University of Groningen

Scoping the Future of 'Population, Space and Place'

Findlay, Allan M.; Mulder, Clara H.

Published in:
Population Space and Place

DOI:
[10.1002/psp.2000](https://doi.org/10.1002/psp.2000)

IMPORTANT NOTE: You are advised to consult the publisher's version (publisher's PDF) if you wish to cite from it. Please check the document version below.

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Publication date:
2015

[Link to publication in University of Groningen/UMCG research database](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Findlay, A. M., & Mulder, C. H. (2015). Scoping the Future of 'Population, Space and Place'. *Population Space and Place*, 21(8), 689-691. <https://doi.org/10.1002/psp.2000>

Copyright

Other than for strictly personal use, it is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

The publication may also be distributed here under the terms of Article 25fa of the Dutch Copyright Act, indicated by the "Taverne" license. More information can be found on the University of Groningen website: <https://www.rug.nl/library/open-access/self-archiving-pure/taverne-amendment>.

Take-down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

Downloaded from the University of Groningen/UMCG research database (Pure): <http://www.rug.nl/research/portal>. For technical reasons the number of authors shown on this cover page is limited to 10 maximum.

Scoping the Future of 'Population, Space and Place'

Allan M. Findlay¹ and Clara H. Mulder^{2,*}

¹Department of Geography and Sustainable Development, University of St. Andrews, St Andrews, UK

²Population Research Centre, Faculty of Spatial Sciences, University of Groningen, Groningen, Netherlands

Accepted 06 October 2015

*P*opulation, Space and Place has fully come of age. This is its 21st year of publication, and it is very satisfying to co-edit a journal whose impact factor has risen in four of the five last years, placing it fifth of all journals in Demography, and 15th of 76 journals in the Geography rankings. The journal was founded as long ago as 1995 under the title *International Journal of Population Geography* and under the successive and successful editorships of Huw Jones, Bob Woods, and Paul Boyle, the journal has grown in stature. To rehearse the key papers in the journal is to review the conceptual repositioning of geographical research on population (Graham, 2004). The core aim has always been to advance population geography and geographical population studies, but interpreting what this means involved not only keeping abreast of demographic advances but also responding to the challenges of social theory (White & Jackson, 1995). Following Graham and Boyle's (2001) map for re-theorising the subdiscipline, contributions have included proposals such as those for a Foucaultian population geography, to mention just one example (Legg's, 2005). At the same time, the journal has carried key papers showing how methodological and theoretical advances in demographic research have had profound geographical implications. This is illustrated by the new contributions resulting, for example, from research using longitudinal datasets to advance understanding of the changing nature of the lifecourse and of family relationships over time-space (Findlay & Mulder, 2015).

The global engagement of scholars with the key debates of population, space, and place has seen the frequency of publication increase from

two issues in the journal's first year, to four issues, and then to eight in 2014. Not only has the number of papers published by the journal increased over the years, but the publishing environment has also changed. In a recent editorial, Boyle (2014) reflected on how changes in the world of publishing has affected the journal as it shifted first to become electronic and then from being subscription only to offering open access options. In this dynamic publishing environment, a key challenge for us as editors has been to respond to the ever increasing number of manuscripts sent to us. Our goal has been to publish only outstanding papers, in order to maintain the standing of the journal. This strategy has clearly been successful, given the rise in citations, the position of the journal in rankings, and the good reputation in general of the journal. But, with rising rejection rates, we came close to a point where we would have to turn away potentially outstanding work that would need only limited revision to make the standard expected by the international research community, or that would suffer from only the slightest data limitations even though these are acknowledged. This was not where we wanted to go. As editors of the flagship journal of the discipline of population geography, we see it as our responsibility to publish the best work carried out in our discipline but not to an extreme where only a tiny proportion of the work can be published and scientists are discouraged from submitting their work.

