Rethinking concepts of the strange and the stranger

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In this paper we analyse debates regarding the strange and the stranger. In critiquing these debates in geography and the social sciences we argue that the stranger as a term is often taken for granted and implies assumed knowledge. In deconstructing 'the stranger' in the complexities of the modern world, defined by hyper-mobility, super-diversity and increased contact with 'strangers' we question the way in which such definitions might lead us to new distinctions allowing us to think beyond the stranger as a figure in isolation to something more relational and complex in nature. In so doing, we flesh out a way in which the geographies of encounter and thinking across difference might build on these theoretical considerations to further knowledge across and beyond difference as identity category, social construct and lived materiality.

Key words: Stranger; encounter; difference; contact

Introduction

European cities, as well as cities in the global context, are witnessing unprecedented levels of migration and population change. This has led to cities becoming increasingly diverse, associated not just with international migration, but also with population ageing, residential mobility and life style choices. Stuart Hall (1993, p.361) has claimed that 'the capacity to live with difference is… the coming question of the twenty first century'. Therefore in this era of super mobility and super-diversity, how do people negotiate these differences? Whilst there have been celebrations of such diversity, others have argued that in the twenty first century we are faced with increasing levels of distrust and uncertainty, characterised in social and spatial distancing of 'others'. Threats to individual personhood and nationhood, seen in threats from 'the outside', alongside increasing austerity measures and what is 'known', or indeed stable, have further increased levels of distrust and uncertainty of others. Simultaneously, Danielle Allen (2004) outlines that we have, from a young age, been taught not to speak to strangers through a fear of what this unknown figure might mean for our own personal safety. Therefore, as places, and indeed peoples, become characterised by levels of uncertainty, change, and distrust, it is crucial to think about how we negotiate our individual and collective relationships with 'the other'.

The purpose of this special issue is to understand this relationship with the other, the strange and the stranger in light of increasing and ever present questions and challenges of diversity and difference. However, whilst we argue that we need to think about how we see ourselves in relation, as well as connection, to those or that which might be strange, we find it

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necessary to deconstruct the notion of the stranger itself in order to problematise previous assumptions regarding 'strange' and 'the stranger'. The relevance of this debate responds to global uncertainties, facilitated by a perspective of the world as superdiverse (Vertovec, 2007), a crucial challenge for the social sciences more broadly. Throughout this special issue we ask our contributors to respond to the challenges presented by living with difference, here appreciating complex negotiations of self and other, familiar and strange. The purpose of this issue is thus to unpack and problematise ideas of the strange and 'stranger', challenging and responding to a series of questions that we pose in this introduction. This introduction therefore traces the idea of the stranger through the literature to pose questions regarding its relevance in thinking through the notion of encounter and discuss theoretical complexities of strange and stranger. Drawing together a critique of these different approaches we suggest new directions for researching the concept of the stranger, the themes of which are addressed in the subsequent papers within this issue.

