 11-20.

This paper uses neo-pragmatist Richard Rorty's understanding of metaphor (as conversation, rather than ocular representation) to critique conventional economic geography with a particular focus on the use of the gravity model. This is a key paper in starting to apply pragmatist ideas to method in various sub-disciplines of geography, in this case economic geography.

Barnett, Clive and Gary Bridge "The situations of urban inquiry: Thinking problematically about the city". *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 40(6) 2017: 1186-1204.

This article looks at problematization, in pragmatism and strands of poststructuralism to argue for the significance of the pragmatist notion of problematic situation and a more dialogical idea of critique and problem orientation in geography and urban studies.

Cutchin, Malcolm P. "A Deweyan case for the study of uncertainty in health geography *Health and Place*. 10 (2004), 203-213.

This article explores the theoretical implications of Dewey's idea of the centrality of uncertainty and then applies this to health geography. It suggests that this approach's emphasis on change and holistic complexity as well as the understanding of the health 'situation', offer guidance for health geographers both theoretically and in terms of research method. It concludes with how such problem-solving devices in applied geography can be used to promote human welfare.

Emirbayer, Mustafa and Douglas Maynard "Pragmatism and ethnomethodology". *Qualitative Sociology* 34 (2010): 221-261.

Looking at the view of experience and recovery of concrete practices in pragmatism, Emirbayer and Maynard see ethnomethodology as, in many ways, pragmatism's fieldwork. They suggest how the work of ethnomethodologists, such as Garfinkel, take pragmatist research further than the originators of pragmatism had envisaged.

Gieryn, Thomas F. "City as Truth Spot: Laboratories and field-sites and in urban studies." *Social Studies of Science* 36.1 (2006): 5-38.

This paper looks at the role of 'place' in scientific credibility and how Chicago School sociologists, influenced by pragmatism, combined close ethnography of place in Chicago as a field-site with Chicago as a laboratory to test trends that can be applied elsewhere.

Harney Liam, Jenny McCurry, James Scott and Jane Wills. "Developing process pragmatism to underpin engaged research in human geography." *Progress in Human Geography* 40.3 (2016): 316-333.

This article discusses the importance of pragmatist philosophy for geographical research practice. Using a grounded example based on participatory action research the paper looks at the significance of pragmatist assumptions of ontological contingency and the implications for the

research relation and role of geographical research in enhancing the democratic capacities of communities.

Marres, Nortje and David Stark “Put to the test: For a new sociology of testing.” *British Journal of Sociology* 71 (2020): 423-443.

Marres and Stark apply a pragmatist analysis to the changing nature of testing and experimentation that come with digital innovations. They argue that whereas experimentation and testing used to occur within a social environment it now operates on the social environment.

Smith, Susan J. “Practicing humanistic geography.” *Annals, Association of American Geographers* 74, (1984): 353-374.

In this paper Smith discusses the relevance of pragmatist ideas of experience for humanistic geography (prevalent at the time) and of the for geography more widely through the pragmatist principles on the ethics of inquiry, the relationship between experience and action, knowledge and common sense.

Sunley, Peter. “Context in economic geography: The relevance of pragmatism.” *Progress in Human Geography* 30(3): 1996, 338-355.

In this article Sunley explores pragmatist thinking on the significance of context in understanding economic process. Context here refers to social and institutional embeddedness of economic process and the intellectual context of thinking about those processes. In a further pragmatist move there is a recognized need to reconnect the economic with the social.

The City, Planning, and Democracy

The original influence of Darwin gave pragmatism a concern with the natural environment, but it is in the urban (as natural) environment that pragmatist philosophical ideas have been most consistently applied. It was in the rapidly growing metropolis of Chicago in the late 19th and early 20th century that pragmatist practice (the community social work of Jane Addams at Hull House) and pragmatist analysis (through the Chicago School of sociology) was applied. Jackson 1984 suggests how that city and that time captured all the elements that pragmatism was concerned with; in its social pluralism; a rapidly changing social and material environment, with uncertainty over moral orders); possibilities of conflict or cooperation and need for democratic inclusion. Most progress on this front has been in urban planning (although rather as a parallel discussion, separate from geography). The way a pragmatist view of action informed planning practice was investigated by Hoch 1984. Forester 2000 saw planners as ‘deliberative practitioners’ in the way they must facilitate and negotiate over contentious issues with diverse publics and institutional structures, giving them a wider democratic remit. Healey 2009 has explored these deliberative themes in the work of John Dewey and Jurgen Habermas in defining what she calls ‘collaborative planning’. This tradition of thinking has