In 2015, Clara Mulder became co-editor with Allan Findlay. We took two key decisions to prevent the journal from having to become too restrictive. Firstly, we decided to refocus the academic terrain served by the journal and, given the increasing number of new open access journals serving neighbouring research fields, to exclude papers that are in some way marginal to the journal's specialism. The published aim of

*Correspondence to: Clara H. Mulder, University of Groningen, Groningen, Netherlands.
E-mail: c.h.mulder@rug.nl

the journal continues to be the world's leading English language journal 'in the field of population geography and geographical population studies'. As a result, we encourage authors of excellent papers in other areas of human geography and social scientists interested in population but whose work does not engage with geographically informed interpretations of 'space and place' to find other publication outlets. Of course, what is central and what is marginal to population geography and geographical population studies is open to debate. The strictness in scope we have chosen to apply is in no way to be seen as a plea for restricting the discipline as such. In any case, our choice of scope is as follows. We welcome submissions of work on migration and residential mobility, and on spatial variations in or geographical aspects or consequences of fertility, mortality, population growth and decline, population distribution and segregation, population age structure, and the formation and dissolution of households, marriages, and partnerships. Submissions on the behaviour and integration of migrants are considered if they take into account connections with the migration process itself or if they have a geographical component. Submissions on health are considered if they not only have a geographical component but also relate to mortality, fertility, migration, or household change.

Secondly, we have made the difficult decision to suspend for the foreseeable future – but hopefully not forever! – the commissioning of special issues. This will allow the backlog of accepted papers to be reduced and a more rapid turnaround of work once it is accepted by the journal. Readers of the journal should note that these changes will take time to have an effect. Many special issues have already been accepted and will continue to be published in 2016 and 2017. Equally, the tighter focus of the range of topics on which population, space, and place will publish will not become evident to readers for some months.

There are also continuities in our editorial principles. As before, we only accept papers that provide a major contribution to the literature. This contribution may be conceptual or theoretical, methodological, or empirical. Empirical contributions should be theoretically informed and answer new questions or provide new answers to existing questions. Studies that replicate

previous research in a new context or even in the same context are welcomed but only if they contain a critical discussion of the previous work and/or an important improvement and/or a thorough discussion of what could explain differences in the findings – in short, if they are not 'just another case study'. We welcome both quantitative and qualitative approaches, as long as the method fits the research question and meets the standards of scientific rigour. The papers have to be readable and relevant for a wide international audience of academics: obscure language and readability for only a small incrowd or a very particular (sub)discipline or paradigm will lead to rejection of the paper. Finally, we remain a peer-reviewed journal. While we reject a considerable share of papers without sending them out to reviewers, for the reason that they do not fit in the scope of the journal or do not meet our quality standards, the help of reviewers for the other submissions is essential. We cannot emphasise enough how important their work is, and how impressed we often are by their generosity in devoting time to the journal and the thoroughness and quality of their work.

Most of the discussion in the preceding text is about strictness and high standards. One thing we certainly do not aim for is to discourage scholars from submitting good work to the journal for fear of rejection. Let us stress, we still feel happy and privileged receiving high-quality submissions that fit the journal. The changes in our editorial strategy were made precisely because we aim to ensure not having to turn down such submissions. We hope these changes, and also the continuities, serve the community well and look forward enthusiastically to serving all those engaged in research within population geography and those from outside the sub-discipline who recognise the importance of geography to population studies.

REFERENCES

- Boyle P. 2014. Population space and place and the future of academic publishing. *Population, Space and Place* **21**: 677–679.
- Findlay A, Mulder CH (eds). 2015. Mobilities, linked lives and fluid lifecourses. *Population, Space and Place* Virtual issue. DOI:10.1002/psp.1956.

- Graham E. 2004. The past, present and future of population geography. *Population, Space and Place* **10**: 289–294.
- Graham E, Boyle P. 2001. (Re) theorising population geography: mapping the unfamiliar. *International Journal of Population Geography* **7**: 389–394.
- Legg S. 2005. Foucault's population geographies. *Population, Space and Place* **11**: 137–156.
- White P, Jackson P. 1995. (Re) theorising population geography. *International Journal of Population Geography* **1**: 111–123.