Of strangers and binaries: conceptualising the stranger

There have been many discussions about 'the stranger' (Simmel, 1908; Schutz, 1944; Ahmed, 2000; Allen, 2004; Amin, 2012) with conversations of who, or what, is strange, having developed over time. Whilst there appears to be a common sense understanding of the stranger and we all feel that we know what or who 'the stranger' is, the literatures discussing the concepts map out numerous distinctions. Definitions of 'the stranger' have been understood through temporal dimensions, associated with history, memory, and heritage; as such, this distinguishes the stranger through binary thinking, through inside and outside. Schutz (1944), for example, outlines that the stranger becomes the man (sic) who has to place in question nearly everything that seems to be un-questionable to the members of the *approached* group, challenging beliefs. Here, the cultural pattern of the approached group does not have the authority of a tested system of recipes, and the *approacher* does not partake in the vivid historical tradition by which it has been formed. From the stranger's point of view, too, the culture of the approached group has its peculiar history. The stranger, therefore, approaches the other group as a newcomer, an outsider; the stranger does not share the common identity or heritage of the established group. Whilst this binary is important in defining who and how strangers come to be, we must note here the temporal processes involved in the production and maintenance of the strange and the stranger. For example, an important consideration is the way in which Simmel's (1950) stranger is temporally fixed in the context of wandering. However, as temporal location, the stranger is also a process of *becoming* (Koefoed and Simonsen, 2011, p.2) wherein 'it is not possible to simply 'be' a stranger; one becomes a stranger through specific, embodied encounters… The stranger is a relational figure, constituted in a spatial ambivalence between proximity and distance'; the stranger is here seen as a processual condition of being (Iveson, 2005). Interestingly, we see the formation of binary positions, inside versus outside, fixed versus wandering. Iveson's (2005) perspective, however, focuses on the stranger as process rather than practice, as becoming rather than being, a fleeting moment which is defined through its opposition to fixity[i]. Thus whilst shared history and memory are indeed important components of the stranger, we suggest that it is in the combination of temporality and fixity where we find the questions of how such an identity might be practised in contemporary everyday life. Such a distinction places focus on the stranger-as-being rather than individual (Dillon, 1995, p.95 in Iveson, 2005, p.76); we see that it is not necessarily 'who' is strange, but what, where and how 'strangeness' occurs. The process of becoming, and what this means for the encounter thereby warrants further consideration. Our first call, then, is for an empirical discussion of stranger as process/ becoming which develops perspectives on context

and positionality, something which Harris et al (this issue) look to with regards to media discourse and everyday life.

The roots of 'the stranger'

Whilst we find that some complexities highlighted have been addressed, including the philosophical roots of the stranger which outline its binary positioning, we argue that these are primarily reduced to a basic structural assumption of 'the stranger', characterised by 'otherness'. For example, in Simmel's definition (1950, p. 404) the stranger 'results from a particular structure composed of nearness and distance'; this notion of proximity, and in identifying the stranger as 'unknown', both Lofland (1973) and Simmel (1908) argue that it is impossible to 'know' everyone; therefore, we have frequent encounters with 'unknown strangers'. Referring to the stranger in this way, Lofland (1973, p.17) outlines that the term 'is often used to mean anyone with whom we are not acquainted, whom we have never met, even though we may possess a great deal of biographical information about the person… Less frequently, the term refers to persons who are 'different' in some way from an established group, the latter being used as a point of reference'. Lofland's use of the term refers to 'any person who is personally unknown to the actor of reference' (1973, p.18) but may also be anyone personally unknown but visually available (Ibid) or someone who has not knowingly been encountered before (Nielson, 2004). Characterised by unknown-ness, the stranger is identified as unpredictable, someone outside one's known circle (Lupton, 1999, p. 13). This characteristic is where *fear* is situated; the stranger is undecided with a difference between personally knowing another individual and 'categorical knowledge' based on objective characteristics (Lofland, 1973). However, theoretically speaking, the stranger is constructed in *language* towards the other (Alexander, 2013). Here, we argue that the language of strangeness *creates* a particular status, a way of being, an identity.

Theoretical perspectives of the stranger have evolved further over time, reflecting core concerns and contextual values. For example, in his (1988) research which explores how the concept of the stranger has changed throughout the twentieth century, Harman finds that the central element of the definition has shifted from that associated with soil and land, through to a focus on the urban site of the stranger. This has shifted further with contemporary concerns regarding the individual identity of the stranger, or the stranger as a question of identity more generally. Such a move demonstrates the reflexivity of the concept and its ability to mirror the social and cultural context of everyday life. Returning to the origin of the term identified by Georg Simmel (1908)- as a newcomer approaching an established group- the stranger is constructed as someone who does not belong. Determined by the intersection of proximity and distance and territorially defined, Simmel's stranger was categorised through notions of 'ownership' of land, and having rights to that land. The notion of 'birthright' or birthplace was thus also seen as underlining definitions of the stranger (Derrida, 2000) which have informed perspectives on citizenship and nationality. This particular perception results in concerns regarding nation-state formation, reiteration of boundaries, and establishment of national identities and ties of citizenship in an era of empire. Consequently, a territorially defined and rooted stranger was not only developed, but flourished; this results in a dominant narrative of stranger as marginality. Reflecting this, McLemore (1970) argued that since the stranger was receiving substantial attention (within the marginality tradition), the development of a more productive sociology of the stranger was required. We subsequently witness an explicit focus on the newcomer and a concomitant recognition that Simmel's (1908) essay had been well advanced by later students, especially Wood (1934) and Schutz (1944). McLemore thereby classified Simmel's stranger as outdated. Following McLemore's rationale, the idea of the stranger evolved to a focus around the urban, the cosmopolis, and the potential cosmopolitanism