contributed to how pragmatism informs the prospects of democracy more generally. Lake 2017 straddles urban geography and urban planning in exploring Dewey's ideas on creative democracy as an ethical possibility and imaginative act, set against ideas of the post-political that have been more prominent in geography. Pragmatist radical democracy has also been explored by Barnett and Bridge 2013 in terms of the possible spaces for emerging publics and city spaces. Bridge 2005 argues how the communicative registers for the formation of publics can be as much about non-discursive action, as discursive action. Stratford, Waitt & Harada 2019 explore how walking in the city opens up transactional spaces and affect and care with democratic potential in the city. Such pragmatist radical possibilities also have synergies with Marxist geographies, as well as distinct differences (Bridge 2013). Sennett 2018 takes expressions of the pragmatist idea of experience and environmental resistance and how it plays out in terms of the built form of the city whilst also acting as a critique of rationalist and 'smart' solutions the city.

Barnett, Clive and Gary Bridge "Geographies of radical democracy: Agonistic pragmatism and the formation of affected interests." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*. 103.4: 1022-1040.

This paper develops a pragmatist interpretation of the rationalities of problem solving all-affected principle. It uses the idea of transactional space to look at both the agonistics of participation and experimental institutionalization of democratic will in forms of radical democracy. The paper contrasts this approach with the more usual poststructuralist theories of radical democracy more typically deployed in geography.

Bridge, Gary "City Senses: On the radical possibilities of pragmatism in geography" *Geoforum* 39.4 (2008): 1570-1504.

The article explores the significance of Dewey's pragmatism for geography and urban studies and especially the significance of city spaces for cultivating non-discursive action as part of the performativity that supports more discursive rational action and debate in public. These arguments are developed in book form in Bridge, Gary. *Reason in the City of Difference: Pragmatism, communicative action and contemporary urbanism* (Routledge, 2005).

Bridge, Gary (2013) On Marxism, pragmatism and critical urban studies *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 38.5: 1644-1659.

This article looks at the synergies and the differences in Marxist and pragmatist approaches to critical urban geography. It argues of the radical possibilities of pragmatism in its pluralism and strong democratic ethos.

Forester, John F. *The Deliberative Practitioner: Encouraging Participatory Planning*. Cambridge, MA.: MIT Press, 2000.

This book acknowledges the pluralist context in which planners must operate and offers techniques to help in deliberation where the skill of the planner as an intermediary is as much a part of their role as planning techniques themselves. It is very much in the pragmatist vein of recognizing pluralism, conflict and the value of communicative action.

Hoch, Charles C. "Doing good and being right: the pragmatic connection in planning theory." *Journal of the American Planning Association* 50 (1984a): 335-34.

This paper establishes the relevance of John Dewey's pragmatist idea of action and argues that pragmatist assumptions are held implicitly in mainstream planning practice. Hoch reviews the pragmatist ideas of problematic experience, experimental inquiry and democratic participation for planning practice. He argues this pragmatic approach tends to underestimate the significance of more structural power relations.

Healey, Patsy "The pragmatic tradition in planning thought." *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 28.3 (2009): 277-292.

This article reviews the influence of pragmatism on the development of planning and especially the work of Lindblom, Forester, Schon and Friedman and argues for the transformative potential of this practically situated social model school of planning.

Jackson, Peter. "Social disorganization and moral order in the city." *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, NS9 (1984): 168-180.

Jackson explores the ideas of 'social disorganization' and 'moral order' from Chicago School sociology and emphasizes the pragmatist influences that gave these terms a dynamic aspect that has continued lessons for the conduct of ethnographic research.

Lake, Robert W. "Urban Geography Plenary Lecture: On Poetry, Pragmatism, and the Urban Possibility of Creative Democracy," *Urban Geography*, 38,4 (2017): 479-494.

This is the published version based on a keynote address in urban geography in which Bob Lake argues for the Deweyan notion of creative democracy as task involving practical education and the collective imagination of citizens. It also entails the democratic activity of research and knowledge production to enhance democratic prospects.

Stratford, Elaine, Gordon Waitt and Theresa Harada "Walking city streets: spatial qualities, spatial justice, and democratising impulses." *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 45.1 (2020): 123-138.

From a pragmatist perspective this paper looks at the creation of embodied transactional spaces through walking in the city and the range of communicative registers that are live and have prospects for encounters that create space of affect and care. The democratic prospects of these spaces are also explored.