of the stranger as wanderer and as *mobile*; these definitions formed central tenants of thought from the mid-20th century through to more contemporary discussions in the face of super-diversity and mobility. For example, Lofland's (1973) book 'world of strangers' began to look in depth at the idea of the stranger in the city. Lofland here theorised that the modern city was the product of a general shift in how society dealt with the presence of strangers in public space. The presence of strangers was in itself not modern; neither was the basic categorical way of identifying a person. What changed, Lofland argued, was the dominant source of information upon which the categorical labelling took place.

Lofland (1973) critiqued Simmel (1950) and Schutz's (1944) work on the stranger, arguing that they limited themselves in the main to two situations: one, that the newcomer approaching an established group and became assimilated, and two, the newcomer approaching an established group and remained marginal. Lofland thereby argued that 'while these are certainly fruitful analytic foci since they recur in all places and times, they are hardly the only 'stranger situations' worthy of consideration' (1973, p.183). Lofland's work thus developed new thinking in how the stranger was conceived in the processes of everyday life, laying the foundations for thinking of the stranger in more complex ways. For example, Harman (1988) argued that in an era of residential mobility and social diversity, the stranger would better be seen as a cosmopolitan, an expert navigator- moving *between* and making sense of the different communities in which she or he temporarily resides (in Chambers, 2000). Others, conversely, have described the stranger as a position of interpretive failure or dispossession- the one who cannot, or who can no longer, understand the signs and symbols through which public communication takes place (Cooper, 2007, p.203). Such perceptions of the stranger, arising primarily at the end of the 20th century, began to focus more resolutely on the stranger-as-identity facet, reflecting contemporary social concerns regarding individuation and the loss of community. Within these literatures, the stranger is figure; this is context specific, reflecting social constructions and concerns regarding daily life and an attempt to categorise the outside with an incorporation of stranger-as-identity in the 21st century. Discussing the stranger-as-identity, Allen's (2004) text focuses on the concept of the stranger with regards to the negotiation of difference to overcome structural inequalities within the world and to produce lessons in 'good citizenship'. Allen here argues that in conversing across strangeness, and in navigating the *trajectory* of the stranger we might become better acquainted and subsequently able to deal with difference, inequality and injustice. More recently still, Amin's (2012) book 'land of strangers' looks to the collapse in close social ties and the habits of modern living, arguing that this impacts on how we live with different and the outside. These texts show a development in conceptualising the stranger.

Who, or what, is strange, or indeed stranger, have therefore developed and changed over time. Less clear, however, is exactly who 'the stranger' is in terms of contemporary social life, though it is still assumed that 'the stranger' represents an outside, reflecting again its rootedness in binary assumptions. We must, then, develop more contemporary perceptions of 'the stranger' to include the proximal and distant, and through complexity(ies). For example, debates occur over whether we live in a land perpetuated by the 'eternal stranger' (Amin 2013), where we do not interact or connect with others, but instead live at a distance from 'them'; this is demonstrated through individuation and a notion of internalising one's emotions and sense of self, the erosion of community and the rise of 'familiar' strangers (Ahmed, 2000). Therefore the *language* of stranger and its everyday understandings must be unpacked to explore contemporary meanings of the term in everyday life. In short, the stranger is not a simple concept but is open to negotiation in a number of different ways. Whilst the figure of 'the stranger' is situated contextually (Koefoed and Simonsen, 2011), further attention must therefore be paid to this layer of complexity. The identity of 'the stranger', as figure, must also

be critiqued in order to develop a rationale that goes beyond the fetishisation of stranger-as-figure.

Narratives of the stranger

As identified above, historical and temporal roots of the stranger have explored particular conditions and ways of being, whilst empirical discussions of the stranger have focused upon tangible examples in their attempt to 'explain' the stranger phenomenon. Examples include women's fear of crime (Valentine, 1989), focusing upon the city as a place of danger (Lupton, 1999) and the stranger as threat with regard to women's individual personhood (Cooper, 2007). These discussions have primarily focused upon urban environments, for example Iveson's (2005) work on strangers as together in the cosmopolis, or on the familiarity amongst or indeed between strangers (Paulos and Goodman, 2004). Here, cities have been seen as the refuge of stranger (Kahn 1987, in Iveson, 2005). Additionally, discussions of the stranger concept have looked at the combination of citizenship identity with residential status (Koefoed and Simonsen, 2011), developing perspectives of the stranger-as-identity, embodied in the contemporary migrant (Chambers, 2013; Boese, 2010). This demonstrates numerous attempts to categorise and document the experiences of, and indeed attitudes towards, strangers (as people and as identity) through individual personhood, a sense of the nation and shared heritage, as well as a broader navigation of contemporary urbanity.

Reflecting further on the stranger-as-figure are a set of literatures that focus on the stranger as negative. These concerns are broadly discussed as ambivalence, as discomforting, frightening, an invasion, or indeed as a moral panic. For example, Douglas' (1966) work regards the stranger as creating ambivalence in place, arguing that, with their liminal status, they are 'matter out of place' (in Lupton, 1999). Further, Lupton (1999) discusses the risk associated with encountering the unknown, whilst Amin (2013) looks at biopolitics as regulating the balance of conviviality and aversion which is rooted in the perception of risk regarding the stranger. The stranger-as-figure is seen through a permanent state of ambivalence (Koefoed and Simonsen, 2011), a constant threat to the order of the world, poisoning the comfort of order with suspicion of chaos (Bauman 1991, p.56, in Lupton, 1999, p.14). However, Sandercock's (2000) depiction of the stranger as chaos is most distinctive. Strangers are not 'like us' and therefore they are threatening. And yet this strangeness may be both *frightening and enticing.* Fear of the stranger is characterised by ideas of 'stranger danger'. For example, Scott's (2003) discussion of male strangers and male fear of strangers shows that assumed rules of stranger danger can lead to moral panic around particular identities. Lupton (1999) suggests that this fear comes from the unpredictability of the stranger building on Douglas' (1992, p.58) assertion that 'people come already primed with culturally learned assumptions and weightings'. Discussions of fear and the stranger have also focused on women's fear of crime (Pain, 1997; 2000) and, more broadly, the fear of the *behaviour* of the stranger within public space (Valentine, 1989, 1990) thus demonstrating fear around the performative bodily actions of the 'other'.

These negative constructions of the stranger-as-figure are identified at a range of scales, from individual perceptions of the body or self, through to the scale of the nation. For example, Lupton's (1999) research on fear of crime focuses on the stranger-as-being, a different body to 'us' (Koefoed and Simonsen, 2011). It is at the scale of the nation, however, where stranger-as-figure receives most attention. Associated with migration and immigration, one can see discussions of 'floods' of immigrants, a threat from an external 'other' (Chamber, 2013; Hughes, 2007) drawing out a sense of imagined community (Anderson, 1983), further reifying the binary position of inside and outside. Such perceptions are, however, socially constructed (Cooper, 2007) with more positive, and indeed, reflective accounts of stranger-as-figure also

present. Sandercock's (2000, p.204) assertion that 'the strangeness of strangers appears frightening *and* enticing' is thus relevant. The stranger-as-figure may be characterised through romanticised ideology of the other (Cooper, 2007), a desire to get to know the stranger. As outsider, the stranger may be defined by conditions of hospitality-welcoming the stranger-as-guest (Derrida, 2000; Sirryeh, 2013a; 2013b). More broadly, encompassing the figure of the cosmopolitan stranger (Harman, 1988; Chambers, 2000), there is a move to suggest that the stranger is hybrid, that we are 'all strangers' at some point or time. However, Sennett argues against this simplification by suggesting that this brings people together *as* strangers (1994, p.25-26, in Iveson, 2005, p.71). Whilst these views position the stranger as being in the world, situated both spatially and temporally, there remains a fetishisation on the stranger-as-figure with regards to the everyday (Wilson, 2012; Darling, 2009), the home (Sirryeh, 2013a, 2013b) and the city (Amin, 2002, 2010, 2012, 2013; Iveson, 2005). These depictions of 'stranger' maintain a concern with territory and soil, a sense of physical location in the world connected through which the stranger is externalised. We find, then, that these accounts deny positionality of strange and stranger as *experience* and as more than the body of the other.