Sennett, Richard. *The Craftsman*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2008.

In this book urbanist Richard Sennett explores the craft skilled practices as expressions of the pragmatist approach to embodied experience. He also captures the pragmatist notion of environment/organism transactions through the idea of the resistance of the environment to human endeavors.

Sennett, Richard. *Building and Dwelling*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2018.

In this book Sennett takes further his pragmatist inspired idea of experience and looks at how it can/should shape urban design, as well as providing a critique of more rationalist and 'smart' solutions to the urban life.

Pragmatism and non-representational geographies

The transactional, processual and emergent nature of (human) organic activity recognized in pragmatism has influenced non-representational geographies, with key figures such as Nigel Thrift and Bruno Latour acknowledging pragmatism as one of their influences. The emphasis in pragmatism is on knowledge being achieved through (pluralistic) practice, rather than being some invariant match to (or mirror of) nature (to adapt the title of one neo-pragmatist Richard Rorty's most influential texts (Rorty 1979). No-one has done more to introduce pragmatism to a wider contemporary audience than Richard Rorty who initiated the neopragmatist movement. The lack of foundational guarantees means that enquiry is as Frega 2010 has argued, expressive and knowledge is a part performative action. The significance of performative action, rather than in forms of representation is argued most strongly in non-representational theory in geography, established by Thrift 2008. Transactions are characterized by movement, intensities and encounters in a 'geography of what happens' (Thrift 2008, 2). For his inspiration Thrift draws on the radical empiricism of pragmatist William James alongside poststructuralists such as Deleuze and Guattari. Key elements here are nondiscursive action and the role of affect and emotions. Dewey argued that there is more to experience than what is known and that much of what is known is not reflective but embodied knowledge. Pragmatists see emotion and rational reflection as a continuum of interaction with the world with emotion as the energy for reflection and reasoning. The motivational energies of affect and emotion have been traced in emotional geographies. Especially important has been the differentiation of affect, feeling and emotion. A good deal of this work has seen affect as capacity (to affect or to be affected – see Simpson on non-representational geographies elsewhere in *Oxford Bibliographies*) and as McCormack 2003 argues, offers a form of ethical sensibility as fidelity to place rather than to a

transcendent norm. Pappas 2008 shows how pragmatists bring to this argument a long-standing appreciation of the situatedness of ethical dilemmas and concerns. The performative elements of emotion and embodiment encompass life practices, such as habits, hitherto seen as constraining and routine. Bridge 2020 looks at the synergies between non-representational and pragmatist ideas of habit as wider potentialities in the environment. In an article that brings together the dimensions of pragmatism and non-representational geographies Jones 2008 argues that the non-foundationalist and performative aspects of action in pragmatists connects strongly to non-representational approaches. The other side of this is the potential for the realm of affect and non-discursive action to be penetrated by manipulative technologies. The malleability of this vibrant zone of affect-interactivity is also traced from a pragmatist perspective by Coles 2016 where he explores the vulnerabilities to manipulation of intercorporeal 'resonance' but also the possibilities of radical democratic action. This parallels the work of Thrift 2008 and others but in a strongly pragmatist vein of reconstruction (in what he calls visionary pragmatism) that explores the prospect of the resonant realm in intensifying grassroots democratic energies and cooperation. The prospects of non-discursive performative action for rethinking the nature of the space and the public realm in cities was also explored, in a Deweyan vein, by Bridge 2008.

Bridge, Gary "City Senses: On the radical possibilities of pragmatism in geography" *Geoforum* 39.4 (2008): 1570-1504.

The article explores the significance of Dewey's pragmatism for geography and urban studies and especially the significance of city spaces for cultivating non-discursive action as part of the performativity that supports more discursive rational action and debate in public.

Bridge, Gary. "Habit, experience and environment: a pragmatist perspective" *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 38 (2020): 345-363.

This paper argues for an approach to positive and dispositional view of the role of habits in the environment (in sympathy with poststructuralist/post-humanist approaches) but argues for an emphasis on a pragmatist, action-oriented approach to understanding habits and the idea of human and nonhuman experience.

Coles, Romand. *Prophetic Pragmatism: Radical and ecological democracy in neoliberal times*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.

On the basis of a range of fieldwork studies, Coles explores the zone of nondiscursive resonance in embodied reactions and looks to the prospects of the development of a 'habitus of resonant receptivity' that crosses social difference and opens people through certain non-discursive affective atmospheres.