The stranger-as-figure can be attributed to Sara Ahmed's work on strange encounters (2000). More recently, the stranger-as-figure, as identity and person, is the focus for a special issue of the Journal of Intercultural Studies (2012, volume 33, issue 6). The special issue claims to demonstrate the "different conceptual and theoretical approaches underlying the category of the stranger" (Marotta, 2012a, p.585). Further, the authors claim that the issue provides a rigorous approach to the concept of the stranger that has been absent within the social sciences literature (Ibid). As such, the stranger is here seen as 'both a figure and a spatial relation' which is 'distinct from other categories such as marginality and otherness' (Ibid). We find much merit in the contributions of this special issue, particularly in their contributions towards the sociological dimensions of the stranger. However, we argue that whilst the special issue acknowledges 'strangeness' as a term, this is focused upon the sociological perspective of strangeness as identifier with a focus on the use of psychoanalytical approaches of the self. Further, the papers within the issue (Marotta, 2012b; Datta, 2012; Fuhse, 2012; Kharlamov, 2012; Horgan, 2012; Mallory, 2012) focus on the concept of the stranger through discussions of migration and the figure of the migrant as stranger, or as embodying processes of the stranger. Further, we argue that these papers, whilst offering a valid and interesting contribution, do little to advance knowledge of stranger, stranger and strangeness with reference to geographical or socio spatial positioning(s) in the world. As such, we argue that a critical approach to the concepts of strange, stranger, strangeness and strange encounter must indeed focus on the socio-spatial, and indeed the temporal, as processes through which the idea of the term stranger must come to be considered. For example, Kielland (this issue) discusses the idea of stranger with regards to place identity, place stories and representation. Further, Bennett and Crawley-Jackson (this issue) discuss stranger and strangeness as feeling and collaborative experience. Thus, these papers develop the initial intervention proposed by Marotta's (2012) collection. In so doing, we respond to, and develop this collection to re-theorise the stranger and marginal self (here still referring to the stranger-as-figure) in a contemporary world of flux and fluidity (see Schuermans, this issue). The articles within this special issue thus develop the 2012 intervention by looking at issues around location and context, the geography of the stranger. Further, they explore the notion of strange and stranger in more-than-human ways, looking at experience, place identity, emotion (see Ramsden, this issue) and sense of being rather than as individual or group identity as 'stranger'.

Socially constructing the stranger: moving forward

The stranger is not a natural but rather 'given' category. If we are to think critically about then we need to begin by looking at the stranger as *socially organised and defined*. Here the stranger is defined through individual perceptions and constructions of 'the other' (Said, 1978). As Ahmed (2000) highlights, strangers are not real structures but socially constituted, discursively produced positions. Further, Noble (2013, p.32) suggests that 'the rhetorical power of talking about strangers is that is rests on binaries'. We argue, however, that the nuances and subtleties implicit in constructions of the stranger are lost in the binaries, that the position of the stranger should not be reduced to such simple classifications. For example, Alexander's (2013, p. 81) research critiques this binary assumption of 'the stranger', instead stating that we must focus on the cultural interpretation of social structures and the categories within which these active interventions are made, rather than strangeness as reflecting spatial position and behavioural relation (thus critiquing Simmel's argument). Developing Alexander's (2013) perceptions, we argue that we need to focus on the *construction and constructive power of difference* and the active employment of distinctive standards of interpretation. Doing so would also allow us to analyse the sense that both strangeness and stranger are produced in culturally-mediated ways that reference constructions of the subjective motivations of the actors themselves.

Though we do not deny the situatedness of social agency and context in constructions of the stranger, we suggest developing a connection of the multiple scales, sites of becoming(s), processes, emotions and interactions that produce strange, strangers and strange encounters will extend discussion toward practical understandings rooted in everyday social and political life. This approach, we believe, will go beyond binary categorisations of 'the stranger' which rest in the idea of the stranger-as-figure which currently dominate. Our approach is to further unpack the social, cultural and political assumptions that are implied as well as the spatio-temporal contexts in which discussions regarding 'the stranger' take place. We ask how conversations across or between strangers take place and are negotiated, where, by whom and why. However, we also ask that the idea of 'the stranger' is opened up so that we might think beyond the stranger-as-figure. For example, what are strange and stranger experiences, strange and stranger places, contexts, encounters? These questions allow us to look at the role not only that context and complexity play but also allows us to think through re-classifying these terms in an era characterised by super-diversity.

Re-categorising the stranger in an era of super-diversity

Revisiting and indeed rethinking the stranger concept is of paramount importance in an era of hyper-mobility and super-diversity (Vertovec, 2007) where, increasingly, modern life is characterised by anonymity but also by emotion, by the fleeting. Critiquing the notion that 'we are all strangers in some context' (Chambers, 2000) we develop Ahmed's (2000) idea that the stranger can also be familiar in our everyday experiences of social and political life. This 'familiar stranger' is, at present, an *individual* who is recognised from regular activities, but with whom one does not interact or communicate (Paulos and Goodman, 2004). First identified by Stanley Milgram (1972), it has become an increasingly popular concept in research about social networks. There is familiarity *in* strangeness (Ahmed, 2000) in that we have to have *met* the stranger to mark them out as different. These ideas of familiarity allow us to question whether we are indeed becoming more familiar as we (increasingly) simultaneously become strangers to each other. Further, what is interesting is that the notion of familiarity in *strange-ness* plays on the notion of history, memory and the role of process or making. Whilst conditions of modernity were discussed by Lofland (1973), in an era of super-mobility and super-diversity we find that one lives with increased levels of strangeness and strangers in *all* aspects of everyday life. Ash Amin's (2012) research draws on this idea, focusing on how interactions

with 'strangers' take place in everyday, localised settings. Familiarity in strange-ness, then, is found to continuously constitute and redefine the boundaries between strange and familiar, known and unknown. Thus the conditions of the familiar stranger and strange-ness in the contemporary context requires us to think not only about binary relationships of inside/ outside, known/ unknown, fear/ safety, familiar/ unfamiliar, as defined in theoretical assumptions of the stranger, but also calls for us to develop further the complexities of the status of stranger/strange-ness.

Whilst we find merit in discussions of the familiarity-in-strangers this continues to fetishise the stranger-as-figure. Ambiguity therefore remains as to 'what' the stranger is beyond the assumption of stranger-as-figure. The 'everyday stranger' and everyday 'strange-ness' that is at once situated, multiple, complex, beyond categorisation, whilst simultaneously emotional, embodied and fluid is what we seek to capture; we here open the conversation to think through stranger and strange-ness as conviviality, as curiosity, as memory, as emotion rather than simply as figure or identity. In so doing, we hope to develop an intervention beyond the simplistic fragments of socio-spatial relations discussed to date.

Negotiating strange encounters: Conceptualising conversations across difference: The special issue

In this introduction we have shown that whilst much has been done on notions of the stranger (also discussed in accounts regarding contact theory, Allport, 1954), these discussions tend to focus on the idea of the stranger-as-figure, as identity associated with a person or group of people. Much like Bauman's (1987, 1991, 1995, 1997) writings on the stranger in the conditions of modernity and post-modernity, the stranger-as-figure is the focus of the majority of work within the broader social sciences. Whilst Hughes (2002, p.573) finds that Bauman is 'not interested in strangerhood as an existential outcome of life in modern times'. Instead, Hughes argues, 'he is concerned with how social and cultural practices produce and invalidate strangers' (Hughes, 2002, p.573 in reference to Bauman, 1973, 1989). We find merit in Bauman's work, in the potential for understanding the validity of social and cultural practices in the making and remaking of stranger and strangeness. We develop Bauman's ideas within this special issue, focusing on the very practices, performances, and processes that go into the shaping of strange, stranger, strangeness and strange encounter. Drawing on Bauman's (1997, p.13) argument that 'modernity sought to legislate and control, to engineer the social and to dominate nature. Post-modernity seeks to interpret and mediate between a plurality of more or less equal truth claims', we draw a similar conclusion to that of Hughes (2002), arguing that Bauman's fluid and processual perspective of the stranger is able to accommodate and develop further these assumptions regarding the terms. Thus we respond to Bauman's call for a spilling over of definitional boundaries (1997, p.167) in order to go beyond categories associated with the stranger-as-figure.