Frega, Roberto "Expressive inquiry and practical reasoning." *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 23.4 (2010): 307-237.

This paper argues emphasis the expressive and performative aspects of inquiry and of argument. In this way offers a way of linking interest from non-representational geographies to ideas of inquiry and reasoning.

Jones, Owain. "Stepping from the wreckage: Geography, pragmatism and anti-representational theory" *Geoforum* 39.4 (2008): 1600-1612.

Discusses the connections between pragmatism and a stronger version of non-representational theory as anti-representational theory in the non-foundationalism of pragmatism and the processual, performative elements of pragmatist thinking.

McCormack, Derek "An event of geographical ethics in spaces of affect." *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 28.4 (2003): 488-507.

This paper considers the non-representational and the prospects for expanding ethical reach and an ethics of space, with particular emphasis on the role of affect. A parallel effort has gone on in pragmatism over these ethical possibilities (such as Pappas, referenced in this section).

Pappas, Gregory. *John Dewey's Ethics: Democracy as Experience*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2008.

This book brings the Dewey's pragmatist notion of qualitative experience fully into the realm of ethics and explores its democratic potential.

Rorty, Richard. *Philosophy and the Mirror and Nature*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979.

A key text in the re-emergence of pragmatism of neo-pragmatism and especially in the arguments over language and meaning as a conversation rather than representation of the world.

Thrift, Nigel *Non-representational Theory: Space, Politics, Affect*. London: Routledge, 2007.

This was the foundational text in the introduction of nonrepresentational theory into geography. One strand of the lineage Thrift draws on is pragmatist Williams James's radical empiricism. The emphasis on the unknowability and excessive aspects of immediate experience that have strong pragmatist overtones are brought alongside poststructuralist analysis in spatial theorizing.

Pragmatism, assemblage theory and actor network theory

In its understanding of the environment, and in the place of human beings in the environment, in recent years human geography has been strongly influenced by assemblage theory and Actor Network Theory (ANT). These approaches see the environment as vital in the sense that it is full of

acting things (organisms (human and non-human – such as viruses), objects, software codes – all of which have effects. This has been explored especially in term of thinking about cities as assembling environments (Farias 2011). Fuller 2012, for example, combines French pragmatism and Boltanski and Thevenot's work on justification with an assemblage approach to examine the functioning of neoliberal institutions in the city. Schwanen et al 2012 combine Deweyan pragmatism with poststructuralism and to look at behavior change in transport/human/material assemblages. Although assemblage theory and ANT have been mainly understood in geography via their psychoanalytic, materialist and vitalist registers, there are strong pragmatist influences in both approaches (Bridge 2020). Indeed, in her manifesto for vitalist materialism Bennett 2010 points to what she calls Dewey's 'ecological politics' and how it acknowledges the capacities of objects to construct issues and problems and convene publics as a response (see Marres 2007). The significance of pragmatist thinking has also been rediscovered by leading ANT researchers (Hennion 2016). More recently Marres 2019 points to the significance of pragmatism in reconstructing the ideas of the social and the political after the productive deconstruction of assemblage and ANT. In terms of the reconfiguration of an understanding of action and effects through organism-objects relations these examples can be seen as new mappings of the geographies of pragmatism. Assemblage and ANT offer a flatter ontology in which humans are just one component of an active environment in which they have no especial privilege in terms of effects (a further move away from Cartesian rationalism that privileged human reason). Geographers have noted how what are taken to be human characteristics are often congealed out of these wider forces and interactions, such as how habits are congealed out of wider worldly forces, rather than being individual characteristics and some of these contributions acknowledge pragmatist as well as poststructuralist influences (for example Hynes and Sharpe 2015). This worldliness has been acknowledged in pragmatist philosophy in terms of the meaning of pragmata as relations between things, giving way to what Colebrook 2015 calls an 'inhuman pragmatism': "a pragmatism that is not complacently *for us*" (p 264, emphasis in original).

Bennett, Jane. *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2010.

The foundational publication of the new materialist approach, Bennett sees matter as a live and vibrant force in the constitution of the social as well as the material realm. She sees Dewey's 'ecological politics' as acknowledging 'thing power' in the emergence of issues that convene publics and become political.

Bridge, Gary "On pragmatism, assemblage and ANT: Assembling reason." *Progress in Human Geography*. 45.3 (2021): 417-435.