Our critique thus lies in the discussions of the 'the stranger', situated in specific contexts, at specific times, and focusing on particular scales of analyses. These do not understand or explore the inherent complexity of the positionality of 'stranger' as a fluid and multiple entity, as becoming, something more-than-human identity or personhood. The papers within this issue thus provide a more holistic and broad approach (and indeed account) of the stranger as both strange and strange encounter. This issue presents a more careful consideration of the stranger, acknowledging different types of encounter with strange and stranger whilst recognising the importance of fluidity.

In this issue we have asked the contributors to think about, and to ask what the intimate scales, sites and practices of strangers are. What becomes of the emotional, embodied and personal 'meetings' of strange and stranger? What are the complexities of time and context and

how might the *messiness of everyday interaction* be explored? Key questions that we address in this special issue are therefore not only how we live with strangers, both daily and permanently (Bauman, 1997, p.88), but also how we *overcome* this sense of strangeness (Sandercock, 2003), how we see the term 'stranger' as exclusive or inclusive and how we might navigate beyond the categorical, binary assumptions of the term, including stranger-as-figure. Further, the issue explores the impact of contrasting emphases on the temporal or the spatial, the relational and the topological, the fixed and the mobile, the ontological and the epistemological accounts of strange, stranger, and strange-ness, thereby responding to Noble's (2013) call to take into account the diverse processes and positions at stake, not simply to polarise them. Critiquing the studies highlighted for their focus on the stranger-as-figure, as identity, and as rooted in the body, the articles within this issue thereby develop ideas regarding the stranger in social and cultural geography. The papers address issues of location and context, the very *geography* of the stranger, exploring the complexities, localities and existences of strange and strangers in multiple sites, at multiple scales and through varied ways of being. Further, they explore the notion of strange and stranger in more-than-human ways, looking at experience, place identity, emotion and sense of being rather than as individual or group identity as 'stranger'. The papers recognise strangeness not simply as people, but as process, as practice, as performance, seeing strangeness in place and place relations, in place marketing and place stories, across nationalities, through everyday habitual processes and unconscious thoughts and feelings. These papers look at the intimate complexities of these negotiations, focusing on the stranger as relations, as 'becoming' and most importantly as processual dynamic.

This special issue thus focuses on the fluidity of practice of the strange, stranger and strange encounter focusing not only on the position of the stranger-as-figure, but as context specific and relational (Harris et al), as fleeting and fluid encounter (Schuermans), as experience in movement (Ramsden), as story and place representation (Kielland), and as emotional experiential and narrative (Bennett and Crawley-Jackson). Whilst not a critique of the dearth of work on the stranger, we instead offer an alternative perspective, developing thought in social and cultural geography to encompass much more inclusive thinking of the stranger in terms of contemporary and everyday life. Subsequently, we make three recommendations which we believe will add to conceptual and methodological assumptions of the strange, the stranger and the other in human geography. Firstly, we argue that there is a need to re-scale debates regarding the stranger, here demonstrating the connectedness of scales and experiences. Secondly we argue that there is a need to understand the complexities of these debates, the emotions involved, and the practices (and performances) that strange encounters are situated within, as well as the role of context in containing such debates or conversations. Finally, we suggest that aims one and two should be met through a fleshing out empirical examples of 'strangers' which seek to connect the theoretical positionalities of 'stranger' with real, lived, and 'fleshy' examples and narrations of who, what and where the stranger is and the practices of these encounter(s). Such considerations, we believe, will lead to more practical, as well as detailed accounts of the stranger as specificities as well as complexity(ies).