This paper argues for the original influence and continued relevance of pragmatism on ANT and assemblage theory. It looks at how assemblage and ANT can offer a more distributed and modest

idea of reasoning and of the 'place' of humans in wider non-human object relations. It looks at the spatialities of this pragmatist approach.

Colebrook, Claire "Pragmatic finitudes." In Bowden, Sean, Simone Bignall and Paul Patton (eds) *Deleuze and Pragmatism* London, Routledge 252-268.

In this chapter Colebrook looks at synergies between Deleuzian ideas of worldliness (which have been taken up strongly in geography) with Deweyan pragmatism to give what she describes as an inhuman, or what, in geographical terms, we might call worldly pragmatism.

Farias, Ignacio. "The politics of urban assemblages." *City* 15.3-4 (2011): 365-74.

This paper takes a Deleuzian and ANT perspective but also Dewey's pragmatist thinking on organism-environment transactions develop an assemblage approach to understanding the kaleidoscope of material, biological and technical systems that comprise the city. This is a compressed version of the book (Farias and Bender 2010 *Urban Assemblages: How Actor-Network Theory Changes Urban Studies*, Routledge 2010).

Fuller, Crispian. "Urban Politics and the social practices of critique and justification: Conceptual insights from French pragmatism." *Progress in Human Geography* 37.5 (2012): 639-657.

In this article Fuller combines a pragmatist approach on the role of critique and justification in everyday life (taken from the French school of pragmatist and the work of Boltanski and Thevenot) with assemblage thinking to assess the role of urban politics in the neoliberal city.

Hennion, Antoine. "From ANT to pragmatism: A journey with Bruno Latour at the CSI." *New Literary History* 47 (2016): 289-308.

Written by a collaborator of Bruno Latour this paper traces how, with the development of the ANT program ANT researchers (re)discovered the relevance and importance of pragmatist thinking for ANT research.

Hynes, Maria and Scott Sharpe "Habits, style and how to wear them lightly." *cultural geographies* 22.1 (2015): 67-83.

Hynes and Sharpe explore the implications of a poststructuralist approach to the study of the impersonal forces of habit and the production of subjectivities. They also reference the influence of pragmatism on this thinking.

Marres, Nortje. "The issues deserve more credit: Pragmatist contributions to the study of public involvement in controversy." *Social Studies of Science* 37.5 (2007): 759-780.

This is a key article from a sociological perspective that focuses on the role of objects in gathering emergent publics on issues of concern. As a leading ANT scholar Marres acknowledges her debt to Deweyan pragmatism.

Marres, Nortje 2019 "As ANT is getting undone can pragmatism help us re-do it." In *The Routledge Companion to Actor-Network Theory* Edited by Anders Blok, Ignacio Farias and Celia Roberts, 112-120. London: Routledge.

In this chapter Marres argues that the deconstructive aspects of ANT have reached their limit and she looks to Deweyan pragmatism for a reconstruction of epistemology and the notion of the social, whilst maintaining the more distributed elements of life that ANT points towards.

Schwanen Tim, David Banister and Julian Anable. "Rethinking habits and their role in behavior change: the case of low-carbon mobility." *Journal of Transport Geography* 24 (2012): 522-532.

This paper builds on the philosophies of Felix Ravaisson (taken up elsewhere in geography) and pragmatist John Dewey to look at habits as propulsive positive dispositions into the world rather than routines. They apply this reasoning to behavior change in transport choices, recommending influences on mind-body-world assemblages to achieve this.

Pragmatism, space and power

Although pragmatist thought exists mostly in thin strands through geography, in putting these strands together a distinctive view of space and geographies of pragmatism does start to emerge. The idea of transaction acknowledging an environment that acts, as well as being acted upon (or in) gives space a co-constitutive quality that bring it alongside other relational geographies. Like these approaches, it rejects any Cartesian or Euclidian idea of space as outside or as 'stage' and 'container' of action. Rather pragmatism's broad view of instrumentalism sees it as an active (acting) force in efforts (of humans, non-human organisms, technologies) to achieve effects, what Lussault & Stock 2010 call 'doing with space'. At the same time spatial doings are prone to all kinds of contingencies and uncertainties. Spatial constitutions can dissipate or fall apart, or it can result in serendipitous juxtapositions that have unpredictable effects (in what Massey 2005, in a parallel approach has called 'the chance of space'). In this way space is constantly trialed or tested or 'proofed' (Lussault & Stock 2010) in the way it is tested, proved (however contingently) and fool-proofed or made more robust. Lussault & Stock are drawing on French pragmatism here and its focus on trials in everyday life constituting different 'orders of worth' in a more ethnomethodological approach to justification and critique (Boltanski & Thevenot 2006). The way that space mutates, changing function and meaning, is shown in Jackson 2001's pragmatist/feminist/poststructuralist reading of the dynamics of Jane Addams's Hull House settlement and its 'interspatialities': between text and performance, from public to private; habit to experiment. Emergent publics can be constituted at-a-distance via parallel interests, or indeed be adversely affected by power networks acting at a distance. According to Allen