The authors in this special issue respond to these questions by investigating the complex negotiations of/ between strangers, strangeness and strange encounter. They do so in a variety of ways, responding to calls for more explorative writing and understanding about the concepts central to the issue. Harris, Jackson, Piekut and Valentine (this issue) explore the multiple and varied ways in which the stranger as other has been negotiated in contemporary discourse in the UK and Poland. Here, they focus on the seen, visible, stranger and negotiations of the strange/ other relationship with the inside or indeed majority identity. In this paper, their explorations into accounts of distancing are rationalised through more traditional perceptions of the stranger, as othered identity, following more traditional accounts of the stranger but also

identifying new trajectories in terms of social location and social context and their role in negotiating a variety of strange encounters.

These themes are developed through Schuermans account (this issue) on encounters with strangers and strange identities through the case of driving the N2 highway in South Africa. Schuermans draws on photo elicitation interviews with White Middle class South Africans to understand their encounters with visible differences along the highway. In this account, Schuermans extends the traditional 'site' of the encounter, focusing on the non-place of the car as a site through which encounters are negotiated in a visible, though not physical sense. Developing the sight of encounters through a non-traditional 'site', Schuerman's article thus questions the very nature of the encounter itself, challenging us to rethink the notion of the everyday in terms of both situatedeness and its sense of fleeting temporality with respects to the lasting impact of our encounters with strange and stranger identities.

Building on the notion of stranger and strangeness in the site of the encounter, Kielland's paper discusses the strangeness of place and encounters of place. Kielland's paper discusses the telling and re-telling of stories about place, focusing on the representation of Sami identities in Northern Norway. Kielland's article allows us to think more critically about representations of strange and strangeness, bringing encounters in place and of place to the fore to discuss the ambiguity of the stranger concept. Further, Kielland's paper develops arguments shared by Phillip and Evans (2016) who refute the way in which metropolitan, modern, life has become alienated and fragmented. Phillips and Evans explore the spaces of curiosity and friendship within the contemporary city to argue that 'relationships between cities and friendships remain poorly understood' (Ibid, p.2). Kielland thus explores the strange/ stranger relationship in/of/ through places in different ways.

Developing these more fluid perceptions of strange, Ramsden's discussion explores the experiential nature of strangeness through movement, that of walking. Narrating the strangeness of the research process, as well as people's encounters with the strange in their everyday lives, Ramsden's account invites us to think critically about that which we take for granted, the mundane and everyday-ness of life-worlds. Inviting us to examine the strange in the mundane, Ramsden focuses on a perspective based account of being in the world and the very engagement in/ of strangeness in which we find ourselves and, instead of ignoring the disquiet associated with the strange, asks that we instead draw this out in our understanding of everyday material worlds. Bennett and Crawley-Jackson's piece draws the material and emotional experience of strange and strangeness out further, focusing on the non-representational dimensions of strangeness in a project, a site, an encounter and in art. In so doing, Bennett and Crawley-Jackson's account of 'the strange' invites us to refocus our attention further, narrating the often felt experience of encounters with strangers in emotive and poetic language to demonstrate the fluid way in which strange and stranger is being, but also felt, experience, lived- in short, a more than representational account of everyday life.

The papers included in this collection therefore address the complexities of the terms strange, stranger, and strange encounter that we believe are missing from the majority of accounts that currently reside within the literatures. Whilst this collection does not contain all of the 'answers' to the critiques that we pose, we believe that these queries and discussions are the starting point for a more relational and fluid account and understanding of the stranger in social and cultural geography.

Acknowledgements

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[i] Iveson's work here develops other considerations such as that presented by Allen (2004) with regards to her discussion on friendship and political friendship. Here Allen's (2004) presents the notion of friendship as not simply an emotion but also as practice (p. xxi). Therefore, we ask to what extent can the stranger itself be seen as practice, rather than as figure. The idea of stranger as practice goes beyond the binary assumptions presented above and allows us to think of the concept of something that is truly fluid and dynamic.