2008 and Allen 2016) the (global) constitution of power via relational networks makes geographies both relational and topological. But topological space assumes relationships between fully constituted organisms and objects whereas Deweyan ideas of transaction make the relations constitutive of, always in process, thing-like or organism-like events. This pragmatist view of space is more fuzzy-edged and porous than established relational geographies allow. This porosity to power is shown in transactions (across and through skins), such as the effect of patriarchy and racism penetrating the skin resulting in endocrinological reaction and 'oppression in the gut' (Sullivan et al 2013, see also Sullivan 2001). Radical democratic openings and their relationship to space, embodiment and affect have also been explored by feminist pragmatist philosophers more widely (Seigfried 1996; Jackson 2001) with strong potential links here to feminist geographies of embodiment. Pragmatist space can be seen as a hyper-relational field with bundles of energy with fuzzy edges in fields of relation and in constant process of constitution.

Allen, John. Pragmatism and power, or the power to make a difference in a radically contingent world *Geoforum* 39.4 (2008): 1613-1624.

In this paper Allen looks at the significance of relationality in the contingencies of power relations in a globalized world. He provides a reading of pragmatism that endorses a topological (rather than topographical) view of space. For the full argument see his book *Topologies of Power: Beyond Territory and Networks* (Routledge, 2016).

Boltanski, Luc and Laurent Thevenot. *On Justification: Economies of Worth*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006.

This influential book uses pragmatist philosophy to inform an idea of the justification of arguments in everyday situations and the competing orders of worth on which these claims and justifications are based.

Lussault, Michel and Mathis Stock. "Doing with space: Towards a pragmatics of space" *Social Geography* 5.1 (2010): 11-19.

In this paper Lussault and Stock develop a pragmatic view of space. They look at the relationship between space, situation, and practice to argue for doing with space rather doing in space. Drawing on the French school of the pragmatic sociology of critique they see space as being trialed and 'proofed' in the course of actions.

Jackson, Shannon. *Lines of Activity: Performance, Historiography and Hull House Domesticity*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2001.

This book looks at the social inter-relations in Jane Addams's Hull House settlement in Chicago from the perspective of performance theory. She argues for the 'interspatialities' of Hull House, and the essential plasticity of the spaces as they transformed from public to private,

experimental to settled, intimate and distant (see also the Pragmatism and Non-Representational Theory section on pragmatism and performativity).

Massey, Doreen. *For Space*. London: Sage, 2005.

Although not a pragmatist text, this book by a leading geographer has considerable resonance with pragmatist approaches: to the co-constitution of space; the significance relations; the significance of spatial experiments and on the contingencies and serendipitous nature of space and its juxtapositions, or what she calls 'the chance of space'.

Siegfried, Charlene Haddock. *Pragmatism and Feminism: Reweaving the Social Fabric*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.

In this book Charlene Siegfried recaptures the spirit of pragmatism that influenced many pioneering feminists (such as Jane Addams), but which then waned in its influence on the feminist movement. Siegfried explores the rich mutual terrain between pragmatism and feminism for a contemporary audience.

Sullivan, Shannon *Living Across and Through Skins: Transactional Bodies, Feminism, and Pragmatism* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001.

In this book Sullivan develops John Dewey's idea of transaction and his phrase 'living across and through skins' to explore a pragmatist/feminist idea of the body and the social forces that range across and through. She re-works embodiment in terms of a feminist/pragmatist radical politics.

Sullivan, Shannon "Oppression in the gut: The biological dimensions of Deweyan habit" In *A History of Habit: From Aristotle to Bourdieu*. Edited by Sparrow, Tom and Adam Hutchinson, 255-274, Lanham, MA: Lexington Books.

In this chapter Sullivan applies her pragmatist/feminist inspired approach to transactional bodying to contemporary questions on race and the embodied/biological impacts of sexism and white racism.